Making Space for Skateboarding in Groningen

Assessing the needs of the Groningen skateboarding
community and the municipality's efforts to meet them

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Acknowledgment

Dear reader,

I would like to acknowledge a few individuals who have been particularly impactful in my academic journey, which has culminated in this thesis.

First, I would like to recognize my two thesis supervisors. I started the thesis process with Charlotte Miller, MSc who encouraged me to follow my interests, stay within scope, and be creative. Charlotte's guidance during the beginning of the research process was exactly what I needed to push past barriers and be confident in my work. Although Charlotte was unable to stay on as supervisor for the entirety of the thesis process, their support was nonetheless very impactful. During the second half of my thesis, Dr. Özlemnur Ataol graciously stepped in to supervise me. Dr. Ataol's structured approach to supervision kept me on track and her feedback was very valuable. I am extremely lucky to have been able to work with two skilled, patient, and creative thesis supervisors.

Next, I would like to thank my friends and family, whose support I can always rely on. Specifically, I would like to thank my mother, Amy Ohlson, my father, Jeff Ohlson, and my brother, Jasper Ohlson, for their constant encouragement. I would also like to thank my partner, Joosje Bleeker, for her enduring support.

Lastly, I would like to thank Hobbe Hollands for his photos. Hobbe, a skateboarding community leader in Groningen, was kind enough to give me access to many of the photos found throughout this thesis, including the cover photo.

Abstract

The municipality of Groningen has announced that they are embracing the rapidly growing urban sport of skateboarding. The formalization of the sport of skateboarding, which tends to rely on the availability of diverse and engaging spaces, often experiences challenges on the municipal level. These challenges include lack of available space, conflicts with other residents and businesses, lack of political will, reproduction of transgressive behaviors commonly found in urban subcultures, and the exclusion of non-male participants. Despite growing research on the benefits of skateboarding, the link between skateboarding and one's 'right to the city', and the sociological functions of the subculture itself, there is still a need to understand the dynamics of individual cases. A municipality may claim to be 'skater-friendly', but the skateboarders in the area may still experience issues such as legal or social discrimination, a lack of space to practice skateboarding safely and creatively, or a lack of agency. This thesis adds to the understanding of the complex dynamics at play when a municipality decides to embrace skateboarding. Through using a mixed-methods approach of field observation and semi-structured interviews, the case of Groningen is characterized. By identifying the needs of skateboarders through interviews and relating them to Groningen's laws and spaces, this thesis highlights the gaps hindering Groningen from becoming a skater-friendly municipality. Then, by recommending methods to fill these remaining gaps, the thesis will serve as a toolkit that can be used to improve the environment for skateboarders not just in Groningen, but worldwide.

Keywords: Skateboarding, skateparks, urban sports, spatial norms, urban governance, right to the city, exclusion, inclusion

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GUSA   Groningen Urban Sports Agenda

APV   Algemene Plaatselijke Verordening (Groningen General Local Regulations)

AWB   Aanwijzingsbesluit (designation decree)

VWS   Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport (Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport)

DIY   Do-it-yourself

NIMBY   Not in my backyard

NBD   Never been done

BMX   Bicycle motocross

PDB   Skatepark de Paardenbak (officially known as Skatepark Stadspark)

UMCG   University Medical Center Groningen

MACBA   The Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art

1. Introduction

1.1 Groningen as an 'urban sports Valhalla'

At Groningen's 2023 Let's Gro Festival, Councilmember Inge Jongman made a special announcement to a full audience: Groningen, the sixth most populated municipality in the Netherlands (CBS, 2024), was aiming to become an 'urban sports Valhalla'. The announcement was paired with the release of a new magazine created by the municipality of Groningen and a regional skateboard magazine publisher, Essay Skate Magazine, outlining their Urban Sports Agenda (GUSA) ─ a roadmap for the future of Groningen's physical urban sports areas and the political procedures needed to achieve them. According to the GUSA, urban sports provide an opportunity for the municipality to better facilitate equal opportunities for exercise and play, especially for those who do not want to or cannot participate in team sports (GUSA, 2023).

The sport most frequently mentioned in the GUSA, skateboarding, is particularly interesting to study given its contentious and popular nature. The popularity of skateboarding is increasing globally, as signaled by its recent inclusion in the 2020 Olympic Games and the multibillion-dollar industry's spread to new markets (Li, 2022). However, skateboarding, especially the integration of the sport into the urban environment, can be controversial.

Political parties in the Netherlands and around the world continue to debate the status of skateboarding as a potential public nuisance and its overall social utility. For example, the public nuisance statute in Groningen's *Algemene Plaatselijke Verordening* (APV), the municipality's general local regulations, was amended in 2023 to include a new section on skateboarding. This amendment increases the power of the council to prohibit skateboarding in public areas if skateboarding is deemed a nuisance (Gemeente Groningen APV artikel 2:55a, n.d.). Nuisance behavior is defined in the following regulation:

"It is prohibited to remain in or on a space accessible to the public without a reasonable purpose and in a manner that is a nuisance to others, or to contaminate it or use it for a purpose other than that for which this space is intended" (Gemeente Groningen APV artikel 2:55, n.d.).

Skateboarding's addition to the public nuisance regulations was the subject of tense political debate (Scheffer, 2023). In 2024, the city council used the power given to them in APV artikel 2.55a to pass an *aanwijzingsbesluit* (AWB), or decree, which would:

"Designate the natural stone elements and paving on the Grote Markt, the Waagplein and the Nieuwe Markt as a road where it is prohibited to ride skateboards, skates and BMX bicycles, because they can be damaged and cause nuisance" (Gemeente Groningen AWB ex. artikel 2.55a, 2024).

Skateboarding is a dynamic activity ─ one that originated as "sidewalk surfing" and has intrinsic ties to the reappropriation of the built urban environment (Borden, 2001). As professional skater Stacey Peralta describes, skateboarding in space is "all an open highway with hydrants, curbs, bumpers, shopping carts, door handles and pedestrians" (as cited in Borden, 2019, p.222). Skateboarders also build their own do-it-yourself (DIY) spaces in acts of creativity, resistance, or merely need (Kyrönviita and Wallin, 2022; Yates, 2022). Imbued within the activity's subculture and literature is a sense that skateboarding and the urban environment cannot truly be separated, yet it appears many municipalities such as Groningen attempt to do so.

The solution to making space for skateboarders in many cities has often been to build public outdoor skateparks ─ enclosed concrete spaces built specifically for skateboarding ─ and simultaneously outlaw the sport in the rest of the city (Owens, 2002; Németh, 2006; Wooley and Johns, 2001). In cities with colder climates such as Groningen, indoor commercial skateparks are also commonly built and operated, occasionally with the help of public funds. While these facilities appear to be popular, it can be argued that the approach of segregating a street-based activity from the streets themselves is antithetical to the notion of creating an urban sports 'Valhalla', yet the GUSA and its APV skateboarding amendment appear to reflect a similar approach. This research will be done using semi-structured interviews and field observation to uncover what the spatial and social needs of Groningen skateboarders are, the current state of skateboarding in Groningen, and how the skateboarding community itself acknowledges the legal barriers to their inclusion.

1.2 Societal relevance

Groningen is a municipality that prides itself on its authenticity and alternative culture, as reflected in its new approach to urban sports and their featuring of other urban subcultures on its official tourism page (visitgroningen.nl, 2024). Skateboarding has been identified by the municipality as a tool that can be used to expand and embrace this cultural identity, but success regarding this mission may be defined differently by different groups. It is therefore important to ensure everyone is on the same page about what is realistic, what is important, and which outcome can be deemed a success. Without identifying these, Groningen risks creating conditions in which no one is truly content. If the goal is to embrace skateboarding, it is in everyone's best interest to ensure it is done correctly, presuming that a correct method exists.

By welcoming alternative uses of public space, the municipality may benefit from the ensuing creative practices, increased tourism, and local skateboard industry growth. A list of the skateboarding community's needs is provided at the end of this thesis. These identified needs, connected to recommended actions, can help the municipality start down the path of truly embracing skateboarding. Given the similar nature of other urban sports, similar approaches could also be applied to other urban sports contexts.

1.3 Scientific relevance

This study will seek to provide data on the underlying relationship between skateboarders in Groningen, Groningen's spatial conditions, and the engagement between the municipality and the skateboarding community with the hope of discovering gaps that need to be addressed if Groningen is to meet the goals outlined in the GUSA. There is no existing academic data on the needs of individual skateboarders in Groningen; the main information about the needs of urban sports groups in Groningen comes from a single set of Urban Sports Network committee meetings (GUSA, 2023). However, the literature highlights a phenomenon of skateboarders being excluded from public spaces and the construction of skateparks being used to justify this exclusion. Groningen, like other cities, claims to want the best for its skateboarders but its actions may tell a different story. Therefore, clear data may shift the conversation around embracing urban sports in Groningen and the published case study findings may be used by other researchers studying within the relatively new field of urban sports governance and placemaking.

1.4 Research objectives

Using a case study approach, this research seeks to identify gaps between the needs of Groningen skateboarders and the conditions created by the municipality. There is a growing trend of cities embracing skateboarding. However, this strategy is often coupled with exclusion tactics, effectively denying some citizens the 'right to the city'. Skateboarders, as this study explains, require a variety of spaces. A one-size-fits-all approach to creating skate spaces is incompatible with the diversity within skateboarding but is often adopted anyway. By looking at Groningen's approach to skateboarding through its provided or allowed spaces, this study will attempt to add local context to the understanding of exclusionary urban governance practices.

1.5 Research question

Based on the research objectives, the following main research question is formulated:

How does the municipality of Groningen meet the social and spatial needs of the local skateboarding community?

Three sub-questions help to answer and support the main research question:

1. *What are the social and spatial needs of the local skateboarding community?*
2. *How do current and planned skateboard spaces in Groningen accommodate the needs of the local skateboarding community?*
3. *How are the legal barriers to creating an 'urban sports Valhalla' acknowledged by the Groningen skateboarding community?*

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter links concepts and theories to provide a better understanding of the context behind the research questions. Section 2.1 focuses on the phenomenon of urban subcultures. Section 2.2 homes in on skateboarding to provide context on the activity, its practitioners, and its spaces. Section 2.3 focuses on urban politics and the governance of skateboarding in neoliberal settings. Then, these political contexts are grounded using the theoretical lenses of the right to the city — a term created by Henri Lefebvre and popularized by David Harvey (Harvey, 2015). Lastly, a review of the author's expectations is provided.

2.1 Urban subcultures

The Netherlands has many urban settings and as is the case with other urban settings, various groups with different norms, interests, and behaviors (van der Rijt, d'Haenens, and van Straten, 2003). Some of these groups are referred to in literature as subcultures. Subcultures are groups that have achieved a critical mass of members with 'unconventional' characteristics, using their own social subsystem (Fischer, 1975). Beal and Weidman (2003) expand, suggesting that the members of some subcultures willingly forgo the benefits of conforming to general social norms to benefit from appearing authentic to the other members of their subculture. However, the forgoing of general social norms comes with a price: these subcultural members may lose their recognition and power as 'legitimate citizens' in the eyes of the general public (Beal and Weidman, 2003). This navigation of complex power relations plays out in the urban environment and its understanding is therefore crucial to a larger understanding of urban governance.

Critical scholarship often views public space as the site of social reproduction, however, public space is often built and governed by entities prioritizing economic growth and efficiency (Borden, 2019; Fainstein, 2013). As different groups attempt to shape and appropriate space, a conflict appears. One result of this conflict is that subcultural groups and other groups lacking significant power or agency have long been labeled as deviant, delinquent, and subversive by more powerful groups (Borden, 2019; Cresswell, 1996; Fainstein, 2013; Iveson, 2013). One of these subcultural groups is skateboarders. To better understand the complexities surrounding skateboarding's relationship with space and urban governance, the larger group of urban sports must first be explored.

2.1.1 Urban sports

Subcultures also appear regularly in the sports world (Donnelly and Young, 1988). However, societal acceptance of individual sport communities hinges on the type of sport and the degree of the sport's institutional legitimization (Heere, 2018; McBride, 1975; Parry, 2018). The Olympics, for example, being an example of a governing body that determines whether something is a sport or not (Parry, 2018).

While sports are hard to define, urban and informal sports further blur the lines. This is the quandary that decision-makers confront when accounting for urban sports participants in space. Urban citizens engage in various informal sports activities that temporarily redefine the purpose and use of public space (Bach, 1993). These informal sports include cycling, jogging, street hockey, free running, roller skating, and skateboarding. These activities don't require governing bodies to operate but do require space and some, such as skateboarding, often rely on shared public space (Borden, 2019). Recreational use of these public spaces, according to Bach (1993), effectively turns them into informal sports facilities; their existence as facilities thereby necessitates a framework for their continued provision. Defining and categorizing various sports is important because their spatial needs are fundamentally different. For example, skateboarding may in part rely on the provision and access to informal sports facilities — a realm of urban politics not frequently governed by municipal recreation policies.

While their adoption of the more 'urban' part of skateboarding is yet to be seen, cities in the Netherlands appear to be taking an active role in the definition and facilitation of these sports — among those actively engaging with the idea of formalizing urban sports are Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Groningen. A report financed by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport (VWS) and carried out by the Mulier Instituut sought to provide a clear definition for urban sports as many Dutch municipalities have begun to embrace informal and urban sports as an important part of their overall sports policies. The report identified three main municipality justifications for embracing urban sports: giving young people more choices on how to be active, utilizing a new approach to diversifying spaces, and using urban sports to make their municipalities appear more 'hip' (Mulier Instituut, 2022). The focus specifically on youth is mirrored in their definition of urban sports as "sports that are mainly practiced by young people, often take place in urban public space, are embedded in the 'urban culture' and therefore contain creative and/or artistic elements that are shown on the street and/ or via social media, possibly in the form of battles" (p.10). This definition led to the creation of a provisional list of sports and this list was later used to inform the GUSA, along with the urban sports policies of other Dutch municipalities.

The attempt to categorize urban sports by Dutch municipalities is interesting because it closely connects urban sports with 'urban culture' and in doing so recognizes that these activities transcend the stricter boundaries of formal sports and fundamentally exist within urban and public spaces. Governing these urban sports is already challenging given their amorphous nature, but many of the sports' underlying cultures also encourage the breaking of rules they view as unjust. Urban skateboarding, for example, is not governed by an international skateboarding rules committee. The most relevant set of rules for enforcing skateboarders may be modern property law, but skateboarders, like graffiti artists, often view these laws with ambivalence (Carr, 2010). Governing such a gray area using the traditional urban governance techniques of nuisance laws and other exclusionary tactics may not be effective for creating better urban sports spaces nor creating social cohesion.

2.2 Skateboarding

Skateboarding is a physical activity that is hard to define. In essence, skateboarding involves the riding of a deck, commonly crafted from wood, on four wheels. It first became popular in the 1950's and 1960's as a tool for Southern Californian surfers to ride 'concrete waves' during low-swell periods (Borden, 2001). While the basic concept is clear, defining what modern skateboarding is at its core is difficult due to its newfound diversity in "skaters, terrains, and intentions" (Borden, 2019, p.2) as well as its nature as a cultural phenomenon. Professional skateboarder Leo Valls aptly describes this plurality in an interview with SOLO Skateboard Magazine: "Skateboarding is a sport, but it's also cultural, it's an art form, it is a way to meet up and create social cohesion […] it is a way to communicate with the architecture of the city, and it is an ecological way of transportation" (Schwinghammer, 2020b). This plurality can be seen throughout skateboarding's culture, but skateboarders are still often placed into a single box: that of the young, white, relatively affluent alternative male with a propensity for risk-taking and trouble-making (Atencio et al., 2009). However, these stereotypes are becoming less accurate as academic research on skateboarders branches out to new communities and geographies (Beal et al., 2017). Inspired by Borden's abovementioned categorization of skateboarders, terrains, and intentions (2019), this chapter maps out the phenomenon of skateboarding into sociocultural and spatial categories with the larger political context following in Section 2.3.

2.2.1 Forms and socio-spatial needs of skateboarding

There is a plurality of forms within the broad concept of skateboarding. Among these forms, or styles, are street skateboarding (Figure 1), transition skateboarding (Figure 2), cruising or longboarding (Figure 3), and downhill skateboarding (Figure 4). Given this plurality and skateboarding's inherent creative aspects, it is impossible to impose strict boundaries in the same way that academics struggle to

Figure 1: Jan Jacobson ollies in Minneapolis (Thrasher Magazine, n.d.)

Figure 2: Justyce Tabor at a skatepark in Seaside, Oregon (Thrasher Magazine, n.d.)
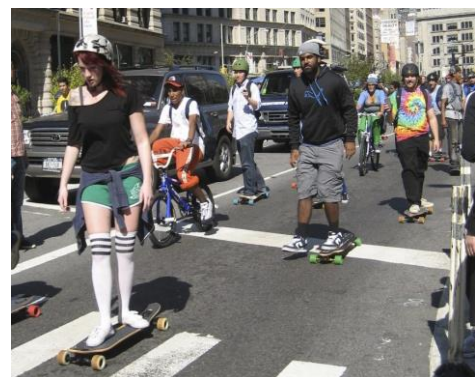
Figure 3: Annual 'Broadway Bomb' longboard race (boardistan.com, 2012)

Figure 4: Jasper Ohlson bombing a hill in Hawaii (Flinchbaugh, 2017)

classify art forms. However, different styles have complex natures that require specific morphologies. For brevity and specificity, this thesis attempts to focus on the styles of street skateboarding and transition skateboarding, two of the more popular forms of skateboarding which often share equipment, practitioners, and spaces.

Street skateboarding, as its name implies, originally involved skateboarding in the urban environment. Common tricks involve using elements of the urban landscape. Given street skating's popularity, modern skateparks also tend to cater to the street skater in their replication of urban features. Therefore, street skating has at least partially been divorced from its strictly urban characteristic; a street skater can spend their entire skateboarding life without ever skating outside the skatepark if they have good access to proper facilities. Transition skateboarding requires the construction of ramps, usually in a skatepark. For this reason, transition skateboarding is sometimes referred to as park skateboarding. One main distinction between transition and street skating can be found in competition settings, where the size and style of competition parks such as those in the Olympics dictate whether an event is a street skating or park skating competition (Olympics.com, 2024).

There is a dialectical relationship between skateboarding and skate spots: the progression of skater skills has led to the evolution of constructed skate spots and the availability or legality of skate spots has led to the evolution of skate styles and forms. Modern skateboarding is a result of this dialectical relationship, but the relationship continues to evolve.

A common trend in literature is the classifying of skate spots into a binary. For example, Carr (2010), Chiu and Giamarino (2019), and Woolley and Johns (2001) all separate 'purpose-built' spots from 'urban' spots. Alternatively, Paese (2024) uses the terms 'domesticated' and 'naturally occurring' to classify skate spots. Borden (2001) separates physical skate spots into 'found' and 'constructed' spaces while denoting that a third, super-architectural 'space of representation' is created through the locally produced and globally consumed lived images of skateboard culture. These spaces of representation, for example, are what imbue famous skate spots with an extra element of aural importance beyond their purely physical characteristics.

While this research doesn't specifically utilize Borden's (2001) categorization of super-architectural or representative spaces as separate from other types of spaces, it does recognize representative space's importance in the conceptualization of skate spots. In addition, DIY spots represent another space to categorize, although the lines between 'domesticated' and 'naturally occurring' spots are blurred when a skater fixes a naturally occurring spot to make it more skate-able (Paese, 2024). While they are granular, debates on the different classifications of spaces are still relevant because these classifications may impact the realm of law. The GUSA (2023) itself, for example, lists DIY spots as a potential intervention but notes that Dutch national regulations surrounding safety inspections may be a barrier to their adoption in Groningen.

Socialization is another lens through which skate spots can be viewed. The sociability factor focuses on a chosen spot's ability to be a comfortable gathering place. Woolley and Johns (2001) found that the UK skateboarders in their study chose skate spots based on their ability to facilitate continued social interaction amongst skateboarders and with other users of the space. In a paper discussing the exclusion of skateboarders from Love Park, Philadelphia's most popular skate spot in the 1990s and 2000s, Németh (2006) describes the park as being the center of the skateboarders' social lives; skateboarders would often visit the park "just to see who was present". Additionally, both Woolley and Johns (2001) and Németh (2006) note that the spatial elements of chosen skate spots include comfortable areas to sit, namely grassy areas and plenty of benches.

Socialization is also a commonly cited aspect to skateparks and other more programmed skate spots (Beal, 1996; Borden, 2019; Bradley, 2010; Carr, 2017, 2020; Hölsgens, 2019; Taylor and Khan, 2011). A common theme within literature on urban skateboarding is the idea that there is a significant amount of 'hanging out' done and that this is part and parcel of a skate session with friends.

Urban skate spots

Urban skate spots characterize the spaces within the built urban environment that are not purpose-built for skateboarding. Both public and private spaces are included in this definition because skateboarders, as Carr (2010) points out, often do not view spaces through the modern prevailing lens of property ownership. However, the enforcement of urban skate spots varies depending on their nature as public or private spaces and vary across geographic contexts. Commonly skated features of the urban environment include benches, ledges, handrails, stair sets, curbs, and walls (Borden, 2019; Carr, 2010; Vivoni, 2013; Woolley and Johns, 2001). Skateboarders also prefer smooth surfaces to ride on; cracks, pebbles, or bumpy surfaces hinder skateboard wheels from maintaining speed and hinder skateboarders from keeping balance (Borden, 2019; Woolley and Johns, 2001). Woolley and Johns (2001), in their research on UK skateboarders, found four main factors that influenced their choice of urban skate spots: accessibility, trickability, sociability, and compatibility. These broad factors encompass most of the more specific factors identified by other researchers and thus prove to be useful for a general conceptualization of urban skate spots.

Accessibility

Accessibility also plays a key role in the choice of skate spots. Accessible skate spots are those that are centrally located and provide opportunities as a meeting place for likeminded individuals (Woolley and Johns, 2001). Their centralized locations also provide access to public transportation — a resource that some people rely on. Woolley and Johns (2001), for example, highlight Tudor Square in Sheffield, UK and the Civic Center in Cardiff, UK as the preferred meeting point for local skateboarders. Likewise, Chiu and Giamarino (2019) point to the Brooklyn Banks' central location near New Jersey, Long Island, all five New York boroughs, and the subway system as a reason for its influence on the New York skate scene.

In this way, the popular urban skate spots act as hubs from which to embark with new or old friends on exploratory missions.

Trickability

'Trickability' is described by Woolley and Johns (2001) as the potential for tricks provided by the landscape. In their research, Woolley and Johns (2001) mostly find that skateboarders prefer smooth surfaces, a variety of obstacles, and open spaces to enable a wide variety of tricks. As skateboarders advance in skill, they begin to unlock the ability to skate more difficult and even culturally significant terrain. Borden (2019) points out the importance of innovation in modern skateboarding: the completion of a trick that has 'never been done' (NBD) in or on a certain skate spot tends to provide the skater with local or even international legitimacy. Borden (1998) also notes that the choice of space and the choice of trick to perform in that space is often based on the space's historical context, adding another layer to the concept of trickability. For example, performing one of the more basic tricks, a 'frontside ollie', is not necessarily special, even when done over an obstacle. However, Tristan Funkhouser's frontside ollie over a bench at one of the most famous skate spots in the world, China Banks in San Francisco, earned him the cover photo on the prestigious Thrasher Magazine (Figure 6). The importance of Funkhouser's trick was largely defined by the historical context of the spot itself — tens of thousands of skateboarders had made the pilgrimage to China Banks, many of them adding their own NBD trick to the growing archive of photos and videos (Thrasher Magazine, 2022). Therefore, Funkhouser's trick, along with Dennis Busenitz's 'kickflip' (Figure 5) and countless other creations collectively immortalize and define the spot. These famous skate spots exist around the world but even local skateboard video production highlights locational context. Borden (2001) specifically notes the popularity of the wide-angle lens in skate filmmaking which is used to emphasize the locational context just as much as the tricks themselves.

While there is an obvious competitive one-upmanship and daredevil aspect to this representation of trickability and skate spots, it is just one style of conceptualizing skate tricks. For example, skateboard companies such as Tired Skateboards release videos with older skateboarders doing simpler tricks on simpler terrain (Tired Skateboards, 2018). These types of videos and their popularity may be seen as a commentary on skateboarding's inherent creative and play-like nature: some people do high-risk tricks at famous spots and some people have fun skating a curb outside their home. In either scenario, the participant is not only having fun but engaging an entertained audience. In short, trickability may be individually subjective as much as it is culturally or historically conveyed.

Figure 5: Dennis Busenitz kickflip at China Banks (Thrasher Magazine, 2016)
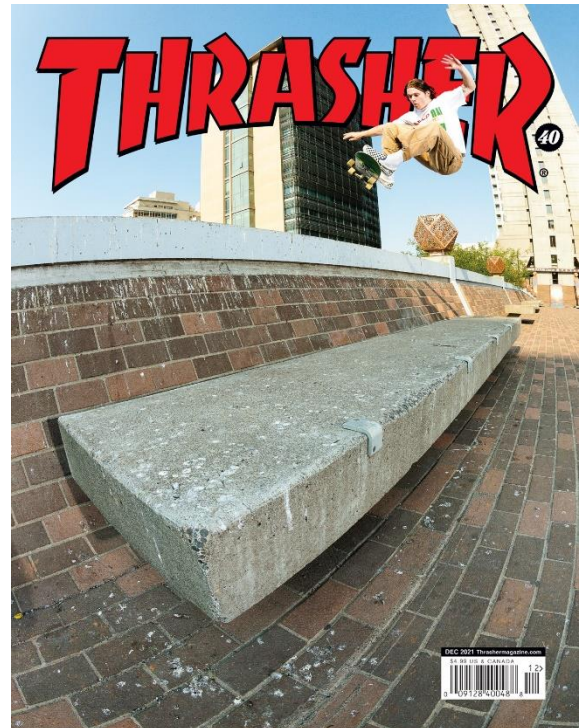
Figure 6: Tristan Funkhouser frontside ollie at China Banks (Thrasher Magazine, 2021)

Compatibility

Compatibility with other users can also influence whether a skate spot is adequate or not. In the context of urban skate spots, some skateboarders prefer positive interaction with other users of the space. Woolley and Johns (2001), for example, found that many UK skateboarders preferred harmony over conflict when interacting with the non-skateboarding public in public space despite skateboarding's image as transgressive and rebellious. Borden (2019) also highlights numerous professionally produced skate videos that include clips of friendly interactions between skateboarders and pedestrians, shop owners, and police officers. There is certainly a complex relationship between skateboarders — a loud and energetic urban group — and the other users of urban space. However, the average skateboarder, like the average citizen, seeks some level of harmony in their everyday interactions with others.

Although research shows skateboarders choose skate spots based on the spot's accessibility, trickability, sociability, and compatibility, it can still be hard for non-skateboarders to identify common or potential skate spots. This presents an interesting situation for policymakers and planners, most of whom do not skate. As the language of skateboarding continues to evolve, new tricks, methods, and spots are shared leading to further codification and diversification. Borden (2001) asserts that urban skateboarders reinvent the logic of space. However, this reinvention largely takes place outside of the view or scope of policymakers and planners, which impacts their ability to effectively enforce or encourage the activity.

Programmed skateparks

Skateparks, purpose-built spaces with a variety of skate-able features, are commonly found worldwide (Borden, 2019). Skateparks are widely covered in literature due to their use as popular youth spatial interventions, their contestation in local politics, and their use as replacement spaces when skateboarders are excluded from urban skate spots. However, the quality and attributes of the features within skateparks, their accessibility, and their ability to satisfy safety needs vary depending on a number of factors.

Skateparks blend the lines between social spaces and playgrounds. Planned play spaces, such as skateparks, can be seen as interventions attempting to replace unsupervised urban play with a supervised version of play that can promote good citizenship and socialization for young people (Vivoni, 2013). However, skateparks are commonly used by a wide age range of users (Bradley, 2010; Carr, 2017; Taylor and Khan, 2011; Vivoni, 2013). Hierarchical age dynamics and divisions also tend to be diminished in skatepark settings. The different age groups tend to interact with each other through giving advice, encouragement, and turn-taking, creating an opportunity for young people to build self-confidence and older people to better understand the youth (Bradley, 2010). The blending of different age groups also leads to young people's exposure to other elements of adult life; cannabis and alcohol consumption, for example, is common in skatepark environments (Borden, 2019; Taylor and Khan, 2011). Therefore, while they certainly play a role as context for adolescent development, skateparks must also be understood as a dynamic social space catering to a wider audience than just young people.

Additionally, skateparks must be understood as planned replacement interventions for urban skate spots. As a participant in Woolley and Johns' (2001) study remarks, "if they spent the money on a skatepark instead of on ways of stopping us skating our best spots, we wouldn't need to use the streets" (p.222). In this context, the dynamic and social world of public space in which urban skateboarding occurs is replaced by a static, limited space often contained by fencing and subject to a set of rules imposed by the municipality. In areas with a limited amount of skateparks, a wide range of skateboarders in terms of age, race, socioeconomic background, and intentions are directed to a limited amount of contained spaces. Some styles and skaters may be more attuned to this environment than others. Given the plurality in skate forms noted in Section 2.2.1 and the forthcoming information on identity in Section 2.2.2, the needs of every individual skateboarder are impossible to meet through a skatepark-only model. However, it is often the case that municipalities adopt this model. Therefore, it is important to understand what broad aspects of skateparks are most important for meeting the most prevalent needs of skateboarders. Three specific aspects appear throughout existing literature on skateparks: accessibility, variety, and safety.

Accessibility

Accessibility plays a different role in the skatepark context than it does in the urban skateboarding context. While urban skate spots are often chosen for their proximity to other nearby skate spots and transportation opportunities, most skateboarders have a 'local'

skatepark that they frequent (Borden, 2019; Taylor and Khan, 2011). Without a local skatepark, skateboarders, especially those without access to reliable transportation, are unable to routinely access purpose-built facilities. This can specifically present a challenge to those who are also being excluded from public space or do not have access to other types of skate spots.

Local skateparks can also be found in inaccessible areas. Borden (2001) expands on this idea: "too often a local council, fearing conflicts between skateboarders and other citizens (unsightly concrete, unwanted noise, graffiti, drugs or simply the gathering of youth are commonly cited as problems), will place its skatepark not in a popular park or central part of town but around the back of a warehouse or remote leisure centre, next to the recycling bins, car park or other low-quality sites" (p.124). In this example, accessibility encapsulates not just access to mobility but also access to a welcoming environment and other resources for skateboarders. In some cases, the location of skateparks can be a safety concern, a notion covered later in this section. Conversely, accessibility encapsulates access by non-participants; pedestrians tend to enjoy the spectacle that skateparks provide (Bradley, 2010). If municipalities are seeking to provide a space for skateboarders that will decrease their demand for urban skate spots, the skatepark must be built in an accessible area.

Variety

Skatepark quality can be partially determined by the variety of obstacles a skatepark has, the skatepark's ability to adapt to changes in user preferences, and the opportunities for creativity the skatepark provides.

Although skateparks in general tend to be static spaces without large changes, a distinction must also be made between commercial enterprises and free public skateparks. Commercial enterprises (Figure 7) are often in the form of indoor skateparks charging an entrance fee. Many indoor skateparks, because of lease obligations or cost factors, build their ramps out of wood. The use of wood provides greater flexibility in meeting the evolving demands of skateboarders (Borden, 2019). Additionally, commercial skateparks may have a greater exposure to liability risks depending on legal and geographical contexts.

Boredom stemming from a lack of variety or from poor design choices is used as a common criticism of skateparks (Borden, 2001, 2019; Taylor and Khan, 2011). Users surveyed in Bradley's (2010) study cited the importance of various obstacles that, when combined in a 'run', provide opportunities for creativity. However, the design of the skatepark affects the opportunities skateboarders have to create their own runs. In Bronson Skate Co.'s (2024) YouTube series 'Worst Skatepark Ever', professional skateboarder David Gravette reviews poorly designed skateparks, often noting their lack of 'flow' that, in turn, can hinder skateboarders' opportunities to create a run. Flow can be moderated by space; a poorly designed skatepark may require skateboarders to concentrate on speed modulation or safety instead of the next trick in the run. In successfully doing a run, whether in the streets or in the skatepark, skateboarders may also achieve a personal mental 'flow' state. This state is described as a 'oneness' in which space and body are dialectically intertwined (Borden, 2001,

2019). Janne Saario, a landscape architect responsible for the design of Westblaak Skatepark in the heart of Rotterdam, the Netherlands, expands on this point by stating that a proper skatepark designer stimulates the personal bonds skateboarders have with the skatepark by creating obstacles that together help to tell a story (Saario, 2015, cited in Borden, 2019, p. 149-150). This story is therefore a living, evolving creative endeavor that requires both user and skate-able terrain.

Another form of programmed skate spot has gained popularity in recent years. The mixed-use skate spot is a sanctioned urban obstacle that can be used for a variety of purposes but is also created with skate-ability in mind. Some examples of this type of intervention can be found in Bordeaux with their skate-able sculptures and in Seattle's skate dots program (Borden, 2019; Schwinghammer, 2020a). To the untrained eye, these sculptures or interventions may not look like skate spots, inviting other users to interact with the spots. When skateboarders come to skate the obstacles, a social context is created in which two or more equally legitimate uses of space must cohabitate and interact. Angner (2017) argues that these creative mixed-use spots are one necessary puzzle piece in creating a skate-friendly city.

Safety

Skatepark design and social dynamics at the skatepark can both affect the safety of participants or their perceptions of safety. Taylor and Khan (2011) largely focus on skater perceptions of skatepark safety, concluding that while skateparks are generally safe, rivalries and conflicts can occur and are largely related to priority rights over certain skatepark obstacles. If multiple people are skating at once, their paths may intersect causing a collision or distraction. Some skatepark obstacles may also be more dangerous than others although Borden (2019) notes that skateparks in general have become less dangerous in recent years due to their accommodation of different skill levels. Therefore, safe skatepark design must not only provide obstacles for a variety of levels but also ensure that different users can use the skatepark concurrently without conflict. Maintenance of skatepark obstacles and choice of material is also to be considered for safe skatepark management (Taylor and Khan, 2011). Lastly, location plays an important role in the perceived or actual safety of participants. Isolated skate spots can be hotbeds of localism and antisocial behavior as various groups attempt to assert ownership (Bradley, 2010; Carr, 2017). As in discussing the needs of skateboarders themselves, there are both spatial and social aspects to skatepark safety.

Larger mixed-style skateparks

larger skateparks often have the space to accommodate multiple styles of skateboarding. In this example, transition skateboarders can enjoy the various pools and bowls while street skateboarders can enjoy the rails, banks, and ledges. These skateparks are often more expensive

Zeeburgeiland Skatepark in Amsterdam, the Netherlands (Bolk, 2020)

Skate plazas and small skateparks

Smaller plots of land and costs are limiting factors in skatepark development. The 'skate plaza' is a common form of skatepark due to its beginner-friendly nature, smaller footprint, and ease of construction (Borden, 2019). Without large ramps, skate plazas like Ambassador primarily cater to the street skateboarder. Other types of small skateparks may distinctly cater to transition skateboarders by solely providing ramps or bowls.

Ambassador Skate Plaza in Los Angeles, USA (spohnranch.com, n.d.)

Commercial skateparks

Commercial skateparks are often privately owned and sometimes subsidized by municipalities. A fee is usually required for entry. While commercial outdoor skateparks do exist, many are indoors, providing shelter from the elements (Borden, 2019). These skateparks are primarily made from wood, a cheaper and more flexible building material than concrete. In the example photograph, street skate elements can be seen in the foreground and ramps can be seen in the background.

Area 51 Skatepark in Eindhoven, the Netherlands (surfergalaxy.com, n.d.)

Mixed-use obstacles

Also known as 'skate dots' (Borden, 2019) and 'integrated designs' (Angner, 2017), these formally skate-able obstacles differ in size, shape, and artistic elements. However, the commonality between them is that they are placed in urban areas to encourage interaction between skateboarders and pedestrians. Leo Valls has collaborated with the city of Bordeaux to place temporary sculptures throughout the urban environment (Schwinghammer, 2020a).

A mixed-use sculpture in Bordeaux, France (Manaud, 2019)

Figure 7: Categorizing programmed skate spots (Author, 2024)

DIY spots

Spots are sometimes hard to categorize as urban or programmed. For example, do-it-yourself or DIY skate spots are bottom-up and often unauthorized skatepark builds that sometimes claim abandoned or neglected urban spaces such as old warehouses and the spaces below bridges (Kyrönviita and Wallin, 2022; Yates, 2022). There is a spectrum of DIY spots from simple fixing of existing urban skate spots to make them more skate-able to complete DIY skateparks. The common thread is that skateboarders will reappropriate space as their own when the need for their own skate spots is present (Yates, 2022). In some cases, DIY skateparks, such as Burnside Skatepark in Portland, Oregon, have become institutionally recognized and some even closely resemble the quality of programmed spaces (Borden, 2019). However, even low-quality DIY skateparks have an appeal to some skateboarders, as one of Carr's (2010) interviewees describes: "there are guerilla spots all over, that if you replicated them in a park, people would say they are crap, but because they are underground, people dig them" (Carr, 2010, p. 993). Therefore, DIY skate spots may not be singularly important for meeting the needs of skateboarders, but also to offer an alternative, 'underground', and creative space built for and by skateboarders themselves.

Wooden DIY Skateparks

These skateparks change shape regularly as skateboarders add obstacles and move them around. Most if not all the obstacles at this DIY skatepark in Portland, Oregon were made of wood and therefore somewhat mobile. What started as an organic and unauthorized DIY takeover of an old tennis court space has now become formalized in partnership with Portland State University (Benesh, 2022; Pelster, n.d.)

'The Courts' DIY skatepark on Portland State University's campus in Portland, Oregon (Author, 2022)

Concrete DIY Skateparks

Due to their use of concrete, the obstacles at these DIY skateparks are often less mobile and smoother. Burnside Skatepark in Portland, Oregon is recognized as the catalyst for the modern skatepark movement as it inspired skateboarders to take an active role in constructing skateparks around the world (Borden, 2019; Hamm, 2010).

Burnside skatepark in Portland, Oregon (Kanights, 2010)

DIY Fixes

Some skateboarders use the contours of the urban environment to their advantage. Instead of building an entire ramp, skateboarders add small amounts of self-mixed concrete or other materials to existing obstacles to make them more skate-able (Borden, 2019; Paese, 2024). Pictured here is a traffic barrier, commonly known as a Jersey barrier, with concrete added to create a smoother transition.

A simple DIY addition to a jersey barrier (Gopal, 2012)

Figure 8: Categorizing DIY Spots (Author, 2024)

2.2.2 Identity in skateboarding

As is the case with other subcultural phenomena, identity is an important part of skateboarding. Efforts have been made in literature and popular culture to characterize the typical 'skater', but as the activity gains more participants and further diversifies, characterizing the practitioners becomes increasingly difficult. The first pieces of literature on identity in skateboarding mainly characterized skateboarders as anti-competitive, anti-authority, and focused on authenticity (Beal, 1996; Beal and Weidman, 2003). Beal and Weidman (2003) specifically attempted to characterize skateboarder values and norms using the frame of authenticity. However, modern skateboarding has also transformed, making it harder to place the activity itself, much less its participants, into a single box. The growth of skateboarding's popularity has introduced new dynamics into skate culture. What was once seen as a non-competitive, subversive, alternative activity to the world of jocks and competitive sports (Beal, 1996) is now an Olympic sport itself. This growth has made skateboarding an attractive investment opportunity and the industry's subsequent marketization and globalization has resulted in an influx of new skateboarders (Beal et al., 2017). The underlying culture of skateboarding now simultaneously navigates two paradoxical landscapes: one in which skateboarding is a subversive, excluded activity done by 'skate rats' and 'vandals' and one in which skateboarding is a heavily marketed tool of neoliberalism (Beal et al., 2017; Chiu and Giamarino, 2019; Howell, 2005). This paradox can be seen in popular skateboard media. For example, Thrasher Magazine, one of the most popular and long-running skateboard magazines, conveys an anti-authority 'core' image yet simultaneously provides ad space for multinational corporations such as Nike. The transition from underground subcultural phenomenon to popular culture mainstay is an ongoing process and is still contested.

Concurrently, there is a growing amount of literature and other media surrounding the politics of inclusion, specifically that of gender identity, in the subculture of skateboarding. Beal (1996) found that, unlike traditional sports which tend to embody modern masculine norms of physical domination, aggression, competition, and rule conformity, skateboarding culture often promotes an 'alternative masculinity' that emphasizes a rejection of authority and structure. This alternative masculinity identified within the skateboarding community reinforced the idea, often prominent in feminist theory, that masculinity was not universal but a product of social context (Beal, 1996). While Beal's (1996) case study found that the male skateboarders rejected hegemonic masculinity, they also reinforced sexist and homophobic norms through their language, treatment of female skateboarders, and treatment of others who they found to be 'outsiders' (Beal, 1996). Skateparks often become spaces that reproduce and intensify an underlying, sometimes exclusionary, form of masculinity that is prevalent in the subculture because skateparks are often the only dedicated or allowed spaces for skateboarders (Beal et al., 2017; Carr, 2017; Gray, 2019). Carr (2017) highlights the specific role that skateboard spaces play in the reproduction of gender roles and ideology but found that non-male participants mostly preferred programmed skateparks, especially those

embedded in multifunctional areas, to urban skate spots. Specifically, Carr (2017) found that non-male skateboarders choose skateparks in settings where playgrounds, green spaces, and families are present. While there is an underlying issue of toxic masculinity in skateboarding culture, this dynamic is spatialized in that it appears in some settings more than others. This idea is key to understanding how different skateboard spaces may meet the needs of different community members. In short, not all skate spaces are created equal.

A few trends have emerged as responses to skateboarding's exclusive, masculine cultural undertones. Queer skateboarding, for example, is a movement that simultaneously reinforces the foundational aspect of skateboarding in that it subverts norms or binaries about how space is used while also subverting the exclusive gender norms of the subculture itself (Borden, 2019; Geckle and Shaw, 2020; Wheaton, 2013). Various groups within the queer skateboarding movement have gained popularity in recent years. Unity, a queer skateboarding collective, began hosting 'queer skate days' in California in 2017. These events have quickly gained traction internationally (Borden, 2019; Burke, 2017). There is also a notable rise in women and queer-friendly spaces: Forward Living Skate Collective built a queer-friendly DIY skatepark in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Vans, 2020) and New Wave, a women and queer-friendly skateboarding organization in the Netherlands, has opened an indoor skatepark in Amsterdam (womenskatetheworld.com, n.d.). The creation of these groups and spaces further proves that there exists no single skateboarding culture. Rather, there is a growing plurality of subcultures within skateboarding with each subculture co-mingling and co-navigating a variety of spaces and policies.

2.3 Skateboarding and urban governance

Skateboarding in the urban environment, as shown in the previous sections, comes in many forms. However, the common thread is that skateboarders, like graffiti artists, reappropriate the built environment for fun, adrenaline-seeking, resistance, and creativity (Bäckström and Blackman, 2022; Borden, 2019; Chiu and Giamarino, 2019; Taylor and Khan, 2011). This reappropriation is often possible because "skaters exploit the ambiguity of the ownership and function of public space. They often use spaces when they have no other use, and in doing so create a meaning for that space" (Wooley and Johns, 2001, p.215). In spaces with entrenched and normative uses, "skaters threaten accepted definitions of space, confronting the social, spatial and temporal logic of capitalist space; skaters take over space conceptually as well as physically and so strike at the very heart of what everyone else understands by the city" (Borden, 2001, p.21). This process results in a variety of outcomes as non-skateboarders and municipalities react to this reappropriation.

2.3.1 Reactions to skateboarding

Skateboarders are labeled by some as a group that can only be adequately addressed through similar measures to those used for anti-graffiti and anti-homeless interventions (Borden, 2001; Wooley and Johns, 2001; Nolan, 2003). Non-skateboarding citizens and municipalities commonly cite noise, drug use, and property damage as negative outcomes of urban skateboarding (Beal et al., 2017; Borden, 2019; Carr, 2010; Cresswell, 1996; Németh, 2006;

Taylor and Khan, 2011). Additionally, the subcultural practices of an alternative masculinity within skateboarding have been identified as perpetuating behaviors or values that are perceived as being threatening or transgressive to 'outsiders' (Beal, 1996; Carr, 2017; Gray, 2018; Nolan, 2003). These downsides to skateboarding bring into question the sport's true efficacy as a tool to increase social well-being and are often used as justifications by oppositional groups to garner public and political favor for the exclusion of skateboarding in urban areas.

Exclusion

The exclusion of skateboarding from urban life comes in several forms but mainly falls under 3 categories: social exclusion, exclusion by design, and legal exclusion. These categories are not mutually exclusive. Often, complaints from residents and business owners signify the first step towards the spatial or legal exclusion of skateboarding (Borden, 2019; Owens, 2001; Woolley and Johns, 2001). Table 1 outlines the types of exclusion with examples.

Exclusion type	Description	Example
Social exclusion	Vilification of skateboarders by non-skating members of the public leading to skateboarders feeling out of place.	A pedestrian interviewed by Woolley and Johns (2001): "Well, they're just little vandals aren't they. I was just admiring this sculpture and trying to work out what it represented when this lot came along. They don't know how lucky they are, these kids, destroying a beautiful thing like this" (p.223).
Exclusion by design (spatial exclusion)	Hostile or defensive architecture preventing spaces from being skated.	"Various metal spikes and bumps (aka 'skate stoppers'...) have been added to handrails, ledges and other street furniture to frustrate skaters' slides and grinds" (Borden, 2019, p.232). Examples of skate stoppers can be found on the benches at China Banks in figures 5 and 6.
Legal exclusion	Municipal regulations, usually in the form of anti-skateboarding ordinances, banning skateboarding from certain areas of the city or the city as a whole. Nuisance regulations, loitering regulations, and property rights are also commonly used as justification.	"...when Santa Fe, New Mexico prohibited skateboarding in its historic town square, one planner involved in that decision acknowledged that 'for all practical purposes we threw our teenagers off the Plaza'' (Mitchell and Staeheli, 2005, p.14 as cited in Carr, 2010).

Table 1: Categorizing the exclusion of skateboarders (Author, 2024)

Each form of exclusion impacts the skate community differently, but most literature focuses on skateboarding's direct relationship with the legal system. This relationship, according to Carr (2010), should be understood as "a continual dialectical relationship with the law by which their (skateboarders) use of the city is constantly evolving in response to a variety of legal logics — especially those of private property — which in themselves evolve to respond to these emerging practices" (p.990). This describes a situation in which governments may never successfully remove skateboarding from the urban environment because the underlying culture of skateboarding is flexible enough to be immune to the intended effects of criminalization. However, as Borden (2019) notes, the real impetus behind anti-skateboarding legislation may not be attempting to stop skateboarding but to validate conventional neoliberal society through legislation. In this way, stopping skateboarding is not as important to governments as signaling to the rest of society that skateboarders and their culture, looks, and behaviors are undesirable.

The plurality of forms and styles within skateboarding also further complicates efforts to criminalize it. For example, in their study of 'feral travel', Stratford and Harwood (2001) monitored the Tasmanian government's efforts to legalize skateboarding as a transportation method while simultaneously upholding bans on the recreational side of urban skateboarding — a strategy that was ultimately unsuccessful due to skateboarding's hybridity. Feral travel, therefore, is the use of mobility tools such as skateboarding regardless of legal status (Stratford and Harwood, 2001). By refusing to recognize what they see as unjust laws, skateboarders and other practitioners of feral travel effectively assert their rights and undermine the power of government regulation.

The skatepark-only approach

As Section 2.2.1 describes, skateparks are a vital resource to skateboarding communities. However, municipalities may use the provision of skateparks to justify the exclusion of skateboarding elsewhere. Vivoni (2010) puts the advocation for a skatepark in Chicago in terms of territorial gains and losses: "this specific territorial gain results in a citywide loss" (Vivoni, 2010, p.68). Other notable examples of this dynamic can be found in Philadelphia (Németh, 2006) and Sheffield (Wooley & Johns, 2001). Thus, the skatepark-only approach is one that attempts to contain the diverse world of skateboarding into contained spaces. This approach clashed with the more urban nature of skateboarding in many geographical contexts.

Skateboarders as the creative class

Skateboarding is at once a sport, a subculture, and an expression of artistic creativity (Borden, 2019). One of the commonly mentioned appeals to skateboarding in literature is that it is inherently non-productive and therefore it counters the hegemonic pressures of neoliberal space. However, skateboarding's relationship with modernist urban governance is more complex.

Skateboarding as a culture has in part been fused with other aspects of popular culture. Now, skateboarding appears on television, music videos, museums, and the Olympics. Its growing popularity has made it a target of marketing. For example, Howell (2005) argues, from the lens of Richard Florida's 'creative class' theory, that skateboarding can be reconfigured as an instrument of development through its reclamation of space and its marketability — the result being that skateboarders become "shock troops of gentrification" (Howell, 2005, p.40). While this process supposes that skateboarders are largely unaware of their recruitment into the implements of gentrification, Chiu and Giamarino (2019) found that cities "hope to coopt the positive images skaters generate to market themselves as metropolitan areas with emerging creative enclaves" but that "excluded users can strategically maneuver within the logic of neoliberal urbanism. They do so by constructing public good rationales to coopt an inclusionary strategy with the city and pro-development interests to transform a public good into an urban commons" (Chiu and Giamarino, 2019, pp.462-463). Therefore, both sides of the dynamic, municipal governments and skateboarders, leverage pro-development strategies and rhetoric to get their needs met.

2.3.2 The proven skate 'Valhallas'

The approaches to skateboarding in most cities have been largely centered around the concept of exclusion. However, models of inclusion do exist. Three European cities are among the most cited skate-friendly cities: Malmö, Copenhagen, and Bordeaux.

Malmö, Sweden

Malmö is home to some of the most progressive approaches to skateboarding. For example. there is a fully credited skateboarding-based high school in Malmö, called Bryggeriet Gymnasium (Borden, 2019). Additionally, the city's dedicated skateboarding coordinator, Gustav Edén, assists the city in strategically placing skate-able objects in public spaces, constructing skateparks, embracing successful DIY projects, and hosting events (Angner, 2017). These kinds of formal and inclusive efforts, according to Borden (2019), have also resulted in non-male skaters feeling more welcome in the Malmö skateboarding community.

Urban skate-able spot in Malmö
(Skate Malmö, 2017)

Copenhagen, Denmark

Like Malmö, Copenhagen has also instituted a skateboarding coordinator position within their local government, resulting in official collaborations between the skateboarding community and the city (Angner, 2017). The most famous of these collaborations is the Copenhagen Open: a multi-day international skateboarding festival complete with city-wide skate sessions and competitions in a variety of spaces (Angner, 2017; cphopen.com, n.d.).

Copenhagen White Banks
(blog.skateboard.com.au, n.d.)

Bordeaux, France

Bordeaux's approach to skateboarding is still less institutionalized than its Scandinavian counterparts, but its creative community of skateboarders has worked hard to collaborate with the city in making it skate-friendly. One example of this is the city's official skateboarding guide (City of Bordeaux, 2023). This guide was the result of years of negotiations between skateboarders and the city about appropriate times to skate and appropriate behaviors (City of Bordeaux, 2023; DC Shoes, 2019). The guide features areas that are color-coded for varying degrees of nuisance possibilities and rules. In 2023, the city of Bordeaux also removed the last of the 'no skateboarding' signs in public space, signaling an end to skateboarder exclusion and their commitment to a different style of skateboarding governance (Valls, 2023).
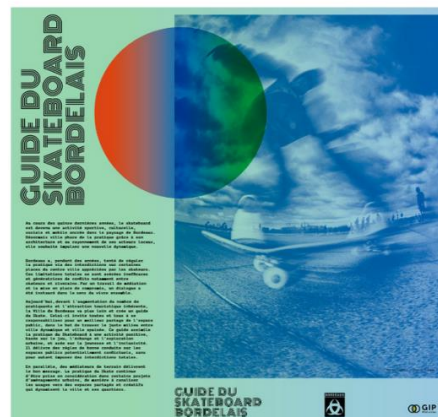
Official Bordeaux Skateboarding Guide (City of Bordeaux, 2023)

Figure 9: Highlighting the 'skate Valhallas' (Author, 2024)

2.4 Right to the city

The urban interactions between skateboarders, citizens, and governments invoke a conversation about rights from a legal and critical perspective. While legal contexts vary, rights to the use of and existence in public spaces can be framed by critical theory. The writings of Henri Lefebvre, especially those on the topic of 'right to the city', commonly influence literature on urban practices. Lefebvre's work, according to Fainstein (2013), "...defined space as being constituted by social relations rather than, as had been the case until the 1960s, by its territorial, physical, and demographic characteristics" (Fainstein, 2013, p.1). Harvey (2015) links Lefebvre's concept to Marxist theory arguing that the wealthy colonize urban space through exploiting or restricting these social relations and that this colonization plays an important role in the accumulation of capital by the rich and the oppression of the poor. Fighting against this dynamic, according to Harvey (2015) involves claiming "some kind of shaping power over the process of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and re-made and to do so in a fundamental and radical way" (p.272). This reconceptualization of space by Lefebvre (1968) and the call for a radical reclamation of space by Harvey (2015) help to provide a framework for better imagined urban futures, such as Iveson's (2013) 'DIY urbanism'. The common theme among these concepts is the call for the power of appropriation and shaping of urban space to be given to all citizens.

A common reference point for skateboarding literature, including this thesis, is Iain Borden (2001, 2019, 2020) who connects the practices of skateboarding to Lefebvre's theorizations. Lefebvre, according to Borden (2020), argued that the attempted economic homogenization of space conflicts with the diverse human uses of space. This fundamental conflict creates cracks in the neoliberal city, within which practices such as skateboarding can exist and even thrive (Borden, 2001). Urban subcultures in general can also take advantage of the ambiguity formed when top-down control meets diversity and creativity (Cresswell, 1996; Fischer, 1975). By resisting, either directly or indirectly, the exclusionary tactics of non-skateboarders and governments, skateboarders assert their rights to public space and by extension the city (Borden, 2001, 2019, 2020). This resistance and assertion of rights can be found across case studies on skateboarding. A common theme found in literature is that skateboarding is something that cannot be stopped in the same way that graffiti cannot be stopped: their unique use of space subverts the capitalist and modernist logics of space and law (Borden, 2001; Iveson, 2013). These dynamics have been embraced by practitioners and enshrined in their culture as seen in skate videos, advertisements, and publications across the globe.

2.5 Conceptual model

The conceptual model in Figure 10 below represents the connections between inclusion, exclusion, and the socio-spatial needs of the skateboarding community. In short, policy and design influence whether the social and spatial needs of skateboarders are met. In turn, the social and spatial needs of skateboarders may influence policy and design. The right side of the conceptual model shows noted factors contributing to good skate spots. This side represents spatial needs. The literature suggests that there is a plurality of social needs which

cannot be mapped. However, one suggested need is inclusion. Regardless of whether skateboarders are excluded or included from space and society, their right to the city is enacted. In cases where skateboarders are included, such as in the cities mentioned in Section 2.3.5, skateboarders' right to the city is given or recognized by the municipality. In cases where skateboarders are excluded through legal processes, social discrimination, or hostile architecture, skateboarders assert their right to the city. This assertion of their rights is enabled by a robust, empowering set of subcultural norms.
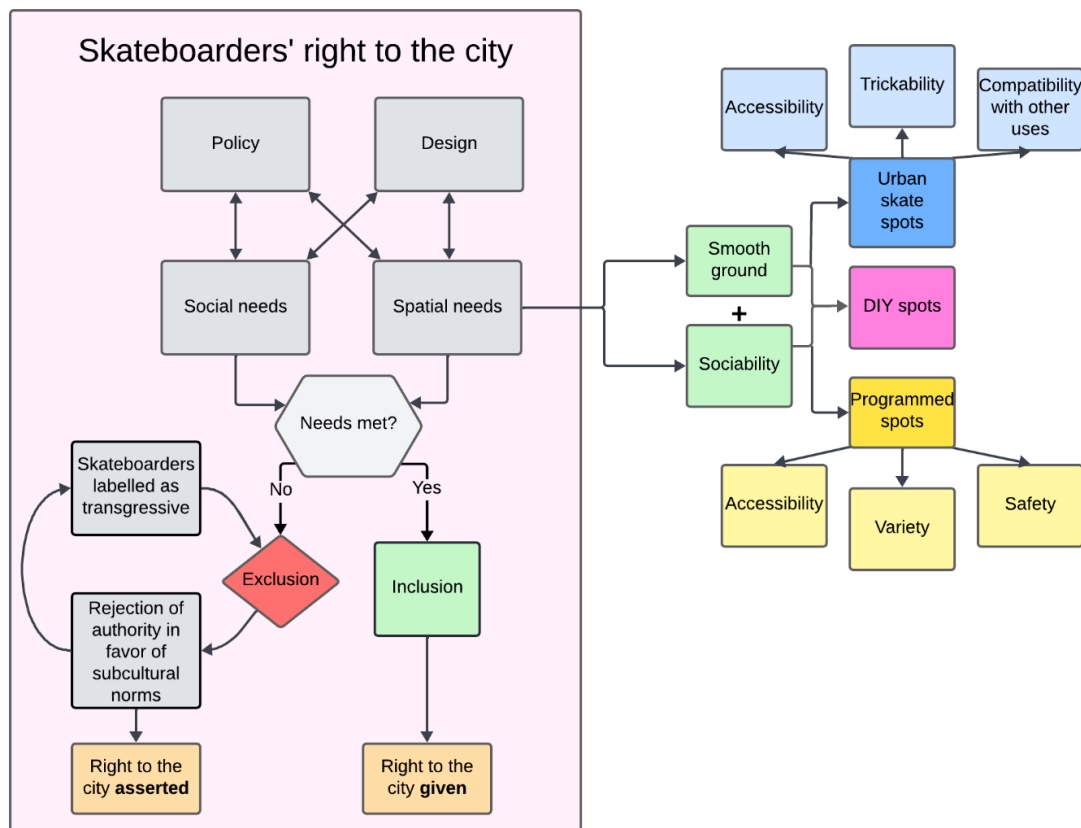
Figure 10: Conceptual model based on the theoretical framework (Author, 2024)

2.6 Expectations

This research focuses on the needs of the skateboarding community in Groningen and the role that the municipality of Groningen plays in the facilitation of these needs. The expectations come in two main parts. The first expectation is that the municipality, through its implementation of anti-skateboarding policies and its construction of programmed skateparks, is taking a skatepark-only approach, which will further isolate the skateboarding community both spatially and socially. Second, beginner skateboarders will disproportionately experience the negative aspects of the municipality's approach ─ while the more experienced skateboarders claim the limited programmed spaces available, have the loudest voice in advocacy contexts, and are more adept at navigating the complex social and legal dynamics common in skateboarding culture, other skateboarders or those interested in skateboarding will be dissuaded by the laws, the subcultural practices found at the skateparks, or the lack of accessible spaces to skate.

3. Methodology

First, this chapter will start with a description of the research design. Second, the case study of Groningen will be explained. Third, an outline of the data collection methods will be presented. Fourth, the data analysis approach will be characterized. Lastly, ethical considerations for this research will be addressed.

3.1 Research design

This study seeks to answer the research questions through a mixed-methods approach. This mixed-methods approach consists of two main components. First, semi-structured interviews will be used to gain a better understanding of the Groningen skateboard community and their perceptions of policies, spaces, and social dynamics. Then, various skate spots highlighted through field observation in Groningen will be assessed using field observation framework found in Appendix IV and the perspectives of interview participants. These spots will be analyzed based on their socialization characteristics, safety, and physical characteristics.

The research, aiming to reveal the skateboarding community's perceptions of policies, spaces and social dynamics, mostly adopts a qualitative approach — an approach taken in other skateboarding research such as Woolley and Johns (2001) and Angner (2017). The data collected is context-specific and the degree to which perception plays in the understanding of social and spatial needs of individuals in the Groningen skateboarding community necessitates a qualitative approach.

3.2 Case study approach

This thesis uses Groningen as a single case study due to its recent pledge to become an 'urban sports Valhalla', its rapidly developing skateboarding policies and spaces, and the existence of a passionate and politically active skateboarding community. Case study research is concerned with describing, exploring, and understanding phenomena in a specific geographic context (Cousin, 2005). Given the complexities inherent in categorizing the skateboarding community broadly, a single case study may yield more conclusive results and have a greater impact while also providing a framework for application in other geographical contexts.

3.2.1 Contextual background

Activism led to recent changes

In 2019, a Groningen skateboarder, Bram Roenhorst, expressed his frustration with the lack of quality skateboarding facilities in a blog post distributed on Sikkom.nl and a video on OOG, a Groningen news site (Mooijman, 2019; Roenhorst, 2019). This statement calling Groningen the worst skateboarding city of the Netherlands sparked a political movement among skateboarders which culminated in the formation of Rollend Groningen, a skateboarding advocacy organization.

Alles op Rolletjes

In 2022 a women and queer-friendly skate collective started in Groningen. Alles op Rolletjes, which means 'everything on wheels', brings together women and queer skateboarders, in-line skaters, and roller skaters in sessions at a variety of places throughout Groningen (GUSA, 2023).

Three modern skateparks

Since 2020 the municipality, in collaboration with Rollend Groningen, has built two new public skateparks: a revitalized skatepark Reitdiep and Skatepark Stadspark, also known as de Paardenbak (PDB). Additionally, the municipality has partially subsidized the move of a commercial indoor skatepark, called Skatepark Colosseum, in the eastern part of the city (Veenstra, 2023). The current Skatepark Colosseum was opened in September of 2023, the same year as PDB, but it has been a community staple since 1997, moving around to a variety of locations. This is currently Colosseum's fourth location. These three skateparks are among those shown in Figure 11. With these new skatepark builds, the needs of skateboarders may be closer to being fulfilled.

Two new laws

The two new legal updates have both been instituted in 2023, the same year as the opening of PDB and Colosseum. The APV and AWB regulations outlined in Section 1.1 have been signed into law, but their enforcement has not yet been recorded. The APV, which grants the city council authority to designate certain areas as forbidden to skateboard based on prevalence of nuisance, was debated.

One (translated) exchange between a representative from the D66 party and the PvdA party was noted by Scheffer (2023) in their summary of the debate:

> "…inquiries have shown that this problem does not exist at all. In fact, reports about this specific nuisance are not even kept up to date […] We are going to ban something that we should actually encourage." (D66 representative Jim Lo-A-Njoe, as quoted in Scheffer, 2023)

> "But we're not going to ban anything, are we? Aren't we only going to give enforcers and police officers tools? Isn't skating and skateboarding still possible?" (PvdA representative Joren van Veen, as quoted in Scheffer, 2023)

While Joren van Veen argued that they are not going to ban anything, the APV was passed in 2023 and was used to ban skateboarding in select inner city areas in 2024.

Groningen skate spots

All three previously categorized types of skate spots exist in Groningen. Figure 11 below shows the locations of all urban skate spots mentioned in interviews as well as the locations

of all formal, programmed skateparks regardless of their quality or use. One unregulated DIY skatepark was found and while a photo is provided in Figure 30, its location has been left off the map and the map's legend to protect its privacy. All spots from Figure 11 are expanded on in Chapter 4 and are organized by spot type.

Skate Spots in Groningen, The Netherlands

Legend

🟡 Programmed Skateparks	🩷 DIY Spots	🔵 Urban Spots

1. Skatepark Reitdiep	5. Skatepark Helperzoom	8. Oosterhavenbrug DIY	10. Grote Markt	14. Minerva
2. Skatepark Zonnelaan	6. Skatepark Stadspark (PDB)	9. Driebondsbrug DIY	11. Forum/Nieuwe Markt	15. Europapark Station
3. Skatepark Kardinge	7. Skatepark Colosseum		12. UMCG Noord	16. Euroborg Stadium
4. Skatepark Hoornsemeer			13. Aweg Bus Stops	

Figure 11: Map of Groningen Skate Spots (Author, 2024)

3.3 Data collection methods

A mixed-methods approach, encompassing both interviews and observations, was employed to address the primary research question: "How does the municipality of Groningen meet the social and spatial needs of the local skateboarding community?" The interviews highlighted the socio-spatial needs and perceptions of the skateboard community regarding legal contexts, while the observations demonstrated how current skateboard spaces accommodate these socio-spatial needs, as identified through desk research.

Semi-structured interviews

10 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with local skateboarders of various skill levels and gender identities (Table 2). Skateboarders' needs are best understood through hearing about the experiences and opinions of skateboarders themselves. These experiences and opinions are interwoven with complexity and personal perspectives that cannot be fully captured through a broad quantitative survey. Multiple sources within the municipality of Groningen were contacted to set up interviews to better understand the municipality's perspective. However, the indefinite absence of the Urban Sports Policy Advisor and the lack of a response from the municipality's temporary replacement hindered efforts to learn about the municipality's perspective — this limits the scope of the research but also allows the focus to be squarely on the skateboarding community.

Most interviews were conducted in person but one was conducted over Google Meets. After interviewees were informed about research, given time to consider their participation and ask questions about the research, they signed the informed consent form (Appendix I). All interviews were recorded using personal recording devices, transcribed using online software, and reviewed by the author.

R - # Identifier	Skateboarding Experience (years)	Gender	Interview Date	Communication Method	Interview Duration
R-1	12	Male	19/04/2024	In person	43 minutes
R-2	3	Male	23/04/2024	Google Meet	49 minutes
R-3	12	Male	25/04/2024	In person	34 minutes
R-4	20	Male	26/04/2024	In person	37 minutes
R-5	8	Female	30/04/2024	In person	28 minutes
R-6	26	Male	02/05/2024	In person	38 minutes
R-7	24	Male	03/05/2024	In person	36 minutes
R-8	1	Female	07/05/2024	In person	43 minutes
R-9	18	Male	07/05/2024	In person	33 minutes
R-10	15	Female	16/05/2024	In person	33 minutes

Table 2: Interviewee overview (Author, 2024)

Field observation

Field observation was carried out in the role of participant observer. Participant observation can be a useful tool for social geographers because it provides a way to do ethnographic research without being limited by predetermined boundaries of inquiry (Jackson, 1983). First, the official release event of the Urban Sports Agenda at the Let's Gro Festival was attended to better understand the municipality's approach to embracing urban sports and to gain insight into the individuals involved in the process. This event provided the first opportunity to connect with potential thesis interviewees.

Skate spots were identified in various ways. The programmed skateparks were identified through desk research using Google Maps except for Skatepark Zonnelaan, which was mentioned to me by an interviewee. All urban skate spots mentioned in this research were noted by interviewees. Although the grind and wax marks on urban features throughout the city show evidence of skateboarding, I focused only on the skate spots mentioned by interviewees for brevity. The DIY spots were also discovered through tips from interviewees.

The resulting field observations of skate spots sought to identify common spatial attributes that, when paired together with the other methods, can provide a clearer narrative on the spatial needs of skateboarders in Groningen. The field observation framework, based on desk research, structured my observations and can be found in Appendix IV. This framework helped to limit bias in observations. I used these questions to guide my observations and I took notes on my mobile phone. Each location mentioned on the map was visited twice on differing days and times of day. A full schedule of observation visits can be found in

Appendix V. Observation durations varied based on the activity and type of space. For example, when conducting observations of urban spots and DIY spots, no skateboarders were present except for in Grote Markt. I would spend on average about 20 minutes during observation periods to see if skateboarders would show up. During this time I would explore the area looking for markings left by skateboarders, identify any barriers to skateboarding, and note the socialization and compatibility aspects to the spot. When visiting programmed skateparks, on the other hand, I often rode my skateboard. This active participation allowed me to better understand the spatial characteristics of various spaces. On average I spent about 60 minutes on skatepark visits.

3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is primarily done using open coding. This thesis utilizes Boyatzis' (1998) framework of open coding prior to interpretation and then identifying patterns that can encapsulate a theme. Common themes are identified through literature review and lead to the formulation of the theoretical framework. This theoretical framework helps to shape the interview questions whose answers, in turn, are coded. A list of interview questions can be found in Appendix II and a coding tree can be found in Appendix III. Coding revealed four main themes in the conversations: skate spots, skate community dynamics, socialization with non-skaters, and skater relationships with the municipality.

3.5 Research ethics

This thesis considers research ethics to be of highest importance. The reliance on subjective life experiences in the semi-structured interview portion of this research necessitates proper data storage, confidentiality, and consenting participation. Additionally, more sensitive information such as gender identity and age are also given voluntarily. All interviewees are provided with information about the study and their rights. All participation in interviews is optional and all participants are notified of their right to revoke their consent at any time. An interview consent form, a copy of which was signed before each interview, can be found in Appendix I. No personally identifiable information except for name is stored. A University of Groningen Google Drive account is used to store interview transcripts. Anonymized versions of these transcripts are available upon request. Audio files containing interviews are deleted after the transcription process is completed.

The first 3 interview participants were met during informal (non-observation) visits to PDB. After obtaining their contact information, they were asked to participate in an interview. After these initial three interviews, two of the participants provided the phone numbers of multiple other skateboarders who they thought would be good people to talk to. This became the start of the snowball method, where interview participants offered other contacts. Communication with participants, including initial outreach, mainly utilized WhatsApp although one was contacted via email. All contacts were kept anonymous on all devices for the duration of the research period.

Jackson (1983) notes that there are ethical and moral implications to participatory observation, especially when participants do not know they are being observed in a research capacity. For this reason, I did not include any observed situations in which personally identifying information could be deduced. During one visit to the skatepark, a skater asked if I wanted to be added to a WhatsApp group chat for Groningen skateboarders. I used information from this group chat to skateboard with others informally but never as a part of the research. No identifying or sensitive information is taken from this communication channel and no interview participants were identified using this group.

4. Results

This chapter presents the findings of the research, which were obtained using the methods outlined in Chapter 3. Section 4.1 narrows in on the physical locations where skateboarding takes place. Section 4.2 focuses on the Groningen skate community's social dynamics and how the various spaces play a role in socialization. Lastly, Section 4.3 highlights findings on the relationship between skateboarders, other Groningen residents, and the municipality of Groningen.

4.1 Groningen skate spots

This section briefly denotes and categorizes the various skate spots in Groningen. Then, field notes and interviewee anecdotes are used to explain the spatial quality of the facilities, including their accessibility and safety

4.1.1 Programmed skateparks

In total, six programmed skateparks exist within the municipality's jurisdiction. Of these six parks, only three were specifically mentioned as being favorable and utilized by interviewees: PDB and Colosseum. Regarding the other four parks, interviewees mentioned various factors contributing to their decision to avoid them. Some interviewees mentioned that the older parks felt as though they were not designed or built by skateboarders (R-2, R-6). Among other reasons mentioned were their lack of flow, or the ability to connect various tricks and obstacles while maintaining speed (R-2), their small size (R-4, R-8), their aging materials (R-4), and their lack of safety (R-9). One interviewee also mentioned that before the two newest skateparks were constructed, they would travel to other cities' skateparks (R-4). On the subject of these four older skateparks in Groningen, interviewees said:

"...some of the things are just unskate-able" (R-6)

"I think if [...] a real inspection would be done, most of the parks would have to be closed." (R-9)

Skatepark Reitdiep

Skatepark Reitdiep was constructed in 2019 by the same company that designed and constructed PDB, SkateOn Skateparks. During two site visits, children, none of whom were skateboarding, were observed playing on the skatepark obstacles. This park is in Reitdiephaven and appears to serve as a playground of sorts for local children more than a skatepark despite its modern features. Skateboarding was very difficult due to the small size of the park coupled with the large number of children. Skatepark Reitdiep has many of the common features found at high-quality small skateparks, including a quarter pipe, flatbar, ledges, and a manny pad. It is about a 15-minute bicycle ride from the city center. The skatepark sits next to houses, which provides a level of safety and accessibility for neighborhood children. None of the interviewees specifically mentioned the park despite its recent construction.

Figure 12: Wessel Oelen frontside ollies at Skatepark Reitdiep (Hollands, 2022)

Figure 13: Skatepark Reitdiep (Hollands, 2022 via skateon.nl, n.d.)

Skatepark Zonnelaan

If it were not for a pin on Google Maps, it would have been hard to locate this park briefly mentioned by R-2. Upon visitation, the park was very aged, and the surface was rough enough to prevent a skateboard from maintaining momentum. Skatepark Zonnelaan is square-shaped and is surrounded by 4 compact but tall ledges. A pyramid sits in the middle between two awkwardly sized ramps; one ramp is a bank, and the other is a quarter pipe. There was adequate space for beginners to practice flatground tricks but the surface was too rough to consistently roll on. During two visits to the park, no skateboarders were present.

"Technically it is a skate park. Technically, there are ramps, but even if I was good, I probably wouldn't want to go there [...] I just don't think they asked any skaters like, 'hey, will this flow well, would this feel good to skate on?' They kind of just plop them (obstacles) down." (R-2)

Figure 14: Skatepark Zonnelaan overview (Author, 2024)

Figure 15: Ramp at Skatepark Zonnelaan (Author, 2024)

Skatepark Kardinge

Kardinge is in the eastern part of the municipality near other sports facilities. Of the ten interviewees, only two mentioned that they use the space. However, R-10 noted that before the construction of PDB, Kardinge was the go-to outdoor park in Groningen. Both interviewees with stated experience at Kardinge noted its limited size:

> *"I think it's pretty cool. But it's kind of small. So when it gets crowded, it just gets a bit too busy." (R-10)*

The obstacles in the park include a stair set with a handrail and curved ledges, two obstacles that cannot be found in PDB or Colosseum. The ledges at Kardinge are tall and may be too challenging for less experienced skateboarders. R-10 noted that this park is better for intermediate skateboarders.

The overall quality of the skatepark was decent. There is open space and while the ground is not as smooth as PDB, one can maintain speed while rolling on the concrete. There were some cracks in the concrete and one of the metal sheets providing transition to the ramps appeared to be loose. Debris accumulated in pockets of the park suggesting that maintenance was infrequent.

No skateboarders were present during two observation visits to Skatepark Kardinge although many pedestrians walked past the skatepark and visited the sports park's other facilities.

Figure 16: Skatepark Kardinge from the eastern corner (Author, 2024)

Figure 17: Skatepark Kardinge from the northern corner (Author, 2024)

Figure 18: Skatepark Kardinge's 4-stair with debris at the bottom (Author, 2024)

Figure 19: Cracks in the concrete of Skatepark Kardinge

Skatepark Hoornsemeer

During two visits to Skatepark Hoornsemeer, no other people, including pedestrians or automobile drivers, were present. The area is very quiet with only a road passing by the skatepark. The skatepark featured two halfpipes of similar size and was made out of rough concrete. Skateboard wheels struggled to maintain momentum on the rough surface which had numerous cracks. The majority of the ramp surface area was covered in graffiti, making it hard to judge where cracks were located. The overall state of the skatepark suggested that it was unsafe for beginner or experienced skateboarders but it did not appear to be closed.

Although one interviewee, R-7, mentioned that they hoped that a bowl would one day be built there, none of the ten interviewees stated that they used this space.
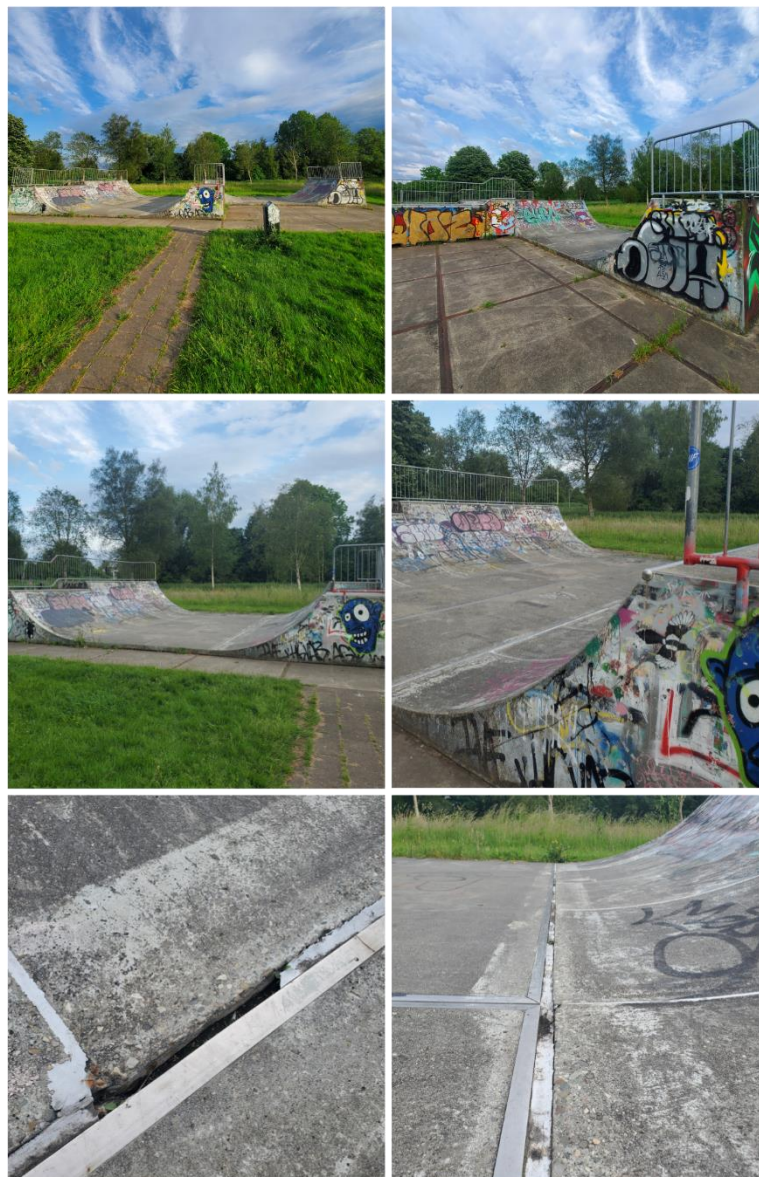
Figure 20: Skatepark Hoornsemeer (Author, 2024)

Skatepark Helperzoom

Skatepark Helperzoom is a collection of concrete ramps located next to the train tracks across from Europapark station. It does not appear to be actively maintained. The construction of the ramps creates an almost completely private area. One cannot see what is happening inside the park from the road and only a glimpse of the park is provided on the train as it passes by. Upon the first visit to the park, the park appeared to be empty because there were no sounds of skateboards and no bikes parked outside. However, upon entering the park area I was confronted by four men who were surprised to see me. They were not skateboarding. They questioned my intentions and their tone implied that I was not welcome in the space, so I left. No one was present during my second visit.

The private nature of this park presents multiple safety issues. For one, injuries and other medical emergencies may go unnoticed by those passing by. Secondly, other groups of people take advantage of the privacy and may be hostile to outsiders.

The quality of the skatepark features was low. Weeds and dirt accumulated in the cracks of the concrete and the features were all large. The ramps were connected to the ground with metal sheets, some of which appeared to be loose. Graffiti covered most of the park as well. Only one interviewee mentioned this park's quality:

"... it's like this kind of prefab elements [...] the people who make these,
they are not skaters, so they don't know what's up." (R-6)

Figure 21: Skatepark Helperzoom (Author, 2024)

Skatepark Stadspark (PDB)

PDB was by far the most cited skate spot by participants. All interviewees had positive things to say about it:

"...if you want to skate you go there." (R-6)

"The skate park [...] has people there from morning till sundown when it's dry, every day." (R-7)

The quantity and variety of PDB's obstacles were highly regarded by most interviewees. PDB is primarily a street skatepark with the highest ramps being only about 2 meters tall. Due to it only being half-completed, interviewees often referred to the spatial qualities of PDB in terms of what is currently offered and what they hoped would appear in the second half of the park. The design of PDB's completed section consists of three lanes, allowing for multiple people to skate at once (Figure 22). While all participants noted that PDB was the best park in the city, there were differing opinions when asked about the flow and variety of obstacles in the park:

Figure 22: Overhead view of PDB (Skatepark Stadspark on maps.google.com, 2023) with illustration of 3 lanes (Author, 2024)

"...now it's a really good park, but it gets crowded pretty quick. You do have the three lines, which I really like." (R-7)

I like the flow of it. On both sides you have quarter pipes, so you just go back and forth and get used to going up and down ramps." (R-8)

"There's some dead ends. But I think they're going to extend it so maybe that's getting better then." (R-6)

Three interviewees played key roles in the advocation and design phases of PDB and two were able to give information on the intentions of the design:

"...we choose to, like kind of see this as one park and try to put as much variety in as possible. Which makes this a bit difficult if we add the second part. Because, yeah, we already have most things. [...] it's always a bit full. Lots of obstacles there [...] I would say what we lack is a bit of like, more open space." (R-4)

"What I like the most about it is that I designed it myself. I like that it's all mellow, but there's enough variation, some small rails, some bigger rails. But nothing's too big, I guess. So it's kind of accessible for everyone." (R-9)

Figure 23: A view of PDB's quarterpipe in the foreground and street obstacles in the background (Author, 2024)

Regarding obstacles for beginners at PDB, all four of self-identified beginner skateboarders mentioned that they often prefer to skate on flat, smooth ground with enough space away from obstacles so that they can practice 'flatground tricks' (R-1, R-2, R-5, R-8). While PDB does have a flatground section at its southeastern corner (see figures 22, 23, 24, and 46), this area doubles as PDB's social space, leading to a conflict expanded on in Section 4.2. This small space was specifically mentioned by multiple interviewees:

"The space in the front where people do their flatground tricks — it's pretty small, I think. For beginners, I think (it's) a bit sketchy because it's like, very high off the ground. Maybe people would be scared to [...] fall down when they do a trick [...] which I am also scared of sometimes. So there's limited space." (R-8)

One interviewee, R-5, mentioned that they opted to try flatground tricks in the adjacent parking lot, which will be the eventual location of the second half of PDB, instead of in the skatepark because the parking lot has more open space. During observation visits, there were multiple instances of people practicing tricks in the parking lot and some would even jump off this corner section into the parking lot while trying more advanced tricks.

Three interviewees mentioned that they were primarily transition skateboarders who prefer to skate larger ramps, but they still expressed content with the design of the skatepark so far, noting that they hoped for more variety in ramp size, especially in the form of a pool, when the second half is completed (R-2, R-4, R-8, R-10). Interviewees also hoped for connectivity

and flow between the completed first half and the future second half of PDB (R-4, R-7). One interviewee expressed a preference for more beginner obstacles (R-5)

Figure 24: Southeastern corner of PDB with view of access road and flatground/social area (Author, 2024)

Multiple safety issues regarding PDB were mentioned in interviews. First, the skatepark was built over a former parking lot. However, half of the parking lot is still in use by other park users and an entrance still exists on the skatepark side. Interviewees mentioned that cars can still access the parking lot using the former entrance and a small access road next to the skatepark (Figure 24), leading to close calls between moving cars, loose skateboards, and falling skateboarders (R-2, R-3). During multiple observation periods, older skateboarders were seen placing their bikes on this access road and refusing to move them when drivers protested.

A lack of amenities at PDB was also noted by interviewees as safety concerns (R-2, R-3, R-5, R-8). Each interviewee who mentioned missing amenities also noted the park's location as a contributing factor to safety. PDB is located outside of the 'ring' of highways surrounding Groningen, about an 11-minute bicycle ride and 35-minute walk from the city center. The subject of some of these complaints was the lack of water, food, and bathroom facilities:

"There's no water, there's no bathrooms, there's no nothing out there. There's no food. So when you go out there it's really like you're planning a camping trip." (R-3).

Two interviewees, R-5 and R-8, mentioned that PDB is located very close to their homes but there were differing opinions on the general accessibility of PDB's location in Stadspark:

"I would still call it central [...] I think for most neighborhoods it's within like 15 minutes by bike." (R-9)

"I would say it's actually not really close, realistically, to anyone's house. It's deep inside of a park. I mean, as far as Dutch standards go it's not really close to anything [...] I like to go out there by myself too but If I fall and get hurt, I'm gonna just be laying there..." (R-3)

There is no designated seating at PDB. During observation periods, most skateboarders left their belongings and sat to take breaks on the skatepark's tallest and most challenging ledge on the southeast corner of the park. Some skateboarders did attempt to skate this ledge but

needed to move other people's belongings to access it. This observation of the main rest area was supported by R-3:

> *"They don't even have seats there for us. We all sit on the one ledge, you know, like, there's nowhere actually (to sit)." (R-3)*

Another missing amenity, according to two interviewees, is a covering. Coverings for the skatepark were mentioned as important for 3 distinct reasons: first, as a need to keep water out during the rainy season (R-2); second, as a way to prevent seeds and other debris from the neighboring trees from falling on the skatepark and subsequently and unexpectedly stopping the moving wheels of skateboarders (R-2); and third, to provide shade in the summer (R-3).

> *"...as soon as there's a light drizzle, it gets kind of slippery." (R-2)*

> *"It (debris) just covers the skatepark, so you'll have to take breaks mid skate session or before the skate sesh just to clear all the debris out" (R-2)*

> *"...there's no shade in the middle of the day. It's actually miserable [...] I felt multiple times like I was gonna die. I shaved my head because it's so hot in the summer." (R-3).*

PDB is open during the day but due to noise regulations is closed at 10pm, although frequency of enforcement has not been identified.

Skatepark Colosseum

Eight out of ten interviewees have been to the current Skatepark Colosseum location and the other two, R-1 and R-6, had visited previous locations in the past. The current Colosseum space is different from previous locations which has resulted in some frustration among interviewees. Some of this frustration stems from Colosseum's decision to cater to BMX bikes as well as skateboarders in a confined space, leading to the construction of obstacles too large for most skateboarders:

Figure 25: BMXers and Skateboarders sharing the space at Colosseum (colosseum.nl, n.d.)

> *"They went from like three floors to one floor. And one of the old floors used to be solely BMX because the ramping size and the flow is different from BMX. And since they only have one floor now, at the new location, they kind of merged BMX and skating, but not in an ideal way in my opinion." (R-2)*

Other complaints about Colosseum revolved around the lack of space in general and the lack of specifically beginner-friendly obstacles. However, one interviewee noted that the wooden features were more comfortable to fall on in comparison to the concrete at outdoor skateparks.

"In my opinion, the size is not big enough. So you don't have the variety of… different obstacles. Super happy it is there; super happy it's supported. But if (they) want to have a proper indoor skate facility, then they need to have a bigger space." (R-4)

Figure 26: Overview of Skatepark Colosseum (colosseum.nl, n.d.)

"If there's, I think four people skateboarding, it's already a bit crowded. At least it feels for me, because [...] I think my skill level is like still at the beginning. So I'm just doing simple things. And then I quickly have the feeling that I'm like, in their way or something." (R-5)

"I learned how to drop in at Colosseum. And that was quite difficult because they don't have [...] low quarter pipes. The only low one is very high up and on the other side, it goes down to another ramp so it's sketchy for a beginner." (R-8)

"I would say with the Colosseum, because it's like all made with wood. I feel like I feel more comfortable to fall on that than on concrete." (R-10)

Despite these complaints, all interviewees indicated they would at least consider visiting Colosseum, especially during rainy days because it is one of the only skate-able spots with shelter. One interviewee, R-9, mentioned that its location played a factor in their decision to go to Colosseum even during rainy days. Colosseum is located on the eastern side of Groningen, about a 13-minute bike ride and a 46-minute walk from the city center. Additionally, R-2 cited the entrance fee as an accessibility barrier and R-3 cited the entrance fee as being antithetical to their view of skateboarding. According to their website, Colosseum has options for €6.50 entrance fees, €45 monthly passes, and €400 yearly passes (colosseum.nl, 2024). Counter to R-2 and R-3, R-10 noted that the prices are affordable, and they enjoy supporting a local skateboard business that treats them as family.

"If you're actually struggling money wise, and skating is your hobby, the indoor skate park isn't feasible at all for you; you'd have to do street skating or wait 'till it's dry outside." (R-2)

The opening times of Colosseum are also limited. In total, Colosseum is open about 32 hours each week but has a long list of adjusted opening hours accounting for special events or holidays. R-1 shared a recent experience they had where they planned to visit Colosseum during the day only to find that Colosseum was closed.

4.1.2 DIY spots

Four DIY spots locations were given to me by interviewees. However, one of the spots seems to have been demolished as a part of Groningen's reconstruction of its southern ring road. Two of these DIY spots were located in public places but the other one's status as public or private space is unknown.

Oosterhavenbrug DIY

Figure 27: Oosterhavenbrug DIY spot (Author, 2024)

The Oosterhavenbrug DIY spot features two makeshift concrete transitions allowing skateboarders to access the concrete ledge above. This spot is located under a bridge which allows for a dry space to skate while it is rainy. A trailer was parked next to the spot, making it difficult to approach the obstacle with enough speed to reach the top. It is unknown whether this trailer is a permanent installation or was only parked there during the two times I visited the spot.

Apart from the person occupying the trailer and a few bicyclists, this spot seemed quiet. There are numerous roads, apartment buildings, and commercial spaces surrounding the spot and it is located relatively close to the city center.

Driebondsbrug DIY

The Driebondsbrug DIY spot features two main obstacles: a smaller slappy curb (Figure 28) and a larger ledge (Figure 29). This spot is located far outside the city center. It is located under a bridge and is next to a bicycle path. However, during two visits only one bicyclist was observed using the bicycle path.

Figure 28: Driebondsbrug slappy curb (Author, 2024)
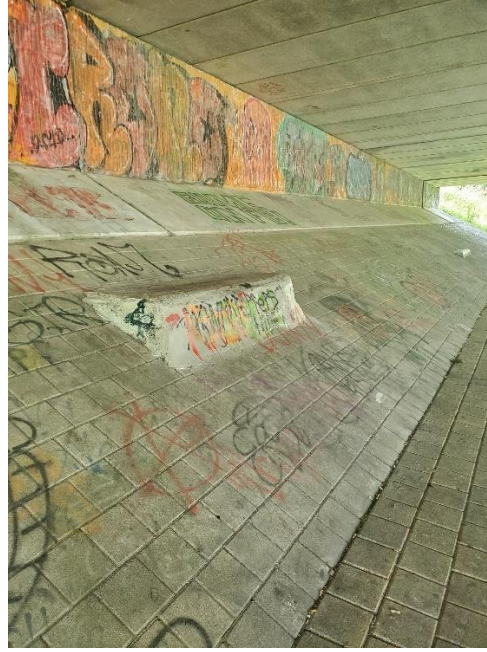
Figure 29: Driebondsbrug ledge (Author, 2024)

DIY Skatepark

Figure 30: A DIY skatepark in Groningen (Author, 2024)

This DIY skatepark was mentioned by two interviewees. However, its location next to buildings may make its legality more complicated. While one interviewee mentioned that they helped with its construction, the main constructor of this DIY skatepark could not be contacted for permission, and therefore its location was left off the map.

All of the obstacles in this DIY skatepark are advanced and the rough surface of the ground, including the vegetation growing between the cracks further contributes to this spot being hard to skate. Upon visitation, numerous teenagers were gathering in the space but none of them appeared to have skateboards with them.

4.1.3 Urban skate spots

Commonly mentioned urban skate spots are listed below with corresponding images. Multiple interviewees reported skating in the urban environment, however, the contexts in which they skated in the urban environment were often different. For example, while most skateboarders reported that they often skate recreationally at various 'spots' or obstacles throughout the city (R-3, R-4, R-5, R-6, R-7, R-8, R-9, R-10), others reported that they use their skateboard as a mobility tool as they travel from place to place throughout the day (R-2, R-3, R-6, R-8, R-10). Categorization of what is and is not a skate spot, therefore, is difficult because every street or sidewalk smooth enough to use a skateboard on could theoretically be skated. This perspective is echoed by three interviewees:

Figure 31: Floris does a pop-shuvit at the Korenbeurs in Groningen's city center (Hollands, 2020)
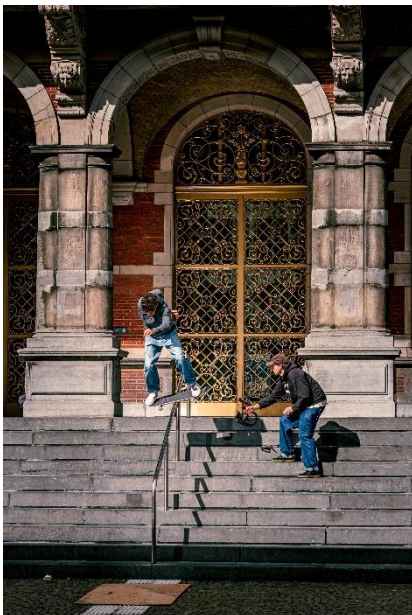
Figure 32: Daniel Moragues boardslides the handrail at the University of Groningen's Academiegebouw while being filmed (Hollands, 2022)

"...you can skate anywhere." (R-6)

"The whole fun is to get something that that you don't find in the skatepark or is out of the ordinary or is creative, and that can be everywhere." (R-7)

"... you could just skate easily in the city. And it's just endless obstacles that you have." (R-10)

Grote Markt

Grote Markt is at the center of Groningen and has recently undergone a pedestrian-friendly renovation. The square, now automobile free, has smooth bricks and many areas to sit. It is home to various skate spots. Some of the spots have been removed during renovations, some have remained, and others have been recently added.

Figure 33: Grote Markt and its new fountains post-renovation (Author, 2024)

Apart from having appealing urban skate obstacles, Grote Markt is a skate spot in and of itself. The square is wide open, has a smooth automobile-free surface, and is full of life. This was the only urban skate spot where skateboarders were present during observation times. During one observation period, a skateboarder was practicing flatground tricks in the middle of the square and during the other observation period a skateboarder was seen skating through Grote Markt on their way to somewhere else. Other times groups of skateboarders would stay in the area practicing tricks and skating obstacles.

Numerous interviewees mentioned Grote Markt as a skate spot. However, one interviewee, R-8, mentioned that they think Grote Markt is too crowded and it would be an intimidating place to attempt tricks, potentially falling in front of many people. R-3 noted that Grote Markt was one of the only areas they could think of that has both smooth, open space and a location near other amenities.

"Kids maybe find that spot nice to skate [...] if you don't feel confident enough to go to the skate park because everything goes quite fast." (R-4)

"The bricks are a lot of fun to skate on." (R-3)

"It used to be quite bad for skating, to be honest, but now they changed quite a lot." (R-4)

"It's central, which is nice. In Grote Markt you have a good flatground, which you don't have a lot in the Netherlands." (R-6)

Figure 34: Benches outside ABN AMRO that have since been removed. Skater: Floris (Hollands, 2020)

Two interviewees mentioned that there were very good obstacles at Grote Markt that have since been removed. Among these were benches outside of ABN AMRO seen in Figure 34 (R-7, R-9), a wooden bench and planter combination (R-7), and granite ledges (R-7). However, one currently available spot was highlighted by two interviewees: the tree plantar with a transition seen in figures 35 and 36.

"… there are some spots that were always famous like the tree with the quarter pipe that they re-did [...] everybody's kind of like happy to go skate that thing. I also think it definitely won't be damaged too much." (R-4)

"Yeah, if you build like a quarter planter, around a tree in the Grote Markt, yeah we're going to skate it." (R-7)

Figure 35: Floris does a blunt-to-fakie on the Grote Markt planter quarter pipe (Hollands, 2020)

Figure 36: The Grote Markt planter with quarter pipe transition (Author, 2024)

Forum/Nieuwe Markt

The Forum building and the Nieuwe Markt square on its western side have a few skate spots. There are a variety of stair sets throughout the square, multiple granite ledges, and rails to grind. The building itself is also a skate spot, as seen in Figure 37. However, the ledges are mostly skate-stopped and the ground's brick style creates a slightly bumpier riding experience than Grote Markt. During observation periods, no skateboarders were present.

"It's also quite popular for […] skating. It's quite a good street spot. Some stairs, some other things to skate." (R-4)
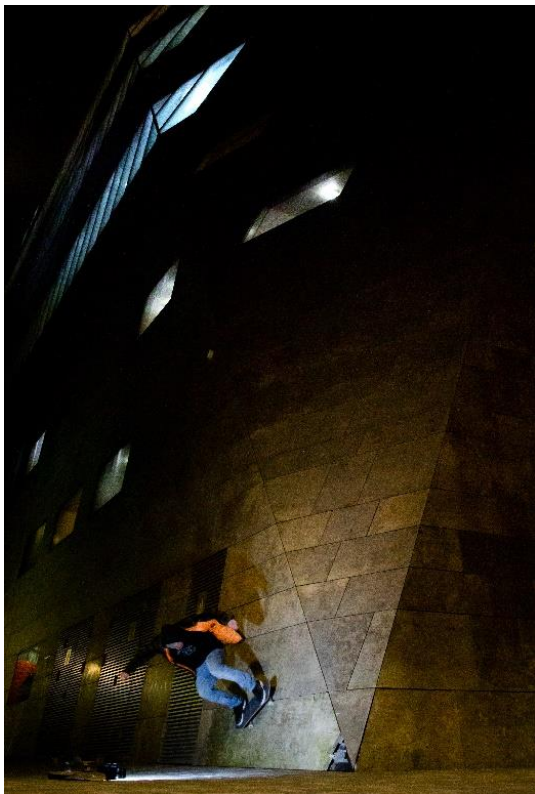
Figure 37: Wesley Worst does a wallride on the Forum Groningen (Hollands, 2020)

Figure 38: Max Bouwman does a backside tailslide on a Nieuwe Markt ledge (Hollands, 2021)

UMCG Noord

The University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG) was one of the cited urban skate spots in interviews (R-6, R-7). Upon site visits, skate-able terrain was found throughout the UMCG campus although much of it had skate-stoppers installed. R-7 claimed that he had a conversation with the person in charge of placing the skate-stoppers and found out that €10,000 was spent to skate-stop the area even though the only thing that is commonly skated is the curb near the UMGC Noord bus stop (Figure 39). This curb shows signs of wax usage and does not have any skate-stoppers.

Figure 39: UMCG Noord waxed curb (Author, 2024)

Aweg Bus Stops

Only one interviewee mentioned these bus stops. There are a few bus stops on both sides of the road. However, the road is relatively busy with cars, buses, pedestrians, and cyclists. There are various manny pads and curbs in the area with smooth ground to skate on.

Figure 40: Aweg bus stops (Venema Media, 2023)

"The ground is nice and smooth. And there's a curb that I can jump up and down and slide on a little bit. It's not the best thought, but it's also close to my house. So if I just want to skate for a couple minutes, I'll walk outside and skate." (R-3)

Minerva

Three interviewees mentioned Minerva (R-5, R-6, R-7). The Minerva Art Academy operates from various buildings but the most referenced spot was a curb in a courtyard between buildings. This courtyard often has students working on their art projects outside or pedestrians. The curb is heavily waxed and appears to be worn down. The curb also has a small transition from a smaller height into a taller height, which makes it easier to get onto the curb before grinding.

it's like this really long, low curb which grinds is pretty well [...] It's one of the few that we have in Groningen actually." (R-6)
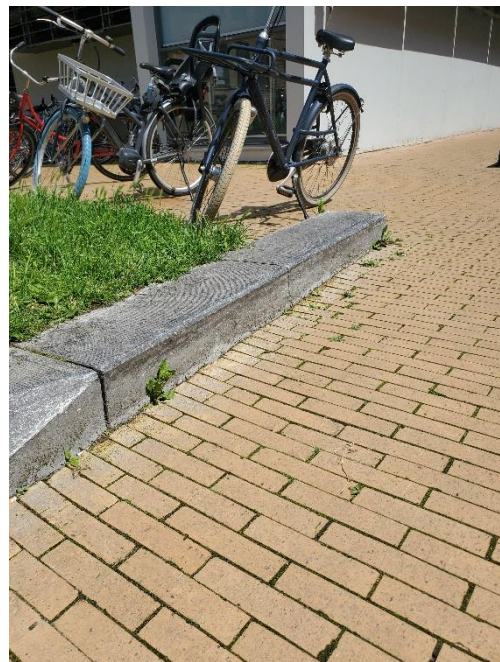
Figure 41: The slappy curb at Minerva (Author, 2024)

Europapark Station

Europapark Station has a pedestrianized plaza outside its entrance with a variety of ledges and stairs. Upon visitation, no skateboarders were present but signs of skateboarding were apparent in multiple places. There was a pallet left on one set of stairs (Figure 42), suggesting that skateboarders or other urban sports practitioners used it for tricks up or down the stairs. There were also numerous ledges with grand marks and remnants of wax (Figure 43).

"I think if you really want to skate I think Europapark still is one of the better spots to start." (R-7)

"It's an open space, a lot of space to move around and different spots in a small area, small stairs, some bigger stairs, small ledges and bigger ledges. It's accessible for everyone. It's not just for the real experienced, but also, if you're just starting, there is still something to skate there." (R-9)

Figure 42: A pallet added to the stairs at Europapark to create an obstacle (Author, 2024)

Figure 43: Rob Schutte does a backside 180 nosegrind to fakie on a Europapark ledge (Hollands, 2020)

Euroborg Stadium

The stadium has 360 degrees of varied terrain including stairs, open space, large manny pads, and covered space. The surface of the covered space was particularly smooth and easy to roll on. There is also a movie theater in the stadium building which contributes to a steady flow of pedestrians in the evening, but the area is mostly empty of people on days without special events like football matches in the stadium.

"there's a lot of space and there's the roof. When it's raining, you can just skate there. So that's really nice […] there's also the ground — It's quite nice to skate on." (R-5)
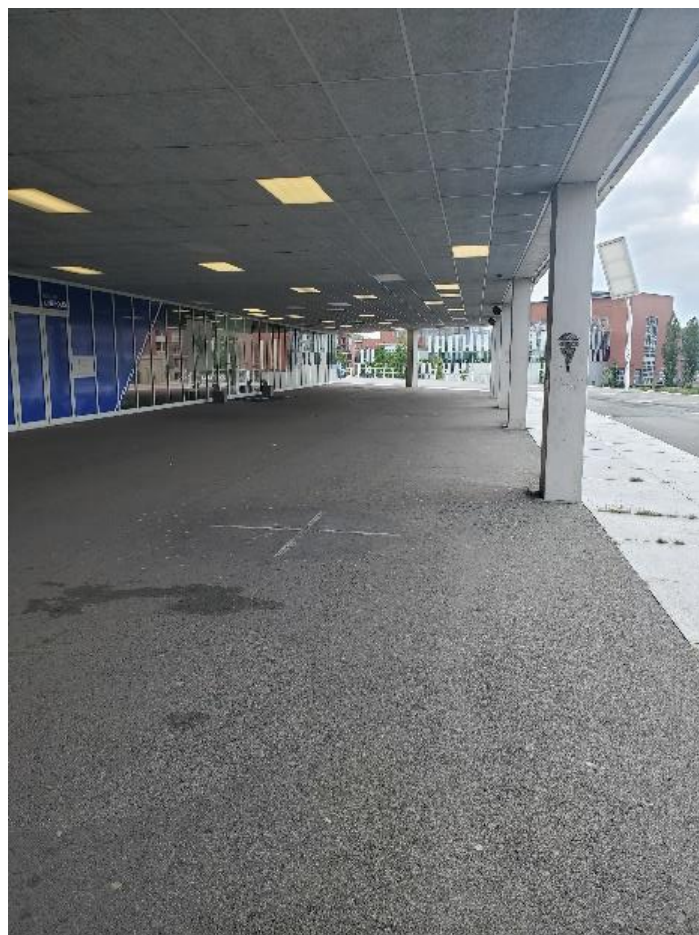
Figure 44: Covered flatground at Euroborg Stadium (Author, 2024)

4.2 Socialization and perceptions of community

The Groningen skate community has grown in size since its birth about 40 years ago. The interviewee with the most experience skating in Groningen reflected on this growth:

> *"When we started skating, I knew all the skaters in the city, it was like a small group. Well, it's grown beyond I think two, three, maybe 400 people right now actively" (R-7)*

The skate community is largely perceived by other skateboarders to be welcoming. R-6, for example, noted that she picked up skating again as an adult to make new friends after moving to Groningen. On the subject of seeing other skateboarders in public, multiple interviewees noted that there is already an unspoken bond between them that helps to facilitate new social connections (R1, R3). One skate community member mentioned that their perceived status as outsiders from the rest of society helped to strengthen these bonds:

> *"The skate community is quite close. And I don't know… that could just be because we're shunned by the rest of the community. So we better support each other. Because no one else seems to support us." (R-3)*

Two interviewees also mentioned the importance of Alles op Rolletjes 'Skatehaven' sessions, held at Skatepark Colosseum, as being integral to their ability to make friends in the skateboarding community (R-5, R-8). These sessions are dedicated for women and queer skateboarders to have a welcoming place to skate.

PDB is the main gathering place for Groningen skateboarders despite its location away from the city center. All interviewees referred to PDB as a context for social interaction.

> *"…you just want to hang out with your friends, I guess. And also I think for the kids who just start skating, they can go there and meet other kids who are at the same age or at the same level, so they can connect with each other and learn from each other, and like all my friends I know through skateboarding, so like, I wish the same for kids who start skating now." (R-9)*

> *"It's […] outdoorsy. And you can just go with your friends, have a picnic, or meet other skaters." (R-10)*

Three interviewees, who all identified themselves as beginner skateboarders, noted that they perceived PDB to have an intimidating atmosphere when more experienced or unknown skateboarders are present (R-1, R-6, R-8). Additionally, the youngest interviewee, a female skater, noted that they perceive the community at the skate park to be overwhelmingly experienced and male:

"Every time I go to the skate park, I'm very impressed with how good they all are. I feel like there's not a lot of beginners there. They're all really nice, I think. But for me, not very approachable. Because they all know each other… they're all men, mostly. Sort of, like, I think in the same age range. So for women, I think it's a little harder to connect with them." (R-8)

"I've noticed girls who haven't skated at all, like beginners, or people who just are getting into it, try and not get in the way of other people. They just stand on the side […] I think even guys in general as well, if they're also beginner, and they see a lot of guys who are really good at the skate park. They're also not going to try and go in." (R-10)

Figure 45: PDB's main social area (Author, 2024)

In both observation visits, the same ledge area at the southeastern corner of PDB was used as the main social and resting area (Figure 46). Skateboarders' belongings were all placed in this area as well; there are no lockers or designated benches available for storage or rest. Next to the ledges in this social corner is a flat area without obstacles. Two skateboarders noted that this area is perfect for beginners but is commonly used by experienced skateboarders competing in skateboard games such as S.K.A.T.E. (R-4, R-8). This specific activity was also observed during 4 out of 5 visits to the skatepark.

"that's usually where they play games of S.K.A.T.E. and do tricks in front of each other. As a beginner, that's not really a place for you […] when I go there, and there's a lot of people sitting […], even if they're not looking at me, it feels a bit weird, like, trying tricks in front of them as a beginner. So if I can I usually go further in the park to try my tricks." (R-8)

Other activities taking place in the social area of the park during observation visits included barbecuing, drinking beer, and smoking. Although PDB had both children and adults present during each visit, children rarely ventured over to this social corner of the skatepark, and parents usually stood on the opposite side of the park where there is nowhere to sit. Younger visitors took breaks and left their belongings in various areas throughout the park, sometimes on more frequently used obstacles.

The only other programmed skate space mentioned in the context of socialization among participants was Skatepark Colosseum. Colosseum does have multiple seating areas. One is inside the skatepark area itself and a lounge can be found near the front desk. These areas can also be used by parents waiting for or watching their child while drinking a coffee (R-4). Paid lessons are available for beginner skateboarders as well. The indoor nature of the park also provides privacy from the

Figure 46: The front desk and lounge area at Skatepark Colosseum (colosseum.nl, n.d.)

outdoor world, which contrasts with PDB and urban skating where failure can be seen by non-skateboarders (R-1).

R-5 mentioned that they first became a member of the Groningen skateboarding community though visiting Colosseum's 18+ nights, which provide a space for adults to skate without children present.

Other interviewees mentioned specific urban spots in Groningen that they used as social gathering places as well as skate spots, including Grote Markt (R-6) and Euroborg (R-5).

One interviewee, R-7, noted that a previously popular meeting point and skate spot, the Europapark Train Station, is not used by skateboarders as much because of the construction of the nearby PDB skatepark, however, R-9 claimed that the spot was still significant as a meeting point for urban skate sessions.

4.3 Skateboarders, citizens, and the municipality

Interviewees expressed varying strategies and opinions on their interactions with other users of public space, their own exclusion from public space, and their responsibilities as citizens.

Multiple interviewees expressed that they thought the skate community was misunderstood or mischaracterized by the municipality and by other users of public space (R-1, R-3, R-4, R-6, R-7, R-8, R-9, R-10). R-10 specifically equated skating with other sports, noting that non-skateboarders viewed skating as a dangerous activity while ignoring the equivalent dangers of other sports. R-1 also reflected on the mischaracterization of skateboarders by others but through the lens of 'playing' as an adult:

> *"If you're really young […] people look at you and enjoy that you're playing and then when you get older […] suddenly you're a nuisance or an outcast. When you get older people look at you like 'what are you doing with your life?'" (R-1)*

Varying degrees of positive social interactions were described by nearly all interviewees (R-3, R-4, R-6, R-7, R-9, R-10). R-3 noted that their preferred skate spot, the Aweg bus stops, were often full of people watching him, leading to extra motivation and assumed entertainment for the bus riders:

"... I think people are just kind of bored. They kind of recognize like, it's not a very beautiful spot. It's just paved asphalt [...] I think they actually enjoy watching it [...] Sometimes I'll be like, man, I'm really tired. But then I'm like, the buses come in a minute. And these people have watched me not land a trick so much I need to land it." (R-3)

Other positive interactions were noted by other interviewees:

"You always [...] meet people [...] people stop and sit on the bench and like, look at you, because they find it interesting what you're doing." (R-4)

"... most of the spots we skate, we just get nice, positive people" (R-9)

Regarding a particular day skating a closed road, R-8 noted a particularly impactful positive interaction:

"...there were a few kids that came over, they were on their bikes and scooters and stuff. And they were very impressed with what we were doing. And so they wanted to race us, so we raced them with our skateboards because the street was very long. And then one of them also had a skateboard. And she was a little girl. She said she just started skating as well. And she asked us for tips on how to do an ollie and stuff. And they were very excited to see other skaters, I think. Because they hadn't really come in contact with them." (R-8)

According to two interviewees with the most experience skating in Groningen, the attitudes of the non-skating public towards skateboarders have shifted (R-7, R-9).

"...it used to be annoying as fuck; like 9 out of 10 people were saying like, 'oh what are you doing here', whatever. And that has switched completely. So now 9 out of 10 people will stop, watch, tell them 'Oh nice!'. Or make like a comment but still be friendly." (R-7)

"...you have to really be like damaging some property or even just skating on something like stairs or somewhere and they will hate on you. But for the majority I have not gotten any hate." (R-10)

R-3, R-4, R-5, R-6, R-7, and R-9 have all noted that they have been asked to leave spots, usually due to the noise.

"The old people just get upset. They come out of their houses to yell at me. It's always old people getting mad, skating in the streets." (R-3)

All interviewees recognized the impact skateboarding has on others, but the impacts varied from noise to general annoyance and perceived endangerment of citizens. R-6 noted that they attempted to negotiate acceptable times to skate UMCG Noord with the local residents to limit noise impact, but these informal negotiations were largely unsuccessful because different groups skate the spot at different times. The interviewees with the least amount of skateboarding experience noted that they primarily skate in more isolated areas, such as empty parking lots (R-1, R-8). Both R-2 and R-10 noted that they enjoy using their skateboard as a mobility tool and R-10 specifically mentioned using softer wheels when using their skateboard as a transportation device to minimize sound.

"I am quite aware that when I'm skateboarding it can be quite noisy." (R-1)

"when I skate in public, I do think about myself and how I'm portrayed to other people [...] If it's like 11 o'clock at night, and I only have park wheels on my board, I'm not going to go skating around the inner city, because then it's just going to wake everybody up in the apartments. It's going to be loud as hell." (R-2)

"You sit there with like, friends [...] maybe they smoke joints or drink beers or something [...] you easily just appear to be like a group of hooligans or something. [...] when I see [...] residents, I try to, like, say hi, or like, be approachable so that they lose the fear of interaction." (R-6)

"...skaters are usually very careful with skating [...] I'm not trying any tre-flips or crazy tricks in the city. I just do my ollies; I don't go too crazy." (R-10)

Of the 10 skateboarders interviewed, only 4 were aware of the recently passed APV nuisance law (R-4, R-6, R-7, R-9) and 4 were aware of the ban on skateboarding in Grote Markt, Nieuwe Markt, and the Waagplein (R-4, R-5, R-7, R-9) prior to interactions with the author. However, regardless of their knowledge of the local laws, most skateboarders asserted their rights regardless and many noted that they thought the laws would be unsuccessful at deterring skateboarders:

"I figure the city's made for everybody. Like, it doesn't really matter if you're walking or I'm on a board". (R-2)

"No, I'm not aware of them. As a skater, I feel like skating has been illegal all over the place. And it's something that I think just teaches you to not

respect the laws. And I don't think that's cool, because like, you know, you should respect laws [...] I have no idea what the laws are here. But when people try to minimize my existence as a skater, I'll typically just minimize their concerns." (R-3)

"I think if you want to skate them (skate spots), you skate them anyways." (R-4)

"It doesn't really change anything [...] If nobody's complaining, or if it's not a problem, then we also don't have a problem." (R-6)

"...we're gonna skate either way, like in the app groups we're in it's like, 'oh, Haren has a new school with a sick two-block?' 'Okay, cool. Let's hit it.' Like it's going to be always like that, even if they make it more illegal or write tickets or whatever. It's not gonna stop certain people from street skating." (R-7)

"I think even if [...] I knew it was not allowed. Maybe I would still do it with consideration of other people." (R-8)

One interviewee, when asked about whether they were aware of any laws about skateboarding in Groningen, stated that they thought skateboarding on public property had always been illegal, but they continued to skate and thought it was okay as long as they were careful (R-10).

Multiple interviewees formally collaborated with the municipality in the past and expressed frustration about the recent legal changes and their lack of participation in the debates on these changes.

"We had like, at least three meetings with them, and also with like, people that designed Grote Markt [...] They ask us for help. And yeah, we had a super good conversation with them. And then at some point this kind of came out of nowhere for us [...] these areas are now not allowed to skate anymore, whatever that actually means [...] it's also not going to stop anybody from skating. I don't believe that." (R-4)

"We did have talks with the people that are designing the Grote Markt and they did have fears, the fountain is like one and a half million euros and 'is this going to be skated or not?'. And I told them yeah, probably it will. But I mean, you have to have consensus on a bench: is it only for sitting or does it have multiple purposes? We were pretty good in those talks. And then all of a sudden, without any further notice, they did the aanwijzingsbesluit (AWB)". (R-7)

Some interviewees even claimed that the municipality was benefiting from the positive cultural image of embracing urban sports while not actually doing anything to benefit those that practice urban sports (R-2, R-4, R-7). Two interviewees noted that the marketing material for the redesign of the Grote Markt (Figure 48) included a picture of a skateboarder despite skateboarding being forbidden there (R-4, R-7).

Figure 47: The cover of the municipality's 'Room for You' Grote Markt design plan featuring a skateboarder in the lower left corner (Gemeente Groningen, 2021)

"I feel like obviously just kind of talk to talk. And they're like, 'Oh, we love our people. We love our culture. We love this.' And they don't actually do anything to like, back those words up. So I think if they do start embracing it, and they do actually, like put concrete actions to make it more comfortable for skaters, I think it'd be dope." (R-2)

"They also use it as…almost like a way of marketing. So there's also a plus for them in supporting us, which we're really happy about. And like a good example now… they banned skateboarding in Grote Markt. But there used to be like a big poster of the, like, designing what it's (Grote Markt) going to be. And there was a skateboarder on there." (R-4)

Figure 48: A BMX rider wallriding the Forum on the cover of the municipality's Sport050 Magazine (sport050.nl, 2024)

"The municipality just brought out a Sport050 magazine with somebody wallriding the forum (Figure 49). *Yeah, which is fucking stupid, like, on the one hand you're saying it's illegal, and we don't want this shit. And then that's your cover." (R-7)*

There are multiple skate spots in the city with spatial interventions, called skate stoppers, aimed at preventing skateboarding. The interviewees with more urban skateboarding experience brought these interventions up when discussing skating urban spots:

Figure 49: A new skate-stopped bench in the Waagplein next to the Grote Markt (Author, 2024)

"...when you build a beautiful skate spot, and then put skate stoppers on it, I think it looks ugly. And I feel like it's almost my duty as a citizen to break it off [...] It's not even that I'm offended that they don't want me to skate on it, I'm offended that they would rather make something look ugly, and be less useful [...] there's other ways to do it; you can still stop me from skating it without actually making things worse for everyone." (R-3)

"I mean, the communication is pretty clear it at that point, they don't want you here. Yeah, I mean, sometimes it can give you new opportunities also. Sometimes the skate stopper makes the spot. Sometimes you see skate stoppers in like, the weirdest places where nobody's ever gonna skate this." (R-6)

"if you would have not skate stopped anything in the city, you would have had like 200, maybe 300,000 euros. If you have spent that differently, like on inner city development, make it more skate friendly and assign certain or make certain places more attractive, you would have done the same." (R-7)

"In use, it will not matter that much. Some skate stoppers are easy to break off so you could still skate it." (R-9)

Another interviewee, on the subject of skate stoppers and other hostile architecture, noted that they appreciated the more subtle anti-skateboarding design of the Grote Markt fountains (Figure 33) in comparison to skate stoppers (R-3); the rough river stones surrounding the fountain prevent skateboarders from accessing the ledges while still being aesthetically pleasing — in comparison to the "lazy" skate stoppers (R-3).

Through discussing the APV and AWB laws, one interviewee was asked about whether they thought the municipality was taking a skatepark-only approach. Their response was:

"I don't think so because then they would have to build way more skateparks." (R-9)

4.4 Stated needs

When asked what the municipality could do to better meet their needs, interviewees had various responses. Some interviewees stated that they needed more programmed skate facilities. R-1 mentioned that a more permanent indoor skate facility is needed as they felt upset that Colosseum kept having to move locations. However, R-1 also expressed that they preferred a sheltered DIY park so that they could be involved in the creation phases. The need for better and permanent indoor or sheltered facilities was echoed by R-2, R-3, R-4, and R-9. In addition to needing indoor or covered facilities, R-3, R-7, and R-8 said that the community needs more high-quality and centralized outdoor skateparks. R-9 noted that many of the older skateparks surrounding the city could be revitalized to meet the community's needs for programmed spaces. R-2 also cited skatepark maintenance as a need because in their past place of residence, programmed skateparks would deteriorate and municipal governments wouldn't commit to keeping them functional or safe.

Some interviewees said specific obstacles, park styles, or amenities were needed. R-7 specifically noted the need for a 'plaza-style' skatepark with wide open areas and urban obstacles, as well as the need for a bowl, potentially at the Hoornsemeer location. Other interviewees mentioned specific obstacle needs in the context of what they would like to see in the yet-to-be-constructed second half of PDB:

"I think it'd be dope if they added like some bowls and like, maybe even like another halfpipe, because I love the halfpipe." (R-2)

"Maybe some more like unconventional objects" (R-6)

"I really hope that they're going to put a mini ramp in addition to the skatepark. I think that's what's missing here." (R-8)

"Maybe some more typical street stuff [...] some more different kinds of manny pads; let the community decide. Let's have an engaging conversation about the needs of the community, and then use that in the design." (R-9)

"I would love a water fountain at the skatepark [...] and then otherwise, like, I would love a skate park that you can skate to from the city center. Because, like, this is where people come to hang out. And then you try to kick the skaters way out of town [...] But it's like part of the fun of skating, I think, is going from spot A to spot B, using your board as a means of transportation and finding different spots. And it'd be cool if there's just somewhere more centralized, where you could go and skate and not feel like you're causing problems." (R-3)

Other stated needs in the interviews revolved around representation, communication, and collaboration. R-5 noted that they hoped that beginner skateboarders would be more represented in talks about the design of programmed skateparks and in skateboard advocacy group participation. The need for beginner spaces in general was also identified by all self-identified beginner skateboarders (R-1, R-2, R-5, R-8). R-4, R-6, R-7, R-9, and R-10 stressed the importance of the municipality taking a progressive, communicative stance towards interacting with skateboarders instead of instituting bans and implementing skate stoppers. Commonly mentioned positive examples of progressive stances towards skateboarding included Malmö and Copenhagen's inclusion of skateboarders in municipal planning practices, the shared use context of Barcelona's MACBA square, and the mixed-use skate-able urban features such as those found in Bordeaux.

> *"...involve us, like in a, kind of like a beginning stage, and [...] talk with us, like, 'Hey, how can we [...] design some things that are like super multifunctional, that can be used for like people that do bootcamp, but also can be skate-able?'." (R-4)*

> *"...other cities like Copenhagen or Malmö [...] they made skateboarders like part of the city planning there [...] and gave like skate opportunities in public spaces. I mean, the public space should be for everybody. Right?" (R-6)*

> *"...what would really be sick is to have an [...] approach like Copenhagen." (R-7)*

> *"If you make a place like that [...] gets owned by a community and that's also willing to maybe restore certain stuff like at MACBA, I really like that skaters, once every year or whatever, they remove all the plates or try and get everything straight again and that's sick. And I think if you can [...] facilitate skaters in [...] taking responsibility for spots, they will do it." (R-7)*

> *"I think [...] more collaboration would be nice [...] I guess it's some kind of dream scenario then. But I guess in a utopia, you would be involved in the planning of the city, to some extent. Or like, the arrangement of public space, like when they built a new fountain on the Grote Markt [...] it would be super easy to say, 'Okay, we're going to make this fountain here. Maybe you guys can get like one side of it.' And then you would get to [...] come up with ideas for that side of the thing." (R-6)*

Regarding needs, two interviewees expressed positive outlooks on skateboarding in Groningen regardless of the municipality's approaches to skating. R-7 rejected the notion that the skate community needed anything from the municipality and R-10 saw the growth of the

Groningen skate community, and particularly the growth of women skateboarders, as inevitable.

> *"I don't think skateboarders need anything […] looking at football, or other clubs, once you start needing it, you're also becoming dependent. And that's, I think, the most beautiful thing about skateboarding […] you're dependent on nobody. And even if they make like a sand road, you can still get some plywood and make something of it." (R-7)*

> *"I can't wait to get more skaters in this city and more women skating."*
> *(R-10)*

5. Conclusion

This chapter uses the theory in Chapter 2 and findings from Chapter 4 to revisit and answer the research questions. Then, a reflection on my research process and recommendations for future research are provided.

5.1 Discussion

This section starts by revisiting the conceptual model and theories found in Chapter 2. Then, answers to the three sub questions and the main research question are provided.

5.1.1 Revisiting theory

The conceptual model assumes that skateboarder needs can be met through inclusive policy and design. This is only partially true in the Groningen case. The Groningen skateboarding community has grown in the past 40 years and its most passionate, active members claim to be somewhat self-sufficient. While the more experienced group of skateboarders enjoy a robust social system that largely rejects the authority of municipal law in favor of their own subcultural norms, other skateboarders indicated that they relied more heavily on programmed spaces. The perspective that skateboarders have a variety of preferences and needs matches the theories on skateboarding and identity in Section 2.2.2 where various groups of skateboarders struggle for recognition, space, and agency in a subculture dominated by the 'core' predominantly male group (Beal, 1996; Beal et al., 2017; Carr, 2017). However, the findings of this thesis suggest that overarching skateboarder needs follow lines of skill level just as much as gender.

The highest-quality skatepark (PDB) is saturated with skateboarders enough for space to be contested — multiple beginner skateboarders identified this as a barrier. Some skateboarders specifically noted that they felt intimidated as women in a male-dominated space, which made it difficult to practice at PDB. Programmed skateparks are the spaces that are most frequently mentioned as sites of gender discrimination (Beal, 1996; Beal and Weidman,

2003; Carr, 2017). Alles op Rolletjes provides a program that may remedy some of these barriers, but it only happens once a month. Given that PDB is often crowded and dominated by experienced male skateboarders, other skateboarders may benefit from more frequent Alles op Rolletjes sessions or even a programmed space to claim as their own.

The exclusion of skateboarders from urban space in theory closely aligns with the findings of the Groningen case. In Groningen, the APV and AWB regulations sought to restrict skateboarding (Gemeente Groningen 2023; 2024). However, there is no indication from the interviewees that their behaviors will change based on the laws. Interviewees also expressed nonchalant attitudes towards their exclusion and their status as potential nuisances. A surprising finding from the interviews was that some skateboarders already thought it was illegal to skate in Groningen public spaces, yet they did so anyway. Some had not heard about the new regulations at all. The findings closely align with the dialectical relationship described by Carr (2010) where skateboarders opt to embrace transgression in response to their exclusion from public space. This shows that these skateboarders are already following a set of subcultural norms that assume that skateboarding is something that can simultaneously be illegal yet still legitimate (Beal and Weidman, 2003; Carr, 2010; Cresswell, 1996). Embracing transgression, however, is not the first choice of the skateboarding community. Woolley and Johns (2001) found that skateboarders preferred harmony over transgression, but skateboarders were willing to stand up for their rights if needed. This stance was mirrored by the majority of interviewees.

Harvey's (2015) call for a radical approach to urban shaping power by citizens is mirrored by the interviewees as well. Multiple interviewees expressed views that a different kind of urban governance style — a radical one pioneered by select Nordic countries — is needed. While not all interviewees directly expressed this need for a direct urban governance channel, they mostly took the stance that their rights to public space, and by extension their right to the city as skateboarders, was not adequately respected by society or by the municipality. Regardless of whether these rights are respected by authorities, the skateboarders asserted their rights by continuing to skate in urban space. An example of this assertion can be found in their attitudes towards skate-stoppers: some skateboarders break the skate-stoppers off the spots they want to skate and others re-appropriate the skate-stoppers by skateboarding on them. From this perspective, skateboarders in Groningen already have the the power to shape and appropriate urban space because the norms at the heart of their subculture grant them this unalienable power.

The findings mostly support my expectations that:

1. *The municipality is taking a skatepark-only approach*.
The theoretical framework presents multiple types of skateboarding spaces, each with a different significance to the skateboarding community. DIY/Hybrid spots blend placemaking and creativity with skateboarding (Angner, 2017; Kyrönviita and Wallin, 2022; Yates, 2022), urban skate spots position skateboarders as urban citizens reconceptualizing space itself and in doing so connecting with the larger cultural contexts of skateboarding (Borden, 2001), and

programmed skateparks provide safe training grounds for the social and athletic development of the skateboarding community (Borden, 2019; Bradley, 2010; Taylor and Khan, 2011). The theoretical framework suggests that together these spaces form a more cohesive skateboarding ecosystem in which the community can thrive.

While the municipality of Groningen has shown glimpses of this multi-space-type vision in its marketing materials and its overall recognition of 'urban' sports, it has not yet fulfilled its promise of being an 'urban sports Valhalla' in part because it has not provided formal access to these varied spaces. In other words, the municipality has only officially granted access to formal sports facilities despite urban sports' clear dependence on informal sports facilities, a fundamentality described by Bach (1993) and the Mulier Instituut's (2022) report which was referenced by the municipality itself in the GUSA (2023). It should be noted, however, that the internal debates on the APV revealed differing opinions; some within the municipality claimed that skateboarding was not a problem and should be encouraged (Scheffer, 2023). Additionally, the perspective reflected by interviewees is that the municipality largely understands the urban nature of skateboarding and knows it cannot feasibly contain such a large community in a limited number of skateparks. Therefore, the situation is most likely a case of the municipality attempting to appease conflicting groups; the municipality may have tried to appease demands by law enforcement officers, businesses, and some citizens while simultaneously trying to promote urban sports.

2. Beginner skateboarders may be more negatively affected by the changes to the laws.
There was a lack of information in the theoretical framework about how beginners specifically fit into the context of urban skate spots. I assumed that beginners would be dissuaded from skating in the urban environment due to the new laws and a lack of other safe places to skate. The findings of this thesis suggest that beginners, regardless of gender, idealize skateboarding in the urban environment and view programmed skateparks as a training ground of sorts. When the beginner skateboarders in this research skated in the urban environment, they sought flat, open spaces without obstacles. However, they wanted to improve their skills enough to skate urban obstacles regardless of whether it was legal. The new AWB regulation prohibits skateboarding on the only large, central, and smooth area in Groningen: Grote Markt (Gemeente Groningen, 2024). Data is needed to show how enforcement of this regulation works. It is also yet to be determined whether these laws impact people who are interested in learning to skateboard but have not yet started. For now, beginner interviewees indicated that the laws wouldn't stop them, but civic responsibility may limit their time spent in individual areas because their activity is loud.

Another assumption was that subcultural practices, especially those related to gender, would drive people from skateparks into urban areas. However, while interviewees did mention negative experiences at PDB because of their gender, these experiences could not be concretely linked with their drive to skate elsewhere.

5.1.2 Revisiting the research questions

SQ1: What are the social and spatial needs of the local skateboarding community?

Through talking to 10 Groningen skateboarders, various needs were discovered. At the beginning of the research process, I assumed that spatial and social needs could mostly be separated. During the literature review phase, however, a plurality of social needs was identified to the point that a cohesive conceptual model could not be created. Additionally, many social needs were interwoven in spatial contexts. Therefore, the social and spatial needs sections were combined into one section with one all-encompassing need from which other needs can more easily be satisfied. After collecting data, it was discovered that the main need of the skateboarding community is procedural in nature. This main need is **a diverse group of skateboarders participating in decision-making and skateboarder-specific representation in the municipality through which this inclusive decision-making process can function.** In other words, the cases of Malmö and Copenhagen serve as examples of the type of skateboarding governance structure that Groningen needs. In these cases, skateboarding is recognized as a diverse urban sport and used as a tool to make urban space more dynamic (Angner, 2017; Borden, 2019). The recognition is possible because these cities have a designated skateboarding coordinator. Groningen does have an urban sports advisor, some interviewees felt that without an actual skateboarder in a decision-making position, the municipality would continue to misunderstand the intentions and socio-spatial dynamics of skateboarding culture.

SQ2: How do current and planned skateboard spaces in Groningen accommodate the needs of the local skateboarding community?

The choice of skate spots by interviewees and their wishes for obstacles in the soon-to-be-constructed half of PDB revealed preferences and needs. Multiple interviewees chose to skate at PDB because it was, according to them, the only high-quality skatepark in the city. From both interviews and observations, it is evident that PDB has the best quality obstacles, the most variety, and the most accessible location. Beginner interviewees found PDB to be lacking in open space, small obstacles, and larger transition obstacles such as bowls and halfpipes. On the other hand, more experienced skateboarders were mostly content with the design of PD's first half. Meanwhile, most skateboarders regardless of skill level expressed discontent with the quality of other skateparks, including Skatepark Colosseum. These findings support the conclusions drawn by Borden (2001, 2019) and Taylor and Khan (2011) that skatepark quality, which relies on factors such as variety and safety, affect skatepark usage.

PDB is also the social hub for many Groningen skateboarders. This mirrors the findings of Beal (1996), Borden (2019), Bradley (2010), and Taylor and Khan (2011) that skateparks serve as a social context. While PDB's status as a social hub is beneficial, it also means that many skateboarders, only some of whom are there to socialize, are packed into a relatively small space with few amenities. The interviewees, in expressing the need for better amenities at the park, strengthened the findings from Woolley and Johns (2001) and Németh (2006) that quality skateboarder social spaces have amenities such as benches. The plans indicate that PDB will double in size, accommodating more people. With more high-quality skateparks spread out throughout the city, people with different preferences for obstacle types and social situations can have their needs met. Carr (2017) also found that non-male skatepark users enjoyed skatepark settings where other facilities and functions were close by — this is also a point of improvement for PDB.

There are a variety of urban skate spots throughout the city. Part of the appeal to urban skateboarding is skating things that were not meant to be skated or performing tricks on technically challenging obstacles. The interviewees who skated these obstacles make do with what they have and are not significantly bothered by laws or skate stoppers. Another appeal is the internal and external social interactions that skateboarders experience when they are skating in the city. Woolley and Johns (2001) for example, mention sociability and compatibility with other users of public space as a preference of skateboarders. For these preferences, the urban environment in Groningen does an adequate job; multiple interviewees reported that their interactions with non-skateboarders are overwhelmingly positive. As of now, Grote Markt, with its wide, smooth open space, its greenspace, and its seating, is the most notable place for urban skateboarding in Groningen.

> *SQ3: How are the legal barriers to creating an 'urban sports Valhalla' acknowledged by the Groningen skateboarding community?*

I found that the barriers to Groningen becoming an urban sports-friendly municipality largely revolve around the municipality being ill-prepared to work alongside skateboarders, not that the laws themselves present a significant barrier to the skateboarding community. These findings connect with Carr's (2010) and Woolley and Johns' (2001) research on the relationship between skateboarders and the law. Skateboarders in Groningen, like skateboarders in other geographic contexts, acknowledged that the laws had no effect on them. In terms of truly becoming an 'urban sports Valhalla', interviewees mostly reflected the viewpoint that the municipality had two options: either truly embrace skateboarding, including its inherent urban nature, or continue to waste money on skate stoppers, lawmaking, and law enforcement. Either way, the skateboarders who enjoy urban skate spots will continue to use them because skateboarding is inherently urban, and skateboarding's subcultural norms support the continued appropriation of the urban environment (Borden, 2001).

Groningen, in its participation of the Lets Gro festival, its Grote Markt 'space for you' marketing materials, and its Sport050 magazine, have used skateboarding to appear youthful, fun, and cool. This mirrors the claims from Howell (2005) and Chiu and Giamarino (2019) that cities will utilize the pop-culture appeal of skateboarding for ulterior purposes. However, the true intentions of the municipality in the case of Groningen are hard to determine without more data. Interviewees were upset that the municipality was engaging in a hypocritical approach but also stated that characterizing the skateboarding community as a creative, hip group of athletes could ultimately be beneficial to getting their needs met — it already helped them get a new skatepark in the first place.

RQ: How does the municipality of Groningen meet the social and spatial needs of the local skateboarding community?

In the last few years, Groningen has received multiple new skateparks in Stadspark (PDB), Reitdiep, and Colosseum. The narratives from Groningen skateboarders revealed that they are grateful for these developments. However, I argue that the municipality has failed to meet the needs of the local skateboarding community and in some ways has threatened the relationship between themselves and a community of passionate, creative urban citizens. The municipality has threatened the relationship in the following ways:

- Failing to include skateboarders in talks about anti-skateboarding laws.
- Banning skateboarding in Grote Markt and Nieuwe Markt while using marketing material depicting skateboarders in these areas.
- Spending money on skate stoppers despite skateboarders telling them that they are ineffective.

In short, the municipality has largely failed to recognize that skateboarding is not a programmed sport that can be confined to a few programmed areas. Instead, it is an urban sport with a rich, creative, and somewhat anti-authoritative subculture (Beal et al., 2017; Borden, 2019). By attempting to separate skateboarding from its inherently urban nature (Borden, 2001), Groningen has begun institute an exclusionary approach. In the end, the tangible benefits Groningen can derive from skateboarding culture is not in its marketability but in skateboarding's creative use of urban space, its rich communities, its individualism, and its physical and mental health benefits (Mulier Instituut, 2022). These benefits are best realized through the formal inclusion of skateboarders in urban planning practices and urban governance systems.

5.2 Reflection

When I started the literature review, I found a great amount of existing literature about skateboarding from planning, sociology, architecture, psychology, and political science perspectives. I did not, however, find any pieces of literature about the 'needs' of

skateboarders. While this approach allowed me to try something more novel, I realized that it is impossible to categorize the needs of individuals in such a large and diverse community, especially within such a short time period (6 months). The pluralities within skateboarding are too great to properly conceptualize and it would have been more prudent to focus on a specific subgroup, such as beginner skateboarders. The main limitations of my research were the lack of time, the breadth of my research questions, and my relatively small sample of interviewees. A survey could have given me much more data without the need to organize and code so many interviews. This could be combined with a quantitative study on skatepark and skate spot usage. Additionally, during my data collection period, the urban sports advisor for the municipality of Groningen left their position before we could conduct an interview. The other contacts related to urban sports issues at the municipality never answered my communications. This has led to my research being one-sided: we only hear the perspectives of skateboarders, not of municipal officials. To get the full picture, I suggest that non-skateboarders should also be included in data collection.

I am also a skateboarder myself. While I tried to remain unbiased through developing questions and my obervation framework using theory, I may fundamentally view the world differently as a skateboarder. On the other hand, my status as a skateboarder allowed me an 'in' into the local skate scene. Additionally, I think I was able to understand answers better when conversing with other skateboarders due to our shared subcultural language.

5.3 Recommendations for future research

This research happened at an interesting inflection point in the relationship between the municipality and skateboarders. Therefore, ongoing monitoring of the relationship may yield increasingly interesting findings. Additionally, alternative perspectives, such as those from 'interested but not yet skateboarders' individuals and more non-male identifying individuals could improve the quality of the research.

Another potential research topic could focus on the socio-spatial dynamics of urban skateboarding in Groningen. It would be intriguing to capture interactions between skateboarders, other urban citizens, and urban space, especially if the anti-skateboarding laws remain intact.

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Appendix I: Interview consent form

Interview Consent Form

Research title: "Making Space for Skateboarding in Groningen: assessing the municipality's approach to embracing the urban sport of skateboarding"

Main researcher/contact: Cameron Ohlson — c.m.ohlson@student.rug.nl

Other Participants: Özlemnur Ataol, Ph.D.; Charlotte Miller, MSc. (thesis supervisors)

Purpose of the study: This master's thesis focuses on Groningen's approach to embracing the urban sport of skateboarding through identifying the needs of skateboarders and comparing them with provided 'skate spaces'. This research therefore seeks to identify gaps between what is needed by skateboarders, what spaces and policies currently exist, and what is planned. By interviewing skateboarders of various backgrounds and skill levels, a more accurate picture of the community's needs can be obtained.

By signing this form of consent, the participants in the interview agree to the following conditions:

- The upcoming interview will take approximately 30 minutes.
- As an interviewee every person has been given sufficient information about the topic.
- Participation in this research is absolutely on a voluntary basis.
- The interviewee should be aware of the fact that he/she can always decide not to answer certain questions and has the full right to stop the interviewing in case of a certain discomfort regarding the questions or the time consumed.
- The interview will be recorded and additional notes can be taken during the conversation.
- Confidentiality is a main consideration in this research. Thus, the participant has the full right to remain anonymous.
- As a participant in the interview, each person that was interviewed has the right to see the transcribed interview data and ask for corrections.
- The access to the transcript will be available to a limited amount of people, including the main researcher, the thesis supervisor and the interviewee.
- The voice recording of the conversation will be deleted after being transcribed.
- All of the listed above have been carefully read and all considerations have been understood.

Name of interviewer:

Name of interviewee:

Date:

Signature:

Appendix II: Interview question list

1. What is your skateboarding background and skill level?
2. Where do you prefer to skateboard?
3. What does the ideal skate spot look like to you?
4. Do you have access to good skate spots?
5. Does skateboarding have a social aspect to you?
6. How do skate spots affect this socialization?
7. How would you describe the Groningen skateboarding community?
8. Do you skate in urban space?
9. Are you aware of any laws regarding skateboarding in Groningen?
10. What is your experience like interacting with non-skateboarders while skateboarding?
11. Do you have any unmet needs as a skateboarder and what can the municipality do to meet your needs?

Appendix III: Coding tree

The coding tree organizes **Skater Needs** into four main branches:

Spaces (blue)
- Programmed spaces — Safety, Accessibility, Quality
- Urban spaces — Size, Variety, Flow, Video making, Accessibility
- DIY/Hybrid Spaces — Creativity

Skateboarding community (green)
- Inclusion — Support
- Hanging out — Making friends
- Exclusion — Intimidating atmosphere, Gender-based, Skill-based, Age-based

External socialization (yellow)
- Positive social interactions — Entertainment, Meeting new people
- Conflicts — Getting kicked out
- Nuisance — Noise, Endangerment, Loitering, Civic responsibility

Relationship with municipality (red)
- Awareness of laws — Asserting rights
- Skate advocacy
- Hostile architecture — Ignoring laws, Reliance, Direct action

Appendix IV: Field observation framework


```
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  Determine space    │
                    │       type          │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
          ┌───────────────────┼───────────────────┐
          │                   │                   │
    ┌───────────┐      ┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐
    │ DIY spots │      │ Programmed   │     │ Urban skate  │
    │           │      │ skateparks   │     │    spots      │
    └───────────┘      └──────────────┘     └──────────────┘
          │                   │                   │
```

DIY spots	Programmed skateparks	Urban skate spots
• Does socialization happen at this spot? If so, who is socializing? • What obstacles are present? What are their spatial characteristics? • Is it clear who owns the land? • Does the spot offer privacy from non-skaters? • Is the spot sheltered?	• Does socialization happen at this spot? If so, who is socializing? • What obstacles are present? What are their spatial characteristics? • Is the spot accessible? To whom is it accessible? • Is the spot safe? Safe for whom?	• Does socialization happen at this spot? If so, who is socializing? • What obstacles are present? What are their spatial characteristics? • Is the spot accessible? To whom is it accessible? • Who else uses the space? Does skating conflict with these users?

Appendix V: Field observation schedule

Name of spot	Type of spot	Date of 1st visit	Time of 1st visit	Duration of 1st visit	Date of 2nd visit	Time of 2nd visit	Duration of 2nd visit
Skatepark Reitdiep	Programmed skatepark	Saturday, April 13, 2024	12:00	30 minutes	Monday, June 17, 2024	16:30	60 minutes
Skatepark Zonnelaan	Programmed skatepark	Saturday, April 13, 2024	13:00	30 minutes	Monday, June 17, 2024	17:55	60 minutes
Skatepark Kardinge	Programmed skatepark	Sunday, April 14, 2024	11:40	45 minutes	Friday, June 7, 2024	14:00	60 minutes
Skatepark Hoornsemeer	Programmed skatepark	Saturday, April 6, 2024	15:15	25 minutes	Sunday, May 26, 2024	15:00	60 minutes
Skatepark Helperzoom	Programmed skatepark	Saturday, April 6, 2024	16:20	2 minutes	Wednesday, June 5, 2024	12:00	60 minutes
Skatepark Stadspark	Programmed skatepark	Tuesday, March 26, 2024	12:30	180 minutes	Saturday, June 1, 2024	18:00	60 minutes
Skatepark Colosseum	Programmed skatepark	Saturday, December 16, 2023	14:00	110 minutes	Saturday, November 25, 2023	14:00	120 minutes
Oosterhavenbrug DIY	DIY spot	Wednesday, June 5, 2024	15:10	15 minutes	Friday, June 7, 2024	15:20	15 minutes
Driebondsbrug DIY	DIY spot	Wednesday, June 5, 2024	14:30	15 minutes	Friday, June 7, 2024	15:55	15 minutes
DIY Skatepark	DIY spot	Saturday, February 24, 2024	16:00	20 minutes	Thursday, May 2, 2024	17:30	30 minutes
Grote Markt	Urban spot	Thursday, March 21, 2024	13:40	20 minutes	Saturday, June 1, 2024	13:00	20 minutes
Forum/Nieuwe Markt	Urban spot	Thursday, March 21, 2024	14:10	20 minutes	Saturday, June 1, 2024	13:20	20 minutes
UMCG Noord	Urban spot	Thursday, March 21, 2024	14:45	20 minutes	Saturday, June 1, 2024	13:45	20 minutes
Aweg Bus Stops	Urban spot	Thursday, March 21, 2024	13:15	20 minutes	Wednesday, 5 June, 2024	12:00	20 minutes
Minerva	Urban spot	Saturday, March 9, 2024	10:15	20 minutes	Wednesday, 5 June, 2024	12:25	20 minutes
Europapark Station	Urban spot	Saturday, March 9, 2024	14:30	20 minutes	Wednesday, 5 June, 2024	13:15	20 minutes
Euroborg Stadium	Urban spot	Saturday, March 9, 2024	14:55	20 minutes	Wednesday, 5 June, 2024	13:45	20 minutes