

CONTESTING PUBLIC SPACE
SKATEBOARDING, URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND THE POLITICS OF PLAY

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ABSTRACT

Recent urban development schemes seek to produce new public spaces for the pursuit of leisure. Tourism, entertainment, and consumption figure among the intended uses of these increasingly policed and regulated spaces. The making of leisure cities takes place through dynamics of controlled inclusion and the masking of social disparities. However, challenges to the production of leisure spaces abound as everyday practices and aesthetic interventions also shape the urban landscape. Contestation unfolds at ground level through the embrace of public space as a site of spontaneous acts of creativity and grassroots projects invested in the widening of public participation. This study focuses on skateboarders' claims to the city through a survey of the multiple forces engaged in the production and regulation of skateboarding spaces in Chicago. Through participatory research, it chronicles social dynamics of contestation and accommodation grounded in the production of planned and found spaces. The study discusses skateboarding as an expression of creative play and critical intervention that envisions alternative built environments and inclusive social practices.

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of new public spaces is a key dynamic within processes of contemporary urban development. As nation-state economies decentralize and municipal governments compete for financing on a so-called global stage, the revitalization of urban centers takes place through downtown infrastructure investments. Within this particular scenario, city competence requires a dramatic multiplication of office space for corporate headquarters, specialized services, and information-based jobs (Sassen, 1991). Furthermore, it requires vast infrastructure for hosting conventioners, tourists, sporting events, and outdoor festivals (Spirou, 2006). Among the goals of city center investments, Central Business Districts seek to merge work and play spaces in order to encourage downtown living (Isenberg, 2004; Herzog, 2006). Rehabbed loft buildings, high-rise luxury condos, and elite leisure, entertainment, and consumption destinations figure among the amenities luring a “creative class” of young professionals to urban cores (Zukin, 1982; Florida, 2002; Clark, 2004). Within this framework of global competition and downtown development, the provision of new public spaces is an infrastructure asset for marketing cities and enticing the influx of affluent residents and tourist dollars.

Furthermore, the proliferation of new public spaces along North American Rust Belt cities takes shape through urban beautification programs. These programs set out to improve the “quality of life” of urban cores through new forms of controlled inclusion intent on “cleansing” downtowns for the proper circulation of capital. The most recent wave of urban renewal efforts informed by the imperative of global competence produce downtown public spaces that cater to the leisurely pursuits of affluent newcomers while pricing-out tenured working-poor and indigent people from their neighborhoods and single occupancy residences (Smith, 1996). Contemporary public space users increasingly experience surveillance technologies that control public conduct

and limit access to public life. Social control measures include the pervasive use of CCTV cameras, high-intensity street lighting, wrought-iron spiked gates, and enforced rules, regulations, and curfews (Davis, 1990). Recent arrangements between state, market, and civil society actors shape the emergence of privately owned public spaces such as corporate plazas, atriums, and walkways, and the enclosure of urban parks and other open spaces within the city (Kayden, 2000). The overall effect of these trends is the hardening of urban space. Hard spaces, defensive architecture, and crime prevention through urban design inform normative views within urban governance policies set on making poverty invisible while increasing social disparities.

This study examines the contestation of spatial hardening through a discussion of the political potential of everyday playful practices. Through an analysis of the relationship between play and contestation, the study explores the political resonance between street skateboarding and other playful spatial tactics. It develops social theories and interpretive methods that frame public space as a site of struggle, negotiation, contestation, and cooperation (Mitchell, 2003). The study focuses on the social import of street skateboarding and ephemeral spatial tactics as everyday practices and aesthetic playful interventions that undermine the intended uses of built forms and the moral panics inherent to the “cleansing” project concerned with urban beautification. The wilding of urban space disrupts normative prescripts of public life and forwards alternative visions of the city.

Within these alternative visions, everyday life constitutes a site of meaningful social relationships for understanding urban dynamics of domination and contestation. Realms of social life ascribed to mundane activities gain currency as possible harbingers of social change. For example, Lefebvre’s (1991/1974) spatial triad and de Certeau’s (1984) tactical practices

further founds the transformative potential of everyday life experiences. Among the “dialectical relationship which exists within the triad of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived”, representational space is “directly lived” by users and experienced as dominated space which “the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre, 1991/1974, p. 39). Likewise, de Certeau (1984) explains relations of domination and contestation through recourse to spatial arrangements. Top-down official spaces are conceived through strategies that assume “a place that can be circumscribed as *proper*” while “the place of the tactic belongs to the other” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix). Similar to representational spaces, tactical practices forward social change through bottom-up everyday lived experiences.

These top-down strategies and bottom-up tactics take place within an amalgam of multi-directional social relations. Rather than binary opposites, these procedures are tightly entwined and follow the dialectical relationship among perceived, conceived, and lived spaces (Lefebvre, 1991/1974, p. 39). The heterogeneous spaces of heterotopic contradictions reveal an overlapping of dominant and oppositional practices through the emergence of counter-sites (Foucault, 1986). A reassessment of power as relational, rather than unidirectional, informs spatial techniques employed for governing the social body. From this reading of the microphysics of power, “effects of domination are attributed not to ‘appropriation’, but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings” that should be modeled after “a perpetual battle rather than a contract regulating a transaction or the conquest of a territory” (Foucault, 1995/1977, p. 26). The unsettled nature of the “perpetual battle” as explanatory model is coupled with the pervasive capillary effects of power. Representational space (Lefebvre, 1991/1974), tactics of practice (de Certeau, 1984), and the microphysics of power (Foucault, 1995/1977) conform relevant discourses for understanding public space as a site of contention and constant negotiation.

The entanglements between official and alternative spatial practices in everyday life tactics guide this research project. This guiding concern is addressed through an exploration of the relationship between skateboarding and the politics of play. The concept of play is intrinsic to political contestation. Expressive movements such as Critical Mass and Reclaim the Streets best convey this relationship through playful tactics of disruption (Jordan, 1998; McDonald, 2006). However, the overlapping of play and contestation precedes these new social movements. For Huizinga (1955/1950), the play-element underscores cultural expression and remains a serious endeavor in so far as “play may be deadly yet still remain play – which is all the more reason for not separating play and contest as concepts” (p. 41). This blurring of the dichotomy between play and contest allows for an understanding of play as power. Much like Foucault’s (1995/1977) understanding of the microphysics of power as a “perpetual battle”, Huizinga (1955/1950, p. 41) forwards a reading of the play-element in which “play is battle and battle is play”. Through a broad discussion of the social meanings of play, this study sets out to draw key linkages between contesting public space and the politics of play.

Play also underscores key collectives that precede and inspire contemporary actions that take place through playful spatial tactics (Lasn, 2000; Klein, 2000). For example, Situationists practiced irreverent play as an essential component of their repertoire of collective challenges to the primacy of normative art by practicing creativity and wit in order to undo the false dichotomy between art and everyday life (Marcus, 1989; Sadler, 1998; Thompson, 2004). They concocted puzzling board games, unruly modes of writing, and unconventional ways of traversing the city in order to challenge capitalist prescriptions of the work/leisure divide. Furthermore, these cultural expressions embraced the entanglement of play and contest by ascribing a political

charge to activities commonly relegated to the domain of children (Huizinga, 1955/1950). Playing around was imbued with the seriousness of an outright revolution.

As a significant form of organized play, sport is a key site of contestation. Political protest such as the Black Power demonstration at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, opposition to colonial rule as in Geertz's account of Balinese cockfighting, and challenges to dominant cultures through alternative sports such as surfing and frisbee figure among varied dynamics of contestation through sport (Donnelly, 1988). The cultural opposition that characterizes alternative sport partially stems from 1960s counter-cultures that sought to challenge dominant structures through high-risk and thrill-seeking activities. Donnelly (1998) argues that

the playful and expressive qualities of these activities were accentuated precisely because the dominant sport forms lacked such characteristics and seemed overly rationalized, technologized, and bureaucratized. (p. 74).

Alternative sports address the highly regulated, organized, and structured nature of play within team sports through the reinsertion of spontaneous play and expressive movement within sporting practices.

This study focuses on skateboarding as a social enterprise that contests public space through the embodiment of a politics of play. As an alternative sport, skateboarding is both commodity and spatial tactic. According to Howe (2003),

skateboarding offers a way out, a path of opposition. A board is more than a slab of wood; it is ... a silent vote for freedom without fame, glory without glamour, entertainment without consumption (p. 368).

Alternative sports research embody productive tensions between the potential for subcultural resistance (Beal, 1995; Kelly, Pomerantz & Currie, 2008) and key commodification processes (Rinehart, 1998; Rinehart, 2008) within the social practice of skateboarding. These tensions remain productive for studying possibilities of meaningful social change in as much as the

wholesale incorporation of cultural expressions that challenge capitalist social relations within the fold of mainstream commercial enterprises remains incomplete. However, current skateboarding popularity within mainstream media circuits and urban development is unprecedented. Thomas (2009) explains that

when I was a kid, skateboarding was a struggle. It was a struggle to find people WHO were into it, a struggle to find a place to do it, and it was definitely a struggle to get acceptance from the general population (p. 26).

This newfound acceptance fuels both the production of planned skateboarding spaces and the increased criminalization of skateboarding in found spaces.

Other alternative sports such as snowboarding (Heino, 2000) and BMX riding (Rinehart & Grenfell, 2002) also hinge on dynamics of contestation and cooptation. At the center of these dynamics lies an incommensurable divide between grassroots practices engaged in trespassing, loitering, and defacement of property and global corporate media images, merchandise, and spectacular mega events. Skateboarding harbors an uneasy rift between significant challenges to normative assumptions about urban land use and political concessions aimed at policing through play. This study examines skateboarding as an alternative sport practice engaged in the production of contradictory spaces. Through the juxtaposition of varied built environments, this study argues for the emergence of skateboarding terrains as sites for both practicing and contesting urban governance.

The study sets spatial appropriation within a narrative of the entangled emergence of skateboarding styles and terrains. It explores variations among purpose-built facilities. The study contrasts the planned or purpose-built form to found spaces and vernacular landscapes (Jackson, 1984). Everyday struggles for public space frame both variations of skateboarding terrains. Skateboard spaces encompass a wide variety of spatial experiments that range from

collective creativity through playful spatial tactics to social control through top-down urban design. The ebb-and-flow of purpose-built and found spaces that structures this study mimics skateboarders' mobility as they negotiate sanctioned and unsanctioned desired spaces.

Noteworthy contradictions arise from the study of alternative sport as a meaningful avenue for practicing contestation. Although Beal (1995) depicts skateboarding as a cultural site of social resistance that challenges dominant norms and values, her ethnographic study in northeastern Colorado also unveils male skateboarders' reinforcement of normative patriarchal hierarchies through sexist behavior. Likewise, Rinehart (2005) forcefully demonstrates how skateboarding reproduces misogyny in print media advertisements through a critical content analysis of trade magazines. On both performative and representational fronts, skateboarding lacks the potential for equitable social change when considering these findings. Furthermore, the complicity of this alternative sport with social injustices deepens when accounting for the multiple intersections of gender inequalities and the exclusion of women from public space (Rose, 1993). Although constituting a meaningful "path of opposition" (Howe, 2008), skateboarding also conforms to dominant power hierarchies and reproduces social inequalities that perpetuate contemporary race, class, and gender privileges.

Along with the interpretation of media documents and observed practices, this study of built environments also contributes to an understanding of the contradictions inherent to the practice of skateboarding as a site of privilege and contestation. Ethnographic research on BMX (bicycle motocross) spaces (Rinehart & Grenfell, 2002) in San Bernardino, California exposes two distinct built environments defined mostly by user age. While children procure grassroots ad hoc courses, permanent corporate-sponsored tracks remain the domain of adults. Youthful ingenuity and market commodification collude through BMX built forms. These findings further

complicate the reproduction of privilege at the intersection of race, class, and gender by considering the relationships between age groups and material spatial practices within an emerging alternative sport.

Skateboarding terrains concur with BMX spaces on a guiding juxtaposition between illicit grassroots initiatives and corporate-sponsored for-profit enterprises. However, these alternative sport sites differ in the material conditions considered most desirable for each activity. Dirt courses and jumps are usually located in woods, mountains, and other rural areas suited for BMX speed, flight, and exhilaration. A large wheel diameter and a pedal, gear, and chain mechanism allow for greater mobility across a wider range of versatile terrains. Although BMX riders also excel in urban environments, skateboarding thrives in modern cities as an intricate spatial tactic with meaningful political consequences. Street skateboarders constitute unusual stakeholders in urban politics through negotiated struggles for public space and the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996/1968; Mitchell, 2003).

Extraordinary feats that require awe-inspiring settings and high-tech equipment such as a 75-foot mega ramp jump over a section of the Great Wall (Phelps, 2005) or a 1,600-foot skateboard to BASE jump drop into the Grand Canyon (Hamm, 2006) push skateboarding towards the pinnacle of alternative sport spectacular achievements. These death-defying endeavors readily conform to a series of monikers that include “adventure”, “action” and “extreme” employed to qualify alternative sport (Rinehart, 1998; Rinehart & Sydnor, 2003). The sociology of risk-taking scrutinizes similar spectacular daredevil enterprises through the critical lens of edgework (Lyng, 2005). At the level of everyday spatial configurations, street skateboarders face a different set of challenges, risks, and goals through the creative appropriation of urban environments.

This study couples alternative sport research and urban studies research that explores tensions between contestation and cooptation through skateboarding. Commercialization and media representations are key processes within the sport scholarship addressed above. In contrast, the urban studies literature on skateboarding focuses on conflict and exclusion within the context of civic participation in public life. This research is organized around the social meanings of skateboarding in public spaces (Flusty, 2000; Ferrell, 2001; Woolley & Johns, 2001; Stratford, 2002; Stevens & Dovey, 2004; Tonkiss, 2006; Franck & Stevens, 2007) and the regulation of skateboarding through the emergence of skateparks (Jones & Graves, 2000; Németh, 2006; Howell, 2008; Chiu, 2009). Coupling sport and urban studies reveals multifaceted scenarios for the study of public space, the politics of play, and skateboarding in contemporary Chicago.

Rather than focusing on individual skateboarders, this research project explores the making of urban space through the social practice of skateboarding. The project highlights instances of conflict and negotiation in everyday public space settings. These instances constitute snapshots of a fleeting collective performance staged across a variety of urban landscapes. The study chronicles a wide range of skateboarding styles and terrains in order to portray a panoramic view of the transformative potential of alternative uses of urban space. Through spatial appropriation and redefinition, skateboarders collectively perform the city in unintended ways. This “directly lived” space that “the imagination seeks to change” (Lefebvre, 1991/1974, p. 39) is a shared experience achieved through everyday expressions of creativity. The social practice of skateboarding challenges prescribed notions of public exchange and forwards alternative visions of the city.

The text is organized in three chapters that discuss the relationship between skateboarding, urban development, and politics of play. The first chapter chronicles a significant shift in urban governance from industrial urban renewal to postindustrial leisure economies. A discussion of contemporary struggles over freshwater surfing in Chicago prefaces a broad register of social strife over land use and urban space. Reiff (2008) qualifies these social processes by stating that

throughout Chicago's history, spatial contestation has encompassed a wide variety of issues, from race relations to divergent views on land use. Chicagoans, like residents of other cities, have divided over all aspects of urban space, from how it is planned, to how it is experienced in everyday life, to the less tangible question of how it is perceived (p. 56).

The chapter addresses land use struggles along the intersection of space, power, and culture within the context of accelerated globalization processes and the production of leisure cities.

The second chapter turns towards the ideological underpinnings of planned spaces and the emergence of the skatepark as a sanctioned site of practice. Neoclassical urban design and the play movement figure among the social forces that shaped the nineteenth century North American industrial city. These forces shaped public spaces, such as boulevards and playgrounds, for civic uses and the socialization of marginalized people. In contrast to these Progressive Era spaces, skateparks constitute postindustrial playgrounds for the production of leisure cities. The chapter concludes with an exposition of research experiences at four Chicago skateparks that portrays meaningful variations among built terrains, social dynamics, and land use struggles.

The final chapter discusses street skateboarding through found spaces and the possibility of an open city. According to Rivlin (2007),

found spaces offer an openness that appeals to people, one that is casual and spontaneous and where they find possibilities that are not available in conventional sites (p.44).

This openness contrasts with the prescribed uses of the playground envisioned by Progressive era reformers. However, the relationship between planned and found spaces is presented as interdependent rather than dichotomous. Through a depiction of the modern city envisioned by twentieth century International Style architecture, the chapter documents the urban design practices that enabled the emergence of street skateboarding. The plaza at the foot of the skyscraper figures among the built forms deemed “dead public spaces” due to the proliferation of defensible architecture throughout the modern city. Skateboarders appropriate and redefine these hard spaces as skatespots by performing unintended uses of the built environment. The chapter concludes with a discussion of skatespots as critical spatial practices and an exposition of research experiences at spectacle events staged throughout Chicago that performed skateboarding as art, crime, and sport.

CHAPTER 1:

SPACE, POWER, AND CULTURE IN THE LEISURE CITY

Cities encompass multiple geographic scales and cultural flows through the everyday production of urban space. This chapter explores the emergence of leisure cities through the intersectionality of space, power, and culture. The first section chronicles recent struggles over the unusual practice of freshwater surfing in Chicago. This discussion sets the stage for a broad review of key spatial dimensions within ongoing processes of accelerated globalization. The second section reviews meaningful aspects of globalization processes through a discussion of mobility and connectivity. These categories are further illustrated through the example of the global diffusion of surfing cultures. The third section of this chapter forwards the spatial turn as pivotal for noteworthy interventions on the politics of identity, difference, and representation. The final section grounds these discussions through reference to the emergence of Chicago as a postindustrial leisure city.

Urban Struggles for Waves

During June 2009, Chicago Park District officials lifted a longstanding surfing ban on a few city beaches. After several years of petitions and protests, local surfers along with the Lake Michigan Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation achieved the legalization of surfing in Chicago (Possley, 2009). The use of all flotation devices has been outlawed in Chicago beaches since an accidental drowning of three children while on an inflatable raft that dates back several decades. Local surfers have circumvented these legal measures by traveling to the Indiana coast of Lake Michigan or illegally surfing in Chicago. Challenges to the surfing ban have been met with police arrests and criminal prosecution. For example, Chicago surfer Jack Flynn was jailed

overnight after attempting to surf on a cold and stormy December day. In May 2009, professional surfer James Pribram and a group of local surfers, including Flynn, paddled out in protest along the Magnificent Mile while successfully evading apprehension by Chicago police officers patrolling the waters by boat (Surfing no longer illegal..., 2009). Flynn coupled this direct action event with an online petition that gathered thousands of signatures from supporters from as far as Bali enthused at the possibility of including Chicago among other surfing destinations (Brotman, 2009). The repeal of the surfing ban constitutes a significant victory for a rare group of city dwellers invested in redefining urban space through expressive culture, local land-use struggles, and transnational collective action.

Regardless of rules and regulations on the books, surfing thousands of miles from an ocean is a challenging endeavor unto itself. In North America, freshwater surfers track local winds that blow across the Great Lakes and create good conditions for riding waves. The fall, winter, and early spring seasons are most ideal for surfing in Chicago. With the advancement of wetsuit technologies, Chicago surfers weather frigid temperatures and ward off hypothermia during these seasons. Although most often conceived as a leisurely pursuit proper of the warm climates off the California or Hawaii Pacific coastlines, surfing is practiced in the most unlikely of places. Its transformation from an ancient Polynesian art into a global sporting lifestyle is widespread and has intensified along with a growing constellation of alternative sports (Booth, 2003). Professional competition circuits, corporate sponsorship, and media exposure set the stage for the commodification of surfing through the mainstreaming of alternative sport practices within the folds of entertainment, fashion, and retail industries (Rinehart & Sydnor, 2003). Even

so, Chicago surfers participate in the global exchange of surfing culture while maintaining an outsider identity stemming from an outlawed practice.¹

Both freshwater and ocean surfing are enabled through particular coastal geologies, reef formations, water depth, water temperature, air temperature, storm systems, winds, and a host of other climatic conditions that make for an unpredictable and inaccessible spectator sport. These conditions hinder the reproduction and dissemination of surfing while advancing a deep legacy of struggle bounded by place-specific characteristics.² Surfing subcultures thrive on territorial claims that differentiate those who belong from the rest. The ‘locals only’ graffiti is often reproduced along beach built structures in order to ward off visitors competing for waves and enforce a sense of identity founded on territoriality.³ Surfers craft a fringe status from the shared experiences of having “historically differentiated and separated themselves from ‘outsiders’” (Booth, 2003, p. 316). Even though this script runs contrary to the strong ties between surfing and international tourism as well as the global media diffusion of surfing images, territorial identities forged in the surf line-up continue to compete for access to a limited set of waves.

Unlike other board sports such as skateboarding and snowboarding, surfing eludes overt mainstream exposure due to the lack of artificial or purpose-built venues on which to train and compete. Skateparks and snowparks recreate desirable elements found “in the wild” (Whitley, 2009) as well as new terrain apt for the repetition of motions. These purpose-built facilities most

¹ Although a significant victory for local surfers, the legalization of surfing in Chicago constitutes more of a loosening of regulations rather than an open access mandate. Posted rules state that “non-motorized water sports can be enjoyed only at designated locations and times as determined by the Chicago Park District...” and “participation in these activities at locations which are not specifically designated may lead to fine and/or arrest by the Chicago Police Department.” Furthermore, rules state that “the Chicago Park District cannot be liable for injuries sustained while surfing, kiteboarding, windsurfing, sailboarding, stand up paddling, kayaking, canoeing or participating in any other self- or wind-propelled board or paddle sports or other non-motorized water sport activities as these activities are considered dangerous under Illinois law 745 ILCS 10/3 109” (Non-Motorized Water Sports..., 2009).

² Booth (2003) notes that the ancient Polynesian art went into decline after Calvinist missionaries banned surfing in Hawaii during the nineteenth century while the twentieth century tourist industry helped diffuse surfing worldwide.

³ See Blomley (2004, p.19) for a photo of a variation of the ‘locals only’ graffiti that reads: “If you don’t live hear, don’t surf hear”. The author discusses surfing along with community gardening and squatting as examples of “property claims that escape or complicate the conventional categories” (p. 20).

often accommodate non-participants and form part of larger leisure complexes. However, the promise of an artificial wave may transform surfers' fringe status and intensify the commercialization of surfing. Hunter (2009) argues for the potential implications of the successful development of surfparks.

For years conjecture about live televised surf competitions, surfing finally breaking into Middle America, and the possibility of surfing becoming an Olympic sport has hinged on the possibility of a water park capable of making the perfect wave (no page).

As the original board sport, surfing embodies a long history of struggles for open access and environmental conservation of beaches. With the prospect of the surfpark, industries seeking to profit from surfing could pursue a proactive role in urban development projects similar to traditional sport stadiums.

Chicago surfers participate in urban land struggles intersected by issues of open access, sanctioned leisure, and public safety on lakefront beaches. These contests for urban land do not hinge on the promise of purpose-built surfing facilities but rather contribute to the historical making of Chicago. Freshwater surfers join a historically diverse cast of lakefront protagonist that include squatters led by Ma and Cap Streeter who claimed the spoils of the 1871 Great Fire and Progressive Era philanthropy headed by Montgomery Ward's legal battles to halt urban development and create a lakefront park (Wille, 1972). Currently, a significant portion of lakefront contention revolves around public space for recreation, commercial, and real estate development projects along with local government failed efforts to win the 2016 Olympic bid. Among everyday lakefront users, surfers negotiate space with lifeguards, sunbathers, swimmers, police, dogs and dog owners, beach volleyball players, skateboarders, in-line skaters, bicyclists, joggers, onlookers, tourists, and other water sports enthusiasts. These regulated leisure activities

contribute to the making of contemporary Chicago beaches as sites of negotiation, struggle, and accommodation.

Lakefront development is driven by an amalgam of social forces with diverse motives such as commercial profit, historical preservation, public safety, and citizen participation. The recent proliferation of leisure practices along the lakefront corresponds to a paradigmatic shift in urban governance from securing ideal conditions for industrial manufacturing to more often allocating local government resources towards the everyday spaces of entertainment and consumption. Built environments, security, and citizenship become further entwined within a context of increased interdependence between leisure spaces and economic development. As a result, public resources are unevenly distributed toward the social reproduction of tourists and local elites who can afford leisure while poor racialized populations are systematically excluded from the city. Urban development projects such as high-rise condo buildings, multi-level parking garages, wrought-iron gated parks, and fine-dinning restaurants cater to affluent city dwellers. The development of these amenities tend to price-out poor populations and contribute to efforts that seek to make poverty invisible.⁴ Municipal governments increasingly envision public safety and citizenship participation in urban spaces as an exclusive domain of affluent populations.

Top-down visions of an exclusive city take shape through urban design practices that pursue the criminalization of poverty. Along with city ordinances against pan handling, rough sleeping, street vending, and other unsanctioned activities, property owners seek to exclude poor

⁴ Both Berman (1982) and Harvey (2006) discuss Baudelaire (1869/1947) in order to tease out key linkages between social inequality and built environments. In “The Eyes of the Poor”, Baudelaire describes an exchange between wealthy café goers and a poor family lurking from outside. The eyes of the father say “All the gold of the poor world must have found its way onto those walls” while a patron begs: “Those people are insufferable with their great saucer eyes. Can’t you tell the proprietor to send them away?” (p. 53). As part of Haussmann’s military plan for Paris, the spectacle of the new café is contingent on keeping poverty out of sight.

people through defensive built environments. Hard spaces, defensive architecture, and crime prevention through urban design inform normative views within urban governance policies set on making poverty invisible while increasing wealth disparities. For example, the Caltrans District 7 Headquarters Replacement Building in Los Angeles and renderings of the Freedom Tower plaza in New York City display urban design schemes that “strike a defensive posture” through copious concrete and steel bollards as well as solid walls and other overt barriers (Ouroussoff, 2007).

The punitive regulation of public life is on the rise. Defensive design measures contribute to a high surveillance scenario that spreads thick across varied urban centers. Both Haussmann’s Paris and contemporary New York City and Los Angeles conform examples among a plethora of cities in which municipal governments seek to mask poverty through built forms. With the dramatic rise in global wealth disparities and disinvestment in social welfare programs, governing differences among populations becomes increasingly challenging. In Chicago, the linkages between lakefront leisure and urban unrest contribute to longstanding race, class, and gender inequalities. Chicago beaches have long been contested spaces among a diverse gamut of users. The lack of built structures along the lakefront has secured recreational spaces in which defensive measures are implemented mostly through legislation rather than urban design. The recently lifted surfing ban is just one example of social policies put in place for the exclusion of targeted sectors of the population.

Racial segregation plays a central role in the social dynamics that make up public life along the lakefront. During 1919, a series of race riots erupted after a group of Whites assassinated a Black youth on a raft after accidentally floating near a beach designated for Whites only (Fisher, 2006). These riots mark a troubled past plagued with state-sponsored

racism that continue to intensify social inequalities along race and class lines in contemporary Chicago. In uncertain times, new immigrants join the ranks of the descendants of the Great Migration as scapegoats for the source of endemic social problems that include economic decline, street crimes, and dwindling social welfare programs. New arrangements of urban space on the defensive arise from the multiplication of plural publics in the contemporary city.

Surfing, Mobility, and Connectivity

The “turf wars” played out around surfing destinations correspond to both place-based identity formation processes and the emergence of global media cultures. Rather than framed as either local or global, surfing practices develop across a wide range of forums at interdependent sites. The production of surfing as commodity takes shape through an amalgam of social actors that may include a professional surfer ripping through the barrel of a breaking wave, a professional photographer snapping shots, and a teenager flipping through a glossy surf magazine. A series of corresponding sites may include an Australian beach, a New York City-based printing company, and a big-box bookstore in Illinois. These interdependent actors and sites pertain mostly to the commercial profitability of the surf industry. Furthermore, these commodity chains are linked to grassroots struggles for beach access and environmental conservation. Media exposure in glossy print, television broadcast, and computer screens disseminates surfing to unforeseen places.⁵ For example, the teenager flipping through a magazine in a bookstore may very well be a freshwater surfer engaged in the struggles for legalizing surfing in Chicago. Surfing plays out as a social practice that congeals through

⁵ Benjamin (1936/1968) foreshadows the unforeseen reach of this media mix: “But only a few decades after its invention, lithography was surpassed by photography. For the first time in the process of pictorial reproduction, photography freed the hand of the most important artistic functions which henceforth devolved only upon the eye looking into the lens. Since the eye perceives more swiftly than the hand can draw, the process of pictorial reproduction was accelerated so enormously that it could keep pace with speech” (p. 219).

circuits of media entertainment, lifestyle branding, sports performance, and transnational activism.

The processes responsible for the ongoing dissemination of surfing correspond to broad social dynamics of contemporary cultural production. These dynamics proceed at multiple scales that range from the local and national to the regional and global. Through new media technologies, cultural products traverse geographic scales within heterogeneous, fragmented, and uneven circuits of dissemination. Unlike nation-state projects of cultural homogeneity and integration, Hannerz (1989) states that these interdependent circuits contribute to the formation of a plural global ecumene. According to Featherstone (1990), this emerging social formation consists of

a process whereby a series of cultural flows produce both: *firstly*, cultural homogeneity and cultural disorder, in linking together previously isolated pockets of relatively homogenous culture which in turn produces more complex images of the other as well as generating identity-reinforcing reactions; and also *secondly*, transnational cultures, which can be understood as genuine ‘third cultures’ which are oriented beyond national boundaries (p. 6).

Contemporary surfing cultures engage in both of these processes through the simultaneous entrenchment of place-based identities forged through territorial strife and the proliferation of media images, lifestyle brands, and tourism at a transnational scale. Furthermore, Featherstone (1990) argues that within the global ecumene “there is little prospect of a unified global culture, rather there are global cultures in the plural” (p. 10). The multiple sites of cultural contestation, production, and consumption take shape as contradictory processes that participate in what Robertson (1992) describes as dynamics of particularism and universalism.

A wide variety of interconnected cultural products from sport, music, food, fashion, tourism, and lifestyle industries make up part of the multidimensional processes of contemporary

globalization. Much like Marx & Engels (1978/1848) defined capital as a social relationship rather than a finite object, Nederveen Pieterse (2001) argues that globalization is best understood as

a process and not an outcome: it refers to the trend toward the growing interconnectedness of different parts of the world, not to *their* being interconnected (p. 22).

Both the integrated nature of these cultural products and their worldwide dissemination contribute to the articulation of global cultures. However, cultural production within times of intensified interdependence also conform complex processes rather than predictable outcomes. The globalization process does not produce a unified whole, in part, because cultural reception, use, and reproduction are not predetermined but rather ongoing. In this sense, the global spread of interconnected cultural production is less about end results in the form of artifacts, merchandise, and images and more about multidimensional and uneven social processes in the making.

The ongoing process of interconnecting global cultures within a fragmented global ecumene differs from the aspirations of geographically bound and uniform national cultures. While the former seems to defy nation-state boundaries, the latter is construed to encapsulate cultural homogeneity. However, the global and national scales are interlinked, co-constitutive, and take shape through simultaneous processes. A procedural perspective on the relationship between these scales depicts strong tendencies of interdependence among local, national, regional, and global forces. From this perspective, globalization processes precede the formation of the nation-state and inform its on-going cultural make up. The oppositional binary between the national and global scales fails when considering long historical processes rather than

perceived present-day outcomes.⁶ The global ecumene as “a process whereby a series of cultural flows produce” (Featherstone, 1990, p. 6) further interconnectedness among uniform and plural expressions that result in both parochial and cosmopolitan social dynamics.

These contradictory processes increasingly bring together different parts of the world through the accelerated movement of people, commodities, and images across national borders. According to Castells (1989) contemporary globalization takes shape through increased mobility and interconnection producing a social trend toward “the historical emergence of the space of flows, superseding the meaning of the space of places” (p. 348). New information technologies work as fundamental instruments within economic and cultural processes that become less bound to geographic places. The “space of places” is also superseded through a series of overlapping “dimensions of global cultural flows” that materialize as ethnoscaples, technoscaples, financescaples, mediascaples, and ideoscaples (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33). These dimensions signal the increased mobility and differentiation among people, machinery, money, images, and ideas.⁷

Furthermore Appadurai (1996) points out that throughout

at all periods in human history, there have been some disjunctures in the flows of these things, but the sheer speed, scale, and volume of each of these flows are now so great that the disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture (p. 37).

The “space of flow” and the “dimensions of cultural flows” work against the static nature of the center-periphery model and forward nuanced understanding of contemporary globalization processes.⁸

⁶ Sassen (2001) states that while “Much of social science has operated with the assumption of the nation-state as a container, representing a unified spatiotemporality. Much of history, however, has failed to confirm this assumption” (p. 206).

⁷ See Soja (2006) for a succinct exploration of the “abounding adaptability” of the suffix “scape” that “seems to evoke a visual and panoramic sensitivity, an invitation to explore the globality of whatever is attached to it” (p. xv).

⁸ Concepts of flow challenge both the center-periphery model upheld by world-systems theory at a global scale (Wallerstein, 2004) and the concentric circle model proper of the urban ecology theory at a city scale (Park & Burgess, 1967/1925).

As an alternative explanatory model, the rubric of flows reasserts and transforms the social meanings of urban space. New transportation and communication technologies foster greater mobility of people, commodities, and images throughout contemporary cities. As a key dimension of the processes of globalization, diverse cultural goods increasingly permeate a wide range of everyday and nightlife scenarios. For example, the commercialization of surfing cultures spreads products such as board shorts and surf wax further away from the beach across rural, urban, and suburban consumer landscapes. The emergence of niche marketing and lifestyle branding disseminates surf images within a growing constellation of extreme sports and beach cultures. These newfound terrains of reproduction and consumption broaden the reach of surfing goods.

Furthermore, surf culture is both shaped by interconnected “dimensions of cultural flows” and shapes popular expressions of the “space of flows”. New sports such as skateboarding and snowboarding developed from the ancient art of surfing by translating the exhilaration of riding ocean waves to modern urban settings and snow-covered rural mountains.⁹ These leisurely pursuits epitomize the experience of increased mobility through processes of accelerated globalization. The term “surfing” itself is also out of the water. “Channel surfing” and “surfing the net” dub new patterns of social relationships forged through electronic media technologies. These practices parallel the flow of riding waves to the mobility of images across television and computer screens. Whether on a couch or in the streets, surfing gains currency through the flow

⁹ The flowboard is a hybrid device that mimics the feel of snowboarding through a contraption similar to a skateboard. It enables a second-order simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994) in which the sidewalk surfing achieved by skateboarders now translates to asphalt snowboarding through the use of flowboards. The Flow Rider also denotes a hybrid practice of wakeboarding and surfing enabled through a stationary wave. This technology is precursor to the surfpark and the promise of an artificial breaking wave. Both the flowboard and the Flow Rider further the linkages between the centrality of flow and the emergence of new sports.

of commercialized practices and images throughout increasingly interconnected parts of the world.

Within the spatial context of flows, cities occupy a meaningful position across local, national, regional, and global scales of experience. Urban spaces produce social relationships in which these scales simultaneously overlap giving way to ambiguous, contingent, and contested lived scenarios. While “assumptions of the nation-state as unified container” and the “center-periphery model” posit the development of citizenship at the national scale, cities remain a key loci for the shaping of participation in public life. Holston & Appadurai (1999) argue that

although one of the essential projects of nation building has been to dismantle the historic primacy of urban citizenship and to replace it with the national, cities remain the strategic arena for the development of citizenship. They are not the only arena. And not all cities are strategic. But with their concentrations of the nonlocal, the strange, the mixed, and the public, cities engage most palpably the tumult of citizenship (p. 2).

The intensification of cultural flows further increases the movement of a plethora of social actors across national borders and their uneasy concentration within cities. Rather than a scenario in which, as Castells (1989) claims, “social meaning evaporates from places” and where “people live in places” but “power rules through flows” (p. 349); the city and its urban spaces continue to constitute meaningful sites for cultural exchange and political struggle. Moreover, cities play a key role within the ongoing processes of contemporary globalization. According to Holston & Appadurai (1999),

it has become common in the literature on national identity to consider such transformations in terms of a dichotomy between the national and the global. Cities usually drop out of the analysis because this dichotomy tends to present globalization, especially of labor, capital, and communication, as neutralizing the importance of place, indeed of rendering it irrelevant (p. 2-3).

The social dynamics of global cultural flows amplify, rather than diminish, the social meanings and political import of urban spaces by intensifying the interconnectedness of previously disparate experiences.

Both the concept of “flow” and the term “global” designate contemporary trends of spatial reconfiguration. Places gain meanings within these trends through the materialization of overlapping geographic scales. Rather than making places irrelevant, new information and transportation technologies highlight the centrality of places within a social milieu of increasing interconnections among parts of the world. The global ecumene gains currency as an explanatory model of the spatial dimensions of an ongoing process constituted by interconnections among cultural flows. However, King (2004) argues that representations of social dynamics on a world scale abound:

from a discourse of civilizations, races, empires, tribes, peoples and the oikumene, to more recent notions of the international, transnational, global, world system (with its center-periphery conceptualizations), postnational, postcolonial, neoimperial, neocolonial, postmodern and others. All of these alternatives attempt to pinpoint the significant loci of power, influence and hegemony in the world and the strength and direction in which economic, political or cultural power flows from one part of the world to another (p. 29).

While the intensification of cultural, financial, and demographic flows constitutes a key dimension of contemporary globalization processes, these dynamics have been historically consistent even under widespread assumptions of the nation-state as homogenizing container.

Cities and urban spaces continue to foster a diverse arrangement of contested social practices. The “space of flow” heightens, rather than diminishes, the “space of place” through a tumultuous amplification of these arrangements.¹⁰ Furthermore, the “dimensions of global

¹⁰ Sassen (1991) argues for a heightened centrality of place as the rise of contemporary global finance capital undermines national economies through command-and-control centers of place-specific highly specialized services.

cultural flows” that correspond to disjunctive mobility of people, machinery, money, images and ideas also intensify the social import of bounded places. King (1991) argues that these trends of spatial reconfiguration produce “transformations in the built environment, in architecture, in the physical and spatial forms of cities” while diffusing “the meaning and significance of these changes, at a global scale” (p. 149). Cities encompass multiple geographic scales and cultural flows through the contested everyday production of urban space.

The Spatial Turn

The modernism/postmodernism debate on the cultural front seeks to understand late twentieth century processes of social transformation. During the 1980s, the concept of modernity quickly gained currency as either an incomplete project worth pursuing (Habermas, 1983) or a relic dismissed through a widespread incredulity of metanarratives (Lyotard, 1984). Postmodern proponents forcefully challenged the universal salience and exclusionary zeal of Enlightenment values within the social sciences. Moreover, they shunned linear historical progression founded on scientific predictability through an embrace of uncertain and ambiguous social outcomes. While modern times were concerned with temporal prognosis, postmodern sensibilities participated in a paradigmatic shift toward understanding social relations in spatial terms. A focus on the material and symbolic import of social space as a previously neglected realm of social life remains a lofty goal within the social sciences.

The spatial turn within the social sciences prompts a complex and critical reassessment of built and natural environments as constitutive of social relations. Discursive and material processes of contemporary accelerated globalization deepen the currency of emergent fields of inquiry invested in the production of spatialized epistemologies. Social space has taken center stage in varied research areas such as cultural geography, new urban sociology, and transnational

studies. The multiple intersections of human agency, institutional structures, and physical environments underline the reframing of pressing social problems in spatial terms. While the social sciences make room for space new social concepts and emerging social processes are taken for granted under the bend of the spatial turn.

Through a survey of seminal works set on this turn, Keith & Pile (1993) outline differing theoretical conceptualization of social space. The tensions ascribed to the advent of postmodernism are enmeshed with the crises of representation, the downfall of authenticity, and the reassertion of space over the centrality of a heroic class struggle understood in temporal terms. Significant disparities between theories of postmodernism forwarded by Jameson (1991) and Soja (1989) illustrate the increasing currency of space in contemporary social theory. Keith & Pile (1993) argue that Jameson reads space as a new “template from which the secrets of reality are to be read” while Soja counters this claim by asserting that “space is not an innocent backdrop to position, it is itself filled with politics and ideology” (p. 4). Jameson’s space-as-template theory transfers the heroic potential of the working class onto everyday practices of resistance set on a static backdrop of social space. Absolute global space trumps linear time progression in this vision of social reality. Postmodernism is then conceived as a cultural logic of a current stage of capitalism that privileges the widening spread of glossy surfaces over the historical depth of economic determinism. In line with Foucault’s rendering of heterogeneous space, Soja notes the contradictory constitution of social space. According to Soja (1989), the spatial turn embraced by Jameson traces cognitive maps onto the schizophrenic present while ignoring “how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life” (p. 6).

Notions of absolute space reproduce naturalized prescriptions of spatial organization and distribution as a static and monolithic stage on which human agency unravels. An anthropocentric ontology underlines a prolonged hierarchical split between text (action) and context (space). Within the former resides social action characterized through the dynamic forward-march of time while the latter houses a taken-for-granted mute backdrop. Massey (1994) troubles the space-time split within the social scientific production of knowledge by arguing that “the spatial is not simply opposed to the temporal as its absence, as a lack” (p. 4). Furthermore, a narrative of loss informs key contributions to the spatial turn in which the advent of postmodernism and the accelerated mode of globalization result in unwarranted cultural fragmentation. Cognitive mapping (Jameson, 1991) and the spatial fix (Harvey, 1990) are conjured up as epistemological remedies to the ontological loss of a modern unitary identity. From a feminist psychoanalytic standpoint, Massey (1994) states that “the requirement for such a defensive and counterpositional definition of identity, is culturally masculine” (p. 7). Harvey’s reworking of capitalist annihilation of space by time through time-space compression finds stable footing in the spatial fix. Physical buildings and infrastructures are given material credence as the stuff from which localities are made. Massey (1994) debunks the spatial fix not only as motivated by a patriarchal narrative of lost identity but also informed by a foundational juxtaposition between Time-as-Becoming and Space-as-Being (p. 136). Similar to Jameson’s omission of the power dynamics inherent to space as social product (Lefebvre, 1991/1974), Harvey’s search for fixity relies on a definition of space as taken-for-granted material reality. Dominant theories of postmodernism and globalization have made room for space within the social sciences through narratives of loss founded on a privileged experience of modernity.

The schism between modern and postmodern renditions of space is relevant to an outlining of emerging heterogeneous spaces as sites of contestation. While Jameson (1991) and Harvey (1990) hold on to absolute space through a recasting of class analysis, Soja (1989) and Massey (1994) forward relational space and open the terrain of political agency. Class struggle no longer constitutes the motor of history in an epistemological context in which space is also indicative of social relations. From this vantage point, social space is both a tool for capitalist accumulation and consumption as well as a site for political contestation, social experimentation, and human creativity.

The City that Plays: Urban Leisure and the New Chicago

The social reconfigurations captured through the spatial turn and the model of flow unfold throughout the ongoing processes of accelerated globalization. A dramatic shift in the role of cities as places for a host of unforeseen social dynamics forms a central part of these processes. In North American rust belt cities, a key dynamic unfolds with the onset of a steep decline in industrial production. The loss of jobs and consequent population that result from increased capital mobility press city officials to experiment with postindustrial models of economic development. Cities once anchored by the relative stability of manufacturing jobs scramble for footloose capital within a scenario of place-specific competitors at multiple scales beyond city limits. These range from suburban and metropolitan areas to emerging exurbs and edge cities. The “space of flow” shapes the contemporary contours of cities through the emergence of social dynamics of intensified mobility and connectivity.

Harvey (1989) details a key component of an increasingly normative urban development model within processes of accelerated globalization of cities. Although focused on Baltimore, the transformation in urban governance described as a process “from managerialism to

entrepreneurialism” has steadily taken place across North American rust belt cities. In the United States, this transformation came with the end of the federally subsidized urban renewal era and the subsequent intensification of private sector funded urban development projects. Finance capital and land value speculation became leading social forces in the shaping of urban landscapes (Harvey, 1973). With the decline in federal subsidies for projects such as highway and public housing construction, local government focus shifted from managing public assets to an increased partnering of public goods with private interest developers.

Furthermore, Brenner and Theodore (2002) analyze the recent intensification of an economic development model centered on public-private partnerships as staples in the production of contemporary urban spaces. While the authors question the novelty of these state-market arrangements, the dramatic intensification of public-private partnerships signals a decline in municipal governments focus on managing social problems through the provision of living wages, affordable housing, public schooling, and accessible healthcare. Instead, neoliberal cities seek competitiveness and growth through the privatization of public assets and the development of entertainment zones that cater to affluent city living, elite consumption, and urban tourism (Hackworth, 2007).

The postindustrial landscape of North American cities is shaped by a layered confluence of social forces at municipal, national, regional, and global scales. With the decentralization of resources from the national to the municipal scale, city officials seek a competitive edge on a so-called newfound global stage. Cities such as Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Chicago that received federal moneys for urban development projects during the first half of the twentieth century, now compete with each other and cities the world over in order to attract finance speculators and private developers. City officials adopt a “global trope” (Wilson, 2006) in which

industrial manufacturing decline is remedied through the embrace of services such as tourism, entertainment, education, and retail. The “global trope” is a script adopted by municipal governments intent on forwarding a particular form of globalization dominated by corporate interests. The adamant pursuit of service industries as economic development strategy is a central processes within the shaping of urban spaces through “world-class city” aspirations rooted in an ideological stronghold on neoliberal globalization.

The widespread embrace of urban tourism is a key component of postindustrial urban development. The marketing of cities as centers of culture and entertainment is common ground among local government officials seeking growth beyond industrial production.¹¹ Instead of a stage for jobs, the city and its amenities are increasingly promoted as the main attraction. Publicity campaigns abound advertising local destinations such as convention centers, shopping malls, museums, theaters, and restaurants through a plethora of media that include television and print ads. Furthermore, both virtual spaces such as web pages and social networking sites and built forms that follow current trends within elite architecture promote cities as tourist destinations.

Fainstein & Judd (1999) capture the recent shift from the city as stage for industrial jobs to the city as main attraction. The authors frame the widespread practice of city marketing by municipal governments as follows:

within the city the unity previously imposed by a manufacturing-driven economy has disappeared, and urban culture itself has become a commodity (p. 261).

Built forms, virtual spaces, and the image of global competence sought by municipal officials and private developers are key components within the transformation of urban cultures into

¹¹ Spielman (2009) reports that even under it’s current economic crisis the state of Illinois will spend \$16 million to promote tourism. The mayor of Chicago justifies the spending by stating that “We’re competing against Atlanta. We’re competing against Las Vegas and Orlando. You have to put packages together to get the conventions here. At the same time, you have to publicize. You have to do marketing worldwide and throughout the United States” (p. 9).

commodities.¹² Fainstein & Judd (1999) detail differences within the process of urban culture commodification by outlining variations on the theme of the tourist city. “Resort cities” are “places created expressly for consumption by visitors” (p. 262) such as Cancún and Las Vegas; “tourist-historic cities lay claim to a historic and cultural identity that tourists can experience” (p. 262) such as Jerusalem, Prague, and Boston; and “converted cities”

have built infrastructure for the purpose of attracting visitors, but the tourist space brought into being by this infrastructure is insulated from the larger urban milieu within a process of uneven development (p. 262).

These varieties of tourist cities convey diverse processes of urban development geared toward growth through leisure.

The tourist emerges as a central figure within recent development strategies anchored on such leisurely pursuits as shopping and entertainment. Leisure is big business within postindustrial city development models. The tourist embodies the imagery of mobility and connectivity espoused by proponents of corporate globalization. As city officials and private developers retrofit cities for the promotion of tourism in line with the “converted city” model, uneven development amplifies longstanding social inequalities. In his portrayal of the tourist, Bauman (1998) states that “mobility has become the most powerful and most coveted stratifying factor” (p. 9). The author furthers this assertion by juxtaposing the tourist and the vagabond.

What is acclaimed today as ‘globalization’ is geared to the tourists’ dreams and desires. Its second effect – a *side*-effect, but an unavoidable one – is the transformation of many others into vagabonds. Vagabonds are travelers refused the right to turn into tourists.

¹² Another component of the commodification of urban culture consists of the promotion of urban lifestyles for the marketing of a consumer product. For example, a narrative on the label of the Function: Urban Detox Citrus Prickly Pear energy drink reads: “You are a city warrior. You jog in the smog and party on work nights. And as souvenirs of your noble escapades, you collect toxins in your body. Urban Detox, your daily tonic for city living, will clear them out!” “Featuring a powerful combination of prickly pear extract and the ‘smog-scrubbing’ super-antioxidant N-acetyl cysteine (NAC), Urban Detox is designed to evict the free radicals hanging out in your lungs and sinuses. These same ingredients remove toxins from your liver to help address hangover physiology. Play as hard as you work, let Urban Detox be your shield.”

They are allowed neither to stay put (there is no site guaranteeing permanence, the end to undesirable mobility) nor search for a better place to be (p. 93).

The social disparities that emerged with the onset of industrial work as outlined by Marx & Engels (1848/1978) multiply with the recent imperative of postindustrial leisure by hosting a majority population outright excluded from the tourist city.

In contemporary Chicago, tourist city dynamics most align with the “converted city” model in which infrastructure is built to produce tourist spaces that Fainstein & Judd (1999) describe as “insulated from the larger urban milieu within a process of uneven development” (p. 262). Vast social disparities characterize the urban landscape segregated along racial, ethnic, and class fault lines. Chicago remains a divided city in which government officials in partnership with finance speculators and private developers seek to hide poverty behind a veneer of tourist attractions. These attractions consist of large-scale infrastructure projects that include sports stadiums, convention centers, museums, theaters, parks, gardens, and public art. Tourist city dynamics in Chicago funnel public resources and symbolic purchase toward projects that will attract visitors and away from citizens’ claims such as affordable housing and public education.

A series of recent urban redevelopment projects within Chicago’s Grant Park highlight the trend towards the making of a tourist city. Grant Park encompasses an open expanse of lakefront land adjacent to a densely built central business district. City residents often consider it Chicago’s front yard. The contours of Grant Park continue to be forged within a rich history of struggles, negotiations, and concessions to remain “open, clear, and free” (Wille, 1972). The most recent round of development was spearheaded by the Millennium Park project that covered-up a stretch of Illinois Central rail yards, constructed an underground parking garage, and topped its roof with outdoor sculptures, gardens, promenades, and other leisurely spaces. Among its built forms, the Frank Gehry designed Jay Pritzker Pavilion is the centerpiece of the

park. With this band shell, Chicago officials seek to position the city on a world stage through cutting-edge postmodern architecture. Adjacent to Millennium Park, the Art Institute opened a new wing designed by Renzo Piano that further heightens the purchase of Grant Park among tourists, museum goers, and enthusiasts of outdoor music events.

Spirou & Bennett (2003) chronicle recent sports-driven development in Chicago through the lens of a significant shift “from urban renewal to the city of leisure”. Within the context of US cities, a dramatic decline in federal subsidies during the 1980s marked the end of the urban renewal era and ushered in new trends among municipal leaders to search for investment in the growth areas of entertainment, sports, tourism, and other leisure-centered activities. The authors illustrate this shift by noting the decline in smokestacks across urban landscapes as indicators of industrial production.

Whereas a generation ago smokestack chasing was a principal obsession of mayors and economic development officials, these days the endowing of a new museum or the awarding of a professional sports franchise are just as likely to drive municipal ambition (p. 39).

The exchange of smokestacks for tourist attraction signals a meaningful trend within urban development away from manufacturing. Akin to what Bauman (1998) describes as the “tourists’ dreams and desires” (p.93), the postindustrial “municipal ambition” centers on luring mobile and interconnected visitors through entertainment infrastructure.

Spirou (2006) furthers the “city of leisure” thesis as a model of postindustrial urban economic development through an assessment of urban beautification projects as key social forces shaping the new Chicago. The author details an increase in green spaces through a series of initiatives that include a new Landscape Ordinance in which developers are expected to incorporate landscaping into their projects and the Green-Streets Program which has planted thousands of trees across the city. Other citywide initiatives include stone planters, bright

flowerbeds, wrought iron fences, and old-style streetlight posts as well as the Green Alley Program and Chicago's Green Rooftops. According to Spirou (2006) these initiatives have helped forge Chicago's new municipal identity. Urban beautification works along with sports-driven development in promoting an image of a city built for leisure.

Furthermore, Clark (2002; 2004) depicts the new Chicago through the exposition of "the city as entertainment machine" in which "amenities drive urban growth". This thesis seeks to "take entertainment seriously", go beyond the growth machine as explanatory model, and focus on not just production and growth, but also consumption and entertainment. By taking entertainment seriously, government officials and private developers in Chicago enact a turn toward culture within urban development strategies. Cultural production in the forms of sport, music, theater, architecture, and food takes on a central role within new urban economies. Local governments and private investors envision the main function of the city as a purveyor of these cultural products in competition with other cities on a so-called global stage. Much like Spirou & Bennett (2003), Clark (2002) argues for a contemporary reversal of "smokestack chasing" in which high-tech workers "are often courted by cities that compete for them with public amenities" (p. 499). Amenities such as entertainment zones, theater districts, and museum campuses not only serve to lure tourists but also a new affluent class of urban dwellers engaged in so-called creative work (Florida, 2002). The shift "from urban renewal to the city of leisure" (Spirou & Bennett, 2003), urban beautification projects (Spirou, 2006), and the "amenities drive urban growth" thesis (Clark, 2002) all contribute to visions of a contemporary Chicago that has shaken off its industrial rust, embraced a turn towards culture as motor of development, and transformed itself into a city that plays.

The Frank Gehry designed band shell in Millennium Park constitutes a postindustrial rehashing of the smokestack. This built structure helps construe an image of Chicago intended on luring tourists, investors, and affluent urbanites to the city. The urban redevelopment dynamics that take place in Millennium Park create diverging experiences founded on an increased control of potential users. Although access to the park is free of charge, its financing scheme and the policing of its grounds conform to a growing trend within the production of new public spaces. Like most sports stadiums, Millennium Park is a corporate sponsored destination turned advertisement landscape. The selling off of naming rights is a key public-private partnership scheme that raises issues of access and ownership. Corporations such as McDonald's, Chase, and BP advertise their brands across the park's grounds. Furthermore, sections of the park are often off limits to the public and rented for private events while an enforced curfew dissuades homeless sleeping. Corporate sponsorship and highly controlled access make for unforeseen arrangement within public space. Staeheli & Mitchell (2008) describe the park as follows.

With its heavy corporate sponsorship and curfew, Millennium Park seems like some confusing hybrid space. It *is* publicly-owned, but the trappings of private ownership and commerce are woven into the fabric of the place (p. xviii).

Millennium Park combines trends within official sporting venues that showcase corporate brands with the work of star architects, such as Frank Gehry, in order to advertise the city on a so called global stage.

The wholehearted embrace of a corporate-sponsored globalization by city officials and private developers contributes to the shaping of a new Chicago identity. Set within a context of global competition for increasingly mobile and interconnected resources, industrial urban cores seek to revamp their images through marketing and infrastructure geared toward tourism, leisure,

and entertainment. These transformations not only recast the role of the “city as entertainment machine” (Clark, 2004) connected to other cities with similar aspirations, but also reconfigure the limits set on the city by industrial standards. The linkages among global cities achieved through information technologies and knowledge economies also take place at local and regional scales through interconnected urban cores, suburbs, exurbs, and edge cities. Tajbakhsh (2001) explains this process as a shift “from the concentric industrial city to a low-density metropolitan network” and argues that the contemporary experiences of urban space become more “numerous, fluid, and overlapping than in the past” (p. 163). The Chicago School concentric circle model of the city remains a static rendition fit for industrial times.¹³ Networks more aptly represent recent postindustrial development experiences of mobility and interconnection.

While corporate globalization enthusiasts in Chicago envision the city in terms of downtown lakefront cultural amenities, urban space exceeds industrial city limits and takes on the shape of a complex network of interdependent infrastructures and services. Furthermore, the Chicago metropolitan area not only stretches almost 60 miles west of the lakefront but is also connected to other regional, national, and global metropolitan configurations. Amin & Thrift (2002) argue for the multiple and expanding meanings of urban space.

The city is everywhere and in everything. If the urbanized world now is a chain of metropolitan areas connected by places/corridors of communication (airports and airways, stations and railways, parking lots and motorways, teleports and information highways) then what is not the urban? Is it the town, the village, the countryside? Maybe, but only to a limited degree. The footprints of the city are all over these places, in

¹³ Keating (2008) argues that regional development across the Chicago area “with neighborhoods forming first around rail stations and later between stops and the rail lines themselves runs counter to the concentric model of urban growth” in which “development moved out from the city center in waves in a contiguous fashion” (p. 8). Furthermore, Abu-Lughod (1999) argues that the concentric model was also problematic due to “the premature generalizations about the urban form produced by Ernest Burgess, which sent sociologists off on a fruitless search for parallels in other cities, without recognizing that his findings were specific to the particular topography and simplified semicircular arrangement of Chicago” (p. 132.).

the form of city commuters, tourists, teleworking, the media, and the urbanization of lifestyles (p. 1).

The social reproduction of play is a key dynamic within the multi-scalar geographies of cities. In contemporary Chicago, this dynamic takes shape through multiple development strategies that span from large-scale infrastructure projects such as sports stadiums (Spirou & Bennett, 2003) to neighborhood pocket parks and city street bike lanes (Spirou, 2006). The recent lifting of a surfing ban by the Chicago Parks District conforms to urban development through the promotion of leisure. While the partial legalization of surfing in Lake Michigan does not require major infrastructure and service investments beyond lifeguards and parking lots, the official embrace of freshwater surfing in Chicago contributes to the crafting of an alternative sport-friendly city.

Although the surfpark remains an unfulfilled dream for those seeking to reproduce a breaking wave and increase surfing popularity, the adaptation of surf styles to built environments has taken flight through the social practice of skateboarding. Skateparks and skateplazas emerge as key sites within the making of leisure cities. These public spaces contribute to the crafting of a new city identity that promotes alternative sports and embraces youth, creativity, and diversity. The following chapter chronicles social dynamics of contestation and accommodation within planned skateboarding spaces throughout the city of Chicago. The chapter forwards a nuanced understanding of space, power, and culture by focusing on everyday skateboarding experiences.

CHAPTER 2:

PLANNED SPACES: SKATEPARKS, SKATEPLAZAS, AND URBAN POLITICS

Purpose-built skateboarding terrains register within a broad spectrum of planned spaces conceived for the proliferation of play. City officials and urban developers seek to regulate public behavior and control play dynamics through the provision of playgrounds. This chapter casts the emergence of skateparks as sanctioned skateboarding sites invested in the complex production of leisure city amenities. The first section chronicles the Progressive Era playground within the context of the neoclassical social order envisioned through the 1909 *Plan of Chicago*. The following section locates skateparks under bridges, inside malls, and on the plaza in order to forward a wide spectrum of divergent purpose-built terrains. These variations on the skatepark theme illustrate contemporary social dynamics beyond the traditional playground. The third section of this chapter focuses on research experiences gained at Chicago's premier lakefront skateparks. Through snapshots of skateboarding outings to Burnham Skate Park and Wilson Skate Park, the section demonstrates both the inherent exhilaration and limits to spaces planned for skateboarding. The fourth section narrates the unlikely set of social dynamics that set the stage for the construction of the Grant Park Skate Plaza. This unique built environment took shape through the haphazard collusion of an art installation, spatial appropriation, and recycled materials. The final section of this chapter examines the most recent planned space for skateboarding in Chicago. The experiences gained at the Logan Boulevard Skate Park highlight key linkages among skateboarding, graffiti writing, and urban beautification.

Governing through Play

The play movement unraveled in cities across the United States during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Urban parks and playgrounds registered as ideal sites for effectively governing growing urban populations. Progressive Era social reformers sought to remedy the dire working-class living conditions brought on by the rampant spread of industrial capitalism. Among a wide host of welfare initiatives, reformers believed in the socialization of children through supervised play. The replacement of overcrowded tenements with urban parks was often implemented as a social reform strategy. Through the raising of slums and the emergence of playgrounds, civic leaders and government officials addressed growing concern over sanitation and public safety. The unequal distribution of wealth endemic to the model of industrial production practiced in early twentieth century cities in the United States was partly addressed through unsuccessful efforts to make poverty invisible. During the Progressive Era, working-class children were lured off the streets and away from the dangers of traffic while slum clearance was a commonplace practice for the promotion of sanitary living conditions and the provision of open leisure spaces.

Progressive Era reformers intent on transforming cities and addressing the social problems caused by unfettered industrialization were inspired by the ideals of enlightenment and rational order. These ideals were most often expressed through built forms that correspond to the neoclassical Beaux-Arts tradition. Developed in Paris throughout the nineteenth century, the Beaux-Arts style drew heavily from Imperial Roman architecture and promoted an abundance of civic spaces. The rebuilding of Paris, under the direction of Baron Haussmann, showcases the aesthetics and spirit of the Beaux-Arts. The late nineteenth century transformation of Paris included the widening of streets into grand boulevards and the proliferation of cafés, arcades, and

department stores. Boulevards and cafés came to represent the rationalization of the city intent on the swift mobilization of military troops, the mobility of capital through bourgeois consumption, and the invisibilization of the poor by way of slum clearance (Harvey, 2006). The social inequalities that emerged from the onset of industrial capitalism were remedied on the surface through recourse to bourgeois civic spaces.

During the early twentieth century in the United States, the Beaux-Arts tradition gained currency through the City Beautiful movement. Its proponents formed part of the Progressive Era social reforms that sought to remedy overcrowding and congestion in growing cities through urban beautification. An unprecedented influx of immigrants in search of industrial jobs populated large urban cores while streetcars and a host of other vehicles jammed narrow city streets. The smokestack, along with the hazardous gases it spewed, became a symbol of industrial might at the expense of human exploitation and environmental degradation. Within this context of unregulated industrial growth, the City Beautiful movement promoted uniform and harmonious built forms so as to achieve social order and improved living standards. Parks, playgrounds, and public spaces were envisioned as key socializing forces. The City Beautiful movement upheld a vision of civic citizenry founded on the reciprocity between social harmony and environmental aesthetics.

In Chicago, examples of the City Beautiful movement were plentiful at the turn of the twentieth century. The Great Fire of 1871 leveled much of the city's infrastructure and provided an opportunity for experimentation with new construction materials within an emerging laboratory of built forms. Architects and engineers flocked to Chicago after the Great Fire to make their name within an unimaginable social context of near tabula rasa. Among those aspiring to fame and fortune, Daniel Burnham gained notoriety through the orchestration of the

World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Deemed the "White City", the exposition showcased mostly temporary buildings with white plaster exteriors designed in the Beaux-Arts style. This monumental achievement that encompassed almost 700 acres of land was meant to promote Chicago's industrial might as it successfully rose from the ashes (Appelbaum, 2009).

The manicured grounds, promenade boulevards, and civic spaces featured in the World's Columbian Exposition sharply contrasted with the grim living quarters and leisure spaces of working-class city dwellers. Like present-day theme parks, the exposition boasted fantastic infrastructure, amenities, and attractions far from everyday experiences. According to Schwieterman & Mammoser (2009),

the fair's buildings and grounds, meant to highlight Chicago's progress in planning and design, instead offered a stark contrast to the actual city, with its industrial grime and neighborhood blight. (p. 10)

After this temporary venue came to a dreary end, its organizers envisioned the transformation of Chicago under the ideals and aesthetics rehearsed in the White City. The project consisted of rebuilding Chicago into a permanent stage for the neoclassical Beaux-Arts style and the City Beautiful movement.

At the center of this project was the *Plan of Chicago* authored by Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett in 1909. Sponsored by the business elites of the Merchant Club, it focused on built infrastructure rather than social programs geared toward the betterment of working-class living standards. Schwieterman & Mammoser (2009) argue that much like Burnham's plans for Cleveland in 1903, San Francisco in 1905, and Manila in 1906, the Chicago plan of 1909 "emphasized the *physical* city, with grand boulevards and parkways, beautiful fountains, majestic buildings, and inviting public spaces" (p. 12). While initial drafts addressed social

problems through progressive ideas such as siting schools close to homes, creating daycare centers, and promoting police transparency, these recommendations were eventually discarded.

The plan focused on the arrangement of buildings and public spaces while having relatively little to say on education, health care, and social justice – omissions partially due to the removal of sections that dealt with these issues in earlier drafts. (Schwieterman & Mammoser, 2009, p. 20).

Overall, the *Plan of Chicago* depicted “a gritty industrial city transformed into a shining neoclassical metropolis” (Schwieterman & Mammoser, 2009, p. 16) by upholding the interests of a wealthy civic minority and ignoring the needs of the working-class poor (Smith, 2006).

The illustrations by artists Jules Guerin and Fernand Janin contained within the *Plan of Chicago* exemplify both its broad vision of elite order and the silencing of poverty-stricken plight. These beautiful renderings of a “shining neoclassical metropolis” (Schwieterman & Mammoser, 2009, p. 16) were conceived from a distant bird’s eye view. The illustrations only allow the reader to gaze at Burnham and Bennett’s masterpiece from afar. Diagonal boulevards traverse a rational grid system reminiscent of Haussmann’s rebuilding of Paris. A panoramic sense of order is gained through these aesthetic renditions of an urban prairie topography growing from the shores of Lake Michigan. Parks, monuments, and public works are barely visible from this vantage point. People, street life, and domestic spaces are absent. The lived experiences of city dwellers remain unaccounted. Instead, the *Plan of Chicago* is an influential exercise in master planning founded on an elite vision of urban space and crafted through a top-down unidirectional exercise of power.

While the *Plan of Chicago* was never fully put in place, the Progressive reform movement continued to grow rapidly during the first quarter of the twentieth century with significant contributions to the urban landscape. Amongst a plethora of reform achievements, social service institutions were developed for working-class families in cities across the United

States. Settlement houses, field houses, and playing fields became indispensable sites of socialization within urban cores unable to provide for their growing populations. Progressives envisioned these spaces as laboratories for managing an unprecedented influx of European immigrants and sites of experimentation toward the achievement of social reform. Unlike the bird's eye view of the *Plan of Chicago*, reformers working towards the creation of these new social spaces had an on-the-ground view of the social inequalities experienced by the working-class poor during the early twentieth century industrial boom.

The transformation of cities during the Progressive era was characterized by contention and negotiation over incommensurable uses of urban land. While the *Plan of Chicago* proposed lakefront landscaped parks and suburban forest preserves for elite contemplation, settlement house and play movement reformers sought open spaces for active recreation. The schism between passive contemplation and active recreation was founded on social inequalities and struggles for public resources. The top-down vision of social order sponsored by the Merchant Club sought parks with manicured grounds in the city and unspoiled nature throughout the outskirts. Low, Taplin, & Scheld (2005) argue that in “both landscape parks and woodland reservations, providing users contact with nature had priority over active forms of recreation” (p.26). The suburbs were conceived as nature preserves in the service of city dwellers seeking relief from urban congestion. However, Progressive reformers focused on populations without the means to travel beyond the city limits and envisioned parks as tools for educating working-class children. Furthermore, Low, Taplin, & Scheld (2005) state that the “reformers of that era believed that park planners needed to take an activist stance in bringing the benefits of wholesome recreation to urban people, especially children” (p.26). The playground emerged as a

new public space that could meet these goals through specialized equipment and trained supervision.

Through the rapid spread of the playground movement from east to west coasts in the United States, the act of playing gained social purchase among reform enthusiasts. Planned spaces for play were charged with the responsibility of socializing children into responsible adults. Playground reformers sought to replace unstructured play that took place on city streets with supervised play geared toward the promotion of physical and social wellbeing. For example, the rules and regulations of the baseball diamond were to replace the spontaneous and dangerous game of stickball. Cranz (1982) argues that during the Progressive era “play was systematically channeled into activities that seem to make for good citizenship rather than being an end in itself” (p. 66-67). Furthermore, Rosenzweig & Blackmar (1992) state that to “encourage the skills and values necessary to cope with modern society, play needed structure, supervision, and especially equipment” (p. 393). Progressive era playgrounds were social institutions that fostered adult supervision, specialized equipment, and programs for socialization.

The newfound role of play as moral arbiter throughout turn-of-the-century cities was aimed at working-class and immigrant children. Unruly cultural differences were to be tamed in a national project of assimilation through play. The widespread Americanization of European immigrants would partially take place on the playground. Gagen (2000) argues that through a moral crusade intent on solving “the burgeoning ills of industrialization and immigration”, playground reformers “targeted children as the most efficient route to social salvation” (p. 216). Childs play gained currency as a means towards achieving homogeneity and cohesion on a national scale. Children embodied the potential of a future nation populated by a docile and

disciplined citizenry. The social institution of the playground harbored the aspirations of Progressive reformers intent on correcting the social problems brought on by unfettered industrialization and raising the living standards of the working-class poor.

Within the analytical models of the spatial triad consisting of perceived, conceived, and lived spaces (Lefebvre, 1991/1974) and the strategy/tactic distinction (de Certeau, 1984), playgrounds correspond to top-down spaces of representation conceived through proper strategies. Although Progressive reformers worked toward alleviating poverty through on-the-ground programs, the playground was planned and developed by wealthy propertied civic leaders. In this sense, the panoramic breadth of the *Plan of Chicago* and the meticulous programming of the play movement reformers share elite aspirations of continued domination of the poor. Much like the illustration of a neoclassical metropolis rising from the ashes of the Great Fire, the playground represents the will of a dominant class.

Furthermore, playgrounds conform to dispositifs that emerge through micro-physic techniques of supervision that attest to the entanglement of knowledge and power (Foucault, 1995/1977). The programs that transformed play from “an end in itself” to “activities that seem to make for good citizenship”(Cranz, 1982, p. 67) were founded on emerging scientific knowledge informed by developmental psychology and evolutionary theory (Cavallo, 1981). Playground equipment corresponded with perceived developmental stages in which children evolved from the sandlot to the jungle gym. The regulation of play not only required age-appropriate equipment but also a cadre of trained adult play leaders also known as “play efficiency engineers” or “social engineers” (Goodman, 1979). These play experts determined the appropriate time, place, and modes of playing guided by scientific knowledge. The play activities that made for “good citizenship” (Cranz, 1982, p. 67) were both gendered favoring

boys and the cultivation of masculinity (Gagen, 2000) as well as racialized toward dominant White Protestants (Cavallo, 1981). The playground as dispositif was an instrumental assemblage of specialized equipment, trained experts, and built environments charged with the task of governing difference and inequality through the making of docile bodies.

However, the progressive ambitions of governing through play were often met with resistance. The regulation of play through progressive ideas would remain an incomplete project. Youthful ingenuity and curiosity would make the containment of play within the playground a much too ambitious social program. Valentine (2004) argues that

children often prefer to play in diverse and 'flexible' landscapes (in terms of surfaces, forms, materials, opportunities for creative and manipulative play etc.), such as waste ground and open spaces, rather than playgrounds and other formally designated and provided play sites (p. 75).

Children contested dominant values invested in transforming the city into a rationally ordered metropolis and domesticating their bodies through play by creatively venturing outside the playground. These everyday expressions of dissent are akin to the bottom-up tactics employed by displaced adults. According to de Certeau (1984), official spaces are conceived through strategies that assume "a place that can be circumscribed as *proper*" while "the place of the tactic belongs to the other" (p. xix). Furthermore, children venture beyond the playground and produce representational space. Lefebvre (1991/1974) defines representational space as "directly lived" by users and experienced as dominated space which "the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (p. 39). The tactical appropriations enacted by children throughout cities expose meaningful fissures within dominant visions of social order carried out through planned spaces.

Locating Skateparks

The urban park and the playground remain staples of public life within contemporary cities. New forms of play continue to emerge both within and outside of these planned recreational spaces. With new play activities come unforeseen built environments that cater to specialized users. Jackson (1984/1979) notes the emergence of a third variety of park that parts ways from both the “formal, structured park or garden, the park as work of art for passive enjoyment” and the “less elaborate, more ‘natural’ neighborhood park” (p. 130). The former is akin to the legacy of parks achieved through the neoclassical vision of the *Plan of Chicago* while the latter encompasses the Progressive era playground. Jackson (1984/1979) argues that

Many western cities, plagued by the misbehavior of a restless and mobile younger generation, are creating sports parks. Parks, that is to say, which are designed for sports of mobility: bicycling, skateboarding, motorcycling, all-terrain vehicles, and even in some cases for skiing and hang gliding. They are expensive, unsightly, and still in the experimental stage. Anything more unlike the conventional park it would be hard to imagine: noisy, deliberately artificial in its man-made topography, used by a boisterous and undisciplined public, and dedicated to violent expenditure of energy and to hitherto unheard of contacts with nature, the sports park seems to repudiate and make a mockery of everything the word *park* has stood for (p. 130).

These unconventional settings redefine the recreational potential of parks and multiply beyond the park across a variety of unforeseen venues. The proliferation of sports parks is a key component within urban economies competing for leisure-related revenue. “Sports of mobility” (Jackson, 1984/1979) have captured the imagination of city officials and land developers seeking to build a leisure-friendly image and turn a profit. The sports park continues to transform contemporary urban landscapes through specific design and construction processes geared towards emerging sporting practices.

Skateparks constitute late twentieth century highly specialized playgrounds. With the increasing popularity of “sports of mobility” or extreme sports as an alternative to traditional team sports (Rinehart & Sydnor, 2003), city parks and recreation departments scramble to develop purpose-built skateboarding facilities. Howell (2008) links the contemporary skatepark boom to New Public Management social policies that promote a

broader shift toward entrepreneurial urban governance, and the attendant reconfiguring of the citizen-state relationship away from entitlement and toward contractualism (p. 477).

The role of parks and recreation managers working within postindustrial economies is vastly different from their Progressive Era counterparts. According to Howell (2008), playground reformers had a vision of good citizenship founded on the cultivation of loyalty while current skatepark advocates promote citizenship through the cultivation of personal responsibility. In contrast to the supervised playground, skateparks increasingly conform to “self-supervised, self-maintained, and self-policed” public spaces (Howell, 2009, p. 484). Personal responsibility guides the varied processes of design, construction, and maintenance of an increasingly wide range of skatepark projects. Variations on the theme span from do-it-yourself squats on empty lots to municipal projects funded by tax dollars and pay-to-play corporate brand-building retail spaces. Location sites and design processes are influential within the plural construction of social meanings ascribed to the skateparks.

under the bridge

During the fall of 1990, local skaters in Portland, Oregon mixed a few bags of cement and crafted a steep transition into a wall under the Burnside Bridge (Hamm, 2004). The underside of the bridge was a derelict urban space and notorious stomping ground for all sorts of social misfits. Skateboarders, unhoused folks, sex workers, and transient youth crossed paths under the bridge. The Burnside Project is an evolving and open-ended do-it-yourself

collaboration. Skateboarders have continuously worked for almost two decades on the undulating concrete surfaces under the Burnside Bridge through ad hoc use modifications rather than a prescribed design plan (Nichols & Charnoski, 2003). Portland city officials have recognized this grassroots cement project as a legitimate skatepark and effective crime deterrent invested in top-down efforts that seek to make poverty invisible.

The vast United States federal highway system includes bridge undersides that are coveted spaces for protecting skateboarders from rain while also providing proper shade. Furthermore, bridge pillars not only support above traffic but also serve as skateboard obstacles after cement transition modifications are in place. Pillars anchor these impromptu skateparks while skateboarders skillfully glide from one smooth curved surface to another. Speed and exhilaration are achieved as skilled skateboarders maneuver through these purpose-built terrains. Hamm (2004) explains how the relationship between skateboarders' proficiency and the built environment unravels under the Burnside Bridge.

Very soon, however, reaching previously unattainable altitudes on the wall wasn't enough. They had tasted the sky, and within a week's time, it was inevitable that they would need something more to quench their thirst for speed and altitude and weightless thrill (p. 219).

Dark, dingy, and forgotten bridge undersides are redefined as destinations for "weightless thrill" through skateboarding as spatial appropriation tactic.

Local skateboarders in other cities have also built concrete skateboarding havens under bridges. Examples include Philadelphia's FDR Skatepark, Oakland's Bordertown Skatepark (Zamora, 2005), San Pedro's Channel Street Skatepark (El Beardo, 2005; Zitzer, 2006), Seattle's Marginal Way Skate Park (Carstens, 2007), and St. Louis' Shitside Skatepark (Ploesser, 2009). Creative self-expression through graffiti is prominent on these undulating concrete surfaces. Bridge underside skateparks are built from found and donated construction materials molded

through the untrained use of rudimentary tools such as shovels and pick axes. These lunar-like landscapes incorporate features of backyard pools and drainage ditches into improvised works-in-progress.

Skateboarders engaged in the construction of clandestine skateparks that follow the Burnside Project model participate in community activism through the practice of spatial appropriation. Similar to grassroots BMX courses (Rinehart & Grenfell, 2002), these skateparks emerge out of direct action initiatives to reclaim space without permission. Framed as territorial gain, spatial justice unfolds under the bridge through collective appropriation rather than market-rate purchasing. However, within this fold of justice one marginalized groups' gain is another groups' loss as skateboarding works to sanitize public space by displacing prostitution, homelessness, and drug use. The intersection of marginalized people in this type of found space is most evident at the project site in San Pedro, California. Within the initial construction process of the Channel Street Skatepark, El Beardo (2005) notes a negotiated shift in informal spatial ownership.

Our spot was Popeye's first. He was this mangy old Hobo who lived in this little beater of a car next to the Radiator Shop. He'd bring us brooms and shit (p. 69).

This statement highlights both cooperation between disparate public space users and displacement of homeless people by skateboarders. Even though skateboarding now enables the governing of space through its incorporation into top-down projects such as crime eradication, struggles against eviction continue. Skateboarders organize to secure the Burnside Project longevity in their local do-it-yourself skateparks. For example, skateboarders faced eviction from an illegal skatepark located underneath a section of Interstate 580 in Oakland, California. During July 2004 transportation officials scouted the site, claimed it for building material storage, and called in the California Highway Patrol to enforce a skateboarding ban. However,

skateboarders came together to lift the band through coalitions with local media outlets and city officials (Zamora, 2005). Alternative sport spatial creativity and the politics of urban squatting come together under the bridge.

inside the mall

During November 1998, Vans Skatepark opened in a 40,000 square foot Orange, California retail space. This massive pay-to-play skatepark features a 20,000 square foot indoor street course, a combi pool, a peewee area, mini ramps, an 80 foot wide vert ramp, an outdoors street course, an arcade, and a 7,000 square foot mezzanine observation deck. The combi pool is the skatepark's most notorious feature. It consists of an exact replica of a combined square and round 11 1/2' foot deep pool with 9'9" transitions originally located in the 1970s Pipeline Skatepark in Upland, California. The Vans combi pool exemplifies nuanced ways in which skatepark builders continue to make reference to past built forms. Both found and planned spaces now figure within a growing register of reproducible skateboarding terrains.

Located in the Mills Corporation-owned The Block mall, Vans Skatepark contributes to this shopping center's reputation as a hip entertainment-driven space of consumption for teens (Ebenkamp, 2000). Vans forwards the skatepark as business venture through the accommodation of alternative sport practices into the fold of the elite shopping experience. A membership fee or entrance fee greets a prospective user followed by the enforced observance of a long list of rules and regulation that include the wearing of a helmet, full protective gear, shirts, and shoes at all times. Furthermore, management reserves the right to terminate any membership at any time and to eject anyone at anytime for any reason.

The Vans Skatepark is a space for brand building. Along with the Vans Warped Tour music venue and the Vans Triple Crown Series of skateboarding, snowboarding, surfing, and

wakeboarding competitive events, the skatepark works to identify the athletic shoe company name with youthful alternative lifestyle choices. Through these spectacular enterprises, Vans seeks to portray authenticity to proposed segments of the population understood as consumer niche markets. Brand loyalty among these niches is sought out through the reproduction of images that suggest alternative cultural values. These business strategies correspond to a significant shift from manufacturing to marketing resulting in pervasive corporate-branded landscapes (Klein, 2000).

Recognized as a leading global lifestyle brand (Ebenkamp, 2000), Vans has achieved global currency through the strategic incorporation of alternative sport into its business mission. Frank & Mulcahey (1997) identify Vans as an adept lifestyle merchant and quote from a company prospectus the following:

The VANS brand image coincides with what the Company believes is a fundamental shift in the attitudes and lifestyles of young people worldwide, characterized by the rapid growth and acceptance of alternative, outdoor sports and the desire to lead an individualistic, contemporary lifestyle (p. 78).

The packaging of alternative sport through corporate branding contributes to the process of commodification set forth by the Disney Corporation-owned ESPN X-Games (Rinehart, 1998).

The Burnside Project and Vans Skatepark occupy opposite ends of the purpose-built skateboarding terrain political spectrum. The first is grassroots, illegal, and on the fly while the second is air conditioned, for-profit, and highly regulated. Furthermore, each skatepark claims divergent social settings and reproduces dissimilar social relations. The Burnside Project is founded on do-it-yourself anti-authoritarian camaraderie while the Vans Skatepark is set in elite consumption through membership fees and enforced rules and regulations. However, both spaces reproduce vertical transitioned surfaces like those found in backyard pools and drainage ditches fashioned for exhilarating mobility. These similarities in built form also translate to

media representations as images of both destinations find their way to the magazine and video rack. Shared mainstream media coverage blurs stark political differences between subcultural resistance and processes of commodification. For example, a feature report of the Vans Combi-Pool Classic competitive event (Phelps, 2006) in one issue of a skate magazine was followed in a later issue by a two-page spread of a never-before-seen maneuver in the Burnside Project's almost two-decade history (Trujillo, 2006). The glare of the spectacle colludes variations on the skatepark theme by homogenizing built forms achieved through a variety of means including grassroots activism and corporate brand building.

on the plaza

As skateproofing takes over public space, the desire for the experience of authentic street skateboarding is on the rise. Skateplazas are purpose-built skateboarding destinations that cater to street skateboarders. While the Burnside Project and the Van's Skatepark harbor simulations of deep pools, ditches, and pipes, skateplazas are composed of simulated street skatespots. These built forms host an array of low-set horizontal lines that enable the performance of flat ground tricks. The speed and height of vertical skateboarding gives way to a low-set horizontal experience. Skateplazas host staircases, handrails, benches, and ledges within a carefully landscaped environment. As intentionally aesthetic spaces, skateplazas combine public garden landscaping with high quality construction materials worthy of squares and plazas found in downtown financial districts. These features make for an almost flawless copy of an ever increasingly regulated realm of social life.

The Rob Dyrdek/DC Shoes Skate Plaza located in Kettering, Ohio consists of 40,000 square feet of self-policed duplicated skatespots that are free and open to the public. Unlike the Burnside Project that was recognized by the city of Portland as a legitimate skateboarding haven

only after its construction or the Vans Skatepark that was built like a theme park with pay-to-play rules and regulations, this skateboard destination constitutes a hybrid space that emerged out of a public/private partnership between the city of Kettering and the DC Shoes company. The city donated the suburban park land while the company raised funds for the construction of the facility. In exchange, DC Shoes logos are prominently displayed across the plaza's smooth surfaces. While admission is purchase free, the social costs of the Kettering skateplaza materialize through corporate advertisement and the criminalization of street skateboarding.

In the Rob Dyrdek/DC Shoes Skate Plaza, the University of California at Irvine ten-step staircase, San Francisco's Pier 7, ledges and Philadelphia's LOVE Park figure among the reproductions on display (Lane, 2005). While the Vans Skatepark recreates the combi pool in an effort to relive the first-wave skatepark era, Kettering's skateplaza rescues notorious spots that either no longer exist or have been in effect outlawed. Similar to museums, skateplazas preserve the memory of public spaces once accessible to skateboarders. However, these new spaces also figure as costly political concessions made by skateboarders in order to forfeit their right to the city (Németh, 2006). Street skateboarding thrives on the urban plaza. The skateplaza functions as training grounds and containment device set on keeping skateboarders off the streets.

Poured-in-Place Lakefront Skateparks

The skatepark boom arrived on Chicago's lakefront with the new Millennium. While West Coast and East Coast skateboarders had experienced several waves of purpose-built facilities, the Midwest lagged due in part to an insurmountable distance from surfing subcultures. The emergence of the skatepark in Chicago took place through a different kind of entrepreneurial spirit. Rather than a private business venture thriving on membership fees, the construction of skateparks on the lakefront results from a local embrace of widespread trends in urban

redevelopment. As with other Rust Belt cities, Chicago's dramatic decline in manufacturing has triggered the adoption of a "global trope" by city officials seeking global competence through the achievement of world-class city status (Wilson, 2006). Finance capital, real estate and commercial development, and tourist dollars rank high in the projected revenue streams of aspiring global cities. Furthermore, these cities seek global competence through city beautification and the development of new leisure spaces (Spirou, 2006). Skatepark development on the lakefront contributes to a top-down space-crafting program in which Chicago is envisioned as a world-class leisure city.

Burnham Skate Park is a 22,000 square feet purpose-built skateboarding facility. Built from poured concrete, the park consists of two bowls, two wall rides, pyramids, spines, curbs, rails, and stairs. These features mimic found spaces that span from backyard pools and drainage ditches to urban plazas and public squares. Located in 31st Street Beach, the skatepark figures among other public amenities such as a nature prairie area, water trail launch, pedestrian underpass, playground, beach house, bathroom, drinking fountain, and parking lot. The Chicago Park District Department of Planning and Development envisioned the site through a multi-tiered planning process in which the skatepark became one of many potential elements in 31st Street Beach (Reese, 2002). Even though this planning process included certain skateboard interest groups, the overall outcome left the Chicago skateboarding community wanting more.

Burnham Skate Park lies within a public park setting crafted from the recommendations outlined in the 1909 *Plan of Chicago*. The vision of an "open, clear, and free" lakefront (Wille, 1972) paved the way for a current boom in leisure space development. The location of the skatepark is a site of contestation and negotiation due to its proximity to the Lake Michigan coast. In 1919, race riots erupted after a group of Whites assassinated a Black youth near 31st

Street Beach after accidentally floating into an area designated for Whites only (Fisher, 2006). Less than two decades after these horrific events, the 1933 Century of Progress World Fair was staged in Burnham Park in order to celebrate the advent of a mechanical age characterized by assembly line production, scientific management, and automation (Ganz, 2008). Currently, 31st Street Beach is in close proximity to a series of urban development projects that include the new Cominsky Stadium (Spirou & Bennett, 2003), the Rem Koolhaas intervention at the Illinois Institute of Technology, and the proposed demolition of the Michael Reese Hospital in order to make room for an Olympic Village.

In 31st Street Beach, the skatepark follows a widely implemented trend of clustering sports and leisure facilities within a designated area. Howell (2008) states that

skateparks often stand alone, but like the athletic field, the sandbox, and the swing set, the skatepark has also become one of many elements that are often sited adjacent to one another on large playgrounds (p. 476).

The skatepark, bike path, and play lot at 31st Street attract a wide variety of beach goers. Although skateboarders, cyclists, and families with small children share this lakefront park, each user has a designated area regulated by informal boundaries. The play lot is located adjacent to the beach house in a small area surrounded by a fence. The bike path runs north and south between the play lot and the skatepark. The skatepark is enclosed within a wrought-iron fence and located on the most western edge of 31st Street Beach. While cyclists pedal along the path, they create a line of movement that separates the fenced-in activities taking place alongside the path.

Within the social context of struggles for lakefront land use, Burnham Skate Park represents a victory for Chicago skateboarders. They have achieved the status of legitimate beach goers along with sunbathers and cyclists through the construction of purpose-built

amenities. Skateboarders are not out of place in 31st Street Beach. However, the location of the skatepark is also problematic. Set adjacent to Lake Shore Drive, traffic noise is pervasive while access to the skatepark via public transportation remains limited. In general, locating a site for the construction of a skatepark is a contentious process riddled with not-in-my-backyard sentiments and often resulting in the relegation to out-of-sight locations adjacent to train tracks or busy roads (Jones & Graves, 2000). Within the eclectic mix of 31st Street Beach users, skateboarders were granted an undesirable track of land in close proximity to the noise and debris of highway traffic.

The Burnham Skate Park is a poured-in-place concrete skateboarding facility. Unlike pre-fabricated modular skateparks, Burnham Skate Park was custom designed and built for the specific characteristics of the site. Concrete is a highly desirable construction material due to its malleable consistency before setting followed by a durable finish that requires low maintenance. Although Burnham Skate Park is unique, it follows trends consistent with concrete skatepark features such as pools, banks, stairs, ledges, and handrails. These features materialize through a staged building process typical of municipal skateparks. Unlike Portland's Burnside Project and subsequent DIY skateparks, poured-in-place municipal skateparks usually follow a hierarchical and bureaucratic design and build process. The process starts off with public hearings in which input is gathered from local skateboarders and other interested parties. Then, the design stage is underway in which blue prints are produced and followed by the final dig-and-pour stage. City officials, public space users, area residents, architects, contractors, and developers figure among a wide host of social actors involved in each step of the process. This multi-tiered top-down model of skatepark development is participatory in as much as it allows

for a plurality of voices during the initial stages of the process but often yields a flawed end result.

During the summer months of 2009, I frequented Burnham Skate Park close to a dozen days for several hours per visit. On occasion, I would jot notes on certain built features, social dynamics, or corporal emotions. Most often, however, I explored the undulating concrete terrain atop of my skateboard. Certain sections of the park, such as the street and banks sections, are exhilarating and enable formidable acceleration and speed. Other sections, such as the bowl and pool sections, lack smooth riding surfaces and transition. These flaws in the bowl and pool sections occur when inexperienced contractors leave gaps between cement pours to allow for the material to expand without cracking. The gaps prevent cracking but also stop the flow of small-diameter skateboard wheels as well as serve as fertile crevices from which weeds sprout out of the concrete. Even though it is mostly inaccessible by public transportation, riddled with traffic noise and debris, and has serious construction flaws, Burnham Skate Park remains a challenging terrain and popular skateboarding destination.

The experiences of two separate days stand out as emblematic of the social dynamics that take place in Burnham Skate Park. The first happened on June 21, 2009 during an activity organized around the celebration of GO Skateboarding Day. A group of approximately fifty skateboarders gathered in Grant Park and skated on the bike path southward and adjacent to the lake. After a stop at the McCormick Gap for an impromptu “best trick” contest, we continued to skate toward the skatepark while confronting several agitated cyclists irate with our use of their space. The exchanges escalated as we approached the 31st Street beach house and play lot. With the increased flow of pedestrians and cyclist, the social dynamics turned chaotic and violent. The informal boundary between the play lot and the skatepark drawn by the steady flow of

cyclists on the bike path was temporarily disrupted as skateboarders ventured outside the skatepark. After a series of shouts, collisions, and falls, we made it to the skatepark where an exhilarating session of skateboarding took place until late in the evening.

The perils experienced during the collective push towards Burnham Skate Park highlight key dynamics of negotiation and contestation within public space. Skateboarders gain an identity of legitimate public space users through the construction of skateparks. Public spaces that cater to “sports of mobility” (Jackson, 1984/1979) enable a sense of belonging and ownership among a niche sporting population. Through the use of skateparks, skateboarders become stakeholders within the retrofitting of Chicago into a “converted city” (Fainstein & Judd, 1999) geared toward tourism and leisure. This identity shift is riddled with contradictions. As we made our way to the sanctioned confines of the skatepark, an informal order achieved through impromptu negotiations gave way to contention over the use of the lakefront bike path. During the stop at the McCormick Place gap, older skaters would look out for cyclist and signal when the path was clear for younger skaters to compete for the best trick. This practice is commonplace among skateboarders seeking to perform maneuvers within high traffic areas. The impromptu contest took place without mayor scuffles. However, as the collective occupied the bike path en route to the skatepark, cyclists and skateboarders clashed. The confrontations that eschewed highlight how skateboarders contest the intended uses and meanings of public space. While venturing beyond the confines of the skatepark, skateboarders remain out of place even within current projects that build a new Chicago identity through the promotion of leisure.

During August 8, 2009, I skated the Burnham Skate Park and experienced a set of different social dynamics. Arriving around noon, I exited the air-conditioned interior of an automobile and ventured into the scorching summer heat. I looked back toward the parking lot

and noticed a recently placed electronic parking meter box. I continued to push towards the skatepark while ignoring this unwanted revelation. Once passed the gate and in the park, I skated for only about half an hour before feeling heat exhaustion as my aching body became drenched in sweat. In contrast to the GO Skateboarding Day event, only a few skateboarders were present. I rested for a while and took note of my surroundings.

Lakeshore Drive traffic noise is a constant. I'm sitting under a tree. Five lanes of northbound traffic just about 30 feet from where I sit (field notes).

As the intense summer sun loosened its grip, the skatepark began to attract a growing crowd. I left that day with a mixed bag of emotions. Mostly accessible by automobile, retrofitted with parking meters, and inundated with traffic noise, Burnham Skate Park represents the enclosure of skateboarders within marginal spaces while the park thrives as a popular public space that successfully promotes lakefront leisure.

Just three years after the inauguration of Burnham Skate Park, a second poured-in-place lakefront skatepark was built. Wilson Skate Park opened in 2003 just ten miles north of the Burnham Skate Park. The newer park also consists of 22,000 square feet of poured concrete with two bowls and street features. It is located within Wilson Beach that provides amenities such as a dog-friendly area and a parking lot. Both Burnham Skate Park and Wilson Skate Park were developed by the Chicago Park District and are free and open to the public. Posted rules and regulations on wrought iron fencing welcome users of both spaces. While financed by the city's park district, these municipal skateparks are mostly "self-supervised, self-maintained, and self-policed" (Howell, 2009, p. 484). Burnham Skate Park and Wilson Skate Park exemplify current governmental interest in the provision of leisure spaces along with a steady increase in the popularity of skateboarding in Chicago.

However, the Wilson Skate Park's built features attract larger crowds. An eight feet deep clover-shaped bowl with a concrete coping makes for a close replica of a backyard swimming pool. Likewise, a six feet deep mitten-shaped bowl with metal coping allows for speed, exhilaration, and flight. These vertical terrains are coupled with a vast street course that includes a pyramid, ledges, and curbs. The success of Wilson Skate Park is partially founded on the Park District's decision, at the insistence of local skateboarders, to contract a reputable construction company. Local skateboarders organized in order to prevent the mistakes made during the Burnham Skate Park dig-and-pour construction stage. Instead of an inexperienced construction crew, a California-based company that specializes in the design and construction of skateparks was contracted for the Wilson Skate Park project.

Other features that make the Wilson Skate Park a success in comparison to Burnham Skate Park include a location further away from the traffic noise of Lake Shore Drive, a larger and purchase-free parking lot, and proximity to public transportation. The recent opening of Citizen Skate Café just a few blocks west of the skatepark also contributes to its growing popularity. Skate shops are meeting places where skateboarders hang out, watch skate videos, flip through skate magazines, and purchase equipment. These small independent businesses sell specialized equipment, clothing, and media as well as provide support for local skateboarders through sponsorship, organized events, and the filming and distribution of skate videos. Established in 1997, Uprise Skate Shop is a staple within the Chicago skateboarding scene that has produced several videos showcasing local talent performing throughout the city. These videos potentially disseminate a "skaters'-eye-view" (Flusty, 2000) of Chicago among skateboarding scenes located throughout the world. Citizen Skate Café contributes to the local

scene by incorporating a full-service coffeehouse within a skate shop and by providing a vibrant gathering place in close proximity to Wilson Skate Park.

This skatepark is the place of choice for official skateboarding demos in Chicago. The demo is a promotional event coordinated by skateboard companies that gathers professional skateboarders, team managers, and filmers on multiple destination tours. The destinations are usually skateparks where professionals showcase their skills. Local skate shops work with the companies to advertise these event and often host autograph signing sessions. In Chicago, recent demos held at Wilson Skate Park include Emerica's Wild in the Streets and GO Skateboarding Day on June 21, 2006, Element's Power to the Planet Earth Day Pick up the Parks on April 22, 2009, Vans Driving the Bus Tour on May 22, 2009, Quiksilver's Up in Smoke BBQ on July 6, 2009, and the Nike SB Don't Fear the Sweeper Fall Tour on September 19, 2009. As promotional activities, demos are orchestrated in order to build brand loyalty achieved through logo banners strung along the wrought-iron fence, product giveaways, and the subsequent distribution of tour videos.

On September 19, 2009 I went to Wilson Skate Park in order to get a chance to skate with professionals I had seen only in print and on video. Just two months prior, Uprise Skate Shop hosted a free screening of Nike's recent release entitled "Debacle". During the screening, I felt a sense of belonging as the packed studio collectively gasped at the maneuvers projected on the wall. This was a welcomed change of pace from my usual viewing of skate videos within the confines of the home. I left the screening motivated and looked forward to the Nike SB team's tour stop in Chicago. On the day of the demo, I hopped on the elevated train. While on route to Wilson Skate Park, an advertisement caught my eye.

An ad on the Red Line asks if I have had a concussion or head injury. If so, I could be rewarded \$75 for participating in a study on insomnia and head trauma. This was the last

thing I wanted to read as I made my way north to Wilson Skate Park. Skateboarding is fickle when it comes to injuries. Although I've fractured bones, sprained tendons, and shed blood many a times, I somehow feel safe on a skateboard. This is a contradiction worth pondering. Official sport statistics indicate that skateboarding falls short to traditional sport injuries. So you are more likely to get hurt playing basketball, football, tennis, or baseball than riding a skateboard. However, the perception of extreme sports is that they are individualized high-risk endeavors. This may be marketing hype while there may be something inherently dangerous within new sports (field notes).

On a latter visit to the skatepark, I witnessed a fellow skateboarder handcuffed and detained by a police officer. I was reminded that the risks of skateboarding in the city are not limited to self-inflicted personal injury. After managing to exit the train and skate to the park unscathed, I was met by a sea of skateboarders and onlookers.

Wilson Skate Park was packed! There were hundreds of skaters for sure. Once in the park, I made my way through the crowd to catch a glance at the pros. Eric Koston, Stephan Janowski, Brian Anderson, Grant Taylor. Kids were hyped to see the Nike team! I moved from spot to spot, not really finding my niche till late, after the team left (field notes).

The park was so crowded that there was little room left for skateboarding. A chaotic frenzy ensued as the professional skateboarders were mobbed for autographs and grew frustrated with the lack of space for performing tricks. Furthermore, violence erupted as kids got their boards stolen, fist fights over giveaway products abounded, and an anti-biker hostility set the tone in the bowl. The team left sooner than expected. We skated into the night.

Even though Wilson Skate Park is a top-down planned space, skateboarders have retrofitted the park through everyday use and ingenuity. A series of obstacles such as metal trash cans and plastic Jersey barriers are frequently incorporated into the park in order to modify its contours. Skateboarders perform tricks over or across the add-ons so as to enhance their experience in the built environment. During the Nike SB demo, the cardboard boxes in which the giveaways were brought into the park were quickly appropriated as impromptu obstacles.

However, the most notable bottom-up intervention consists of the removal of sections of the wrought iron fence around the park. This modification is a considerable improvement on the original plan conceived by Park District officials. Instead of a single eastward gate, the altered fence now allows for multiple entrance and exit points throughout the perimeter of the park. Park goers can now come and go at multiple directions due to actions meant to lessen the enclosure of skateboarders.

While Burnham Skate Park and Wilson Skate Park differ in desirable terrain features among users, both leisure spaces emerge from a similar top-down vision of urban planning and land development. This vision continues the bird's eye view and master plan legacy of Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett's *Plan of Chicago* of 1909. Regarded as a project that secured lakefront leisure, the *Plan* set out to remedy the ills of industrialization with the promotion of open spaces. It envisioned a south lakefront park with a series of manmade islands, boating harbors, beaches, meadows, and playfields. Throughout the twentieth century these plans for the south lakefront were put on hold by a series of development projects that included the Century of Progress World's Fair of 1933, the construction of Merrill C. Meigs Airport in 1946, and the McCormick Place convention hall in 1960. Recent efforts in line with the 1909 plan include a landscaped Museum Campus and the controversial replacement of Meigs Airport with a nature preserve. The construction of the Burnham Skate Park in 2000 and the Wilson Skate Park in 2003 evidences the increasing popularity of new sports and continued trends in urban governance through the provision of leisure facilities. These poured-in-place lakefront skateparks conform to top-down urban planning and land use models that seek to keep kids off the streets through specialized terrains and prescribed uses.

A Plaza in the Park

A different set of social arrangements characterizes the emergence of the first phase of the Grant Park Skate Plaza. Rather than a top-down project, the plaza has grassroots and participatory design origins. Although its low-set horizontal lines differ from the undulated surfaces of the DIY skatepark found under the bridge, the Grant Park Skate Plaza was also conceived by on-the-ground users. Located south of Balbo Drive and west of Columbus Drive, the plaza consists of a fenced slab of smooth concrete fitted with an assortment of moveable obstacles that mimic street furniture. On its perimeters are train tracks, a series of tennis courts, volleyball courts, and softball fields. Entry is open and free. Once on site, you get the feeling this is an ad hoc space, a space conceived after the fact. The ground surface is in top condition but the obstacles have seen better days. These obstacles harbor stories of unlikely alliances, spatial appropriation, and urban land reclamation. The skateplaza's barren landscape comes alive once one looks up and takes a glance at the city skyline.

During June 26 to September 12, 1998 Dan Peterman's *Plastic Economies* was on display at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. Among the many installations made of recycled refuse, *Accessories to an Event (plaza)* stood out because of its unique location rather than its otherwise ordinary form. Peterman spread modular and multifunctional units fashioned out of planks made of reprocessed post-consumer plastic and zinc-plated bolts across the entrance space of the museum effectively taking high art to the street (Peterman, 2004). These environmentally conscious artifacts served as functional art and temporary street furniture. To the surprise of both the artist and city officials, *Accessories to an Event (plaza)* became a popular skatespot. Chicago skaters embraced the low-set smooth ledges of the installation where they performed all sorts of technical maneuvers. A reuse of the already recycled materials took place

as skaters performed unintended playful uses of the built environment.

Once city officials banned skateboarding from the museum entrance and the installation was taken down, skaters organized for a purpose-built public space. The first phase of the Grant Park Skate Plaza emerged from these struggles after several years of negotiation. Park District officials commissioned Dan Peterman for the project. The recycled planks from *Accessories to an Event (plaza)* were reused. Much like the DC Kettering Plaza, the refitted artifacts are reminiscent of architectural features of urban spaces such as benches and planters with the added benefit that these plastic simulations can be legally used and rearranged to meet skaters' desires. I frequented the skateplaza on approximately two-dozen occasions during the spring and summer months of 2009 and each time noticed different arrangements of the obstacles so as to enable diverse lines and tricks. On one occasion, a group of eight skateboarders struggled with a bench-like obstacle for a while until we were finally able to flip it over. By doing so, we exposed an edge of the piece of street furniture that was still sharp and unworn.

Similar to the modifications skateboarders make to the Wilson Skate Park fence in order to lessen their enclosure, the repositioning of obstacles at the Grant Park Skate Plaza denotes creative experimentation within an adaptable environment. Through these actions, skateboarders become active participants in retrofitting and redefining sanctioned skateboarding destinations. They contest intended uses and transform fences into exits and untapped obstacle undersides into fresh skateable terrains. The everyday interaction between skateboarding bodies and built forms enable the emergence new skate styles and spaces in constant flux. Whether designed as adaptable or fixed, purpose-built destinations tend to morph through new uses unforeseen even to skatepark builders. Skateboarding progression continues through the creative exploration of spaces made from diverse construction materials that make up an eclectic milieu of built forms.

Due to the malleable nature of plastic, the Grant Park Skate Plaza requires much more maintenance and upkeep than a poured-in-place facility such as Burnham Skate Park and Wilson Skate Park. The wearing down of the plastic street furniture may factor into a decrease in the Grant Park Skate Plaza's popularity. On May 30, 2009 I went to skate the plaza. Upon arrival, I noticed a group of skaters.

I skated with them for about 30 mins and then the foursome parted. I was left alone in the plaza. To the north were several groups practicing baseball and softball on the diamonds. To the south, the six tennis courts were all in use. Further south, the dog run/park was also packed. The plaza was empty! (field notes).

Although surrounded by a plethora of activities, I was overwhelmed by a sense of solitude as I stood in the center of the empty plaza. Unlike Burnham Skate Park or Wilson Skate Park set among less-regulated leisure activities such as sunbathing, dog walking, or strolling on a bike path, the athletic field setting of the plaza portrays skateboarding as legitimate sport. I couldn't help but wonder.

Were skaters using the city and not the skateplaza this afternoon? I sure hope so! However, this use remains under the radar and not confined to a sanctioned place. How does the experience of an empty skateplaza compare to the desolate hard plaza that sprouted at the foot of skyscrapers due to incentive zoning? (field notes).

The derelict conditions and unpopularity of the skateplaza were somewhat remedied toward the end of July 2009. The infrastructure built for a Red Bull-sponsored skateboarding event held in Soldier Field was donated to the city of Chicago and placed in the Grant Park Skate Plaza. The addition consists of a multi-tiered stage or manual pad with inclined banks and ledges that attracts a growing number of diverse skateboarders. Although the manual pad is a much-needed improvement to the plaza, it remains a temporary obstacle unable to withstand prolonged use.

If proper public/private funding and city permits are secured, the skateable art pieces made by Dan Peterman and the Red Bull manual pad will become temporary features of the

skateplaza as plans to design and build a permanent facility are underway. This future scenario is contingent on local skateboarders' willingness to ascribe to a "cultivation of personal responsibility" in order to "self-finance" the project (Howell, 2008). Much like the Rob Dyrdek/DC Shoes Skate Plaza in Kettering, Ohio, the Grant Park Skate Plaza promises to be a stylish planned space combining garden landscaping with high quality construction materials worthy of downtown financial district plazas.

The Grant Park Skate Plaza constitutes a space of productive contradictions. Through this initiative, skateboarders have secured a corner of Chicago's front yard. This contested terrain is coveted for its legally designated "open, clear and free" lakefront location (Wille, 1972). Both eager land developers and historical preservation activists hold Grant Park in high esteem as either an untapped investment venture or a bastion for democratic values ascribed to public space. However, this specific territorial gain results in a citywide loss. Even though access to the plaza is open and free, the hidden cost of this purpose-built skateboarding space consists of forfeiting their right to skate throughout the city (Németh, 2006). Much like Burnham Skate Park and Wilson Skate Park, this project works as a political concession that justifies the controlled exclusion of skateboarders from downtown. Recent legislation prohibits skateboarding in the Central Business District. An unsettling scenario emerges as skaters are subject to stiff fines if caught skating outside the fence. A purpose-built conundrum unfolds. Designated skateboard sites such as the poured-in-place lakefront skateparks and the Grant Park Skate Plaza stimulate the growth and popularity of skateboarding while justifying its further criminalization on city streets.

Prefabricated Modular Skateparks

Logan Boulevard Skate Park is the most recent skatepark built within Chicago city limits. It is the fourth large-scale skatepark built and financed by the Chicago Park District. Located under the Kennedy Expressway in the Logan Square neighborhood, the skatepark consists of a fresh slab of smooth concrete topped with an assortment of prefabricated modular obstacles. Upon entrance through the wrought iron gate with posted rules and regulations, the user will find a street course section that includes straight and curved rails, manual pads, and ledges. Further in, one finds the largest section of the park comprised of several quarter pipes, pyramids, ledges, spines, and a bowl corner. Beyond this tranny sections lies a second smaller street course with a large rail, picnic table, and kicker ramp. Overall, the smooth ground surface and new obstacles make for an exhilarating experience.

Unlike the custom-built features of the poured-in-place lakefront skateparks and the Grant Park Skate Plaza, the street and vertical structures of the Logan Boulevard Skate Park were prefabricated off-site and assembled in place. The steel and wood composite structures follow a uniform pattern determined by a limited inventory of products. Although modular skateparks are most often less expensive than poured-in-place skateparks, the experience of riding a prefab park is much more predictable and less challenging. Furthermore, the assembly of mail-order parks requires much less skill than pouring concrete. The prefab trend is most prevalent outside of city limits. City officials in suburbs within the Chicago metropolitan area such as Oak Park, Forest Park, Elmhurst, Naperville, and Schaumburg have chosen modular over poured-in-place. Overall, skateparks are much more prevalent beyond city limits due to land availability and user demand. In contrast to the concentric circle model employed by Chicago School urban ecologist, the proliferation of skateparks throughout the Chicago metropolitan area first initiated in

suburban subdivisions and then slowly moved toward the urban core. Prefabricated modular skateparks constitute ready-made and relatively inexpensive sanctioned spaces responsible for a steady increase in skateboarding popularity.

The Logan Boulevard Skate Park location stands in stark contrast to the suburban track athletic field. It resembles more the derelict site of the Burnside project than the postwar Levittown development. During four years of planning, local skateboarders struggled to secure a poured-in-place skatepark under the bridge. Inspired by the success of the likes of Portland's Burnside project, Philadelphia's FDR Skatepark, Oakland's Bordertown Skatepark, San Pedro's Channel Street Skatepark, and Seattle's Marginal Way Skate Park, Chicago skateboarders strived for a unique and permanent venue. Instead, a modular skatepark was set in place. Much like the development stages proposed for the Grant Park Skate Plaza, Park District officials settled on prefabricated components in order to gauge the site's popularity before committing to a self-financed concrete skatepark. These proposed development plans remain unfulfilled.

With exception to Wilson Skate Park during demos, the Logan Boulevard Skate Park was the most used sanctioned skateboarding space in Chicago during my experiences in the Spring and Summer months of 2009. The location of the Logan Square neighborhood skatepark best explains its success in attracting skateboarders. While the poured-in-place skateparks and the Grant Park plaza are located on public parkland envisioned by the civic-minded authors of the *Plan of Chicago*, the sites remain somewhat inaccessible. This problem results, in part, from the coupling of a deficient public transportation system and automobile traffic on Lake Shore Drive responsible for creating a sharp boundary between lakefront leisure spaces and the rest of the city. The Logan Boulevard Skate Park is also surrounded by traffic. The Kennedy Expressway zooms with vehicular congestion while its underside provides skateboarders with a much-needed

cover from the glaring sun or rain. At ground level, pedestrians travel along sidewalks to-and-from work, out for a stroll, or headed to a near-by shopping corridor.

The shade from the expressway and the traffic noise make for a gloomy ambiance. Parents and others sat on the benches. I noticed many people (families with strollers, yuppies, hipsters) passing by the park on their way somewhere else (field notes).

The Logan Square park is both a skateboarding destination and a public amenity neighborhood residents experience in passing.

The skatepark is part of a neighborhood beautification project. Sidewalks, street lighting, and decorative landscaping were incorporated into the surrounding area in order to promote pedestrian traffic and neighborhood cohesion disturbed by the expressway. The efforts to revamp this area contribute to a citywide program of urban beautification intentioned on fostering a new postindustrial leisure identity of Chicago (Spirou, 2006). However, expressways and their undersides remain inhospitable spaces for skateboarders and pedestrians.

After parking on a side street, I skated through a (somewhat) manicured path straight into pigeon-shit prefab hell?! (field notes).

Much like Lake Shore Drive, the expressway constitutes an insurmountable boundary within the Logan Square neighborhood. The Kennedy Expressway has dramatically run over Logan Boulevard! In his analysis of a series of Carlos Almaraz crash paintings, Avila (2007) describes a Los Angeles scenario reminiscent of my experience at the Logan Boulevard Skate Park.

The spectacle is delivered on the stage of the postindustrial city, not of the boulevard, but of the freeway, which assumes an unchanging quality: it stands sturdily beneath the explosion of racing cars, unfazed by the deadly combustion of fire and fuel (p. 8).

Chicago city officials and neighborhood advocates seek to remedy the “unchanging quality” of the Kennedy Expressway in Logan Square while local skateboarders seize the opportunity to claim urban space.

The partnering of urban beautification and skatepark construction was put to the test during the opening of the Logan Boulevard Skate Park on April 1, 2009. In weeks prior to this event, skateboarders had managed to jump the fence and inaugurate the new facilities on their own terms. Furthermore, a parallel space-claiming effort unfolded as local graffiti artists tagged the prefabricated modular skatepark. On the day of the official opening, neighborhood advocates and Park District officials were dumbfounded to discover that they had unwittingly planned and financed a new canvas for graffiti writing. If urban beauty is defined by cleanliness, wrought-iron fences, and manicured vegetation, then spray can writers are ill equipped to compete with the thriving community of pigeons perched on the underpass rafters bombarding the park with feces and the soot, fumes, and noise produced by a constant flow of speeding automobiles and semi trailers.

The confluence of skateboarding and graffiti writing signals towards the limits of a vision of social order conceived exclusively through planned spaces. Both social practices claim space by drawing lines across the urban landscape. Within skateboarding parlance, a line consists of a series of maneuvers achieved in sequence and across different obstacles. A skateboarder's proficiency may be gauge by the creativity and consistency of his or her lines. If captured on film and edited within a skate video, lines may serve as a template for others to learn and innovate. In print, lines are represented through sequence action shots that capture movement in still frames. Some lines are first published in glossy skate magazines to be followed by their on-screen debut through an intertextual media crosspollination of sorts. In this sense, skateboarding is a form of writing on the city closely linked to the dissemination and consumption of a highly specialized niche of electronic and print media. Howe (2003) states that

We all draw lines, and in order to ‘get’ skating, in order to take possession of skateboarding, we need to draw out lines with subtlety, in a way that accounts for skateboarding in all its complexity. [...] For me, skateboarding is writing (pp. 368-369).

By writing the city, skateboarders and graffiti artists unearth creative and often-criminalized uses of urban built environments that challenge the prescribed order imposed through top-down planning processes.

Both skating a park before its official opening and tagging beyond a sanctioned graffiti wall constitute transgressions that undermine urban beautification efforts set on securing a postindustrial leisure city. These social practices highlight fissures within planned spaces and motivate the further regulation of public space. Graffiti writing and skateboarding share even more in common when skaters venture beyond the confines of the skatepark. Following de Certeau (1984), Tonkiss (2005) argues that

skateboarding in this sense represents a marginal tactics of space not only in terms of the liminal spaces it carves out but in the illicit status of the practice itself. What appears as a creative spatial practice – like graffiti – is rationalized and policed in terms of trespass, public order and criminal damage [...]. As with graffiti, the spatial tactics of skateboarding slides between ‘crime and art’ [...](p. 145).

A host of technologies, experts, and ordinances take shape in an attempt to manage these unforeseen public space users.

Skateparks conform new leisure spaces that both enable the proliferation of alternative sport practitioners and serve to regulate public behavior beyond their fenced-in perimeters. Although variations on the theme span from do-it-yourself squats on empty lots to pay-to-play corporate brand-building retail space, Chicago skateparks consist of public amenities that can be traced to Progressive Era reform movement but differ from the Progressive playground. In the contemporary city, the social problems of urban congestion addressed by the *Plan of Chicago* are a distant memory. Instead, current city deindustrialization is addressed through an urban

development mandate geared towards competence within a so-called global stage. City officials deploy multiple strategies in order to attract financial investors, corporate headquarters, land developers, tourists, and affluent residents. The promotion of leisure and the construction of leisure amenities figure among these strategies. Skateparks figure among a wide range of new public spaces envisioned for creating a city governed by a leisure economy.

Much like progressive playgrounds, skateparks conform spaces of enclosure intentioned on governing unruly bodies. Both purpose-built sites seek to keep youth from playing in the streets through specialized built environments developed for the promotion of prescribed play. However, within current urban governance practices characterized by a shift from “managerialism to entrepreneurship” (Harvey, 1989) the redevelopment of urban spaces is increasingly driven by public-private partnerships and corporate sponsorships. Much like current trends in the development of sports stadiums, new skatepark and skateplaza projects in Chicago will most likely require private investments in exchange for naming rights and landscape branding. Furthermore, these new public spaces also seek to govern bodies through a host of enforced rules and regulations. Millennium Park figures as a key example of controlled inclusion within privatized public spaces in Chicago through heavy policing, strict curfew, and the closing off of sections for private events. Skateparks will most likely follow suit with increased surveillance and use restrictions that tend to accompany the intrusion of corporate financing of otherwise open access spaces.

Even within the confines of planned spaces, everyday users challenge prescribed uses through unforeseen creative modifications. The removal of sections of the fence at Wilson Skate Park, the rearrangement of obstacles in the Grant Park Skate Plaza, and the use of Logan Boulevard Skate Park by skaters and graffiti writers before its official inauguration constitute

instances of contestation that undermine the intended uses of these spaces of enclosure. Skateboarders also explore the untapped potential of built environments beyond the skatepark. Much like children who often explore beyond the confines of “playgrounds and other formally designated and provided play sites” (Valentine, 2004, p. 75), skateboarders seek exhilaration, thrill, and pleasure in the most unlikely of places. The following chapter focuses on street skateboarding and the possibility of an open city through critical spatial practices. The chapter chronicles the rise and the limits of the modern city through the social practice of skateboarding.

CHAPTER 3:

FOUND SPACES: STREET SKATEBOARDING AND THE OPEN CITY

The emergence of street skateboarding is enmeshed with a host of social policies and urban design trends key to the shaping of the modern city. Skateboarders redefine the barren landscapes of rationally conceived hard plazas as impromptu playgrounds. This chapter explores the political import of street skateboarding within a social context of increased exclusions from public space. The first section of the chapter details the rise of the skyscraper within the crafting of modern city skylines and the ground-level spaces left in their shadows. Through the juxtaposition of neoclassical planning and the futurist impulse of International Style architecture, the section discusses several ideological and aesthetic underpinnings of modern public spaces.

The second section of this chapter examines the aftermath of these urban policies and practices through an assessment of the “end of public space” thesis. Apologists claim that processes of commercialization drastically reduce the possibility of public life while “public space renaissance” adherents embrace a boom in construction motivated by nostalgic New Urbanism architecture. The third section chronicles the emergence of varied skateboarding modalities in unison with specialized sites of practice while the fourth section imagines a third way beyond the “end” or “renaissance” of public space through the casting of skatespots as critical spatial practices.

Street skateboarders’ practice an ethic of care for the built environment through everyday uses that challenge prescribed notions of space while fostering the possibility of an open city. Through varied experiences from skating in a whitewashed gallery to fleeing the caffeinated frenzy of a corporate-sponsored contest, the final section of this chapter chronicles the complexities ascribed to skateboarding as art, crime, and sport.

Skyscrapers and Plazas

The rise of the skyscraper was pivotal in the crafting of the identity and image of cities across the United States. At the end of the nineteenth century, the steel-framed multi-story building emerged as a feasible alternative to the masonry building. The physical properties of steel as a lightweight construction material with a high load-bearing ratio would allow for buildings to reach unprecedented heights. The technology of steel-framed construction, along with the invention of the mechanical elevator and new lighting systems, enabled the realization of vertical cities. Schwieterman & Caspall (2006) describe the 1885 Home Insurance Building erected in Chicago and regarded as the first skyscraper.

Rising ten stories, this engineering marvel was the first tall building to be supported by a metal skeleton of vertical columns and horizontal beams. With a frame consisting of thin pieces of steel, the Home Insurance weighed less than half as much as a typical ten-story building made of heavy masonry (p. 79).

The skyscraper transformed the physical contours of the city as height became an invaluable dimension of urban space for both economic and representational purchase.

The unforeseen upward growth of cities surpassed the neoclassical order envisioned through the *Plan of Chicago*. The Plan's bird's eye view illustrations and rational order were conceived from atop of the 1904 Burnham & Company designed Railway Exchange Building. Schwieterman & Caspall (2006) state that the seventeen-story building

rose to nearly the maximum height permitted by city law at the time and towered above its South Michigan Avenue neighbors (p. 16).

The doubling of the height limit in 1902 to 260 feet ushered in an unforeseen vertical construction boom. However, the panoramic view gained from the top floor of the now named Santa Fe Building inspired the vision of geometric and horizontal order across a monolithic neoclassical urban core. The representations achieved through the *Plan of Chicago* mimicked

the flat Midwestern prairie topography that expanded outward from the urban lakefront to the heartland farms.

In contrast to the low-set order espoused by the neoclassical metropolis envisioned through the *Plan of Chicago*, the vertical reach of the skyline emerged as a significant status marker among United States cities. At the turn of the twentieth century, clusters of skyscrapers were depicted in print media in order to represent the industrial might of cities such as New York and Chicago as well as the might of the United States on a world scale. King (2004) discusses a precursor to this dynamic through an analysis of the “Diagram of the Principal High Buildings of the Old World” from *The People’s Illustrative and Descriptive Family Atlas of the World* (1889).

Despite the key feature (the Washington Monument) being located centrally at the rear of the exhibits and listed at the very end of the accompanying table, the hardly hidden agenda of the whole is to demonstrate the national superiority of the United States, the metropolitan superiority of its capital, and the moral superiority of its first president, by highlighting the height of the Monument – which exceeds them all – at 555 feet/169 meters (p. 7).

This early “example of a ‘global skyline’” (King, 2004, p. 7) juxtaposes the world’s tallest buildings that precede the steel-framed skyscraper.

Skylines are most often represented from ground level. Unless looking down from the privileged vantage point of an airplane window, one usually looks up at or straight-ahead toward a city skyline. Images of these chaotic clusters of skyscrapers adorn postcards and tourist trinkets as quintessential representations of the city. While the skyline serves to sell the image of a city, each of the built structures that make up a skyline serve a similar economic and symbolic purpose. King (2004) states that

given the financial realities of a profit-driven market in land, there was obvious logic in concentrating people vertically in tall buildings on a small lot (p. 6).

Furthermore, skyscrapers serve as business headquarters both housing office space and communicating the corporate might of their tenants. King (2004) argues that

building gigantic towers is an immensely expensive form of advertising, though understandable in the days before television and the saturation campaigns of the press (p. 11).

Although unparallel to the thrust of early and mid twentieth century urban development, the skyscraper as advertisement strategy continues to fuel urban imaginaries.

The proliferation of skyscrapers across the twentieth century city skyline is partly motivated by a break from neoclassical architecture. A futurist movement founded on technological progress took shape in response to the unease experienced with classical revival. The schism between these incommensurable social projects is best captured through key differences between the 1893 World's Colombian Exposition and the 1933 Century of Progress World Fair. The first showcased a White City of civic order in the Beaux-Arts traditions and represented Chicago elite interests in urban development after the 1871 Great Fire (Appelbaum, 2009). The second was held during the aftermath of the 1929 Great Depression and celebrated the advent of a mechanical age characterized by assembly line production, scientific management, and automation (Ganz, 2008). The Columbian Exposition and the Century of Progress Fair were both staged on the south lakefront within a short span of four decades. Both events sought to revamp Chicago's economic prowess through attracting tourist dollars and bolstering a city image of progress and prosperity. However, these events differed in ideological underpinnings and construction materials. The temporary plaster façades of the White City embodied the vision of building classical order in the Midwest prairie. The built forms of the Century of Progress Fair experimented with newfangled construction materials and building

practices such as the prefabrication of single-family houses. The spirit of the Fair was in tune with the rapid rise of the skyscraper and symbolic purchase of the city skyline.

The ideological shift from the 1893 World's Colombian Exposition to the 1933 Century of Progress World Fair may be gauged through key developments in transportation technologies. Both Haussmann's redesign of Paris and Burnham's similar plan for Chicago rely heavily on the replacement of narrow city streets with grand boulevards. The White City was organized around pedestrian boulevards as quintessential civic spaces. With the mass production and consumption of the automobile, the highway has supplanted the boulevard. For Berman (1982)

The distinctive sign of nineteenth-century urbanism was the boulevard, a medium for bringing explosive material and human forces together; the hallmark of twentieth-century urbanism has been the highway, a means for putting them asunder (p. 165).

The advent of the highway is key to the symbolic purchase of the skyscraper and the organization of public spaces throughout contemporary cities.

The 1925 Voisin Plan for Paris is a poignant example of the futurist ethos captured in the Century of Progress World Fair. Le Corbusier, author of this radical project and International Style architect, envisioned the razing of central Paris in order to erect a series of cruciform towers connected to the rest of the city by highways. Much like Haussmann's nineteenth century redesign of Paris, the Voisin Plan strived to impose a top-down rational order that would eliminate historic built forms and traditional uses of urban space. Sadler (1998) argues that Le Corbusier's

version of radical change was carried through not by the populace but by the visionary architect-dictator, capable of planning people's lives by first organizing the spaces and places in which they were acted out: factories, offices, apartment blocks, sports halls, and cars (p. 50).

The cruciform towers would be ordered on a grid system and would serve for elite businesses and luxury apartments. Le Corbusier proposed a similar project entitled *A Contemporary City for Three Million People* in 1922. It was a precursor to his plans for central Paris and rehearsed the benefits of vertically stacked housing. Pidner (2005) explains that in Le Corbusier's city for three million people

densities in the centre reached 1,200 people per acre but due to the use of towers ninety-five per cent of the ground area was open space and parkland (p. 63).

The tower in the park would come to symbolize a twentieth century vision of social order for city officials and land developers across densely populated urban cores throughout the United States.

The clearing of space through the construction of soaring towers would be further achieved by erecting buildings atop of weight-barring columns so as to produce open areas underneath and at ground level. Although by no means a high-rise, the South Bank Arts Centre exemplifies this trend in which buildings seem to balance on stilts. Built during the 1960s and located on the banks of London's Thames River, the Arts Centre combined a tried and tested design style pioneered by Le Corbusier with emerging trends in architectural brutalism. Sadler (2005) describes the space under the building.

It had been a Corbusian dictum that buildings should be raised from the ground, but the unusual size of the South Bank Centre's undercroft made the building 'get up' and 'walk away.' The optimism of the scheme (typical of architecture of the period) is apparent in its assumption that the spaces would be immune from crime (p. 30).

Crime prevention figured among the projected social benefits of raising buildings from the ground and contributed to the guiding themes within Le Corbusier's urbanism: "clean up, reorder, [and] purify" (Pidner, 2005, p. 65).

In contrast to the boulevard, the public spaces of the contemporary city envisioned by Le Corbusier were devoid of pedestrians. The automobile swiftly traveling through an efficient

network of highways would constitute the ideal mode of transportation. Within the technological determinism that characterized the urbanism of Le Corbusier, the city and the home were conceived as machines for living. Berman (1982) argues that

in this street, as in the modern factory, the best-equipped model is the most thoroughly automated: no people, except for people operating machines; no unarmored and unmechanized pedestrians to slow the flow (p. 167).

The tower in the park design would reshape public life in urban centers throughout the twentieth century.

Schwieterman & Caspall (2006) chronicle the proliferation of skyscrapers and urban plazas in Chicago through a history of zoning laws. These regulatory social policies span from imposed height limits during the first quarter of the twentieth century to less stringent floor-area-ratio (FAR) limits and density bonuses still in effect. According to Schwieterman & Caspall (2006), Chicago's skyline grew dramatically during the latter half of the twentieth century due to zoning ordinances that rewarded commercial and residential high-rise developers. During this period of high-rise construction, city officials relaxed the enforcement of building height and bulk regulations in exchange for much-needed amenities at the foot of these rising towers. Plazas and set backs sprouted at street level as developers seized this opportunity to build upwards to unprecedented heights. According to Schwieterman & Caspall (2006),

the adoption of the FAR approach changed the face of downtown Chicago and allowed the city to reclaim its place as a leader in skyscraper construction. By the end of the 1960s, many buildings of great height and bulk, such as the Civic Center (Daley Center) at 100 N. Dearborn (648 feet), First National Bank (Chase Tower) at 21 S. Clark (850 feet), and the Hancock Center at 875 N. Michigan (1,127 feet), emerged on newly created plazas (p. 86).

Furthermore, FAR bonuses granted by city officials to developers who would erect buildings with features that would allow for more light and air in high-density areas. Schwieterman & Caspall (2006) argue that

for many new office buildings, such as the Equitable at 401 N. Michigan (1964), First National Bank at 21 S. Clark (1969), and the IBM Building at 330 N. Wabash (1973), this took the form of a public plaza. By the 1970s, several buildings were approved with FAR over 50 percent beyond the code's basic limit, bringing to Chicago three of the world's tallest buildings [:] the Hancock Center (1969)...; the Aon Center at 200 E. Randolph (formerly the Standard Oil Building, 1974)...; and the 1,450 foot Sears Tower (1974)...(p.86, 90).

Downtown zoning ordinances have yielded a densely populated skyline with a continued proliferation of street-level public spaces.

However, the skyscraper and the urban plaza remain problematic built forms. Although skyscrapers continue to hold symbolic purchase, electronic media has diminished their relevance as advertising ploy. The skyscraper is an outdated built form within the context of current environmental awareness. King (2004) describes a paradigm shift in Western notions of urban modernity that takes shape through

the displacement of monolithic, gargantuan architectural icons of corporate capitalism by a range of environmental indicators that put ecological, energy, social and health concerns as more appropriate measures and signifiers of the modern city (p. 20).

Furthermore, the urban plaza at the foot of the skyscraper often conformed an empty concession to city officials that developers would cede without much thought. Schwieterman & Caspall (2006) state that in Chicago

several downtown public spaces came to exemplify bonus-eligible amenities that were poorly conceived. The Cook County Administration Building (formerly the Brunswick Building at 69 W. Washington), built in 1965, is flanked by an almost-unusable plaza. The Sears Tower has a plaza that is swept by high winds and inaccessible from three of

its four sides – a public space that the Tribune’s Paul Gapp called ‘one of the most conspicuous failures in town’ in 1975 (p. 90).

The skyscraper plaza most often resulted in a barren public space that failed to foster a rich and lively public life.

Variations on the End of Public Space

The emergence of modern public life is usually discussed within the context of a bourgeois revolution that produced the public sphere as a discursive arena in which “private persons” deliberate “public matters” (Habermas, 1989). The public sphere is most often ascribed to a singular bourgeois social class in historical succession to feudal social arrangements and responsible for upholding democratic ideals. Furthermore, this public sphere is conceived as a universal condition by which rational deliberation leads to democracy. The public sphere, much like the Ancient Greek agora, represents a classed and gendered universe pertaining only to male property owners. Critics of the bourgeois conception of the public sphere note the potential of contestation, rather than deliberation, and the recognition of multiple publics, rather than a singular public, as significant advances toward democracy (Fraser, 1990). Furthermore, the centrality of expressive social relations as constitutive of public exchange counters the privileging of rational debate as organizing principle (Hetherington, 1997). Also, claims of universality are further challenged through efforts to spatially differentiate public sphere theories (Smith & Low, 2006).

A dichotomous distinction between “public” and “private” grounds idealized versions of the public sphere. Privacy is doubly construed as private property in a market economy and the intimate domain of domestic, personal, and sexual life (Fraser, 1990). The public/private binary orders privacy as a realm of depoliticized social relations in so far as democratic deliberation and

political agency are relegated to a universal public sphere. However, ambiguities between the public and the private are prevalent. For example, the market could be understood as both private as distinct from the public sector and public as distinct from domestic affairs. Therefore, the dichotomous differentiation between the public and private is also a mutually constitutive relationship (Clarke, 2004).

In contemporary United States cities, multiple public spheres unravel through competing visions of order and disorder that guide the production of public spaces (Mitchell, 2003). Visions of order involve the top-down regulation of public behavior in which prescribed users participate in sanctioned uses of public space. A homogeneous public is enforced in order to assure the complementary imperatives of leisure and consumption. This model best resembles the aspirations of a uniform bourgeois public sphere best represented in the 1909 *Plan of Chicago*. Conversely, visions of disorder are founded on the tolerance of difference and dissent. Multiple and plural spheres of publics are envisioned through this take on disorder (Fraser, 1990). From this vantage point, public space is a battleground subject to heterogeneous usurpations for the fulfillment of political claims to the city.

Competing visions of order and disorder center on the “end of public space” and the contestation of a uniform public sphere. Apologists of the “end of public space” denounce the outright militarization of urban space by way of social policies and building practices intent on transforming cities into fortresses (Davis, 1990). Everyday surveillance spreads thick across public squares through add-on technologies such as CCTV cameras or built-in features such as hostile seating (Staples, 2000; Coleman, 2004). Defensible space tenets underline a hardening of urban landscapes through measures founded on the rational choice belief that the built environment determines social behavior (Newman, 1972). These tenets justify the enforcement

of crime prevention through urban design. For public space eulogists, defensible space translates into the building of paranoia evident in a series of interdictory spaces characterized as stealthy, slippery, crusty, prickly, and jittery (Flusty, 1997). Walls and gates most forcefully trigger the eradication of public space by repelling potential users of fortress cities spanning from pervasive policing throughout Central Business Districts to gated communities across suburban fringes (Caldeira, 1999; Low, 2003).

The “end of public space” also takes place through the reproduction of commercial images across the built environment. This aesthetic strategy complements the social exclusion policies of hard spaces. The branding of public space signals a shift towards privatization/colonization of social landscapes through corporate image saturation (Klein, 2000). It effectively contracts-out the construction and maintenance of public spaces in exchange for advertisement space. The Rob Dyrdek/DC Shoes Skate Plaza in Kettering, Ohio and Millennium Park in Chicago, Illinois constitute examples of this growing trend. Through public-private partnerships and corporate sponsorships, these urban redevelopment projects produce public spaces in which the “trappings of private ownership and commerce are woven into the fabric of the place” (Staehele & Mitchell, 2008, p. xviii). The corporate brand disseminates throughout the urban landscape and in the process transforms cities into marketing ventures.

The arrangements between market and state forces that increasingly privatize public space often take shape through nostalgia as a key force for the collusion of historic preservation and economic development across downtowns (Isenberg, 2004; Herzog, 2006). For some advocates of “the end of public space”, the turn toward nostalgia in urban design results in the proliferation of festive marketplaces, waterfront destinations, and shopping malls that resemble theme parks and forward the Disneyfication of cities (Sorkin, 1992). Pay-to-play rules and

regulations along with simulated environments override the possibility of public dissent and unscripted encounters in these theme park spaces. The Vans Skatepark in Orange, California is an example of a theme park space. Located in the Mills Corporation-owned The Block mall, the skatepark doubles as heavily policed retail space. Its nostalgic reproduction of the 1970s Pipeline Skatepark combi pool figures as a main attraction for skateboarders seeking to recreate the experience of first-generation skateparks. Potential costumers must pay a membership fee and observe strict rules and regulations in order to consume this experience. The Vans Skatepark sells nostalgia while building a corporate brand. Nostalgic built environments for entertainment and leisure figure among a wide range of urban redevelopment initiatives.

In contrast to critics of the “end of public space”, enthusiasts of a public space renaissance celebrate the advent of the theme park as urban design standard. Public order, security, and predictability of social interactions guide new public spaces conceived exclusively with consumption, leisure, and lifestyles in mind. A precursor to the renaissance perspective is found in the architectural populism that takes commercial spaces such as the strip mall and parking lot as a guiding aesthetic model in response to the elite, minimalist, and avant-garde inclinations within the International Style and the urbanism forwarded by Le Corbusier (Venturi et. al., 1972). Most recently, the New Urbanism paradigm espouses a Neotraditional aesthetic through an institutionalized nostalgia of mixed-use centers and by-gone face-to-face communities as guiding principle (Kelbaugh, 2007). A proliferation of public spaces occurs through this planning initiative that claims to couple mixed-uses with mixed-incomes. The boulevard and the café reemerge to remedy the social problems created by the highway and visions of the city as a “machine for living”. New developments conceived at a pedestrian scale,

however, come with a steep price tag. Most city dwellers are doubly priced-out of these new urban spaces founded on market-rate housing and elite consumption.

Waterfront destinations, festival marketplaces, and theme park-like spaces constitute New Urbanist reactions to the proliferation of so-called “dead public spaces” surrounding downtown office towers (Sennett, 1992; Mitchell, 2003; Staehli & Mitchell, 2008). A product of zoning incentive legislation, public spaces at the foot of downtown skyscrapers most often conform to the standards of hard plazas. These sites enforce social order through defensible spaces lacking trees, shrubbery, and ornamental vegetation in order to increase visibility set on deterring crime and reducing maintenance costs (Low, 2000). In line with minimalist aesthetics of the modern architecture conceived by Le Corbusier, hard plazas are intentionally devoid of people. For example, the Sears Tower plaza is an unpopular public space, in part, because it remains “inaccessible from three of its four sides” (Schwieterman & Caspall, 2006, p. 90).

However, skyscraper and New Urbanism developers share a top-down official version of a public space renaissance. Both visions of order (Mitchell, 2003) seek the construction of civic spaces geared towards elite consumption. Furthermore, both high-rises and pedestrian-friendly enclaves participate in processes of gentrification in which working-class residents are increasingly priced-out of their homes and neighborhoods. Both the futurist vision of mounting skylines and the nostalgic renditions of Main Street create cities that reproduce “geographies of exclusion” (Sibley, 1995). Urban development on these terms seeks to produce public spaces that foster homogenous and predictable social exchanges.

Planned spaces double as found spaces. Spontaneous social dynamics in public spaces often redefine the intentions of architects, planners, and developers. In contrast to top-down New Urbanism, everyday users remedy the inhospitable nature of hard plazas through

impromptu appropriation. For example, plaza ledges become alternative seating arrangements produced by office workers during lunch breaks in response to the lack of seating envisioned by urban planners and landscape architects (Whyte, 1980). These improvised benches emerge as unintended consequences of the efficient grid design of low-set horizontal lines across small urban spaces. Other actors such as street vendors, rough sleepers, graffiti writers, street skateboarders, and guerilla gardeners are engaged in everyday urbanism through spatial appropriation and the creative modifications of the built environment (Crawford, 1999). These public space users evidence the ambiguity of the public/private divide through the grassroots alternative privatization of the public sphere. The dichotomous distinction between public and private (Fraser, 1990; Clarke, 2004) is blurred through the public performance of domestic practices, such as rough sleeping, and market exchange such as street vending. Furthermore, privacy is doubly politicized when forced into public. The proliferation of informal economies on streets redefines public space as a site of production and undermines dominant views of public space as synonymous with leisurely retreat (Brown, 2006).

These everyday uses of public space epitomize the possibility of democratic participations through good governance (Friedmann, 2002). A more inclusive scenario of public space emerges from the rubble of a fragmented public sphere. This scenario includes the possibility of unregulated expressions of creativity and alternative uses of public space that foster a vibrant public life. Graffiti writing, guerrilla gardening, free running, and street skateboarding are contemporary examples of creative uses of urban space. Among these urban spatial practices, skateboarding constitutes a social enterprise that contests public space through the embodiment of a politics of play.

Skateboarding All the Way to the Bank

The emergence of varied skateboarding modalities in unison with specialized sites of practice may be traced back to the Pacific coast of southern California. The sidewalk surfer would zigzag parallel to the shoreline while anxiously awaiting the rising tide (Brooke, 1999). Smoothly paved schoolyard banks also served as endless asphalt waves on which to practice surf maneuvers. The ancient and spiritual practice of surfing combined with youthful ingenuity underline all variations on the skateboarding theme. The performative translation from surf to turf would never be completely fulfilled. However, a drought during the late 1970s in southern California left in its wake a catalyst for an unforeseen swell in skateboarding popularity (Peralta, 2001). A dried-up suburban landscape dotted by empty backyard swimming pools allowed for even greater proximity to the adrenaline rush experienced while tearing through the barrel of a breaking wave. Empty pools soon became terrains of pleasure and contestation. Encounters with police multiplied as trespassing further added to the excitement produced by this newly found space (Spasic & Angel, 2003).

Freestyle is an early form of skateboarding that morphed from sidewalk surfing. Sometimes practiced barefoot, freestyle skating is mostly performed on a flat ground surface and consists of highly technical maneuvers. Smaller boards and tighter wheel radii were developed in which the attainment of high speeds on long stretches of sloped asphalt was sacrificed in order to allow for greater board control on reduced flatland. New maneuvers like the “kick-flip” and “pop-shove-it” were perfected due to the greater agility gained on a freestyle skateboard. The technical progression of the interplay of body and board reached unforeseen mastery skill levels through this particular practice. Weyland (2002) notes the by-gone centrality of freestyle.

There was a time, though, when everybody engaged in flatland freestyle, including legends like Torger Johnson and all the Dogtowners. A partial list of other notables

includes Steve Cathey, Desiree Von Essen, Russ Howell, Ty Page, Ellen O'Neal, Doug Hitchcock and Ed Nadalin. All were freestylers, and they pushed skating forward with their innovations, as well as taking these advances to other terrains besides flat ground (p. 60).

Although almost debunked of flatland practitioners, freestyle skateboarding has been poetically transferred to the urban landscape. Street skateboarders reinterpret freestyle moves across stairs, handrails, benches, and other street furniture while adding verticality and speed to the freestyle motif.

Another early variation on the theme that also evolved from sidewalk surfing comes in the form of downhill speed skateboarding. As with freestyle skateboarding, a series of technological innovations were implemented in order to push the limits of board control. Larger urethane wheels and wider truck axles were developed for greater stability while hugging sharp curves at high speeds. Special plastic covered gloves were also engineered for assisting downhill skaters balance and break with their hands. Ironically, greater speed was achieved through the mastery of slowing down. Hamm (2004) traces innovations of the downhill slide back to ad hoc technology put to use on the hills of Berkeley, California during the late 1960s.

Leather gloves, however, skimmed the asphalt with too much friction and quickly burned through. So, to the palms of their gloves they glued thin, hard-plastic objects – road reflectors worked well, as did “skid plates” or “tail bones,” originally designed to shield the underside of a skateboard’s tail from excessive wear. They also salvaged high-density scraps from Bay Area plastic factories. With these specialized gloves, the downhill slide really took form – an innovative, safe, and exceedingly stylish method of slowing down (p. 27).

The achieved high velocities of the downhill variant through technological ingenuity and sheer courage quickly translated to purpose-built skateboarding terrains.

Other forms of skateboarding take place on varied terrains that present different challenges accomplished through the emergence of specialized skills and technologies. A unique

skateboarding modality spawned out of found concrete structures on the outskirts of urban architectural landscapes rather than within the confines of the suburban backyard pool. Borden (2001) describes how dried-up drainage pipes, reservoirs, and ditches became settings for the gravity-defying interplay of bodies and boards across long stretches of curved and vertical terrains. The skills acquired in these remote locations were also transferred to the suburban kidney-shaped drained backyard pool. Both of these settings inspired the construction of purpose-built skateboarding facilities in the form of backyard wooden ramps, both privately owned and operated for-profit skateparks, as well as government built and sanctioned non-profit public skateparks.

Half-pipes and bowls reign as the supreme structures engineered precisely for the practice of skateboarding. Varied combinations of these curved surfaces, along with simulations of street furniture, may collectively compose the contours of a skatepark. Concrete, wood, metal, plastic, and other composite materials may be used to create these awesome structures. Both arise out of inspiration gained from found physical terrains. The emergence of the half-pipe may be traced to the initial encounters of skateboarders with dried-up enormous cylindrical drainage pipes. Borden (2001) describes an experiential symbiotic performance gained through skaters' creative use of this particular form of found space.

In the larger-diameter but shorter single-section Arizona pipes, skaters began a more upward and rhythmical spatial experience, moving higher and higher, pushing skateboard and body above the vertical, and up into the zone where the pipe pressed back against the skateboarder; here, not only does gravity pull from below but the pipe pushes from above, the overhang forcing the skater into an ever more compressed board-body-terrain space, desperately re-flowing the push-pull into their own turning manoeuvre, fully exhaling to avoid being pitched out (p. 43).

By rocking back and forth inside the pipe, skaters gained greater altitude until able to bend their knees and push off the curved surface achieving more than vertical status. Their newfound height was matched by swift speed as full-pipe riders zigzag the length of the cylindrical terrain.

A more domestic drained structure inspired the construction of bowl-like skate terrain. The backyard swimming pool became a sought-out training ground for the transference of surf-style mobility to smooth concrete enclosures. These suburban property-value enhancing commodities were mimicked in skateparks as either wood or cement bowls. While half-pipes mainly consist of two facing curved walls joined by a flat bottom, bowls are spherical rather than tubular which allows for a variety of transitions from which to perform. Pools, bowls, and half-pipes enable the height and speed gained on a full-pipe with the added benefit of the possibility of flight.

The edge separating the vertical wall and the sky becomes a locus of performance within these open-ended curved spaces. The pull and push of gravity experienced in a full-pipe and described by Borden (2001, p. 43) is unleashed across the edge or lip of pools, bowls, and half-pipes. Maneuvers on the lip vary mostly between stalls, slides, and grinds. The rocking back and forth exerted on full-pipes translates to half-pipe edge trickery. “Rock n’ rolls” and “fifty-fifties” are staple maneuvers performed both as standstill stalls or moving slides and grinds as skateboarding bodies emerge from the depths of these undulated surfaces for a quick gasp of air. Similar to freestyle moves, lip tricks are poetically transferred from these curved spaces to smooth ledges found across modern urban landscapes. This cross-communication among varied terrains is furthered as skateboarders figured out how to defy the edge by catapulting their bodies into thin air. In an interview with Beato (1999), Tony Alva explains the emergence of this feat.

Aerials came from surviving, from being very aggressive and hitting the lip until eventually we were just popping out and grabbing the board in the air. It was something

instinctive. Either you made it or you ended up on the bottom of the pool, a bloody mess. It happened by total spontaneous combustion. Then we realized that there was an endless array of things we could do (no page).

While skateboarders achieved backyard flight, a global youth uprising was taking place. The playful resistance enacted through a creative engagement with the built environment was fueled by an anti-authoritarian sensibility of sixties counterculture. Trusting anybody over thirty became a hazardous endeavor as youth took to the streets.

Street skateboarding gained currency as skateparks turned to rubble. By the early 1980s many skateparks went bankrupt and were demolished due to a decline in membership and a staggering increase in insurance premiums (Borden, 2001). Urban public space now hosted a new stranger. The modern city sports all sorts of physical terrain built mostly for the flow of capital and for the enjoyment of a prescribed population. Sidewalks, stairs, handrails, planters, benches, curbs, and ledges are the preferred found spaces of street skateboarders. Much like empty backyard pools, drainage ditches, and pipes, modern street furniture and landscaped public plazas transform into sources of thrill-induced pleasure as well as sites for political and spatial contestation.

As skateboarders drift through the city, traces remain as evidence of an alternative use of the built environment. Similar to the dirt shortcuts created by pedestrians that venture off sidewalks (de Certeau, 1984; BondGraham, 2006), skateboard scuff arises from an unspoken collective effort. Filth traces adorn concrete surfaces as both markers of previous use and harbingers of unscripted encounters in public space. Candle wax and board art coalesce on concrete ledges as skateboarders glide across varied surfaces. Skateboard scuff markings are works-in-progress, smudge palimpsests, and friction regulating technologies. If left unused,

spots tend to dry-up. Pieces of candle wax are often left behind as gestures of solidarity. The upkeep of a skatespot is a communal practice that entails discretion and fine-tuning.

Skatespots as Critical Spatial Practices

Cities the world over host built environments in which skateboarding thrives as an underground youth practice. Skatespots consist of urban sites illicitly appropriated for the purpose of skateboarding. These contested terrains dot modern cities and showcase a variety of architectural and landscape design features that have been deemed desirable for the performance of skateboard maneuvers. Any sort of combination of smooth low-set ledges, planters, benches, stairs, and handrails may prove to be a coveted skatespot. Inclined banks and curved ground surfaces that inspire both horizontal and vertical movements also make for desirable spots. Concrete, granite, marble, and other hard surface features enable greater skateboard maneuverability, speed, and body control. Street skateboarding hints at the hidden potential of unintended spatial desires through the creative engagement of bodies and boards with built forms.

Skateboarders scout areas such as downtown financial districts, public squares, college campuses, and suburban strip malls in search of exhilarating terrain. Although a common repertoire of desired street obstacles serves to focus the search, each skateboarder's creativity inspires the performance of unique, novel, and pleasurable uses of otherwise mundane objects. Once a potential skatespot is identified, spatial appropriation is enacted through tactical modifications to the built environment. One copious tactic consists of the meticulous application of wax to hard edges in order to glide or grind with greater ease and increased speed. Palimpsests of board art, wax, and dirt are left behind as meaningful scuff denoting a skatespot in progress.

Skatespot scuff can be interpreted as both erosion and accretion measures. In his exposition of human traces as data sources, Berg (1998) defines the former as “indicators of wearing down or away” and the latter as “indicators of accumulation or build-up” (p. 203). Examples of these measures include the wear and tear of tiles in museums and books in libraries as indicative of erosion through use patterns while the accumulation of garbage and graffiti represent accretion through deposits over time. Scuff both adds to ordinary landscapes through wax build-up and takes away through continued use. While enthusiastic over the productive potential of unobtrusive measures in qualitative research, Berg (1998) is also cautious of affixing meaning solely based on the interpretation of physical traces. “It is not likely”, Berg (1998) argues, “that a complete description of some group can be accomplished on the merits of some worn spot on a tile or a smudge on some wall” (p. 205).

Hodder (2000) offers a somewhat similar warning as the knowledge gained from the interpretation of material culture is “often highly chunked and contextualized” (p. 714). However, a critical edge is gained through artifact ethnographies of scuff marks invested in the production of alternative knowledge. According to Hodder (2000), “the material expression of power... can be set against the expression of resistance” (p.706) because “material culture is often a medium in which alternative and often muted voices can be expressed” (p. 714). Skateboard traces most often signal an unsanctioned engagement with the built environment that undermines prescribed uses, social norms, and legal mandates founded on the sanctity of property value and intent on regulating social relations in public space. Building on the interpretive potential of material culture outlined by Hodder (2000), skatespots identified through scuff are set against the material expressions of contemporary trends in spatial regulation and urban governance.

For street skateboarders, wax scuff indicates the presence of desirable space. Great care is taken to assure the maintenance of these vernacular landscapes (Jackson, 1984) through the practice of everyday urbanism (Crawford, 1999). A sign of solidarity is achieved when pieces of candle wax are purposely left behind in order to promote the upkeep and use of a skatespot to unknown skateboarders. By sharing wax with strangers, an ethic of care for the built environment unfolds. Urban land takes on new experiential meaning through the collective creation of skatespots. The outcome of these temporary autonomous zones (Bey, 1991) hinges on struggles with dominant spatial enterprises engaged in regulating public conduct and setting the stage for financial gain through urban development.

Notorious skatespot destinations include New York's Brooklyn Banks, Philadelphia's LOVE Park, San Francisco's Pier 7, London's South Bank, and Chicago's Seawall (Salo, 2006a). Some spots such as LOVE Park (Németh, 2006) and Pier 7 (Klein, 2004) have succumbed to the processes of gentrification through urban renewal efforts and are no longer marked by scuff. Others like Brooklyn Banks (Salo, 2006b) and South Bank (Klein, 2007) have been incorporated into the fold of official city life as sanctioned spaces for skateboarding. Although each destination hosts a unique history of struggle within a specific context of urban politics, the demise of the former spots were influenced by their close proximity to emerging downtown elite leisure, consumption, and business sites while the accommodation of the latter occurred through organized negotiations for skateboarders' right to marginalized and out-of-sight city spaces. The struggle continues from spot to spot through everyday tactics of spatial appropriation and contestation.

A turn around of the manifest functions of sidewalks, stairs, handrails, and street furniture is at play in the production of skatespots. Borden (2001) frames this act of spatial resignification

within the language of the Situationist tactics of *détournement* and *dérive*. Latent uses of these built structures are revealed through a performative critique of their intended use as tools of social control geared towards governing law-biding citizens and furthering the circulation of capital. Borden (2001) argues that

skateboarding ... challenges the notion that space is there to be obeyed, and that we exist solely as efficient automata within the processes of exchange and accumulation... [by] consuming the building while not engaging with its productive activity... [it] denies both that labour should be productive of things and that architecture should be directed towards that purpose (p. 231).

Dérive becomes the modality of choice through which street skateboarders practice *détournement*. Drifting along sidewalks, skaters feel the city in search of hidden spots waiting to be usurped. Skateboarders' keen perception and savvy mobility enable the experience of unimagined pleasures throughout the built environment.

The Situationist International enacted through play a critique of modern modes of life regulated by consumption. Initially founded in 1952 as the Lettrist International, the Situationist International was constituted in 1957 among a small group of Parisian intellectuals motivated by the aesthetic irreverence of surrealism and Dadaism of the inter-war years and the philosophical writings of the young Marx, Saint-Just and various medieval heretics (Marcus, 1989). Among twelve numbers of a homologous magazine and a medley of other publications, the Situationist International disseminates an oppositional mode founded on negation. Situationists targeted the culture of spectacular consumption that turns leisure into boredom, art into commodity, and life into representation. *Détournement* or the turn around and appropriation of signs and texts in search of debunking authorship, *dérive* or drifting the city motivated by the re-signification of urban space, and do-it-yourself ethics or everyday life self-sufficiency intentioned on eluding market economies are key situationist tactics practiced in order to subvert consumer culture.

While their work spans almost a decade, the transformative potential of the Situationist International dramatically congealed during the events of May 1968.

Although the Situationist International is long gone, its urban guerrilla tactics inspire a current generation of youthful creative resistance. Culture jamming, dumpster diving, critical mass cycling, street skateboarding, and other forms of irreverent pranking are deeply invested in exercising political agency through play. These contemporary manifestations of subterranean activism create unforeseen situations that both negate the boredom of the present and contribute to the imagination of alternate horizons. Situationist sixties counterculture lives on as noteworthy challenges to consumer ubiquity through the privatization of public space continue.

The situationist call against consumer society is founded on direct action geared towards undoing capital in its most recent transmutation into spectacle. At stake is the uneven cementing of the social milieu through the gung-ho multiplication of images that increasingly render impossible the differentiation between reality and representation. For Debord (1995),

the spectacle cannot be set in abstract opposition to concrete social activity, for the dichotomy between reality and image survive on either side of any such distinction. Thus the spectacle, though it turns reality on its head, is itself a product of real activity. [...] reality erupts within the spectacle, and the spectacle is real (p. 14).

Much more than an inventory of representations, the spectacle consists of a social relationship mediated through images. Spectacular social ties reinforce a significant political, economic, and cultural shift from the primacy of production to the centrality of consumption. The multiplication of images within a world made to fit its geographic representation dethrones material reality as barometer of the social terrain. In line with the allegory of “Del rigor de la ciencia” (Borges, 1971, p. 136), Debord (1995) claims that “the spectacle is the map of this new world – a map drawn to the scale of the territory itself” (p. 23). As a self-referential enterprise,

spectacular capitalism devours everything in its wake through the transformation of the periphery into the center and the impossibility of inhabiting a pristine outside. Debord (1995) states that

the spectacle is essentially tautological, for the simple reason that its means and its ends are identical. It is the sun that never sets on the empire of modern passivity. It covers the entire globe, basking in the perpetual warmth of its own glory (p. 23).

An exit strategy from the ubiquitous entanglement of reality and representation sought out by situationists was imagined through performance. Spectacular society, with its omniscient media coverage and publicity onslaught, had carved out the terrain of the possible from its own corporate image. Direct action within everyday life was put forth as a remedy to the usurpation of reality through its totalitarian representation. Performance became a vehicle of taking back your life from spectacular social control. Lasn (1999) explains that

to the Situationist, you are – everyone is – a creator of situations, a performance artist, and the performance, of course, is your life, lived in your own way. Various stunts were concocted to foster spontaneous living. Situationist members suggested knocking down churches to make space for children to play, and putting switches on the street lamps so lighting would be under public control (p. 101).

Détournement literally meant “turning around” and involved “[...] rerouting spectacular images, environments, ambiances and events to reverse or subvert their meaning, thus reclaiming them” (Lasn, 1999, p. 103).

Culture jamming, adbusting, and subvertising are contemporary practices of détournement that seek to undo corporate control of media and information. The Billboard Liberation Front (BLF) has been altering corporate advertisements on the streets of San Francisco for over twenty years and claiming ownership of public space through parody. By not just saying but also doing, the BLF jammed a Levi’s billboard by pasting the face of serial killer Charles Manson over the image and altered an Exxon billboard by adding a SHIT HAPPENS graffiti (Klein, 2000, pp. 281-282). The former denounces the assembly of Levi’s jeans by

Chinese prisoners and their purchase by American penal institutions while the latter made note of the then recent Exxon Valdez oil spill to millions of commuters on their way to and from work.

Another example of billboard activism is found on the insides of the front and back covers of *Evasion* that depict a before and after scene of a culture jam. Originally a handwritten and then extensively and mostly illicitly Xeroxed zine, *Evasion* fell into the hands of the CrimethInc Ex-Workers' Collective and was published in book form for further distribution. Its protagonist narrates adventures of cross-country train hopping, dumpster diving, squatting, and shoplifting after facing the choice between further schooling or work and opting for neither. Set on living off the waste of others, the narrator embraces homelessness, unemployment, and material poverty as performative critiques of consumer culture.

It seemed an absurd idea – that everything necessary to live could be found in a dumpster. But for a long time, I had been hearing things...hearing things on the street, and reading things in zines – of self-sufficiency through dumpster diving, and a renegade faction of society living and prospering on what we throw away (*Evasion*, p. 64).

And if everything necessary to live could not be found, it could certainly be stolen. The inside of the front cover of the published version of *Evasion* consists of a black and white photograph of a public service billboard. It depicts a stern-faced youth, dreadlocked and tattooed, in front of a backdrop of interconnected metal shopping carts. In white print, the billboard reads SHOPLIFTER – THROWN OUT WITH MY HELP. – AMBER, AGE 16. Below the image and text, the public service announcement exhorts commuters to GET INVOLVED IN CRIME PREVENTION. CALL 1-800-722-TEENS. On the inside of the back cover is a photograph of the same billboard after being jammed. It reads SHOPLIFTERS HAVE MORE FUN. GET INVOLVED IN CRIME. EVASION. The name and age of the stern-faced youth is maintained in order to entertain an identity shift from crime stopper to shoplifter. The sanctity of private

property and exchange value is undermined or turned around through the possibility of a purchase-free life.

Détournement by way of culture jamming also takes place within the circuits of monetary exchange. Every year since 1997 the Media Foundation purchases airtime from major corporate television networks to advertise “Buy Nothing Day” on the last Friday of November (Lasn, 1999, p. 95). This twenty-four hour moratorium on consumer spending grew in scope from a small counterculture activity in the Pacific Northwest into an international event disseminated through corporate airwaves. For Lasn (1999) “culture jamming is, at root, just a metaphor for stopping the flow of spectacle long enough to adjust your set” (p. 107). Through the “Buy Nothing Day” campaign, the television set is ephemerally jammed so as to turn around and reclaim this audiovisual technology from profit-seeking interests.

Other manifestations of current situationist activism explicitly choose to practice life as far from corporate media, like billboards and television sets, as possible. Rather than subvert dominant meanings through direct engagement with the tools of the dominant, do-it-yourself ethics (DIY) strive for self-sufficiency through underground support networks. However, both culture jamming and DIY are linked by a shared negation of mainstream corporate culture. For example, the narrator of *Evasion* seeks freedom in myriad clandestine ways including both billboard jamming and dumpster diving. DIY may be traced back to situationist subversive tactics and punk political aesthetics. A direct challenge and outright refusal to manufactured pop music guide punk momentum. Literature, music, and style are concocted outside the profit motif in order to further anti-authoritarian political values. As with détournement, a performative critique is enacted through DIY punk aesthetics. Duncombe (2002) explains this dynamic.

Punk taught me to DIY: Do-it-yourself. The idea that I could create my own culture – *do-it-myself* – was for me revolutionary, as it carried within it the promise that I could also

create my own politics and my own world. [...] And what I learned, I learned by doing. Punk didn't work unless it was performed, and by writing songs, dressing up and playing out I learned to perform my passions. That is, I learned how to transform ideas into action. When I found my way to political activism a few years later, it was an easy step because I was already halfway there (p. 4-5).

Learning through doing coupled with a keen suspicion of the authority vested upon experts and professionals led to an embrace of amateurism played out in garage bands, handwritten fanzines, and homemade fashion.

Direct action furthers the political thrust ascribed to punk aesthetics. DIY culture champions the everyday life merger of art and action fostered by situationist sensibilities. The Reclaim the Streets anti-road movement in London and New York City coalesce politics and play by orchestrating elaborate pranks and carnivalesque street parties. Jordan (1998) explains that

direct action is performance where the poetic and the pragmatic join hands. The sight of a fragile figure silhouetted against a blue sky, perched dangerously high on a crane that has to stop work for the day, is both beautiful and functional (p. 132).

Luddite industrial sabotage tactics are ingeniously transferred from the realm of the factory shop floor to city streets as environmentalist struggles against encroaching development perform a sort of ecological détournement.

The fleeting takeover of contested urban space to protest unacceptable living conditions is interlaced with the dwelling unrest of the squatters' movement. Housing inflation and derelict buildings as mounting social problems are addressed by squatters through a politically motivated challenge to the sanctity of private property. Homeless youth seek to trump the exchange value of shelter for its inherent use value. The refusal to pay rent or own a mortgage becomes a tenable life choice, a social critique and an organized social movement through the efforts of squatting youth. In *Off the map* (2003), its authors explain that

at its core, the squatters' movement is always a story of resistance. Squatting invalidates the boundaries of private property and sets immediate human needs before arbitrary law. In doing so, it absolutely refuses two of the things which are essential to any functioning capitalist society. No wonder it's so quickly and forcefully squashed; creating new choices is usually fatal for the system they replace (p. 65).

Like dumpster diving, squatting enables productive recycling of capitalist refuse. While the former allows for vital sustenance through the reuse of food and other materials easily discarded as consumer waste, the latter encourages free living by dwelling within unclaimed, abandoned, or dilapidated urban spaces fitted for shelter. Both are direct action performances in which lives are played out as artful politics.

An integral dynamic in the production of skatespots consists of crafting direct action measures to elude anti-skateboarding regulations. Skateboarders' exclusion from public space is most often justified through appeals to public safety and property maintenance. Noise pollution, loitering, property defacement, and trespassing figure among the offenses incurred while skateboarding on unsanctioned grounds. Private security guards, state police officers, and vigilante property owners work towards ridding skateboarders from city streets. Among the strategies employed, NO SKATEBOARDING signs are posted in places where this improper use of space is discouraged. Skateboarders have taken on the challenge of subverting these signs with the same ingenuity employed to redefine downtown workplaces as spaces of play (Flusty, 2000). This spatial tactic of appropriation both resembles situationist *détournement* and conforms to present-day culture jamming practices (Lasn, 2000).

The theft or alteration of NO SKATEBOARDING signs constitutes a symbolic act of skatespot liberation. Ferrell (2001) claims that

for skaters, such acts exist as skirmishes in an ongoing battle, a battle to liberate public space from legal regulation, and to reencode the meaning of public space within the experience of skating. Toward this end, skaters who don't bother removing "No

Skateboarding” signs from strip malls and parks still counter them with a touch of subcultural signage, pasting them over with “Know Skateboarding” stickers that have become almost as common as the signs themselves (p. 72).

Knowing skateboarding entails the recognition of skateboarders as legitimate public space participants and the symbolic victory over anti-skateboarding spatial regulation. A similar culture jamming tactic was devised by the Emerica skateboard shoe company through the purchase-free distribution of ‘de-sign’ kits that consisted of a 14X21.5cm sheet of different sized letter ‘G’ stickers. Proctor (2004) states “the idea was to place the ‘G’ sticker over the letter ‘N’ of a ‘No skateboarding’ sign, reversing the meaning to... ‘Go skateboarding’!!” (p. 72). The defacement of posted rules of conduct is a second-order subversion of dominant meanings inscribed in the built environment that harbors the potential for imagining alternative social horizons.

NO SKATEBOARDING signs are just one component of an intricate system of public space regulation that includes police-issued fines for trespassing, loitering, and defacement of public and private property, skateboarding deterrents designed into the built environment, and purpose-built skateboarding terrains such as skateparks and skateplazas. Skateproofing devices, much like NO SKATEBOARDING signs, dot the urban landscape. Metal brackets are fastened to concrete ledges, knobs are welded to handrails, and ornamental features are strategically placed in hopes of deterring scuff. An advertisement slogan for a company in the business of skateproofing reads: **BECAUSE SIGNS ALONE ARE NOT ENOUGH!**

Skateproofing conforms to recent practices of urban spatial regulation informed by the ideological tenets of defensible space (Newman, 1972) and broken windows (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). Crime prevention through environmental design forwards a holistic approach to community policing founded on a strong correlation between rising crime rates and the

deterioration of built environments (Schneider, 2005). From this social policy perspective, unlawful activities in public space are addressed through built forms. Critics contend that defensible space and broken windows constitute instrumentalist policing ideologies founded on environmental determinism that effectively only relocate lawlessness rather than addressing longstanding social inequalities (Rentschler, 2003; Shaftoe, 2006). Among the new spatial relations that emerge from the practice of these ideologies, hard plazas result in defensible spaces in lacking trees, shrubbery, and ornamental vegetation in order to increase visibility set on deterring crime and reducing public spending on maintenance (Low, 2000). Unexpectedly, these hard places built from smooth concrete, granite and marble slab, and intentioned on securing public safety also comprise desirable skateboard destinations. Skateproofing most often takes place only after scuff has settled across the new surfaces.

Anti-skateboarding landscapes form part of a series of surveillance technologies including graffiti-proof walls, CCTV cameras, automated sprinkler systems, pigeon-proof ledges and bum-proof benches (Davis, 1992). These material expressions of power (Hodder, 2000) forge social relations through geographies of exclusion (Sibley, 1995). Under these social conditions of exclusion, dirt, filth, and scuff are construed as evidence for the reproduction of dominant truth claims and social inequalities. Both from a biopolitical standpoint concerned with hygiene and a criminological standpoint concerned with public safety, scuff-producing skateboarding bodies must be deterred in order to uphold the symbolic purchase of private property and state authority.

Set against a stage of systematic social exclusion, skatespots constitute material expressions of resistance (Hodder, 2000) that proliferate under the wire (Mitchell, 2003). The Skatespot Liberation Front promises the steadfast eradication of anti-skateboarding devices

inscribed into the built environment. Rather than a hierarchal organization, this clandestine collective is composed of anyone willing to trespass, deface, and loiter public/private property for the purpose of reclaiming space for skateboarding. Along with inverting the message of anti-skateboarding signage, hacking metal brackets fastened to low-set ledges, sawing knobs welded onto handrails, and smoothing ground surface cracks with automotive body dent fillers figure among skatespot liberation tactics (Panhead, 2005). Construction materials such as QuickCrete and Portland Cement are applied to sidewalk cracks to allow for smooth entries and landings in and out of spots and used to produce ad hoc transitioned surfaces allowing for vertical prowess. Also, angle iron is fastened to ledges in tandem with the application of wax to assure greater speed. These pro-skateboarding devices adapt the city through spatial desire. The Skatespot Liberation Front materializes a politics of difference without exclusion (Young, 1990) through built counter-narratives to skateboard deterrents and the privatization of public space.

Although the enclosure of skateboarders within skateparks is in full swing, skatespots continue to flourish throughout Chicago's built environment. The *Accessories to an Event (plaza)* installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art and the McCormick Place gap conform two noteworthy examples. The first was the inspiration for the development of the Grant Park Skate Plaza while the second was the setting of an impromptu "best trick" contest during the 2009 GO Skateboarding Day events. Another Chicago skatespot example is the Shedd Aquarium seawall. As a notorious skateboarding destination, it figures among a list of "10 Spots You Gotta Skate Before You Die" (Salo, 2006a) and consists of a ten-foot high curved barrier along the aquarium perimeter intended to protect the building from breaking waves. Skateboarders frequent the wall and perform exhilarating maneuvers. They collectively redefine the seawall through its creative, spontaneous, and ephemeral appropriation. The predictability of

the skatepark and its prescribed uses contrasts with the risks of confronting security guards or witnessing your board sink into Lake Michigan. The differences between found and planned skateboarding terrains hinge on the potential for the flourishing of practices founded on alternative uses of public space. Street skateboarding thrives on the creative exploration of the built environment rather than on ready-made, regulated, and enclosed parks.

Contests, Corporate Branding, and the City

The inception of skateboard culture within the art gallery constitutes a meaningful detour of skateboarding beyond the streets. It is commonplace for lowbrow street culture to infiltrate the sanctified spaces of high culture in a semblance of center-periphery exchange. This dynamic takes shape as outsider everyday practices are brought indoors and put on display as a self-proclaimed parody of the inside. The political consequences of aesthetic urban lifestyles are magnified within the sanitary confines of the art gallery. For example, on December 14, 2002, “Session the Bowl” opened in Dietch Projects, a New York City art gallery, and featured a life-size wooden swimming pool titled “Sculpture as Skatebowl”. Skateboarders flocked to the gallery in hopes of getting a chance to make good use of the art sculpture. Dietch (2004) describes the scene.

We discovered a new art audience that I had not known existed. Teenagers would arrive at the gallery at night after having taken the bus in from Canada or cities in the Midwest. ... This was an audience that connected with art through graffiti and skateboard communities, not through reading the reviews in *The New York Times* or *Artforum*. ... The audience did not differentiate between art and other creative fields. Their interest was in the culture that came from the urban and suburban streets (p. 175).

This insight complements the collusion of skateboarding and graffiti writing experienced during the official opening of the Logan Boulevard Skate Park in Chicago. Furthermore, the commentary chronicles how street cultures perform the Situationist credo of turning everyday

life into art. With “Session the Bowl”, the built form of the pool takes on whole new meanings as it travels from the posh suburban backyard, to the poured-in-place skatepark, to taking over the gallery and mutating into a functional work of art.

Skateboarding structures infiltrate other art scenarios making for undulated mediums of creative expression. The surfaces of these installations play two simultaneous and complementary roles: a stage for the performance of skateboarding and a canvas for communicating textual messages. For example, from October 3 to December 5, 2004 the I Bienal Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo de Sevilla inside the Monasterio de Santa María de las Cuevas in the island of Cartuja hosted a thirty-two meter long mini-ramp within the monastery’s interior patio. This lower set half-pipe sported a montage of digital images posted across its lengthy wooden surface. The multipurpose canvas was mainly conceived as a peculiar setting from which to exhibit witty slogans and digital artwork. Among the graphics displayed **THE INTENTIONS OF ARTISTS ARE OVERVALUED** and **FUCK THE INTENTION OF THE ARTIST** glared from the mini-ramp’s shiny surface as local skaters tested out the art installation (Álvarez & García, 2004, p. 54).

Another example took place in an abandoned building that once housed a garment factory in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico. During the late 1990s an artist collective cleared hundreds of naked mannequins left behind as an eerie reminder of a purposeful place and set up shop in the empty building. Among the many notable projects sponsored by the collective, a wooden skatepark-as-sculpture was erected inside the reclaimed art studio and gallery. Like the Seville mini-ramp, it served both as art object and canvas. The surface of a section of the park was painted white in tune with the sterile ambiance of art galleries while two parallel yellow stripes mimicking traffic lines traversed its length. Graffiti art covered the walls in order to bring the

street into the building (Rosado Seijo, 2003). Skate traces left by continued use were an intended consequence. The ascetic white surface gathered layers upon layers of markings making for an ever-changing canvas. After a series of financial setbacks, a skatepark carcass remains in the shuttered building in place of the hundreds of naked mannequins while the thunder of roaring skateboards continues to echo through the streets.

In Chicago, the merger of skateboarding and art exhibits is in full swing. From March 6 to March 31, 2009, “Recession: Skate Deck Art Show” was held at Columbia College. It showcased dozens of skateboard decks as canvases for original silk screens and paintings. The mass-produced decks featured one-of-a-kind graphics crafted by local artists. The Columbia College exhibit transforms the skate deck from a functional object into a work of art with the support of a local skateboard company, Character Skateboards, and Uprise Skate Shop. A second art exhibit was held on August 21, 2009, “Concrete Wave: A Showcase of Skateboard Art” took place in Rumble Arts Center located in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. It featured works on multiple mediums by local artists as well as performances by local DJs. Both the “Recession: Skate Deck Art Show” and the “Concrete Wave: A Showcase of Skateboard Art” events bring street culture indoors while maintaining a “look-don’t-touch” gallery etiquette.

Skateboarding is most often staged for consumption beyond the confines of the art gallery. The demo constitutes a popular forum for exhibiting skateboarding. Skateparks usually host these events in which professional skateboarders demonstrate their skills to a captive audience. The variety of obstacles and terrains - from street furniture to bowls - contained within skateparks enables professional skateboarders to display a wide range of skills. The demo loosely parallels the experience of consuming art in a gallery. Both produce a public that consumes artistic expressions on display within a confined space. However, a recent trend in

skate demos seeks to go beyond the skatepark gates and into the streets. These demos most resemble performance art staged in public space or street theater ensembles. The street demo puts the city on display. It showcases professional skateboarders making use of local skatespots within a vernacular setting most attune with the street skateboarding experience. Organizers, participants, and publics temporarily appropriate and redefine an urban space for the staging of a spectacle event and the production of a leisure city.

The Wild in the Streets event was a hybrid skatespot and skatepark demo that galvanized Chicago skateboarders' struggles for use and access to urban space within the city. During the early afternoon of June 21, 2006 thousands of skateboarders fleetingly occupied a stretch of Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago. With the harsh winter behind, they pushed forward by taking to the streets. The deafening roar of skateboard wheels felt like a communal cry for change. Their political goals were to disrupt business as usual, gain recognition as legitimate users of the city, and lobby for the second phase of the Grant Park Skate Plaza. Resonance between this protest event and other direct action social movements such as Critical Mass and Reclaim the Streets highlights diverse political enactments of contesting public space through playful spatial tactics.

The six-mile journey from Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park to Wilson Skate Park on Lake Shore Drive was part of a global movement sponsored by the International Association of Skateboard Companies. GO Skateboarding Day encourages skateboarders to take to the streets in unison across the world. Skateboarders' access and use of urban space are at the center of the claims made through this one-day event. Similar to the 2009 GO Skateboarding Day event held between Grant Park and Burnham Skate Park, the 2006 event also gathered a mass of skateboarders gaining ground through the city. However, the Wild in the Streets demo

galvanized a much larger turn out for the event. Sponsored by the Emerica skateboard shoe company, the demo played a key role in the massive participation within the 2006 GO Skateboarding Day event through the draw of its professional skateboarders. Much like the purchase-free distribution of 'de-sign' kits of 'G' stickers for jamming NO SKATEBOARDING signs (Proctor, 2004), the Emerica-sponsored Wild in the Streets demo and advertisement campaign seek to bridge the global reach of skateboarding and localized struggles for public space.

After the organizers of the event gave the go ahead, a sea of skateboarders headed westward away from the lake and into the skyline. Breaking from the sanctioned route, they proceeded to get wild northbound on Michigan Avenue. The street was buzzing with youthful energy. The roar of thousands of skateboard wheels echoing through downtown Chicago seemed like a communal uprising that was somehow spontaneously unfolding. On-lookers were dumbfounded and traffic halted as skateboarders weaved through cars and buses disrupting business as usual. If only for a fleeting moment, the city was theirs.

Emerica promotes Wild in the Streets as an event in line with grassroots social movements such as Reclaim the Streets, Critical Mass, and motorcycle rallies. These direct action events differ from other forms of activism such as labor strikes and organized marches. A shift from representational to performative politics in which a "grammar of experience" is shared through "resonance" between direct action and event-based social movements may explain this difference (McDonald, 2006). Although taking to the streets has long been part of "social movement repertoires" (Tilly, 2004), these direct action events differ from previous forms of contentious politics through the shared experience of an embodied politics through the performance of play.

Moments before getting wild on Michigan Avenue, the mass of skateboarders posed for a group picture behind a banner that read “Thank you Mayor Daley and the City of Chicago for Embracing Skateboarding”. During the six years before this protest event and as discussed in the previous chapter, Chicago skateboarders had organized and achieved the construction of two lakefront skateparks. Burnham Skate Park opened in October 2000 just south of 31st and Lakeshore Drive. Three years later, Wilson Skate Park opened ten miles north near the Uptown neighborhood. Both skateboarding facilities are located on Chicago Parks District land as part of a system of lakefront leisure destinations. A third skatepark is underway in Grant Park at the intersection of Balbo Drive and Columbus Drive. Skateboarders participated in Wild in the Streets to gain support for the completion of the Grant Park project. The Chicago skateboarding community rallied for purpose-built places to call their own while the rest of the city became off limits. The increased popularity in skatepark construction is directly linked with the citywide ban of street skateboarding.

Once skateboarders took to the streets, congratulatory posing gave way to defiant performance. The most skilled skaters pushed ahead of the pack. The rest weaved through traffic trying not to fall. The sound of roaring wheels left the city in a momentary standstill. Even though a Xeroxed hand-drawn map of the sanctioned route had been distributed previous to the departure, skateboarders managed to trace their own unforeseen lines across the city. By veering off of the intended path, they challenged the prescribed expectations of the event organizers. As discussed in the previous section, the appropriation and redefinition of urban space is commonplace among street skateboarders and the crafting of skatespots. The Wild in the Streets demo proved fertile ground for furthering spatial appropriation and creative play within a highly orchestrated corporate-sponsored event.

While traces of skatespots remain in the form of scuffed ledges and jammed NO SKATEBOARDING signs, the space produced through the collective push through the city was ephemeral and fleeting. This social product constitutes a sonorous space characterized by the roaring thunder of thousands of skateboard wheels rolling on the street and echoing off of downtown skyscrapers. Beyond the one-day protest event, skateboarders produce sonorous spaces through everyday practices. The “clack-clack” sound made by quickly skating over sidewalk grooves is a form of sonorous space that communicates the presence of a skater on the move. The “skaters’-eye-view” (Flusty, 2000) of the city also requires a sharp ear for skateboard sounds. Both street and sidewalk skating produce distinctive roaring and “clack-clack” noises that contribute to the making of urban space. Sonorous skate spaces are examples of representational space that is “directly lived” by users and experienced as dominated spaces which “the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre, 1991/1974, p. 39). The load takeover of city streets by skateboarders unearths the potential redefinition of urban space for pleasure and protest.

The unchartered collective push culminated in Wilson Skate Park. After momentarily usurping the streets, Chicago skateboarders claimed the skatepark for an Emerica-sponsored barbeque, product giveaway, and skate demo. Unlike other skatepark demos, a sense of shared accomplishment seemed to linger as skateboarders rejoiced in having collectively survived street traffic and the long journey under the glaring sun. The Wild in the Streets event spearheads a trend towards the staging of promotional skateboarding venues beyond purpose-built settings. The demo proves to be a popular medium through which to cultivate brand awareness and loyalty. Emerica buys multiple two-page ads in skate magazines to promote Wild in the Streets that build name recognition and a corporate image in tune with street skateboarding.

The skate contest is a variation on the demo that encompasses a wide variety of events geared towards the display of skateboarding. Much like the gallery or the demo, skate contests showcase skateboard movement. These competitive events range from neighborhood venues sponsored by independently owned skate shops to televised international spectacles with multinational corporate sponsors. ESPN's X Games, Mountain Dew's Dew Tour, and the Van's Triple Crown figure among a growing crowd of corporate sponsored events. These venues broadcast skateboarding as a competitive sport organized around circuits of athletes, commentators, judges, and consuming publics. From the grassroots skate shop to the corporate spectacle, skate contests widen the purchase of skateboarding beyond artistic expression or criminal behavior into the realm of sporting practices.

The Little Village SK8 Jam 09 Competition illustrates variations on the theme of skate contests in Chicago. Held on August 15, 2009 and sponsored by the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization and the 12th Ward Alderman George Cardenas, the contest consisted of a competitive event among local skateboarders staged with makeshift ramps and street obstacles. Little Village is a working class neighborhood composed of mostly Mexican and Mexican-American residents located in southwest Chicago. The neighborhood hosts high-density housing clusters among rail yards, manufacturing plants, brownfields, and industrial toxic waste. The contest organizers seek to create awareness and build coalitions in order to challenge environmental racism and other social policies that threaten the health and livelihoods of Little Village residents (Bullard, 1993). While the Wild in the Streets event sought to promote Chicago skateboarders' right to the city, the Little Village SK8 Jam addressed a broad register of social inequalities affecting marginalized Chicago residents. The SK8 Jam employed the popularity of skateboarding as a vehicle through which to organize and mobilize toward social

justice goals. Furthermore, the contest meshed skateboarding and art through a skate deck auction showcasing local artists in which proceeds benefited the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization.

The ASA Action Sports World Tour constitutes a mainstream example of a skateboarding competition held on May 1, 2009 in the Chicago metropolitan area. Although promoted as the Chicago stop of the tour, the contest took place in the Sears Center Arena located in the northwest suburb of Hoffman Estates. This advertising strategy signals toward the contemporary contours of Chicago shaped by a shift “from the concentric industrial city to a low-density metropolitan network” (Tajbakhsh, 2001, p. 163). In the early 1990s, Sears, Roebuck and Co. moved out of its infamous skyscraper headquarters in downtown Chicago and moved to a suburban office campus in Hoffman Estates. This move is exemplary of metropolitan area development that includes the construction of amenities such as strip malls, cinema theaters, and sport stadiums. Also, the location of the event parallels the greater popularity of skateparks throughout suburban Chicago rather than within city limits. The Chicago stop of the ASA Tour featured BMX Big Air Triples and Skateboard Vert competitions. Within this venue, skateboarding is featured among other social practices under the banner of action sports. These sports constitute commodified activities produced for broadcast spectacle and corporate branding (Rinehart, 2008). For the one-night event, the Sears Center Arena was retrofitted with BMX jump ramps and a 14 foot tall and 60 foot wide skateboard half-pipe ramp. The Sears logo on the outside of the stadium was complemented with a host of corporate logos along the vertical wall of the ramp. Maxwell, Air Force Reserve, Paul Mitchell, and LG were advertised along the surface from which skateboarders took flight. Unlike the messages featured on the Seville mini-ramp or the yellow traffic lines painted over the whitewashed skatepark in Old San Juan, the

graphics displayed across the half-pipe represent the performance of skateboarding as a corporate branded action sport.

The Red Bull Manny Mania Am Series and DC King Of Series competitive events showcased skateboarding through the temporary appropriation of Chicago skatespots. These corporate-sponsored events were staged in the streets rather than within the sanctioned confines of a skatepark. The built environments redefined by street skateboarders as skatespots were made official for the staging of contests that sought to display skateboarding within an authentic urban setting. Both the Red Bull and DC events lacked the social justice goals that underlined the Little Village Sk8 Jam. Corporate branding is at the center of these street contests. However, the events take up the skateboarders' claims to public space. While Emerica's Wild in the Streets event enabled skaters to take the city in a fleeting motion accentuated by the roaring thunder of thousand of skateboard wheels, these competitive events set up camp and temporarily occupied a corner of the city. Furthermore, they constitute sanctioned skateboarding spectacles that promote Chicago as a leisure city in tune with street cultures and alternative forms of play. The street contest enables the temporary decriminalization of street skateboarding while providing cities with tourism, consumption, and media coverage.

On July 18, 2009, the Chicago stop of the Red Bull Manny Mania Am Series took place on the west entrance of Soldier Field after a last-minute change of location. Initially, the event was scheduled to take place at Daley Plaza in downtown Chicago. Promotional materials for the event included copies of folders in which local skateboarders were encouraged to submit designs for the contest obstacle: "Manny Pads designed by and built for Chicago Skaters!". A manny pad or manual pad consists of a low-set stage with a variety of inclined planes and ledges. Skateboarders perform manuals through an assortment of technical maneuvers that most often

include balancing on two skateboard wheels across an elevated surface. The manny contest is most similar to the almost defunct freestyle competition. During the months leading up to the Red Bull event, the promotional folders surfaced in Uprise Skate Shop that advertised an “under the Picasso” setting and a participatory planning process.

Daley Plaza is a hard space at the base of a 648-foot tall skyscraper at 50 W. Washington Street. Completed in 1965, the towering Daley Center was erected during a boom of high-rise construction due to the relaxing of height regulations and the adoption of floor-area-ratio limits and density bonuses. Its exterior surface consists of self-weathering steel that has enabled the building to mutate over time into a rusty veneer. The centerpiece of Daley Plaza is a 50-foot tall steel sculpture made by Pablo Picasso to match the building’s exterior. While the plaza was conceived as a barren defensible space, it is regularly retrofitted to accommodate lunchtime performances, ethnic festivals, holiday celebrations, and a weekly farmers market. Furthermore, Daley Plaza often hosts political demonstrations, Critical Mass cyclists, and skateboarders seeking thrills on the inclined surfaces of the Picasso sculpture.

The Red Bull Manny Mania event was set to claim Daley Plaza for skateboarding. Instead, the venue was unexpectedly moved outside of Soldier Field. The lakefront sports stadium is a marginal space in which participants and spectators enjoyed views of the city skyline rather than the experience of skateboarding among skyscrapers. The event consisted of a daylong elimination process as local skateboarders showed off their skills to each other, the public, and the judges. Red Bull banners, tarps, coolers, and a DJ vehicle adorned the event while massive quantities of the energy drink were given away. A fence separated skateboarders with wristbands proving they had registered for the contest from other skateboarders and spectators. While the main event played out on the Red Bull-branded manny pad within the

fence, a series of impromptu skate sessions unfolded throughout the perimeter of Soldier Field. Some found refuge from the corporate-branded caffeinated frenzy by waxing a couple of ledges and making lines across a side entrance of the stadium.

A different set of social dynamics shaped the DC King Of Series in Chicago. In previous years, the event was hosted in skatespots across Dublin and Vancouver. Unlike the Red Bull Manny Mania series in which a stage designed through a participatory process is built for the competition, the King Of contest takes place on a found space originally conceived for uses other than skateboarding. On October 10 -11, 2009 the event was staged on a plaza at Roberto Clemente High School in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. Although by no means a skyscraper, the built infrastructure of the school consists of a single steel-framed building anchored by a hard plaza. Much like Little Village, Humboldt Park remains a densely populated working-class neighborhood. Its Puerto Rican population struggles against gentrifying forces set to price-out longstanding residents. However, the King Of event was lacking a political agenda other than to promote a corporate brand and forward struggles towards skateboarders' right to the city. A comment made by an out-of-town event announcer disheartened with the metal detectors placed at the school entrance hinted at the persistent social inequalities shaping the Puerto Rican experience in Chicago and the Humboldt Park neighborhood.

The two-day spectacle was staged across four distinct groupings of built features within the Clemente High School plaza. The first day featured tech zones consisting of a two-stair and ledge followed by a bank to ledge and long stair. Six heats of five skateboarders each competed on the spots for ten minutes at a time. The second day followed the same format across a different section of the plaza named the gnar zone. It featured a long flat rail and ledge followed by a party deck wall short and long gap. Much like the Chicago stop of the Red Bull Manny

Mania Am Series, corporate branding saturated the King Of venue through the copious placement of DC banners, tarps, flyers, and stickers. Furthermore, a product giveaway left lucky spectators sporting DC hats and t-shirts. Overall, the organizers of the event managed to appropriate a variety of architectural features throughout the plaza in order to showcase a wide set of street skateboarding skills.

The success of the DC King Of Series both highlights the gender inequalities that shape skateboarding and the political potential of skateboarding as a tactic of public space appropriation. As a male-dominated spatial practice, skateboarding perpetuates the exclusion of girls and women from public life. The title of the DC competitive series makes no qualms about the masculinist overtones inherent to skateboarding as sport. Skateboarding as crime most often takes place far from the immediate grasp of corporate branding and sport spectacle. Street contests stage male-dominated spectacles through the merging of criminal and sporting dimensions of skateboarding. The collusion between crime and sport is further complicated with the emergence of skateboarding as art. Similar to gallery curators, the DC event organizers retrofit space for the proper display of works of art. They filled gaps across the concrete ground surface and capped ledges with metal veneers to allow for greater speed. These modifications to found space constitute a form of corporate-sponsored skatespot liberation. The corporate branding spotlight shines over the tactical public space appropriations achieved through the social practice of skateboarding.

CONCLUSION

Skateboarding spaces take shape through key social dynamics of contestation and accommodation within a multiplicity of built environments. The sidewalk surfer developed novel ways in which to experience built forms by carving concrete while barefoot. These skills translate body movements from ocean waves to schoolyard embankments and backyard swimming pools. Physical prowess on found spaces enabled the progression of skateboarding into a varied mix of creative performance, competitive sport, and media spectacle. Skateparks quickly sprouted as training grounds that fueled the rising popularity of this new social practice. These purpose-built destinations simulated the terrains usurped by skateboarders for translating surf-style moves onto hard surfaces. With the ebb-and-flow of skateboarding popularity came a shift back to the streets through an unleashing of the hidden potential lodged within urban spaces. The modification of street furniture through the application of wax and other materials redefined the city into an impromptu playground. Skatespots emerged as appropriated public spaces that signal the possibility of an alternative urban politics founded on use and pleasure rather than exchange and accumulation. The enclosure of skateboarding through skatepark proliferation thrives along with continued clandestine efforts to transform cities into skate-friendly environments and more inclusive spaces.

The dichotomous relationship between found and planned skateboarding sites is blurred through on-the-ground everyday practices. The coupling of mainstream media with criminalized uses of public space unveils key variations on the theme from a flat ground solitary pastime to media spectacles disseminated across television screens and glossy print. Skilled skateboarders perform on a wide range of terrains. Planned spaces such as public skateparks both marginalize skateboarders from city centers and serve as training grounds for appropriating urban spaces.

While in the streets, skateboarders are both criminalized for defacement of property and commodified as urban guerrilla performance artists. These contradictions disable straightforward claims founded on mutually exclusive processes of contestation and accommodation. While weaving in and out of found and planned terrains, skateboarders elude fixed categorizations. Instead, their spatial desires unfold somewhere in between a political continuum anchored at each end by complex and contradictory social processes.

This study frames the movement of skateboarders through planned and found spaces within the context of recent trends in urban development. A brief exposition of key transformations within contemporary public life precedes a discussion of public policies and construction practices in the city of Chicago. The “end of public space” and “public space renaissance” figure among guiding trends within a broad debate on the relevance of public space as site for democratic participation. Furthermore, discussions over the meanings of the “public realm” highlight issues of plurality and inclusion. Trends such as failed attempts to make poverty invisible through privatization and criminalization underline current debates on the future of public space. Through careful attention to built forms, this study addresses the contested nature of public space in Chicago. Similar to other North American rust belt cities, Chicago government officials and land developers seek to revitalize local economies through an embrace of entertainment and leisure industries. These public policies both activate a “public space renaissance” through the construction of new leisure destinations and produce the “end of public space” through the production of highly prescribed and overtly policed spaces. Within this study, the scrutiny of the social practice of skateboarding as critical spatial practice forwards a nuanced understanding of these recent urban processes.

The rift between planned and found spaces is discussed through the juxtaposition of skateparks and skatespots as meaningful skateboarding destinations within the city. This study forwards the 1893 World's Colombian Exposition and the 1909 *Plan of Chicago* as key examples of social projects intent on predictable public cohesion and rationally ordered built environments. These projects form part of a broad Progressive Era social reform movement. Within these social processes, the playground movement sought to regulate play in efforts to alleviate chaos and congestion within rapidly industrializing cities in North America. The emergence of the skatepark is discussed within the historical context of playground advocacy and the regulation of play through built forms. These planned spaces contrast with the found spaces usurped by skateboarders throughout contemporary urban landscapes. The 1933 Century of Progress World Fair and the steel-framed skyscraper foreground planning practices that shaped a modern vision of the city. Street skateboarding thrives on the contours of minimalist and defensive architectural forms. The redefinition and appropriation of the city through playful tactics of disruption emerge from this unintended use of public space. As unwelcomed strangers, skateboarders swiftly move back-and-forth from the confinement of skateparks to the spontaneity of skatespots while participating in the making of urban space.

The elliptical movement from skatepark to skatespot disrupts conventional notions of an oppositional relationship between planned and found spaces. Instead, skateboarders weave back-and-forth by simultaneously producing and contesting public space. Through participatory research, this study couples skatepark and skatespot dynamics in Chicago. Planned spaces built through a range of techniques that include poured-in-place concrete such as in Burnham Skate Park and Wilson Skate Park to prefabricated modular obstacles such as in Logan Boulevard Skate Park make for a wide variety of site-specific experiences. Each site differs in social

context and built form, but all skateparks in this study conform to a planned vision of Chicago as a city of leisure. Skatespots, however, also conform to this vision as trends within promotional demos and competitive skateboarding events take shape across found spaces. Research experiences while attending the Red Bull Manny Mania Am Series at Soldier Field and the DC King Of Series at Roberto Clemente High School attest to processes of corporate branding through retrofitting the city to enable skateboarding. As skateboarders weave through planned and found spaces, the distinction between these dynamic sites becomes blurred through complex processes of contestation and accommodation.

The vision of Chicago founded on rational order is ongoing within continued efforts to make poverty invisible through the construction of new built environments. These urban development schemes mask, rather than address, issues of wealth disparity and social exclusion. During the Progressive Era, the *Plan of Chicago* stands out as a monumental project seeking to establish order amongst the ruins of the 1871 Great Fire and the urban problems caused by rapid industrialization. Burnham and Bennett sought to replace overcrowded tenements and congested streets with grand boulevards and civic spaces in the Beaux-Arts tradition much like Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris. Even though earlier drafts of the *Plan* included social welfare measures, these were quickly discarded by the merchant elites in charge of financing the project (Schwieterman & Mammoser, 2009). The *Plan of Chicago* set the stage for the reproduction of urban experiences similar to those narrated by Baudelaire (1869/1947) in which the spaces produced by the new Parisian boulevards and cafés gave way to unforeseen displays of social inequalities (Berman, 1982; Harvey, 2006).

Although the International Style advanced by Le Corbusier sought a clean break from the Beaux-Arts and neoclassical aesthetics of Haussmann's Paris as well as Burnham and Bennett's

Plan of Chicago, the modern city organized in clusters of steel-framed skyscrapers is also founded on similar strategies geared towards the achievement of rational order. Highways, rather than boulevards, connect these clusters and continue the project of making urban poverty invisible through speed and automation. Stacking offices and housing units into vertical cities not only made economic sense as land value increased but also gained symbolic purchase as height represents might for corporations and city officials (King, 2004). Both Burnham and Bennett's vision of a "shining neoclassical metropolis" (Schwieterman & Mammoser, 2009, p. 16) and new planning codes that by the 1970s brought "to Chicago three of the world's tallest buildings" (Schwieterman & Caspall, 2006, p. 86) exemplify the practice of a top-down rational making of the city. Although far from the Paris Le Corbusier sought to rebuild, these examples of urban development in Chicago arose from similar planning processes achieved "not by the populace but by the visionary architect-dictator" (Sadler, 1998, p. 50).

Even though skyscraper construction is booming in downtown Chicago, the symbolic purchase of these "gargantuan architectural icons of corporate capitalism" (King, 2004, p. 20) is in decline. Other advertisement venues such as television and computer screens consist of less costly media to communicate corporate might. Furthermore, the impact of building and maintaining skyscrapers is under scrutiny due to ecological, health, and energy concerns. City officials seek a competitive edge within a so-called global stage through the development of both taller and greener infrastructures. In Chicago, rooftop gardens in City Hall and Millennium Park consist of development projects that embrace an environmentalist sensibility that also works as an advertisement ploy for the making of a so-called green city. Urban beautification, land development, and global competence inform recent trends within the production of urban space.

Recent skatepark design and construction practices also seek to incorporate environmentalist sensibilities. Green skatepark builders work to reduce their ecological footprint through environmental sustainability goals set forth by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. Some techniques include locating sites outside Environmental Conservation and Preservation zones, using recycled construction materials, and managing storm water at the surface through natural infiltration (Mohler & Brooke, 2008). These eco-friendly practices seek to transform skateparks from mere skateboarding destinations into hands-on learning centers through the promotion of environmental awareness (Hines, 2005). While efforts to incorporate sustainable design into skatepark construction advance environmental preservation, this trend fails to address the varied politics of exclusion produced by traditional skatepark sites. Green skateparks effectively highlight the entanglement of local land use practices and global environmental issues. However, the greening of skatepark construction procedures obfuscates the controlled inclusion and persistent surveillance of skateboarders within cities.

The skateplaza forwards an alternative design and construction ethic. Through this built form, environmental preservation takes on new meanings that exceed green ambition. Rather than preserving pristine nature, skateplazas bring defunct skatespots back to life through simulation. An ethic of care for the built environment unfolds as skateboarders collaborate with developers in preserving found spaces through purpose-built forms. Skatespots that gained notoriety through media coverage get a second chance as they are collected and put on display in these museums of condemned spaces. The preservation of vernacular landscapes (Jackson, 1984) forwards an alternative understanding of urban space based on creative appropriation through everyday use. Skateplazas conform ingenious destinations that further the progression

of street skateboarding while eluding the sting of skateproofing devices and criminal prosecution. However, the emergence of skateplazas as designated areas for skateboarding signifies the controlled inclusion of skateboarders within urban spaces. Similar to both conventional and green skateparks, skateplazas also constitute political concessions (Németh, 2006) that most often forfeit skateboarders' ability to either move or stay put throughout the city.

The skatepark system consists of a built form that decentralizes the planned space conundrum. The politics of exclusion inherent to purpose-built skateboarding facilities are spread out over a large expanse of land alleviating the experience of the skatepark as a space of confinement. These systems consist of constellations of skateboard-oriented sites such as skate dots and skate paths intended on enabling spontaneous mobility from site to site most often achieved through the practice of street skateboarding on found space (Dahlgren, 2006). Skatepark systems most resemble the experience of public space appropriation. Instead of fenced-in or pay-to-play facilities, these systems allow skateboarders to move from dot to path to park without being subject to police fines and skateboard deterrents.

The physical obstacles put in place to deter skateboarding form part of recent trends within urban development projects that seek to increasingly regulate public spaces. Surveillance technologies and private security guards multiply within urban settings among a plethora of social policies and building practices that seek to transform cities into fortresses (Davis, 1990). Chicago's Millennium Park is a key example of corporate sponsored public spaces that enforce curfews and host private events in which the "trappings of private ownership and commerce are woven into the fabric of the place" (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2008, p. xviii). This development project contributes to the making of downtown Chicago into a "converted city" retrofitted for tourism and "insulated from the larger urban milieu within a process of uneven development"

(Fainstein & Judd, 1999, p. 262). Millennium Park and other leisure destinations such as lakefront skateparks consist of elaborate veneers that obfuscate the plentiful social disparities, growing joblessness, and poor living conditions that plague the city of Chicago. While city officials and land developers bet on “the city as entertainment machine” in which “amenities drive urban growth” (Clark, 2002; Clark, 2004) as the only path towards municipal prosperity, alternative public space uses are increasingly deterred, regulated, or incorporated into the mix of the leisure city. Skatepark construction conforms one practice among a broad register of top-down public space initiatives geared towards governing through play.

Whether on planned or found spaces, street skateboarding more closely embodies a politics of resistance and social inclusion. Practitioners of this style skate over distinctions between man-made and natural surfaces through spatial tactics of appropriation that transform the city into playground (Woolley & Johns, 2001). Street skateboarding as a critical spatial tactic undermines the enclosure of skateboarders within skateparks and contributes to a vision of the city that fosters collective uses and creative experimentations with built environments. Unintended pleasurable engagements with architectural forms challenge prescribed uses by welcoming unexpected encounters. Furthermore, street skateboarding fosters communal land use practices that undermine the primacy of market-rate private property (Blomley, 2004). While purpose-built skateboarding spaces may work as training facilities to further this quest, the appropriation of found urban spaces through street skateboarding contests the given meanings of cities as theme parks and spectacle (Sorkin, 1992; Debord, 1995/1967). Street skateboarders scout, usurp, and maintain spots of spatial desire by practicing an ethic of care for the built environment that transforms ordinary urban spaces into temporary autonomous play zones (Bey, 1991). The spaces crafted through the ethic of care outlined above are both subject to an urban

politics of disciplined accommodation and figure as groundwork towards resistance to punitive spatial regulation.

Within leisure development, a politics of play unfolds through the provision of sport, entertainment, and consumption amenities. Venues such as stadiums, new public spaces, theater districts, and shopping centers set the stage for highly regulated and prescribed social exchanges that incorporate play. For example, Millennium Park is host to a couple of interactive sculptures that encourage users to playfully gaze at the skyline or frolic in the water. While these built forms lack the specialized equipment, trained experts, and reform agenda of the Progressive Era playground, they continue to foment prescriptive forms of play in overtly regulated social settings. Posted rules and regulations along with Segway-mounted security guards serve to enforce the practice of only certain forms of play in Millennium Park. Bike riding, dog walking, and skateboarding figure among a long list of prohibited activities on park grounds. Play is mostly relegated to the interactive sculptures and subject to the gaze of roving guards. Furthermore, homeless public space users are discouraged from frequenting the park through enforced curfews. These disciplinary measures seek to create a semblance of order that will promote tourism and mask poverty and dissent. Within this scenario of prescribed leisure, playing around is serious business.

The limits of social projects intent on governing through play emerge from everyday unsanctioned practices. Through “directly lived” experiences of spaces “the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre, 1991/1974, p. 39), everyday users collaborate in the making of cities. Children sliding down the Picasso sculpture in Daley Plaza or getting vertical on the Shedd Aquarium seawall explore through play unintended uses of built forms. Other public space users that transform the built environment include street vendors, street musicians,

and urban gardeners. Along with these everyday practitioners of spatial appropriation, Critical Mass cyclists and graffiti writers continue the Situationist quest to merge art and everyday life through playful tactics of disruption. These collective actions enact play as a political force that undermines attempts at governing through play within emerging leisure economies. For those engaged in countering the regulation of public space through playful tactics “play is battle and battle is play” (Huizinga, 1955/1950, p.41). Furthermore, alternative public space users challenge the modernists and rationally ordered visions of the city enforced by “the visionary architect-dictator” (Sadler, 1998, p.50). Instead, the contours of urban space are further shaped and redefined by unforeseen uses and the limitless potential of creativity, imagination, and play.

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APPENDIX A:
BELOW THE KNEES METHOD

A vast repertoire of skateboard maneuvers serves as register of the ebb-and-flow of alternative sport popularity. These moves mark distinct periods within a half-century of skateboarding history through the progression of styles and terrains. Built environments – from the found spaces of backyard swimming pools to the purpose-built park to urban street settings – stimulate an ever-expanding stock of body and board interplay. During the 1980s, the Method Air reigned as a spectacular skateboarding maneuver enabling the almost impossible feat of flight. Most dramatically performed on purpose-built half-pipes, this trick consists of a knee-tucked backside aerial. Proficient skateboarders were able to soar twelve feet over the ramps’ coping, arching their backs, and looking down at Earth. In current X-Games Big Air competitions participants double this height while high definition broadcasts of the Method Air reach the world over.

This research project parts ways with the Method Air. Instead, it contributes to urban studies and alternative sport research through a below-the-knees method. Focus in this project shifts away from in-the-sky spectacle and towards on-the-ground everyday routines. While research on extraordinary physical feats broadens the register of human experiences and chronicles the dangers of doing ethnography at the edge (Ferrell & Hamm, 1998), this research project argues that ordinary acts of spatial appropriation harbor the potential for transforming cities into inclusive spaces. Although most practitioners are youthful, the politics of inclusion performed through street skateboarding resonates with other public space advocates fighting against privatization. These political acts take shape through everyday conflict and struggle.

Rather than soaring high above the coping, spatial appropriation through skateboarding happens on flat ground and is most often experienced below the knees.

The participatory research taken on in this study is multi-sited. Through multiple research sites the study chronicles a wide variety of experiences ascribed to the social practice of skateboarding. These sites encompass both built forms and media representations that span from skateparks and skatespots to magazine spreads and video clips. The intentional mix of skateboarding sites serves to highlight key linkages among contemporary urban development dynamics and an emerging politics of play. Furthermore, this research procedure enables a complex and multidimensional understanding of public space as a site of contestation. By focusing on an everyday use of public space at ground level, this study forwards an alternate reading of widespread social processes that shape key contemporary contours of public life.

Two examples of research sites illustrate key variations within the below the knee method. One research practice takes place in commercial spaces while another unfolds in appropriated public space. The first consists of the perusal of skateboard magazines in big-box bookstores and supermarkets. Most often these texts are located on a rack below the knees and behind official sport print media. At times hard to come by, skateboard magazines are chalk full of vivid photography and insightful reporting on skateboarding destinations around the world. These primary sources inform the argument developed above regarding the interplay of skateboarding and urban politics. A second research site is also found below the knees. Rather than within spaces of consumption, these sites take shape in appropriated public spaces. Skateboarders, police officers, and researchers identify skatespots by observing scuff as the markings of desirable space. In the process of crafting a skatespot, low-set ledges and other landscape features are transformed from tools for social order and urban beautification to

temporary autonomous play zones (Bey, 1991). These below-the-knees wax palimpsests represent an alternative vision of the city in which the market value of built forms is contested by the emergence of new urban experiences.

I conducted preliminary research throughout the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus. Through this research I sought to explore variations on the theme of skate scuff. While all skate scuff takes on the form of waxed residue, each scuffed skatespot communicates a variety of social meanings. Not only does scuff serve as sign that indicates the potential for spatial appropriation, but the consistency of these wax applications also serves as marker of frequency of use and popularity among local skateboarders. Eight skatespots consisting of sixteen architectural objects that sport skate traces were observed during five outings in April 2005. Horizontal and vertical mobility emerged as consistent themes among research sites. Horizontal skatespots consist of scuffed lower-set concrete ledges, planters, and benches that enable movement close to the ground on an alternative surface. Vertical skatespots consist of scuffed loading dock ledges, handrails, and staircase ledges that enable movement at a greater distance from the ground through increased speed. Informal conversations with several local skateboarders revealed that vertical skatespots are most frequented because they require more skill and enable greater exhilaration. This preliminary research exercise motivated the pursuit of this current study through a multi-sited inquiry on the social meanings of skate scuff, the everyday production of urban space, and the transformation of public space through play.

Research on material culture shapes the insights gained through combining these participatory research sites (Berg, 1998; Hodder, 2000). Both leafing through glossy media in stores and scouting scuff on streets constitute first steps towards the practice of a below-the-knees research method. Artifact ethnographies unveil meaningful relations of power from

everyday materials. On the magazine rack, an “alternative sport pecking order” (Rinehart, 1998) is evident as skateboarding publications compete with surfing, snowboarding, BMX riding, and aggressive inline skating for shelf space. On closer inspection, the competition among these sport practices plays out as a competition between a handful of corporations such as Transworld Media and Action Sport Group that publish across the board of the alternative sport market. Within the skateboarding market, each publication has an angle on the sport. *Transworld SKATEboarding* is chalk full of gloss. *Skateboarder* includes helpful tips and insightful reporting while *Thrasher Magazine* and *The Skateboard Mag* are steeped in authenticity with an antiauthoritarian slant. These materials represent both the commodification of skateboarding as a peg within the action sports machine and the voicing of dissent from the trenches of a politically charged subculture through reporting on a plethora of struggles faced by skateboarders that practice their right to the city.

While these visual materials are produced by an industry of writers, photographers, graphic designers, advertisers, and professional skateboarders, skatespots are most often anonymous ad hoc exercises. Scuff comes and goes through daily grind producing below-the-knees clandestine collaborations. The defacement of property takes on another meaning signaling an alternative use of public space. This alternative use highlights the possibility of experiencing unforeseen pleasures in built forms. Skateboarders, BMX riders, and aggressive inline skaters each produce different traces on the built environment. In contrast to X-Games spectacle and action sports print media, scuff highlights on-the-ground conflict among alternative sport practitioners. Generous application of wax differentiates the aggressive inliner trace from other forms. The plastic binding underneath inline skates creates greater friction when engaged with concrete and requires more lubrication. In addition, BMX riders use metal pegs attached to

the sides of their bikes to mount and grind a wide array of obstacles. This exercise chips concrete surfaces producing rough edges. Meanwhile, skateboarders leave their board art behind crafting colorful traces on otherwise bland built forms. Tension between these sport practitioners is commonplace. From a skateboarder's point of view, inliners render skatespots useless by saturating concrete with wax, concocting a slippery mess, and disabling effective board control. Furthermore, BMX bikers break off pieces of concrete while performing stunts and transform smooth surfaces into rugged terrain. The everyday rivalries among these public space users over spatial modification tactics stands in stark contrast to their homogenization under the umbrella of extreme sport marketing.

This study contributes to research on skateboarding and urban politics (Jones & Graves, 2000; Woolley & Johns, 2001; Stratford, 2002; Németh, 2006) through a low-set method focusing on the political potential of scuff. While some experiences are taken from magazines and most observations were made on countless street corners, the discussion crafted above of site-specific fieldwork is framed within the language of experiential sport ethnography (Sands, 2002). Through an overview of skateboarding progression by focusing on variations of styles and built forms, the study highlights the dynamic interplay of planned and found terrains as constitutive of urban politics. These spaces evidence a wide political spectrum that spans from purpose-built do-it-yourself ensembles to skateparks and skateplazas as corporate brand-building tools. However, within this breadth of experiences, skateparks are most often built as spaces of exclusion. The study discusses a politics of exclusion through built forms and offers an alternative through street skateboarding spatial tactics. Skatespots evidence the possibility of inclusive politics through the creative appropriation of public spaces. The participatory research

in this study makes the case for an inclusive urban politics through the embrace of critical spatial practices and street skateboarding ethics.

The research procedures pursued through this study follow key tenets within the field of qualitative inquiry. Narratives of struggle over Chicago's lakefront foreground researcher embodied experiences within participatory sites as sources of alternative stories. Burnham Skate Park, Wilson Skate Park, and Grant Park Skate Plaza are the lakefront sanctioned skateboarding spaces frequented throughout a greater part of 2009. Logan Boulevard Skate Park and events staged in Soldier Field and Roberto Clemente High School also form part of the experiential narrative. Furthermore, the ideological and built legacy of the 1909 *Plan of Chicago* contextualize these experiences within ongoing social dynamics invested in the making of Chicago. I forward both historical and present-day narratives as an interpretive *bricoleur* who

understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 6).

Through riding a skateboard, I craft interpretive narratives from a unique vantage point from which to produce knowledge on spatial regulation within contemporary forms of urban governance. This research procedure sets in motion competing portrayals of social ordering (Hetherington, 1997) through public space and playful contestation.

The participatory research pursued in this study consists of experiential procedures achieved through performance. By pushing a skateboard in designated areas I craft narratives of governance and play within emerging spatial configurations. A performative politics informs this research process by being actively involved in play rather than assuming the role of passive observer. This experiential vantage point allows for an engaged research method with the potential for voicing otherwise silenced narratives. Performance as a research procedure refuses

to “reduce politics to the discursive or representational” through interventions that link “the material grounding of power to the historical conditions that give meaning to places people actually inhabit” (Giroux, 2001, p. 16). From this perspective, a below-the-knees performance as research procedure becomes “a tactic of intervention that enables an alternative space of struggle” (Conquergood, 2002, p. 152). This participatory research portrays “performance as resistance that draws upon the vernacular” (Denzin, 2003, p. 123) through the emergence of purpose-built skateboarding destinations within contested public spaces.

Furthermore, performance ethnography of street skateboarding illustrates the entwined relationship between political contestation and vernacular culture within public space. Through this example, everyday materials become meaningful artifacts that represent social relations of domination and resistance. Skateboarding as performance produces heterotopic counter-sites (Foucault, 1986) that hold currency within research procedures invested in the unraveling of alternative spaces of struggle. Participant observation of this performance practice may unveil a wealth of underground spatial knowledge acquired through appropriation. Through an exploration of skateboarders’ alternative uses of public space, this study participates in performative politics through the playful subversion of intended meanings and uses of built environments.