

Murdoch University

Master of Arts in Community Development Project

**Skaters and the new ‘youth spaces’:
A more inclusive provision? Or another form of
social control?**

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I declare that this project/dissertation is my own account of my own research. It contains as its main content work which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any university:

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22/05/2012

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Acknowledgements

I acknowledge my project supervisor, Jeremy Northcote, for his sound advice and direction during the preparation of this project.

Thank you to my employer, the City of Swan, for providing flexibility in my work hours to enable me to complete my studies. In particular, I acknowledge the contribution of the Youth Development team in hosting me for a practicum that became the inspiration for this project.

Vicki, my wife, has carefully reviewed every word of this project and everything I have written during my studies. It would not have been possible without her support and love. I will be forever grateful that she consented to me giving up full-time employment for three and half years so that I could pursue further learning.

And to my children, Jessica and Daniel, I am sorry that you have been denied my attention whilst I have been writing this project. As you now enter your teenage years it is my hope that you are given the respect, and the space, you need to form strong identities.

Matt Turner

Abstract

Recently some local governments have been replacing traditional skateparks with new *youth spaces*. These are intended to be more inclusive, with the inclusion of non-skate elements that cater to a diverse range of young people, not just skaters. This project seeks to examine the rationale for their construction and understand how they are being used by young people. The methodology for this investigation is to revisit the history of the provision of space for young people and the attempt by governments to redirect them out of contested public spaces to more 'acceptable' locations. Examples of the relationships between skaters, young people and local governments in Australia and the Western world contrast the importance of the public realm to young people with their systematic policing, surveillance, marginalisation, and exclusion in space. Skaters have been particularly targeted but have a positive contribution to make in resisting and critiquing the control of space.

The treatment of young people is set within the context of the spatial theory of Simmel, Lefebvre, Harvey, Foucault, de Certeau, Soja and Bondi. These theorists have explained that the social relations within a society influence who has a right to use space and what it can be used for. It is concluded that the construction of *youth spaces* by local governments are a more inclusive option than traditional skateparks. However, they will not 'succeed' in redirecting young people to an 'acceptable' space. Some youth subcultures are seeking visible places to make their own by challenging 'normal' use of that space and such spaces are important to the formation of individual and group identity. Skaters and young people see space, and behave in it, differently to others in the community and they should be encouraged to share the public realm with others for the vitality and creativity that they bring to them.

Chapter One – Introduction

For three decades there has been a lack of diversity in the type of youth-specific outdoor space provided by local governments in Australia (Gold Coast City Council, 2010). Skateparks were the ‘standard’ provision for young people. Recently there has been recognition that skate parks can exclude young people who want to hang out but not necessarily skate (Gold Coast City Council, 2010; Logan City Council, 2006, pp. 18, 28). The infrastructure response that has emerged in some local governments is the new *youth space*; a space that includes non-skate elements that cater to a diverse range of young people, not just skaters. These *youth spaces* combine skateable furniture, walls, stairs and railings, with ‘hang out’ space, performance areas, and casual recreational elements such as half-court basketball and graffiti walls. They are intended to be a safe and comfortable place for all young people; to give them a space of their own (Gold Coast City Council, 2010; City of Greater Geelong, 2010; City of Swan, 2011; Logan City Council, 2006).

With the first of these *youth spaces* having just been completed in the past few years in Australia, there has been no evaluation undertaken of them. What are the likely issues that local governments will encounter with them? What is the rationale for their provision? Are they likely to be used by their target community - skaters and the broader youth population, and if so, at what social cost? This project aims to respond to these questions by revisiting the history of the provision of space for young people and the contested nature of their relationship with government. *Youth spaces* should be understood in the context of the discourses of ‘problematical’ young people and the ‘threat’ they pose to an ordered public realm.

The new *youth space*

There has been, and continues to be, significant investment in traditional skate parks by local governments. However, there has been a shift by some local governments to more inclusive *youth spaces*. The best example of this type of space in Australia is the award-winning Geelong Youth Activity Area.

Completed in late 2008, the *Youth Activity Area* is in a prominent location on the Geelong waterfront, opposite a university and close to the public transport interchange. It incorporates features for a wide range of activities: markets, live music performances, art exhibitions, fashion shows, dance and street theatre, BMX riding, basketball, skating, and hang-out areas with seating, shelter, lawn and wireless internet connectivity. As seen in Figure 1, a series of cascading concrete terraces form an amphitheatre around a central performance stage. This area incorporates ledges, stairs and railings that are suitable for skating. Surrounding this

amphitheatre are areas for informal viewing and socialising (City of Greater Geelong, 2010; Australian Government, 2011). The City of Greater Geelong reports that it is well used (2010).

Figure 1 – The Geelong Youth Activity Area



Source: City of Greater Geelong (2010)

An example of a purpose-built *youth space* from overseas is the plaza in Cologne, Germany. Similar to Geelong, this extensive skateable space is located on the waterfront of the Rhine River. A series of wide concrete paths and stairs allow long skating ‘runs’ from one end of the site to the other. Raised grass mounds on either side allow comfortable viewing and ‘hang-out’ spaces that give it a dual function as an urban square and a skating space (See Figure 2). The project’s architects have stated that since completion the area has been full of pedestrians who watch the skaters performing (Holmes, 2011).

Figure 2 – Roncalliplatz, Cologne



Source: Holmes (2011)

It could be argued that as a typology these new *youth spaces* are not a significant departure from skateparks; that in fact they are not actually a ‘new’ thing. Skateparks have had ‘street’ elements since the 1980s (Borden, 2001, p. 133; Snow, 1999, p. 17) and usually have associated ‘hang-out’ elements such as tables and benches. They have also often been used for music and other youth-targeted events (City of Casey, 2007, p. 47; Mornington Peninsula Shire, 2008, pp. 38-42; Logan City Council, 2006, pp. 37-38). However, the new *youth spaces* are deliberately designed to replicate the ‘streets’ with their focus on skateable furniture and elements. Further, they are purpose-built to be inclusive of the wider community of young people and for the holding of youth events, rather than being skate-focused infrastructure with those other elements ‘bolted on’ (City of Greater Geelong, 2010; City of Swan, 2011). It is therefore argued here, and by the local governments that are planning and constructing them (City of Greater Geelong, 2010; City of Swan, 2011; Gold Coast City Council, 2010) that they are a new direction in open space provision for young people. It is an evolution, though, that shares the same agenda as the traditional skatepark – the ‘control’ and redirection of young people to ‘acceptable’ space.

Definitions

Before the discussion proceeds any further, it is worthwhile clarifying some of the terminology employed in this project. ‘Young people’ and ‘youth’ are not used in a universally consistent way in literature and policy (White, 1990, p. 9). This project uses the terms as commonly applied by government to those between 12 and 25 years of age (White, 1990, p. 10; Government of Western Australia, n.d.). In the context of skateparks it is acknowledged that other age categories may be using the infrastructure (8-11 year olds; over 25s). However, these younger or older groups are not the ‘target’ demographic for youth work in local government (Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia, 2012).

The terms ‘skating’, ‘skaters’ and ‘skateable’ are used extensively in this project. In a historical and narrow sense these terms have sometimes been applied only to the use of a skateboard. In this project the term ‘skateboarding’ is used when it is necessary to single out the original form of skating. The term ‘skating’ and its derivatives are applied in this project by way of shorthand to encompass all the forms of non-motorised transport that are typically used to complete ‘manoeuvres’, including skateboards, BMX bikes (when used on hard infrastructure for ‘tricks’), inline roller skates, and scooters. However, it is acknowledged that there are distinct preferences in the physical environment for each of these forms and although they may share some common cultural and identity features, each has its own distinct subculture.

Public open space is the principle concern of this project. The phases ‘public realm’ and ‘public space’ are used in this context to include all government owned and managed outdoor areas, including parks, skateparks, civic squares and plazas, footpaths, and transport interchanges. In

many instances the concepts are relevant to 'semi-public' spaces such as outside shopping centres and shopping arcades. The term the 'streets' is also used in its common and broadest sense, incorporating not only road pavement and associated footpaths but also other public spaces managed by government.

Project structure

Having outlined the area of study and the relevant definitions, it will be useful to provide a brief overview of the project structure. In Chapter Two the redirection to acceptable spaces is connected to broader spatial theory. The ideas of Simmel, Lefebvre, Harvey, Foucault, de Certeau, Soja and Bondi develop an understanding that *inequality* can be seen in how space is configured. In other words, the social relations within a society influence who has a *right* to use space and what it can be used for. However, spatial theory also highlights how the public realm can be the place that the oppression of 'difference' is made visible and opens up opportunities for resistance.

The construction of purpose-built skateparks and the prohibition of skating in other public places in Australia and the Western world are of particular relevance to this project. Chapter Three examines local government 'skate strategies' and other published research to uncover that whilst local governments focus on the health benefits of skating, they play down or omit reference to the social benefits of interactions in public space and often conceal the broader 'project' to redirect young people away from visible public spaces and the 'streets' to '*acceptable space*'.

Chapter Four turns to youth culture, the skating subculture, and their collective treatment by authority in the public space. The importance of the public realm to young people is contrasted with the way they are subjected to systematic policing, surveillance, marginalisation, and exclusion in space. Skaters have been particularly targeted but have a positive contribution to make in resisting and critiquing the control of space.

The final chapter applies this knowledge to the question of the new *youth spaces*. It is suggested that these 'street style' spaces are a more inclusive and multi-purpose option but that they, like traditional skateparks before them, will fail to redirect and 'control' young people. They will not succeed in moving them out of other public spaces because some youth subcultures are seeking visible places to make their own by challenging 'normal' use of that space. Such self created spaces are important to the formation of individual and group identity and young people should continue to have a place in the public realm.

Chapter Two – The theory of space

Prior to examining the allocation of space by local governments to young people, it should be through the lens of the theory of space. Our understanding of space is informed by the writings of philosophers, geographers, sociologists, and architects. This knowledge has been built up over the past century and a half from a variety of perspectives: ecological, Marxist, post-structuralist, post-modern, and feminist. Each has made a contribution to the development of spatial theory and we will chart this ‘progress’ over time.

There is an irony in using the lens of history to examine the theory of space. As Soja (1989) points out, in some eras the interest in space has been secondary to the study of time, history and meta-theory. Whilst interest in space and time was balanced in the mid 1800’s, the classical era of competitive industrial capitalism, historicism dominated from the end of that century until the late 1960’s. The influence of Marx and neo-Kantianism devalued and depoliticized space (pp. 3-5). As Foucault reflected: “Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile” (Soja, 1989, p. 4). However, there were still significant contributions to the theory of space during this period. The first was from German sociologist Georg Simmel.

Simmel

Writing at the beginning of the 20th century, Simmel’s sociology of space examined the spatial dimensions of social interaction, particularly as it related to the forms of social distance. He was the pioneer in the concept of space as a form of sociation. He considered that “the social qualities of spatial forms...are dependent upon, rather than the primary cause of, the spatial determinations of social groups” (Kemple, 2011, p. 342). His contribution to the understanding of space was in exclusiveness or uniqueness of space, boundaries of space, fixing of social interaction in space, and spatial proximity and distance (Frisby, 1992, pp. 102-116).

Simmel proposed that it was through the fixing of social forms in space, in creating boundaries, and in the movement of space, that it was given its character and uniqueness. Social interaction, be it between individuals or groups, is associated with specifically demarcated territory. Frisby (1992) states: “[W]hat Simmel wishes to demonstrate is that it is social interaction which makes what was previously empty and negative into something meaningful for us. Sociation fills in space” (p. 104).

This concept of the *boundaries of space* was taken further. Simmel noted that space can be broken, or subdivided for our purposes. Space is always framed by boundaries. By way of example of how boundaries affect social behaviour, he pointed to the ‘impulsiveness’ and ‘freedom’ of crowds in large open spaces compared to tension of crowds in enclosed spaces (Frisby, 1992, p. 105).

Simmel notes the possibility of fixing social interaction in space. He proposed that there could be a continuum of the extent of binding together of individuals, from the almost complete binding together of a medieval town to the complete freedom of a modern city. He noted how in the emerging urbanisation at the beginning of the 20th century there was a desire (and social need) to fix and individualise places in the city, for example, through the naming and numbering streets and houses. Simmel noted that even in the city individuals can be brought together around a particular space based on shared interest. For example, a religious community is centred around a church building and grounds (Frisby, 1992, pp. 105-106). He also noted that money that brought people together. People gathered and interacted for the purposes of selling and buying goods and services. This was to form the basis of future work by Marxist geographers, particularly Harvey, on the concentration of capital and social power that makes transformation of nature possible in city spaces (Frisby, 1992, p. 113; Harvey, 1996, p. 288).

Lefebvre and Marxist theory of space

Henri Lefebvre was, and remains, the most influential theorist of social space. The French Marxist led the charge to reassert the importance of space in critical social theory (Soja, 1989, p. 41). He showed that space was political and that it had been remodelled by the state to suit the purposes of capital (Kofman & Lebas, 1996, p. 15).

Lefebvre's seminal work, *Production of Space* (1991) introduces the concept of everyday life. It is through the everyday use of space, 'spatial practice', that definition is given to places, actions and signs (Borden et al., 2002, p. 7). As Lefebvre explains:

Where then is the principal contradiction to be found? Between the capacity to conceive of and treat space on a global (or worldwide) scale on the one hand, and its fragmentation by a multiplicity of procedures or processes, all fragmentary themselves, on the other (1991, p. 355).

Lefebvre argued that the bureaucratic society had made its way into the practices of daily life through an 'instrumentalized spatial planning' (Soja, 1989, pp. 49-50). This directed attention to what was occurring at localised places, something that would be built upon by later space theorists.

Building on Simmel's idea that it is sociation that fills in space, Lefebvre notes that social relations are dependent on space, but also part of the formation of that space. This 'socio-spatial dialectic' is that "social relations of production are both space-forming and space-contingent" (Soja, 1989, p. 81). Rather than space being a priori entity, time, space and social being are inter-produced. In simple terms; people make places and places make people (Borden et al., 2002, p. 5; Borden, 2001, p. 11). As Lefebvre notes: "Space and the political organisation of

space express social relationships but also react back upon them” (Soja, 1989, p. 81). The social mix is central to how space is constructed and, more importantly, used. He highlighted the differences principally in terms of class, but was also concerned with gender, ethnicity, sexuality, family relations and age differentiation (Borden et al., 2002, p. 11).

One idea introduced by Lefebvre that has been used widely since by architects and urban theorist is that of the *oeuvre*. The *oeuvre* is unique space - it is the creative space of everyday life. It is seen in the art, theatre, sports, games, and fairs that occur in space. It is the restoration of ‘use’ value - the use of space - as an equal partner with ‘exchange’ value - the sale of goods and services in space (Kofman & Lebas, 1996, pp. 19-21). In the words of Lefebvre:

Indeed, the *oeuvre* is use value and the product is exchange value. The eminent use of the city, that is, of its streets and squares, edifices and monuments, is la Fete (a celebration which consumes unproductively, without other advantages but pleasure and prestige and enormous riches in money and objects) (1996, p. 66).

Lefebvre uses the concept of the *oeuvre* to critique capitalism, which churns out repetitive spaces and gestures and standard things so that they can be exchanged and reproduced (Kofman & Lebas, 1996, p. 20; Borden, 2001, p. 213). As Kofman and Lebas remark: “Capitalism and modern statism have both crushed the creative capacity of the *oeuvre*” (1996, p. 20).

In a time when many were critiquing the modernist world, Lefebvre’s writings in the 1960s and 70s put the ‘right to space’ on the agenda. He highlighted that space was political and that the rights of certain excluded groups, old people and women to housing for example, were being ignored by the capitalism system which erased difference (Kofman & Lebas, 1996, pp. 15, 19). He argued that these are to be preserved and emphasized, “...ensuring that the right to the city is not the right to buildings or even public space but rather the right to be different, the right not to be classified forcibly into categories determined by homogenizing powers” (Borden et al., 2002, p. 11).

Lefebvre’s space was the place where the exploitation and exclusion of certain people in a society was visible. This visibility therefore also meant space was the vulnerable point of capitalism. It was the point at which the class struggle, involving all those who were exploited, dominated and peripheralised, must start (Soja, 1989, pp. 50, 92). Highlighting space as the place of conflict, Lefebvre points out:

Socio-political contradictions are realised spatially. The contradictions of space thus make the contradictions of social relations operative. In other words, spatial contradictions ‘express’ conflicts between socio-political interests and forces: it is

only in space that such conflicts come effectively into play, and in so doing they become contradictions of space (1991, p. 365).

Lefebvre ends *The Production of Space* (1991) with a rallying call to action. He points to an *energy* within society to transform and create new social spaces; to create new spatial practices for disrupting abstract space and to grant rights for all to participate in the *oeuvre* (Borden, Rendell, Kerr, & Pivaro, 2002, p. 17; Kofman & Lebas, 1996, p. 20).

Lefebvre's work on the 'right to space' was taken up by a fellow Marxist, geographer David Harvey. His influential book *Social Justice and the City* came out in 1973 and used Lefebvre to examine the changing functions, forms and structures of space, in particular as it related to the circulation (and accumulation) of capital (Kofman & Lebas, 1996, p. 43). Harvey outlined how capital was in need of a "spatial fix" and how it simultaneously preserved and destroyed the urban environment through the "restless formation and reformation of geographical landscapes" (Soja, 1989, p. 58). This critique included the 'suburbanization' of housing and employment and the disparity of wealth formation that this created (Harvey, 2009, pp. 61-62). However, like Lefebvre, Harvey retained a positive view that resistance to "the tyranny of the cadastral map" was possible: "The public sense of time and space is frequently contested from within the social order." (1996, p. 224).

Foucault, de Certeau and poststructuralism

At the same time as Lefebvre and Harvey were making their contributions to spatial theory, the writings of Michel Foucault were laying down the foundations of a transformation in thought that occurred from the 1970s. Foucault was a philosopher, not a geographer or urban theorist. The majority of his work was not intentionally of relevance to spatial theory (Campton & Elden, 2007, p. 1; Soja, 1989, p. 16). However, some of his core concepts, discipline and surveillance, deconstruction, and power have been influential on others such as de Certeau and Soja. His work "was always filled with implications and insights concerning spatiality" (Campton & Elden, 2007, p. 1).

Foucault and the poststructuralists that followed him insisted on the instability of meanings; that we understand the world, understand truth, through language (Bondi, 1990, p. 157; Healy, 2000, p. 39). Healy (2000) explains: "Meaning is constructed through discourses, which are always historically and contextually situated..." (p. 39). In contrast to structural accounts which look for meaning in society, poststructuralists examine the processes through which truth claims are made. Through the tool of deconstruction, they look for hidden meanings. As Healy points out, the aim is not to displace an old truth, but displace oppositions so that a range of truths are possible (2000, pp. 38-42).

The first of Foucault's insights that is relevant to our understanding of space was detailed in *Discipline and Punish* (1977). Foucault details his theory of discipline and surveillance and the mechanisms "that have sapped the strength of these institutions and surreptitiously reorganised the functioning of power..." (Foucault quoted in de Certeau, 1984, p. xiv). He argues that disciplinary procedures, perfected in the army and schools, are used in wider society to 'control' people in a way that is more effective than the judicial system. In a spatial sense, this translates into the small acts of 'gridding' a visible space such to make its occupants available for observation and information. Echoing the writings of the structural Marxists, Foucault also described how some people are isolated from normal social intercourse in space to ensure that there is a rational order to society (de Certeau, 1984, p. 46).

A further concept that Foucault proposed was that of *heterotopias*. This is an external space of the modern world (as opposed to internal space of the body and mind). Similar to Lefebvre's *lived and socially created spatiality*, it is the socially produced space of sites and the relations between them (Soja, 1989, pp. 16-18).

Foucault's writing on the operation of power is also relevant to our spatial concerns. Power is not a possession of individuals, nor is it a force that is imposed. His analysis of power is that it is everywhere; it acts in the family, sexual relations, residential relations and neighbourhoods. Power is productive in that it leads to discourses, knowledges and 'identity'. For Foucault, the analysis of power should be from the ground up. He does not dismiss overarching narratives such as capitalism and patriarchy, but believes they should not be given priority when explaining local phenomena (Healy, 2000, pp. 43-44). It is an opaque power that has no possessor (de Certeau, 1984, p. xiv) and is locally defined. In the context of space then, there is a battle for control and surveillance, but it is not only domination by the 'powerful' (Campton & Elden, 2007, p. 2).

Foucault's analysis of power opens up room for resistance. By way of a spatial example, Foucault highlights the operation of power in a concentration camp. This could easily be seen as exclusively a site of oppression, but there is always the possibility of resistance, disobedience and oppositional groupings within it (Campton & Elden, 2007, p. 10). Foucault's approach enabled examination of the "*micro tactics*" at play in space, including the clandestine ways of resistance by groups or individuals, what he called the "network of an antidiscipline" (de Certeau, 1984, p. xiv).

Michel de Certeau took Foucault's analysis of power and resistance further in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). He described the everyday '*tactics*' that people use to reappropriate space and resist to dominant discourses. De Certeau explains how they produce their own logic through *signifying practices*: "Many everyday practices (talking, reading, moving about,

shopping, cooking, etc.) are tactical in character. And so are, more generally, many ‘ways of operating’: *victories of the ‘weak’ over the ‘strong’* (1984, emphasis mine, p. xix.).

Consequently, what was being constructed from both the Marxist and the poststructuralist perspective was a theory of localised space as not only the site of domination and surveillance, but also of struggle and resistance. This emerging theory was strengthened through the contributions of postmodernists and feminists.

Soja, postmodernism and feminism

The contribution of postmodernism to spatial theory can be difficult to distinguish from that which came before it. Postmodernism has been described as a turn away from meta-narratives and grand theories to greater sensitivity to difference and local discourses (Bondi, 1990, p. 159). However, as we have already seen, this sensitivity was already present in the work of Lefebvre and Foucault. Soja (1989) believes this is because they were the first postmodern geographers (p. 61). Soja refers heavily to Lefebvre and Foucault, using their concepts of the socio-spatial dialectic, critique of everyday life, and repetition and difference (Soja, 1989; Kofman & Lebas, 1996, p. 43). So although postmodernism emerged from events of the late 1960s, it was not until the 1980s that it gained momentum within spatial theory circles (Soja, 1989, pp. 4, 59). It was then, through the work of Soja, particularly his *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), that the theories of Lefebvre and Foucault were brought to the fore in a postmodern critique of space (Kofman & Lebas, 1996, p. 43).

The postmodern perspective values the spatiality of social life and therefore space became a “particularly crucial and revealing interpretive window onto the contemporary scene...” (Soja, 1989, p. 3). Postmodernism seeks to recover excluded cultural forms and social theories and space is one of those exclusions (Bondi, 1990, p. 156). Soja (1989) notes it brings “...an ability to see in the cultural logic and forms of postmodernism an instrumental cartography of power and social control; in other words, a more acute way of seeing *how space hides consequences from us*” (p. 63). For example, Jameson, a postmodern geographer, has built upon Foucault’s *carceral city* of cells, ranks, and enclosures to expose a hidden and insidious human geography that can in turn, be a target of the politics of resistance (Soja, 1989, p. 63).

Whilst postmodernism has insisted on the unequal use and representations in space, this has primarily been from the perspective of class. It has not always taken the time to open up and explore boarder critiques; there has been, in the words of Bondi (1990), a: “refusal to open up the symbolic categories Woman/Man, or the sociological categories women/men, to scrutiny” (p. 160). By contrast, feminism has highlighted the spatial dimensions of unequal gender relations (Bondi, 1992, p. 161). Feminist work on space has included mapping stereotypes in the

built environment and how women are kept in their place through a range of patriarchal ideologies and the practices of male-dominated professions (Bondi, 1992, p. 162).

Feminist geographers have also added to our understanding of the localised *place*. Not satisfied with Harvey's local/global distinction and a spatially fixed conception of community, geographers such as Doreen Masey and Iris Young have constructed place as a differentially located node rather than as a spatially fixed conception of the local (McDowell, 1993, p. 312). This built upon Haraway's idea that embodied local knowledge should be seen as objective because it is partial. McDowell (1993) helpfully outlines this as a view: "*from somewhere, rather than nowhere*, a claim on people's lives, rather than the relativism of postmodernism" (emphasis mine, p. 312).

Conclusion

Over the past half a century a rich theory of space has emerged. From Simmel's "*sociation fills in space*" (Frisby, 1992, p. 104) each theorist has developed the work of the former. Lefebvre *socio-spatial dialectic*, *oeuvre* and *right to the city* were used by Harvey, Foucault, de Certeau and Soja in their explanation of the spaces of everyday life and resistance. They have described how inequality is enforced in space, and in turn influences how space is (re)produced. Feminism has highlighted the gendered turn to this inequality.

The following chapters examine the experiences of another 'problematized' category in society, young people. Turning to young people in public space and skating culture, it is useful to keep in mind Soja's advice who, echoing other spatial theorists before him asserts:

We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology (1989, p. 6).

Chapter Three – The local government rationale for the provision of space for young people

Local governments in Australia continue to provide infrastructure for the use and benefit of young people that skate, either the traditional skate park or the new *youth spaces* that incorporate skateable elements. It is central to this project to understand why this form of community infrastructure is provided. Local governments have limited resources, both financial and human, to deliver new infrastructure (Teriman, Yigitcanlar, & Severine, 2011; McShane, 2005). However, they continue to build or redevelop youth-specific spaces.

This chapter details the reasons why local governments are involved in providing skate parks and *youth spaces*. Examples of how the industry works have come from a review of publicly available local government ‘skate’ strategies from around Australia, best practice examples collected by Rob White in *Public Spaces for Young People* (1998), and academic literature based on research in specific municipalities. The most common reason stated by the local governments themselves for construction of new skateparks is the health benefits of this leisure activity. There are some references to the social benefits of interactions in public space and of directing young people away from the ‘streets’ and other public spaces. In contrast, the academic literature highlights that the redirection of young people to ‘*acceptable spaces*’ is actually the core rationale for the provision of skate parks and *youth spaces*.

Health benefits

One of the most common reasons given is to encourage the increased physical activity by young people and the known associated health benefits. Skating is recognised as a popular and significant recreational activity that provides an alternative, non-committal recreational choice that can promote the benefits of physical activity amongst young people who “are at an age where participation in team sports and physical activity may have started to decline” (City of Swan, 2009, pp. ii, 1). The Mornington Peninsula Shire explains that skating offers the same benefits to participants as any other sports, be it physical, mental or social. Furthermore, they are targeting a group that might otherwise be at risk of poor developmental and health outcomes (Mornington Peninsula Shire, 2008, p. 6). Three of the skate strategies reviewed gave increased physical activity amongst young people as the sole rationale for skatepark provision (Mornington Peninsula Shire, 2008; Logan City Council, 2006; City of Casey, 2007).

Social Benefits

The social benefits to young people of having a space of their own is mentioned in some of the skate strategies, but it is very much a secondary consideration. The *Youth Space Consultation Project* by Launceston City Council consulted with 700 people in 1997. It found that many

young people felt alienated and isolated from their community because of a lack of resources and the negative community attitudes towards them. A key recommendation out of the Project was the creation of places of their own in which they can “establish and maintain relationships with each other and as affordable places to spend time out of school and home” (White, 1998, pp. 28-33). Similarly, the *Girls in Space* project in Brisbane highlighted the importance of social networks and social events for young women, along with personal safety factors and design, if they are to be encouraged to use open space (White, 1998, p. 40). The other skate strategies are silent on the socialisation benefits of skateparks. This is a large disconnect with the academic literature on the benefits of space for young people, which will be explored further in Chapter Four.

Redirection

The final rationale stated in some of the skate strategies is to give them somewhere other than the ‘streets’ to skate (City of Swan, 2009; Logan City Council, 2006; Eurobodalla Shire Council, 2002). This is framed principally in terms of the “reduction of instances and intensity of conflict involving young people and other users of public space” (White, 1998, p. 54). It is also an attempt to prevent damage to other public assets caused by street skating. Generally, this justification for purpose-built skateparks is understated (if it is mentioned at all) and in the ‘public’ or ‘managerial’ language used by government (Watson, 2003) such as that in the City of Swan’s draft strategy: “This Skate and BMX Strategy can assist in alleviating the immediate impacts of unplanned ‘street’ skating and riding by informing the use of contemporary youth spaces that meet the needs of today’s youth” (City of Swan, 2009, p. 2). The draft strategy of the Eurobodalla Shire Council (2002) on NSW’s central coast, however, does not employ such language devices and is therefore worth quoting at length. The sole rationale for the planned provision of skateparks is outlined as follows:

Many users [of skateboards] in the past were prepared to ride on the road or carparks. This often brought conflict with older residents who feel vulnerable to fast moving skaters. Therefore there has been an increase in pressure to remove these ‘louts’ from public areas. In turn this has raised calls for the provision of dedicated off-road facilities.... Many older and younger skaters use cycleways but they are seen as a leisure or commuting facility and there is a increasing call for facilities that are dedicated for skating as well as providing a challenge for those who want to demonstrate their skills (Eurobodalla Shire Council, 2002, p. 1).

With Eurobodalla’s reference to the pressure to remove ‘louts’ from public space, we get an insight that, according to research by academics, is at the heart of the real rationale for the continued provision of skateparks and *youth spaces* by local governments. In a pattern that is

repeated around Australia and other Western countries, local governments have attempted to redirect skaters into skate parks instead of them riding on the streets, footpaths, pathways and other public open spaces (Stratford, 2002, p. 195; Nemeth, 2006, p. 298; Snow, 1999, p. 22; Borden, 2001, p. 248). Along with increased social control such as increased policing and surveillance, making parents more responsible for behaviour and actions of children, and youth curfews (White, 1997, p. 31; Stratford, 2002, p. 200), it is a response to perceptions of community safety and complaints about skating activity (White, 1998, p. 72). Two examples illustrate how this operates, one from Franklin Square in Hobart, Tasmania and the second from Love Park, Philadelphia, USA.

Elaine Stratford (2002) describes the outcomes of research drawing on interviews conducted between 1997 and 2000 in Hobart with State and local government staff and elected representatives, business owners, non-skating members of the general public, and skaters regarding the attempt by the Hobart City Council to prevent skaters using Franklin Square. There had been tensions caused by damage from skateboards and because large numbers of young people were congregating in the Square. There was a perception that the skaters were dangerous and disruptive and a threat to others who were coming into the CBD to shop (pp. 193-197). As Stratford notes, the debate was framed between “unproductive skaters and productive commercial interests and citizen-consumers...” (2002, p. 195).

The business community and other members of the general public called for skating to be banned in Franklin Square and the entire CBD. Ultimately, the Hobart City Council made it unattractive to skate in the Square by redeveloping the skaters’ favourite areas into lawn and by installing some ‘L-bolts’ to the benches. The Council constructed a central skate facility on the edge of the Hobart CBD and instituted some skating ‘no-go’ zones in other areas of the CBD (Stratford, 2002, pp. 201-203).

The second example comes from the ongoing conflict surrounding *John F Kennedy Plaza* in central Philadelphia. Better known as *Love Park* after the defining sculpture at its centre, it was the “mecca” of street style skateboarding in the early 2000s (Nemeth, 2006, pp. 297, 299). *Love Park* in its current form was constructed in 1965 with a cascade of curving granite steps and a large foundation with the famous *Love* sculpture. It is across the street from City Hall and has hosted many political rallies, civic events and electoral campaigns during its history. In the late 1980s it was ‘found’ by street skateboarders and was described as the most famous natural skateboarding park in the world. People came from around the globe to skate on it (Nemeth, 2006, pp. 299-302). *Love Park* was the centre of many young people’s social lives; it was a stage for local skateboarders and others who came to watch them perform. Young people could hang out without adult supervision; “a place to see others and be seen” (Nemeth, 2006, p. 308).

Nemeth (2006) tracks the rapid transition from the host of the *X-Games* in 2001 and 2002, an event sanctioned by the City Council and which earned the city an estimated \$80 million in new revenue, to its closure in 2003 for a redevelopment to install planter boxes and wooden benches that were not skateable and a 24 hour police presence in the park to enforce a ban on skating (pp. 300-301).

Legislation banning skateboarding in Love Park cited the damage to the Park from skateboarders and the danger to other park users. Yet compromise plans by skateboarding organisations limiting skating to after 3pm and the offer of \$1 million by a skating clothing company to repair damage and enforce the rules was rejected by the City Council. Instead they constructed a street-style skatepark nearby, away from the central retail area. This new skatepark is respected but, as the skateboarder that Nemeth interviewed explain, it is for a different form of the sport and the 'performance value' is diminished because it is not visible to passers-by (Nemeth, 2006, pp. 300, 302, 310).

Conclusion

Local governments generally express the construction of skate parks and *youth spaces* in positive terms. The benefits to the health of young people from physical activity are cited, along with the socialisation benefits of skating. Mention of the desire to avoid conflict with other users of the public realm is either not mentioned or is understated. Yet as the examples from Franklin Square and Love Park illustrate, it is key plank in the strategy to redirect "menacing street hoodlums" (Snow, 1999, p. 16) or "louts" (Eurobodalla Shire Council, 2002, p. 1) away from other public spaces. As Nemeth (2006) points out, these examples are indicative more generally of the treatment of young people in public space: "The skateboarders were considered '*out of place*' in the space due to the inherently transgressive and alternative nature of their activity" (p. 309). Certain spaces are considered to be 'adult space' and therefore skateboarders and young people are viewed as illegitimate (Nemeth, 2006, p. 299). Yet, as the following chapter explores, public space is important for the skating subculture and in the formation of identity for young people. The chapter also examines how there is the possibility of 'resistance' to the exclusion of young people from 'adult space'.

Chapter Four – Youth and skating culture in public space

The previous chapter highlighted how local governments have attempted to move skaters from visible public spaces and the ‘streets’ to the ‘acceptable’ space of skateparks. The overview of spatial theory in Chapter Two placed the action of local governments within the context of the conflicted nature of space and highlighted how inequality within society plays out in the control of space. This chapter examines the treatment of young people in the public realm, linking it to discourses of all space being ‘adult’ space and the labelling of young people as deviant, criminal, and unproductive. The public realm is important to the development of a positive self-identity for young people and yet they are systematically marginalised in visible space. The skating subculture similarly values freedom to access public space, but also has a special relationship with it. In the final section of this chapter we look at skating as a form of *resistance* to control and a critique of the *space of consumption*.

The importance of public space for young people

Access to the public realm has been identified as very important in the lives of young people. It is a place for social interaction and connection, building and maintaining support networks, and to identify with and feel part of their community (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2005, p. 36). It is a place to access personal ‘resources’ such as companionship, security, self-development, recognition and stability (Robinson, 2000, p. 438). Robinson’s (2000) research on young people regularly accessing public spaces found they were using it for a range of functions: to meet people, retrieve or make money, trade favours, share goods, organize activities, catch up with friends. It was comfortable and it reaffirmed their individual and group identity. Through their use for *everyday* activities (Lefebvre, 1991), these public spaces have significant meaning for the young people. As Robinson notes: these public spaces “mediate a sense of belonging and self-boundedness” (2000, p. 440).

Many of the above functions and advantages could equally apply to all age groups and are part of the understanding of space encapsulated in Simmel’s idea of sociation ‘filling in’ space and Lefebvre’s concept that social relations are both formed in space, and forming of space (Frisby, 1992, p. 104; Soja, 1989, p. 81). However, it seems that the public realm is particularly significant during the teenage years when self-identity is being developed through opinions, values, looks and preferences (Woolley & Jones, 2001, p. 212). Young people are in a period of liminal status, they are neither children nor fully valued as adults. The ‘in-between’ spaces of the public realm, therefore, suit their need for freedom to explore emerging self and group identities (Malone, 1999, p. 22; Robinson, 2000, p. 429). They are able to interact with other young people in unregulated arenas and to take part in unregulated play and social interactions. It is an escape from the regimented spaces of school or home life; a place where they can do

what they want, with whomever they want (Nemeth, 2006, p. 310; White, 1990, p. 141). For this reason they value places that they can gather and claim as their own. Importantly, unlike other age groups, they are in the public squares, streets, and shopping centres principally for reasons other than spending money and consuming (Woolley & Jones, 2001, p. 213). They value these spaces for their 'use' value rather than their 'exchange' value (Kofman & Lebas, 1996, pp. 19-21).

Exclusion of young people from public space

Lefebvre and Harvey have highlighted how the regulation of space is political and that certain groups in society can be excluded from space (Kofman & Lebas, 1996, pp. 15, 19, 43). Chapter Three gave examples of how this 'exclusion' was enforced upon skateboarders. This is also true for other youth subcultures that 'hang-out' in the public realm. Their use of public space is increasingly restricted through regulation, surveillance, policing, private security intervention, and youth curfews – to the point where their movement and enjoyment of public space is diminished (White, 1997, p. 31; Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2005, p. 7; White, 1990, p. 212). In some cases, such as skating, the desired use by young people is outlawed, but in other instances they are simply made to feel "out of place" (Malone, 1999, p. 19).

The literature would suggest that there are two principal causes for this treatment of young people. Most public space is considered to be 'adult' space and therefore young people are expected, firstly, to use it in certain ways and secondly, to show deference to adults and comply with adult definitions of appropriate behaviour in those spaces (Woolley & Jones, 2001, p. 213; Stratford, 2002, p. 199). 'Hanging out' is understood as a threat by other community members – it is commercial space to them (Nemeth, 2006, p. 309). As White (1997) points out, there is some accommodation of young people in city centres but it is as consumers - or potential consumers. Youth-specific spaces such as leisure and cinema outlets are big business, however payment is required to enter and their freedom within the space is restricted (p. 32).

The positioning of young people and the behaviours (or perceived behaviours) they exhibit is a key part of the treatment of young people from the public realm. As White (1997) explains: "The way in which young people are perceived – as members of the community, or as threats to it – has important ramifications for how public space is constructed" (p. 45). There is a discourse that young people are deviant, barbaric, unclean, and a threat to social order (Malone, 1999, p. 19; Stratford, 2002, p. 202). Therefore, when they gather in public spaces, particularly in groups, the perception is that they are a threat. Media images and police campaigns reinforce the stereotype that all young people are anti-social and criminals (Robinson, 2000, p. 430; Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2005, p. 7). This then provides the ideological cover necessary to exclude or restrict young people's use of public space (White, 1997, p. 30).

Skating culture and public space

This chapter to this point has outlined how as a general population young people are excluded or restricted in their enjoyment of open space and, yet, how important it is for their formation of healthy social relationships and self-identities. Borden (2001) (2002), Nemeth (2006) and Snow (1999) argue that the public realm is particularly important for the skating subculture; that they use and see space differently from their peers (Snow, 1999, p. 17). They are consistently on the lookout for good ‘trickable’ spaces. Once they have found a good area, it becomes a ‘spot’ and they ‘take ownership’ through frequent use (Snow, 1999, p. 24; Woolley & Jones, 2001, p. 224; Nemeth, 2006, p. 311). Snow (1999) quotes skater Ben from his interviews: “It’s like somebody built it and we made it a spot” (p.24). These ‘spots’ can be anywhere in the urban fabric but, as Woolley and Jones (2001) and Nemeth (2006) note, there is a preference for central areas that are accessible and visible (Woolley & Jones, 2001, p. 223; Nemeth, 2006, p. 311).

Skaters have a unique identity: “Skateboarding is my only identity for better or worse” (Dan Cates quoted in Borden, 2002, p. 196). The age of the skater subculture is typically 8-18 years, however there are also many in their 20s and 30s (Borden, 2001, p. 140). It remains a predominately male activity, however there is a small percentage of females involved (Borden, 2001, p. 141)¹. Whilst its roots were with white, blond-haired Anglo Americans, it has spread to all ethnic subgroups in Western societies and is a truly global subculture (Borden, 2001, pp. 141-142). As Woolley and Jones (2001) point out, skaters have a style, ethos and outlook of their own: “Through a combination of style of dress, musical preferences and the activity of skateboarding itself there is a strong sense of self-identity to be found as a ‘skater’” (p. 215).

The varied styles of skating undertaken and enjoyed by this subculture are highly relevant to the investigations of this project because each has unique spatial requirements (Snow, 1999, p. 20). ‘Ramp’ skating uses purpose built wood or metal facilities, often indoors or on temporary structures. It is the form of skating that the ‘sport’ of skateboarding is most associated. Purpose-built skateparks provide the setting for the second skating style. These usually consist of concrete bowls, but can also have ‘street’ elements such as rails and stairs and occasionally metal ramps. The final form of skating is referred to as ‘street’ style. It uses public spaces (including civic squares, parks, footpaths, and roads) not designed for skating: steps, handrails, hills, curbs, benches, stone terraces, embankments, retaining walls, drains (Snow, 1999, p. 17; Mornington Peninsula Shire, 2008, p. 31; City of Casey, 2007, p. 32). The vast majority of skaters around the world are ‘street’ skaters. It is the form mainly depicted in skating magazines and this continual ‘search’ for new places to skate is constructed as a core part of what it is to be a skater (Snow, 1999, pp. 19-20; Nemeth, 2006, p. 311). The attraction of this style of skating is

¹ Woolley and Jones (2001, p. 216) found 8% of skaters were female in the three British cities they surveyed. In Melbourne, Snow (1999, p. 14) found that 5% were female.

explained in skating folk-law as: “Two hundred years of American technology has unwittingly created a massive cement playground of immense potential. But it was the minds of 11 year olds that could see the potential” (Borden, 2002, p. 193).

Studies in Australia put the percentage that predominately skate the streets at between 70-90% (Snow, 1999, p. 18; City of Casey, 2007, p. 35). Whilst a couple of the skate strategies of local governments acknowledged this (Mornington Peninsula Shire, 2008; City of Casey, 2007), they still used the total number of skaters in their area when demonstrating the future demand for new purpose-built skateparks (City of Casey, 2007; City of Swan, 2009; Logan City Council, 2006; Mornington Peninsula Shire, 2008). There is the potential for a significant disconnect between the provision and the actual demand for purpose-built skateparks. The search for new places and the subversive nature of the skating culture (Borden, 2001, p. 163) will mean that the majority will never use a skatepark.

Skating as resistance

There exists within the nature of skating and the identity of its participants the potential for it to be a part of the resistance by the unempowered and disenfranchised for a claim to space. As we have already seen, the ‘right to the city’ is the right to be different – to not be forced into homogenised behaviours (Borden et al., 2002, p. 11). If Lefebvre is right that space was the vulnerable point of capitalism, then skating in public places is an *energy* within society to disrupt and transform space (Borden et al., 2002, p. 17; Kofman & Lebas, 1996, p. 20; Soja, 1989, pp. 50, 92).

It is often recited that the skating subculture is anti-consumerist and anti-capitalist (Borden, 2002; Borden, 2001; Woolley & Jones, 2001; Nemeth, 2006). It is undeniable that skateboarding has been ‘commodified’ – the production of the board, equipment and fashions is controlled by small number of companies and in the late 1980s was worth US\$300-500 million per annum (Borden, 2001, pp. 156-157). However, there has always been a resistance to the branding of skating. At its simplest, skating is a cheap activity and the ‘moves’ at its heart cannot be commodified (Borden, 2001, p. 140, 157). The language used by skaters about themselves denotes this tendency within the subculture to be seen as anti-consumerist, as this quote of skateboarder Stacey Peralta in Borden (2001) demonstrates: “Skaters are like...the culture that doesn’t want. It’s tired of the same old paralysing stench activities that have been going on the whole time...Music, clothes, words, mags, video, skateboarding is a lifestyle” (p. 137). Whilst the architecture that they skate is created for the production of goods, services or knowledge, skating does not make such a contribution. It is ‘consuming’ the space without “engaging with its productive activity” (Borden, 2001, p. 231).

Borden evokes the language of Lefebvre to describe the potential of skating to resist the predominate discourse and create an alternative future:

Through an *everyday practice* – neither a conscious theorization nor a codified political program – skateboarding suggests that pleasure rather than work, use values rather than exchange values, activity rather than passivity are potential components of the future, as yet unknown, city (Borden, 2002, p. 179, my emphasis).

By its nature skating is *creative* - always searching for new spaces and new manoeuvres. In this way it can be part of the restoration of Lefebvre's *oeuvre*: "a place of artistic production in the widest sense...a place of nonlabor, joy, and the fulfilment of desires rather than toil; a place of qualities, difference, relations in time and space, contradictory uses and encounters" (Borden et al., 2002, p. 20). Skating is part of the critique of public space as 'adult' space for consumption or 'high' activities (Borden, 2001, pp. 167, 248).

Skaters resist through challenging the 'proper' and ordered use of the public realm. The skaters, like young people generally, are outside the processes through which space is produced. Instead they insert subversive meanings and claims on their identity and of the space they inhabit (Robinson, 2000, p. 430). As Nemeth (2006) relates for the example from Philadelphia cited earlier: "Although Love Park was created by architects and planners for the purposes of relaxation and respite, the skaters transformed the park into a space of creativity and exploration and an important youth icon" (p. 313). These "skating urban anarchists" use the public realm in ways that the original architects and engineers never conceived of (Borden, 2001, p. 177). Skaters 'exploit' the ambiguity of the ownership and function of public space to insert their own meaning (Borden, 2002, p. 181).

Here our understanding is assisted by the work of Foucault and de Certeau. Skaters are in a battle with authorities for control and surveillance (Campton & Elden, 2007, p. 2), but this conflict can be productive in exposing their 'oppression' and that of young people generally. It has opened up new discourses, such as the rights of young people within society (Stratford, 2002, p. 193) and solidified the individual and group identities. Being banned from the public domain becomes another obstacle to be overcome for the skater and adds to the 'anarchist' tradition of skating (Borden, 2001, p. 258). In this way the *everyday practice* of skating public space is one of Foucault and de Certeau's "*micro tactics*" of resistance and skaters are a part of the "network of antidisipline" (de Certeau, 1984, p. xiv). Skating encourages relations with others and the city in accordance with their own values, not those imposed upon them (Borden, 2001, p. 168).

Conclusion

Like young people more generally, skaters value public space. It is important for socialisation and identity precisely because ownership can be claimed over it and it can be made ‘their own’ through using it in unintended ways (Nemeth, 2006, p. 313). Skaters have a positive part to play in the public realm in our cities, bringing vitality, creativity, and challenging the idea that the only value is in consumption. Given this, and the fact that the majority of skaters have a preference for skating the ‘streets’, what role is there for purpose-built skateparks and the new *youth spaces*? The following chapter seeks to address this question and whether the provision of such infrastructure is likely to succeed in the local government project of redirecting young people to these acceptable spaces.

Chapter Five – Implications for *youth spaces* and Conclusion

The aim of this project is to determine the likely effectiveness of an emerging response by local governments to the provision of open space for young people - the *youth space*. These spaces are designed to replicate the 'streets' with skateable furniture, stairs and ledges. To respond to the questions of how valued they will be by young people and how effective a use of funds they are, this project has examined the history and developed understanding of local government practice, spatial theory, youth culture, and skating culture. This final chapter applies this knowledge base to suggest how *youth spaces* might be received.

Youth spaces as inclusion

To begin with it is appropriate to acknowledge the improvement that *youth spaces* represent in terms of inclusion of a wider community of young people. For too long the traditional skatepark has been the principle youth-specific provision of local governments and this has excluded the majority of young people who do not skate (City of Greater Geelong, 2010; Logan City Council, 2006, p. 28). In particular, skateparks are conceived as 'male space' and are part of the reinforcing of unequal gender relations highlighted by female geographers such as Bondi (1992, p. 161; Borden et al., 2002, p. 5). The switch in focus to the other uses of the space ('hanging-out', performances, events) in the first instance and the needs of skaters second is a significant shift and will result in differences in how the infrastructure is constructed and accepted by young people. The local governments that have constructed *youth spaces* also claim to have included young people in the choice of site and in the design (City of Greater Geelong, 2010; Holmes, 2011). To the extent that this participation in the planning and design by young people is genuine and values their contribution as an equal,² this is a significant advance in local government practice. Participation in the planning of spaces is encouraged (see for example White, 1998; Malone, 1999; Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia, 2010) for a range of reasons, not least of which is that it encourages youth 'ownership' of the completed space (Lynch & Ogilvie, 1999, p. 20; White, 1998, p. 12).

Youth spaces for health and socialisation

The motivation of local governments in the provision of youth-specific spaces is a relevant factor to our consideration of how effective the new *youth spaces* will be. Chapter Three examined the rationale provided by local government for skating facilities. What was revealed was that local governments had a focus on the health benefits of skating but was less clear about the social benefits of interactions in public space. Given that the *youth spaces* are tailored to the

² Cooke & Kothari (2001, p. 9 & 14) note that participation processes can fail to account for the differential bargaining power of the participants and they can lead to token consultation or further domination.

needs of other subcultures more than the traditional skate parks, it is reasonable to assume that they will encourage a broader community of young people to be 'active' and to increased social interaction. Further, the 'street' replicating structures of these parks are likely to be more attractive to skaters because, as outlined in Chapter Four, the majority prefer this style of skating. There is certainly the potential for increased acceptance and use by a wider range of groups with this form of infrastructure.

Youth spaces as redirection and control

One effect of a greater utilisation by young people, however, is that local governments have increased control over their activities. The rationale for *youth spaces* should be questioned if they are part of the agenda of local governments to redirect skaters and young people away from other public spaces and the streets. Chapters Three and Four sketched the 'project' of government to move skaters and young people from 'adult' public spaces to more 'acceptable' spaces. These groups are using the space in unintended ways and inserting a meaning for the place that is not favoured by those in power (Nemeth, 2006, p. 298). A discourse by government and the media that young people are a threat to social order, particularly when they gather in groups in public spaces, provides the rationale to restrict young people's use of public space or exclude them altogether (Malone, 1999, p. 19; Stratford, 2002, p. 202; White, 1997, p. 30; Robinson, 2000, p. 430). Through the spatial theorists examined in Chapter Two, it has emerged that inequality can be reinforced through control of space at the localised level (Soja, 1989, pp. 49-50). Foucault highlighted that government uses mechanisms of discipline and surveillance in the public realm to 'control' people and their interactions (de Certeau, 1984, p. xiv).

It is difficult to separate the new *youth spaces* from this systematic attempt to divert young people to controlled and safe places where they can be monitored - 'out of the way' of the broader community. In this regard the treatment of skaters in the public realm is particularly instructional on the attitude of government towards young people (Stratford, 2002, p. 193). The new *youth spaces* attempt to replicate the elements found on the 'streets'. This clearly exposes the agenda of local governments to provide these street-style spaces, like skateparks before them, in an attempt to keep them off the streets. When skating is banned in central commercial areas and the streets, as it was in the examples cited in Chapter Three from Hobart and Philadelphia, government can point to the *youth space* as their provision for skaters.

Right to the city

This raises the question of whether young people should have a 'space of their own' (Woolley & Jones, 2001, p. 213) or whether they should be welcome in all public spaces. It is suggested that they should have access to both. Youth-specific, subculture appropriate spaces, such as *youth spaces* and traditional skate parks have a legitimate role to play in encouraging physical

activity and social interaction. For some young people, the relative safety and security offered by *youth spaces* will encourage them out into the public realm. Catering for skating in a controlled environment will encourage physical activity, particularly amongst beginner or younger participants (Woolley & Jones, 2001, p. 215). However, this should not be at the exclusion of the *right* of young people to equitable access to other parts of the public realm which are just as important to their formation of identity.

To deny young people access to public space is to deny them the ordinary rights of citizenship (White, 1998, p. 13; Nemeth, 2006, p. 314; Stratford, 2002, pp. 197, 199). They, like all citizens in society, should have access to the public realm. The ‘right to the city’ is the right to be different and be accepted by others (Borden et al., 2002, p. 11). The socialisation that occurs in public space is, as outlined in Chapter Four, particularly important for young people. It enables them to learn and internalise social skills and to build an individual and group identity and bounding away from adult-controlled environments (Nemeth, 2006, pp. 309-310; Robinson, 2000, pp. 435, 440). It helps them to feel valued and welcome in their community (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2005, p. 36). The right to not be treated as ‘out of place’ is the ‘space of their own’ that White (1990) calls for. White was not arguing for a *separate* area for young people, but rather that they *share* in all of the economic and social transactions of society, including the physical spaces in the public realm (White, 1990).

Resistance and failure to redirect

The provision of *youth spaces* by local governments should be respectful of the rights of young people to access all public spaces. An attempt by local governments to use *youth spaces* to redirect young people is, in any event, likely to fail in that respect. As detailed in Chapter Four, the nature of youth and skating culture is such that they will find ways to avoid and resist. Part of the redefining of self during the teenage years is to attempt to break free from the control by parents and other authorities; to stand in ‘opposition’ to these powers (Borden, 2001, pp. 165, 248; Stratford, 2002, p. 202; White, 1990, p. 134). Therefore attempts to ‘move-on’ young people or ban them from the public domain become a challenge to be overcome through a series of ‘micro tactics’ of resistance (Borden, 2002, p. 258; de Certeau, 1984, p. xiv).

For skaters, the majority of whom are ‘street’ style skaters, the incorporation of ‘street’ elements into *youth spaces* may be attractive for a time. However, it is the nature of this form of the activity, and the identity of the skating subculture, that they are continually searching for new places and challenges; the previously ‘unknown’. Part of the attraction is using elements of the urban form in ways that they were not intended; producing new meanings for them (Borden, 2002, p. 179; Snow, 1999, p. 24). A purpose-built space can, by its very definition, never replicate this.

Woolley and Jones (2001) conclude from their research that no matter how many skate parks (or *youth spaces*) are available in an area, skaters will always be looking for the ‘natural’ terrain of the wider city (p. 227). In the same way as the provision of a public swimming pool will not replace the desire and experience of swimming in the ocean, so *youth spaces* and skateparks will not prevent street skating. They cater for different needs and entail very different experiences. Like adults, young people want a variety of experiences in a variety of different places. They will not be content to be redirected to a single ‘adult-provided’ space. *Youth spaces* are needed, but they must only be seen as complementary to street skating and shared public space.

Conclusion

The construction of *youth spaces* by local governments can be an effective use of funds to provide young people with a place for increased physical activity and to encourage the development of healthy social relationships. If they are planned and designed in partnership with young people they have the potential to be a valued and comfortable area for the target demographic. It is recommended that further research is undertaken on the completed *youth spaces* to verify that they are achieving actual benefits.

However, *youth spaces* will not ‘succeed’ in redirecting them to an acceptable space; and nor should they. Skaters and young people see space, and behave in it, differently to others in the community. They construct it as a place for fun and play, the *oeuvre*, and not just for the consumption of goods and services. They should be encouraged to share in these spaces for the vitality and creativity that they bring to them. Nemeth (2006), echoing the sentiments of Lefebvre, Harvey and others, reminds us that there is much to be gained when diversity is allowed to exist: “...truly ‘open-minded’ public spaces present opportunities for discussion, deliberation and unprogrammed, spontaneous encounters with those maintaining diverse viewpoints on the world” (p. 313).

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