

Movement Without Words: an Intersection of Lefebvre and the Urban Practice of Skateboarding

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Summary

Given that skateboarding was very much in its infancy during the 1960s and first half of the 1970s, and did not fully emerge as a street-based urban activity until after his death in 1991, it is unsurprising that Lefebvre wrote nothing about this distinctive urban practice. Yet there are many parallels between skateboarding and Lefebvre's thinking, notably in the areas of bodily spatial production, everyday street-level activity, transgression, appropriation and performative critique. In *Skateboarding, Space and the City* (Berg 2001) and again in *Skateboarding and the City* (Bloomsbury 2018), I develop an extended dialogue between Lefebvre's theorisations and skateboarding's practices, and which include the following thoughts.

Introduction – Commodity Critique

Zero degree architecture is a field of simple signs and complex instructions, a world of dogmatic regulation exemplified in films as diverse as Jean-Luc Godard's dystopian *Alphaville* (1965) and Marco Brambilla's sci-fi *Demolition Man* (1993), and recognisable in just about every high street worldwide. Yet our modern cities are not wholly constraining, for as Lefebvre explains there is a contradiction between, on the one hand, the economic homogenization of space (where all space tends to be treated the same), and, on the other hand, the varied uses of urban space as a whole (Lefebvre 1991a, 18-19). and it is this contradiction that skateboarding works within; 'the act of street skating', states the skateboard video *Space for Rent* (2012) 'is in direct conflict with the ideals of society that places its principal emphasis on economic growth and profit'. While advertisements,

signs, fences, gateways and other controlling devices contribute to what Lefebvre somewhat dramatically refers to as the intensifying ‘terrorism’ of everyday life (Lefebvre 2002, 143-93), skateboarding helps to both confront this terrorism and provide some kind of alternative or compensating way of living. ‘There are no more white lines to stay within, sidewalks to conform to or bases to tag,’ asserted skateboard professional Stacy Peralta as street skating began to emerge in the mid 1980s, ‘It’s all an open highway with hydrants, curbs, bumpers, shopping carts, door handles and pedestrians’ (Peralta 1985).

Skateboarding creates new patterns and meaning, and in doing so counters the logic of signs and signals described by Lefebvre in ‘Notes on the New Town’ (Lefebvre 1995). After all, these instructions are not there for their own sake, so that when skaters confront them these skaters are necessarily critiquing their underlying logic of control, efficiency, normalcy and predictability. This does not mean, however, that skateboarding is oppositional to all of society, and indeed, in stark contrast to the kind of aggressive street demeanour and public confrontations depicted in some skate videos like *Baker 3* (2005), many skaters act with care and respect towards their fellow urban citizens. For example, Joe Penny describes how the street skaters of Clermont-Ferrand carefully replace café furniture, cease skating in order to avoid creating annoyance and pass good humoured banter with local police officers; ‘I’ve never had any issues with people’, states skater Joseph. ‘But I pay attention, to how I skate, I’m considerate of other people’ (Penny 2009). Similarly, the *Ist & Hope* (2006) video depicts the good neighbour demeanour of Brian Lotti and others in downtown Los Angeles, their chilled urban-drift incorporating friendly encounters with numerous fellow skaters, African-American pedestrians, white low-riders, and Japanese restaurateurs. In *Albion* (dir. Kevin Parrott, Morph and Ryan Gray, 2014), despite a few run-ins with disapproving members of the British

public, skaters shake hands after colliding with a cyclist, converse with everyone from elderly pedestrians to religious weirdos, and even repair a lighting bollard. And in videos like Volcom's *All the Days Roll Into One*, (dir. Ryan Thomas, 2008), actual skateboarding even takes a backstage role to skaters' various friendships and street encounters. All of this strongly invokes a sense of polite citizenship and a friendly co-existence between skaters, other dwellers and their shared environment, not of antagonism or confrontation but of affable respect and gentle belonging. Here, skateboarding stands not against the city, but interweaves another rhythm within the urban symphony.

It would be wrong, therefore, to portray skaters simply as a bunch of screw-you, self-centred rebels. Nonetheless, in its general logic and operations, in its speaking through performative movement rather than through words and texts, skateboarding challenges the notion that cities are to be resolutely obeyed, that we exist solely as passive dwellers, and that urban space is closed to social negotiation and diversity. Furthermore, if skateboarding suggests the move from things to energies, from design to experiential creativity, there should also be corresponding shifts in consumption, exchange and use. It is to these areas which we now turn.

Beyond the Shiny Product

One major purpose of architecture is to make things and services – either commodities in factories, knowledge in universities, workers in housing, decisions in offices, and so on. Skateboarding as an urban act, however, offers little such contribution, consuming buildings without engaging with their productive activity. Consequently, it implicitly denies both that architecture should be directed toward that production and, more generally, that work should always be productive or 'useful' at all. We can see this kind of attitude whenever skaters like Chip Morton say that 'life's not a job,

it's an adventure' ('Trash' 1989), or an image caption in *Thrasher* skateboard magazine declares that 'office politics mean nothing to Jamie Thomas as he rides the glass of a San Bernardino business complex' (*Thrasher* (2012), suggesting that skateboarding produces neither things nor services, but is a pleasure-driven activity of its own.

Furthermore, this (seemingly) productive-of-nothing skateboarding is disruptive to highly ordered urban space. Skateboarding rejects the economic and efficiency logic of cities, undertaking an activity which has an entirely different rationale. 'In a culture that measures progress in terms of cost per square foot', noted skateboard advocate Craig Stecyk, 'the streetstylist takes matters into his own hands. He dictates his own terms and he makes his own fun' (Smythe 1981). This is particularly evident in city centres, those concentrations of *decision-making* and power, where skateboarding appears as an irrational addition. 'In a society on hold and planet on self-destruct', added Stecyk, 'the only safe recourse is an insane approach' (Smythe 1980). Why would one spend so much time balancing on a piece of wood with four wheels? Why would one confront the urban citizen's conventional mode of walking-and-looking by moving up as well as along, touching as well as seeing, striking as well keeping distant?

In opposition to such actions, one critic railed that skateboarding 'appears to serve no known purpose in life and does nothing to raise national productivity' ('Off the Wall' 1980). However, this is to miss the point, for although, the act of skateboarding seemingly creates no tangible 'products', it nonetheless releases energies which create or modify space, thus espousing play, art and a sense of everyday festival – what Lefebvre calls Eros or the pleasure principle (Lefebvre 1991a, 177; Lefebvre 1996, 171). So when a skater summarily states that 'when they work, we'll skate' (Catterick 1997), or speaks of having 'moved beyond shiny products and

consumerism' and possessing the ability to 'rise above the repressive, hassle filled, cess pit world' and so become 'higher types' (Powell 1996a), it is clear that skateboarders' labour is directed not at the production of saleable goods or services but at play and the ludic as positive and purposeful. And in doing so, skateboarding correlates with Kane's contention that alongside a work ethic we should also have an equivalent 'play ethic', an 'imaginative "re-form" of the basic timber of social humanity' in which play is considered not just personally pleasurable but also creative, politicised, collaborative and thoughtful (Kane 2004).

One contradiction here, however, is that the extraordinary architecture of the city, from which skateboarding is born and upon which it relies, is itself a product of conventional labour. In this sense skateboarding is a revival what Marx has called the 'dead labour' of the city (Lefebvre 1991a, 348). As *Space for Rent* notes, many buildings and urban spaces utilised by skateboarding are thought to be 'useless or abandoned, having no profits being derived from them', into which skaters 'breathe new life'. This might relate to the re-use of derelict sites, as with the industrial wastelands taken up by many DIY interventions, or the Bryggeriet skatepark in a Malmö brewery. Much more prevalent though is everyday street skating which does not wait for a building to fall in disuse or dereliction, and which produces something which, to borrow Lefebvre's words, 'is no longer a thing, nor simply a set of tools, nor simply a commodity' but which creates 'spaces for play, spaces for enjoyment, architectures of wisdom or pleasure' such that 'use value may gain the upper hand over exchange value' (Lefebvre 1991a, 348).

There also a different treatment of time at work here. Modern cities are commonly a mixture of production and speculation, alternatively sacrificing long-term social benefits for short-term profits or short-term social needs for

programmed investment schedules (Lefebvre 1991a, 335-6). Skateboarding time, by contrast, is immediate, lasting no more than a second (single move), minute (run), weeks and months (repeated visits), or few years (a skater's individual activity). Skateboarding time is also discontinuous, composed of a few minutes here and there, spread over different parts of the city, and frequently runs contrary to conventional temporal arrangements. For example, the long time of property ownership, the medium time of lease arrangements or the short time of parking meters are all avoided by street skateboarders. While economic concerns in cities 'subordinate time', and political concerns expel time as 'threatening and dangerous' (Lefebvre 1991a, 95), skateboarding promotes an appropriative recovery of time as well as of space. Skateboarding reasserts the here-ness and now-ness of architecture. In short, skateboarding is what Lefebvre would call an alternating rhythm within the regular cyclical rhythms of the city (Lefebvre 1996, 221), or skater Steve Shaw has called 'one rhythmical expression in a multitude of rhythmical expressions' (Shaw 1990).

Gifts of Freedom

If skateboarding critiques production and work in cities, then it also involves a critique of exchange and consumption in the modern city, and, above all, proposes a reassertion of *use* values as opposed to exchange values.

Modern urban space frequently exists for the purposes of exchange: either as a commodity which itself can be sold, bought, leased or rented, or to facilitate the exchange of other goods, as occurs in shops, markets, malls, stock markets, trading floors etc (Lefebvre 1991a, 306-7). Thus by the simple act of reasserting use values – using space without paying for it – skateboarding is indifferent to space being used for the purposes of exchange. As skateboard magazine *Sidewalk* put it, skaters oppose 'the real

criminals, who despoil the world in their never ending quest for capital’ (*Sidewalk* 1997. As Brad Erlandson argued in skateboard magazine *Slap*, skateboarding recognises that ‘the streets are owned by everyone. Streets give the gift of freedom, so enjoy your possession’ (‘Sacramento’ 1997).

Over the last 20 years or so, many buildings and spaces have become treated as opportunities for retail and leisure expenditure, hence fulfilling Lefebvre’s warning that ‘exchange value is so dominant over use and use value that it more or less suppresses it’ (Lefebvre 1996, 73). But it is precisely this intense focus on exchange which skateboarding rejects; by occupying those spaces immediately external to stores and offices skateboarders refuse to engage in such processes and instead insert new, dynamic use values. For Marc Spiegler, skateboarders then are far more than mere ‘secondary users’ and instead ‘essentially redefine business and governmental spaces’ (Garchik 1994). This kind of attitude is particularly evident in street skaters’ frequent refusal to pay skatepark charges, preferring to skate elsewhere in the city. As such, skateboarding is a small fragment of that utopian conception of the city as a place of rich and divergent uses, and not just as exchange of goods, services, products and commodities. It helps fulfil Lefebvre’s contention that ‘urban society has a logic different from that of merchandise. It is another world. The *urban* is based on use value’ (Lefebvre 1996, 131).

The way this city of use opposes the city of exchange is further emphasized if we consider that not only cities but also society itself is being ever more organized for the purposes of consumerism, and that this consumption can be of tangible things, such as products and services, or it can be of less tangible things, such as ideologies, images and signs.

In architectural terms, the consumption of signs can be found in the heightened spectacularization of iconic architecture, whereby the appearance of architecture – rather than its usage, spatial complexity, meanings or other less visible quality – is often emphasized, thus creating an urban realm more akin to a theme park than to a lived city.

Street skating, however, has an answer. Where modern architecture is often meant to be looked at, operating as a set of advertisements which we passively receive, skateboarding focuses on the physical, material nature of architecture, and finds a way for the skater's whole body to engage with it. 'There was all sorts of craziness going on around me, all over the city,' described an American street skater, 'but I skimmed above it on my skateboard. Just gliding along, protected by my board' (CSTR 1995). Skateboarding in this sense is a reassertion of use values, of human needs, desires and actions. As Ewan Bowman explained, 'there are only a few routes to authentic happiness left that haven't been turned into theme parks for the brain dead' and that 'thankfully, skateboarding is one those alternative routes to fulfilment' (Bowman 1997).

The tactics here involve seizing specific spaces for small periods of time, so that skateboarding is rhythmically out-of-step with the dominant patterns of the city, and in Miki Vuckovich's words, is 'inconsistent with the adapted pace and uses of our molded environment' (Vuckovich 1995).

Skateboarding here agrees with Lefebvre's contention that 'appropriated space must be understood in relation to rhythms of time' (Lefebvre 1991a, 166 and 356), and, specifically, is different to the time of ownership (longer term, pseudo-permanent) by seeking an active more mobile time (short term, transitory). For example, Bowman explained skating amid London traffic as a mixture of speeds and emotions, with 'the fear and the adrenalin mixing as you skate from spot to spot nearly being hit by cars' and with 'a

mad rush going through your body, over-taking the cars, being overtaken, going through a red light in a junction, dicing with big metal f**kers that would probably kill you'(Bowman 1997).

City-based street skateboarding, then, is not so much a colonization as a series of rolling encounters, an eventful journey. It is also a critique of economic ownership, realizing that true social wealth comes not from exclusive possession as private ownership but from ability to, in Lefebvre's words, 'have the most complex, the "richest" relationships of joy or happiness with the "object"' (Lefebvre 1991b, 156). It is precisely this which street skating addresses, by asserting that, in Tod Swank's words, 'just because you own it doesn't mean you're in charge of it' ('Trash' 1990).

So if the relation between skateboarder and city is not one of production or exchange, what is it? As journalist Paul Mulshine noted in Philadelphia, a street skater's 'primary relationships are not with his fellow man, but with the earth beneath his feet, concrete and all' (Mulshine 1987). In other words, skaters relate to the city, not through possession, production or consumerist consumption, but via bodily senses, and in the form of the 'mad rush' described by Bowman above. Similarly, skaters like the Vancouver-based 'Barrier Kult' crew (2003 onwards) have expressed their dissatisfaction with some of the more spectacular, commodified or star-skater tendencies of modern skateboarding by undertaking a particular form of skateboarding. Skating masked on 'Jersey' highway barriers, this act is in part a return to the appropriative tactics of 1970s backyard pool and the powerful architectural forms of 1980s ramp skating (Nieratko 2015).

Street skating on the physical architecture of buildings and urban spaces, then, helps to meditate between skater, other people and the city, and does

so in a distinctive manner, such that, according to *Thrasher*, skaters are a 'breed that exists within a steel, asphalt and concrete framework' ('Editorial' 1983). Cities frequently seek to control the social identity of their inhabitants through boundaries, public art and other pervasive gestures, and so operate an urban version of the 'marketing orientation' which, according to Erich Fromm encourages people to adopt a specific role in society (Fromm 1967). By contrast, skaters use their mobile appropriation of the city to construct themselves and their relations with others. 'The skater is not a separate entity from his terrain', noted Peralta, for 'he is the terrain with all its intricate pieces' (1985). Rather than allowing architecture and the city to dictate who they are, the skateboarder responds with their own question of 'who am I?', and seeks an answer through their own actions.

The meaning of skateboarding, then, comes from its engagement with the city, together with a generalized critique of society. In terms of the kind of society this might indicate, evidently skateboarders, as what Bonnie Blouin called a 'small bait in a sea of corporate sharks' (Blouin 1985), do not create fundamental change; as Emily Chivers Yochim notes, following cultural historian Leerom Medovoi, skateboarding often correlates with the cold war notion of America as being both anti-authoritarian and democratic, a place which positively welcomes rebels and nonconformists within its overarching condition of middle-class suburbia (Yochim 2010, 33; and Medovoi 2005). 'We're not out to fight the world', declared *Thrasher* ('Editorial' 1992).

Nor do skateboarders undertake much self-critique, offering instead what Becky Beal, following anthropologist James C. Scott, identifies as an 'infrapolitics' of resistance and a 'hidden transcript' intelligible only to other skaters (Beal 1995; and Scott 1990). On the other hand, skaters

undertake an ‘ironic’ assault on the rest of the world and so, as Joel Patterson realized, become ‘aggressive whenever the opportunity arises’ and hence defiantly ‘irritate giants’. Thus through highlighting the conflict between, on the one hand, the law of private property and the logic of business efficiency, and, on the other hand, wider social uses of city spaces), skaters utilize their position of relative weakness to irritate officialdom and convention, and so to interrogate the city as a whole; as Patterson concluded, ‘always question authority’ (Patterson 1996).

Above all else, skateboarding shows that pre-existing uses of buildings and city spaces are not the only possibilities, that architecture can instead be consumed by activities which are not explicitly commodified. Buildings, architecture and urban space, we might then propose, should be thought of as places of functions and experiences, logic and love, objects and ideas – all at once. Here, architecture and cities are not things, but part of our continual appropriation of the world, life and desires, space and time. And our freedom becomes not the bourgeois right to be separated from others, but Marx’s much more complete sense of developing human as human beings to our greatest potential (Lefebvre 1969, 22; Lefebvre 1991b, 170-1).

Skateboarding is Not a Crime

Skateboarding is antagonistic towards the urban environment, even if it causes little actual damage or disruption to the urban realm. In redefining space both conceptually and physically, skateboarders strike at the heart of what everyone else understands by the city, and so can ‘hammer the panic buttons of those uninterested in this pursuit of thrill and achievement’ (Vuckovich 1995). As Arianna Gil comments of her New York street skating, ‘we’re here to add a little chaos’ (Remnick 2016). This is the most overt political space produced by skateboarders, a pleasure ground carved out of the city as a kind of continuous reaffirmation of one of the central

Situationist and Lefebvrian slogans of 1968, that 'sous les pavés, la plage', or beneath the pavement lies the beach.

Consequently, there are inevitable consequences of this kind of critical activity for, as pro skateboarder Mark Gonzales has commented, 'anytime something moves like water, they want to stop it' (*The Cinematographer Project*, 2012). In general, from the mid-1990s onward, skateboarding has been ever-increasingly controlled through myriad localized conventions, laws and reactions, and by 2011 was being included by the US Department of Justice as one of the 'problems' of 'disorderly youth' in public places, particularly when 'recklessly' practised (Scott 2011). As *Sidewalk* commented 'hardly a session goes by these days without someone hurling threats of bye-laws, cops and/or fines in our faces' ('We Are Illegal', 1997). Or as a UK skater commented after arriving in London, 'I hadn't counted on being moved on by the police every minute; had not expected to encounter so many skater-hating pedestrians and had not even begun to imagine that such ignorant gorillas could be employed as security guards' (Phraeza, 1997). Today skateboarding in public spaces is legislated against everywhere from Brisbane, Manchester and Quebec to the Bronx in New York, the general effect being to embed in everyday street skaters a fear of arrest, penalties and even imprisonment.

But treating skateboarding as a crime verges on the ludicrous, and such accusations are extremely tenuous. Consider *Sidewalk's* comparison between a skateboard that 'runs on leg power, causes chips and scratches on bits of stone and metal' and a car that 'runs on poisonous shit, pollutes the air and water, causes the death of hundreds of thousands of people', while, despite all this society generally believes that 'cars are o.k. but skateboards are evil, objects of vandalism, a dangerous menace that *must be* stopped' (Powell 1996b).

Clearly, skateboarding is rendered criminal through what are essentially petty-minded laws. This is largely because skateboarding is aimed at the appropriation – and not domination – of city spaces. Nonetheless, because skaters care little of ownership, they do *implicitly* oppose this principle; ‘All space is public space’, asserted *Sidewalk* (‘We Are Illegal’ 1997). Thus although skateboarding seldom stops buildings from being built or used, it does run contrary to the implicit logic (business, retail, commuting, orderly behaviour) of these urban spaces. Anti-skateboarding legislature is perhaps then less concerned with a ‘crime’ as finding ever new ways to validate conventional society. According to Derby’s City Centre Manager, one of the main reasons for banning skateboards was so councillors would not have to see untidy people skating, and in instances like these it is clear that skateboarding shares its supposed criminality with that of graffiti which, as geographer Tim Cresswell has noted, ‘lies in its being seen, in its transgression of official appearances’ (Cresswell 1996, 58). Rather than any real offence, ‘disorder’ as ‘untidiness’ – what Chris Long calls the ‘cognitive dissonance’ between skateboarding and the social norm (Long and Jensen 2006, viii) – is being targeted here, skateboarding being one of those ‘false crimes’ used to help legitimize the business- and commodity-oriented city (Lefebvre 1995, 23).

The conflict between skateboarding and conventional urban practices can also be representational. Although many street-oriented skate videos depict skateboarders squaring up to irate police, security guards, shop-owners or members of the public, everyday resistance by skaters to anti-skateboarding practices rarely involves direct contestation. More common are such campaigns as ‘Skateboarding Is Not a Crime’, first initiated by Powell-Peralta in 1987, in which stickers were plastered urban surfaces. Similarly, the annual ‘Go Skateboarding’ day is not usually aimed at Occupy- or

Reclaim the Streets-style mass seizures of city spaces, but rather at a general celebration that skateboarding can and should take place anywhere. Other actions include skaters simply removing 'no skateboarding' signs (and often displaying them at home), an act which Jeff Ferrell has called 'skate spot liberation'. As Ferrell concludes, all acts are 'skirmishes in an ongoing battle to liberate public space from legal regulation' and to 'reencode the meaning of public space within the experience of skating' (Ferrell 2001, 72-3).

Ultimately, being banned from the public domain becomes simply another obstacle to be overcome. As Steven Flusty concluded in his study of skateboarding in downtown Los Angeles, 'no matter how restrictively space is programmed, no matter how many "armed response" security patrols roam the streets, and no matter how many video cameras keep watch over the plazas, there remain blindspots that await, and even invite, inhabitation by unforeseen and potent alternative practices'(Flusty 2000). Some skaters even remove 'skatestoppers' – small metal protrusions often added to ledges, benches and other low-lying horizontal surfaces – using angle-grinders, sanders or their own skateboard trucks; around 2005, the 'Skatespot Liberation Front' variously détourned anti-skateboarding signs, hacked away skatestoppers, smoothed cracks with automotive filler, and deployed QuickCrete to fashion ad hoc transitions (Vivoni 2009). The underlying defiant psychology here is expressed Ben Powell in *Sidewalk*, 'the point is f**ck 'em all, they can't touch us now' (Powell 1996a). Or in more legalistic terms, according to Carr skaters are here remaking property law, seeking to 'to find seams within the law that enable them to circumvent exclusionary efforts' (Carr 2010).

Such actions and attitudes are, of course, not without their problematics. As Simon Orpana and others have argued, the 'hyper-performing,

predominantly masculine, individualized and active body' of the street skater aligns neatly with neoliberal patriarchal structures and its focus on risk, masculinist hierarchies and the denigration of women (Orpana, 2016; Atencio, Beal and Wilson 2009; Beal 1996; Beal and Wilson 2004). David Leonard has also remarked on how white street skaters 'violate societal laws without consequences', enjoying an impunity not extended to youth of colour (Leonard 2008). Alternatively, altercations between street skaters and other road users can occasionally lead to violence and even death; to cite but one example here, in 2015 a cab driver was on trial for deliberately running down and killing Ralph Bissonnette, a 28-year-old chef who had been longboarding along a Toronto downtown street (Blatchford 2015).

Nevertheless, while our urban public realms have become increasingly privatised, unwelcoming and even hostile to citizens who are not directly engaged in shopping, tourism, work-focused or otherwise 'legitimate' urban activities, transgressive skateboarders have sometimes gained empathy from non-skaters, many of whom dislike these worrisome alterations to city spaces. 'Something active and free like skateboarding, this shouldn't be automatically disapproved of,' stated eminent planner Jane Jacobs. 'No, this is a healthy thing, that's part of freedom' (*Neighbourhoods in Action* 2003). In Australia, academic Elaine Stratford has called for 'geographies of generosity' which accommodate and even encourage street skating (Stratford 2016). Sometimes these pleas have been taken up by city authorities, as when Newcastle city officials, while seeking to prevent 'bad' street skaters in shopping areas, let 'good' skaters use their boards for local transport and leisure (Nolan 2003). Planning officers and academics like Stephen Lorimer and Stephen Marshall are increasingly considering how skateboarding might contribute to local transportation (Lorimer and Marshall 2016), and the city of Montreal has legalised skateboarding on bike paths and in Peace Park as have Grand Rapids City in Michigan and

Victoria in Canada for their downtown streets (D'Alimonte 2014). In a similar mood, 88% of the public opposed a mooted ban on skaters in Coventry city centre, and in Green Bay, Wisconsin, police officer Joel Zwicky patrols on a longboard in order to enhance community interaction (Gilbert 2014). Black and ethnic Bronx skaters studied by White have even noted how they are *less* likely to attract police hassle when on their skateboards, presumably as skateboarding provides a legitimate reason to be in public space; as one skater remarked, 'You're not looking to cause trouble, you're just looking to skate' (White 2015).

Conclusion

Whatever the solidarity with non-skaters, for skateboarders themselves legislation and authority are there to be resisted, for, in Miki Vuckovich's words, 'reinterpretation and often downright subversion of such regulation is the skateboarder's creed' (Vuckovich 1995). In this respect, skateboarders are part of a long and important process in the history of cities, a fight by the disempowered and disenfranchised for a distinctive social space of their own. In this way, skaters engage city spaces, surfaces and buildings with their own bodies and skateboards, and do so in a highly creative and positive manner – they create not only a physical movement but a movement of ideas, a critique of the spaces around them. To borrow Lefebvre's words, theirs is 'not only the space of "no", it is also the space of the body, and the space of "yes", of the affirmation of life' (Lefebvre 1991a 201). UK skateboard magazine *R.A.D.* perhaps put it best of all: 'This is just a small dream. A dream of endless pure creation. A movement without words' ('That Thing' 1989).

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