Theses and Dissertations

August 2022

The Development of Do-It-Yourself Skateparks in Contemporary Urban Environments

Emmy A. Yates
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Follow this and additional works at: https://dc.uwm.edu/etd

Part of the Urban Studies and Planning Commons

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DO-IT-YOURSELF SKATEPARKS IN CONTEMPORARY

URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

by

Emmy A. Yates

A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science

in Urban Studies

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

August 2022

ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DO-IT-YOURSELF SKATEPARKS IN CONTEMPORARY
URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

by

Emmy A. Yates

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2022
Under the Supervision of Professor Joel Rast

The purpose of this study is to introduce the reader to Do-It-Yourself (DIY) skateparks

by sharing how they come to fruition, how they thrive, and are destroyed in urban landscapes.

The goal of this thesis is to document a thorough understanding of how DIY skateparks are

organized and managed in contemporary urban environments. Exploring the relationship DIY

skateparks have with mental maps, informal rules, subcultures, and legal frameworks can help

the reader understand the ways that DIY skateparks impact the urban environments around them.

Looking at two well-known and frequented DIY skateparks in Milwaukee, Wisconsin –

'National DIY' and 'Estabrook DIY,' – I managed interviews, took notes, and conducted

participatory observations. Through those practices, I was able to better understand the unique

relationships that participants have with informal DIY skateparks that they do not have with

formal public skateparks or privatized skateparks. In this study I learned that DIY skateparks are

self-governed spaces that foster community, protest sanctioning of public space, and challenge

the legal frameworks of shared space. These spaces thrive and inspire participants, despite the

uncertainty of their survival.

To

Bart and Sam –for carrying me through

my skate and bike friends –for keeping me on my toes

and

especially for Lanie –you are missed beyond measure

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

1.1 DIY Urbanism: The Study of DIY Skateparks

Tucked under freeways, hidden in old water banks and viaducts, and folded into abandoned tennis courts or sleepy vacant urban corners, peculiar concrete subcultures are molded into urban existence. The Do-It-Yourself Skateparks that come to fruition symbolize spaces of resistance, independence, and innovation in urban spaces. Additionally, they represent connectedness and community because of the laborious volunteer efforts needed to make these spaces develop and maintain their structure. DIY Skateparks act as creative, dusty subcultures of rhythmic patterns of interactions, and are unique forms of DIY urbanism. LaFrombois (2015) defines DIY urbanism as "unauthorized, grassroots, and citizen-led urban planning interventions that are small scale, functional, temporary, creative, and place specific." Exploring each of those descriptions DIY Skateparks are unauthorized *because* they are citizen-led. Being that they are not constructed by formal planning structures, but by informal actors, DIY skateparks act as informal interventions towards existing urban environments. Their scale can range from a single small concrete ledge incorporated into existing urban spaces, or larger skateparks built in more desolate and unused urban space to accommodate multiple participants, depending on location. Because of their lack of formal legitimacy, they are often temporary features—but their ability to continue through regeneration is what makes them uniquely imperishable. Importantly, DIY Skateparks can provide more functionality than formally built skateparks because of their creativity, and because they are built by the users, with flow and transitions being a driving forefront consideration in engineering.

DIY spaces exist because of the fundamental human desire and need for something that is lacking in formal urban spaces. Informal actors make use of the resources that are in front of them and are focused on "reclaiming and re-purposing urban spaces; and take place outside formal urban planning structures and systems" (LaFrombois, 2015). The networking of building

something from nothing with people who share a common drive and interest can create an opportunity to build more than ramps or skateable features, but spaces that can build community ties that can outlive the very concrete structures that brought them together.

Studying DIY spaces is fundamentally important because it explores how communities can develop beyond the social spaces allotted for those shared activities in urban spaces. These are spaces that are built by the community, for the community. By exploring this topic, we also can identify the influential ways in which DIY urbanism can change both physical and mental maps that govern and direct urban spaces. They are "unauthorized, place-based direct actions that challenge the usual or regulated uses of particular urban spaces' but at the same time they are 'intentionally functional and civic-minded 'contributions' or 'improvements' to urban spaces in forms inspired by official infrastructure" (Douglas, 2014). For decades DIY skateparks have challenged the framework of public space, without any wishful promises or guarantees of those spaces lasting.

1.2 Aim and scope

The purpose of this study is to introduce the reader to Do-It-Yourself (DIY) skateparks by sharing how they come to fruition, how they thrive, and are destroyed or removed in urban landscapes. A unique feature of DIY urbanism, DIY skateparks can have the ability to alter mental maps, challenge the existing legal framework of shared space, and influence subcultures of resistance—all can benefit urban spaces and foster community. My study's aim is to educate the reader on informal urban planning structures and systems like DIY skateparks. I aim to explore how informal, small-scale, citizen-led planning interventions like DIY skateparks can re-purpose desolate and unused urban spaces and build communal ties. Using two thriving DIY skateparks in Milwaukee, Wisconsin as case study sites, my goal is to use those as positive examples to support my thesis argument. Through researching the history of DIY skateparks, interviewing participants, peacekeepers, and builders of these spaces—I intend to convey an intimate story of why DIY skateparks are valuable to contemporary urban environments. I aspire

to have folks who have little understanding of DIY skateparks to read this study—specifically those who contest their existence in contemporary urban spaces. May this study help them see value in these spaces and encourage them to rethink any disapproving thoughts on informal activities and urban planning structures in shared public places.

1.3 Additional research insight

Mental maps, informal rules, subcultures, and legal frameworks each play a role in this study because of the unique relationship that they have with DIY skateparks. In this study we will explore the impacts that DIY skateparks have within those topics.

1.4 Methodology

For this research study, I conducted interviews with two City of Milwaukee employees, and various participants who frequent the two local DIY skateparks in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Prior to conducting my interviews, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). I de-identify the interviewees based on the preference of the participant. In this study I am choosing to not de-identify the location because these are publicly known DIY skatepark locations within the city. Estabrook 'Esta,' has been a functioning informal DIY skatepark in an abandoned tennis court in Estabrook County Park in Shorewood since 2005. Estabrook DIY is owned by the Milwaukee County Park District but is not a state-run formal skatepark. The other DIY space where I conducted interviews at is National DIY, which is located off National Avenue in a formerly used park-and-ride under the I-94 freeway. 'National' has been a functioning informal DIY skatepark since spring 2020, and the space is currently owned by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Milwaukee County. Each DIY space is frequented by users such as skateboarders, BMX bikes, scooters, and roller skaters (known as 'quad skaters'). While all 'wheels' are welcome, these spaces primarily house skateboarders. The characteristics of each space include a broad age group, ranging from young children to folks in their 40s. Because skateboarding is so physically demanding, the primary age group of users is

early teens to mid-twenties. Both spaces are primarily used by males, with the ratio of male to female users being around fifteen to one, though in recent years the participation of femme, trans and queer participants has increased. Of the 12 participants in my study, two identified as female, two identified as nonbinary, one identified as trans, two identified as queer, and the rest identified as cis male. Both spaces are frequented by skateboarders, BMX riders, scooters, and quad skaters of different ethnicities. All participants in this study are between the ages of 18-45. In this study I aimed to include female, non-binary and trans participants and aimed to recruit racial and gender diversity within the study. While I primarily interviewed skateboarders because they are the primary volunteers who create and maintain these DIY spaces, this study also includes additional quotes from quad skaters, and BMX riders.

Using interviewing, I seek to explain and investigate to better my own understanding of how these spaces are created and maintained. But, also, to interpret how DIY urbanism fosters community through informal counter approaches to traditional forms of urban planning. Through interviewing DIY participants, my goal was to explore the role of the individual actors and 'self' in more detail. I recruited individuals by going to each of these spaces and asking them if they were over eighteen and interested in participating in my thesis project on DIY skateparks. In this study I interviewed 12 participants who use or build DIY skateparks by approaching them and asking them to be a part of my study. Each interview took between 10-15 minutes.

In addition to interviewing, I used participant observations and digital ethnography such as photographs and hand drawings to support my central thesis research question: how are DIY skateparks organized and managed and what purposes do they serve in urban environments?
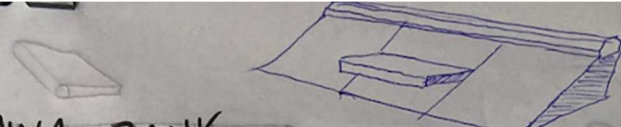
How my own social identity might potentially affect my place as a participant/observer seemingly boils down to my gender. While femme-identifying participants in these environments are becoming increasingly more normalized, I can still feel the tension of past hyper-masculine stigmas of women not being taken seriously in their interest or involvement in these spaces and in skateboarding in general. However, being a female observer rather than a participant appears

to be a more normalized and less noticed amongst male skateboarder in comparison to encountering a female skateboarder trying to skate in the same space. Women who watch and observe in skatepark spaces tend to be coined 'ramp tramps,' and their presence as non-participants are more normalized than when women attempt to share in the same skate space. Another obstacle that I considered is that some potential participants might not want to engage in the interview because they are skating in spaces that are technically non-formal, illegal spaces. Additionally, skateboarders go to these places to skateboard and may not want to take time away from their activities to talk to a researcher.

Potential ethical dilemmas in exploring DIY skateparks could be that technically speaking both sites are informal skateparks. While neither of these spaces have 'No Trespassing' signs posted, or are housed on private property, each space flirts on the line of being an illegal space—making skating there a potential illegal activity. A consensus amongst participants and builders is that it only takes one 'wrong person' to dismantle a DIY skatepark. Because of fear of illegal exposure, people at the sites could be less willing to participate in the study.

1.5 Skatepark terrain terminology

Below are drawings and references for skatepark terrain terminology included to help the reader understand skatepark slang and skatepark structures that will be referenced in this study. These drawings were provided by a Milwaukee-local skateboarder and DIY skatepark builder.

° CHINA BANK
- A VERY WIDE STEEP INCLINE, WITH A PARKING CURB AT THE TOP, AND A LEDGE/BOX PROJECTING HORIZONTALLY OUT OF THE CENTER OF THE INCLINE, STILL ALOTTING SUFFICIENT INCLINE SPACE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE LEDGE. THE NAME DERIEVED FROM THE FAMOUS STREET SKATING SPOT IN SAN FRANCISCO'S CHINATOWN, THE CHINA BANKS.

° TRANSITION
- ANY INCLINE, STRAIT, CURVED/RADIAL, OR VERTICAL OF ANY SORT.

° FLOW
- REFERS TO HOW EASY IT IS FOR USERS TO NAVIGATE THE TERRAIN OF THE SKATEPARK FREELY. I.E. A SKATEPARK HAS GOOD FLOW IF OBSTACLES ARE PLACED IN A ORDER TO BE ABLE TO TAKE LONG RUNS WITHOUT HAVING TO PUSH, SKATE, OR PEDAL, AND THE OBSTACLES PROJECT YOU PERFECTLY TO THE NEXT, ALL THE WHILE SUPPLYING AMPLE AMOUNT OF SPACE TO BE ABLE TO DODGE AND MANEUVER AROUND OTHER USERS TRAFFIC.

Table 1. China bank, transition, flow skate terminology.

- HIP/BANK
  - TWO INCLINES THAT MEET AT AN ANGLE TO FORM A RIDGE LINE. SIMILAR TO A PYRAMID SHAPE.
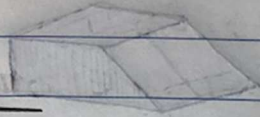
- PYRAMID
  - 4 STRAIT INCLINES THAT MEET AT A SQUARE STAGE TOP, FORMING 4 RIDGE LINES.
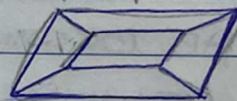
- QUARTER PIPE.
  - A CURVED RADIAL INCLINE RESEMBLING THE SHAPE OF A QUARTER OF A CIRCLE. FOR SPEED, JUMPING IN THE AIR AND LANDING BACK INTO / TO TURN AROUND.
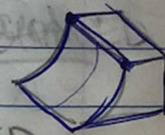
- HALF PIPE
  - TWO CURVED INCLINES FACING EACHOTHER, THAT YOU CAN CONTINUALLY RIDE BACK AND FORTH ON, RESEMBLING A HALF OF A CIRCLE.

Table 2. Hip/bank, pyramid, quarter pipe, half pipe skate terminology.

- **POLE JAM**
  - A METAL PIPE EMERGING OUT OF THE GROUND AT ANGLE, THAT YOU CAN GRIND/RIDE UP AND OFF THE END OF.

- **BANK**
  - AN STRAIT INCLINE COMING DOWN TO THE GROUND OFF OF A FLAT STAGE SURFACE TO THE GROUND. USED TO ROLL DOWN/ TURN AROUND ON TO GAIN & MAINTAIN SPEED.

- **VOLCANO**
  - A CONE SHAPED RAMP THAT CAN HAVE EITHER A STRAIT INCLINE, OR A CURVED RADIAL INCLINE.

- **ROLLER**
  - A HUMP WITH CURVED INCLINES ON BOTH ENDS, TO ROLL OVER TO GAIN SPEED, OR JUMP OFF OF.

- **MANUAL PAD**
  - A LOW FLAT TOP BOX THAT SITS ON THE GROUND ANYWHERE FROM 3-8 INCHES TALL WITH A SURFACE LONG AND WIDE ENOUGH TO JUMP UP TO AND RIDE ON.

Table 3. Pole jam, bank, volcano, roller, manual pad skate terminology.
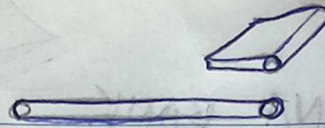
• COPING
- MADE OF CONCRETE OR METAL,
TAKES THE SHAPE OF A ROUND PIPE
WITH A DIAMETER GENERALLY NO MORE
THAN 3 INCHES, PLACED AT THE TOP
EDGE OF AN INCLINE OR TOP EDGES OF
A BOX/LEDGE SURFACE, FOR PERFORMING
GRIND TRICKS ON.

• LEDGE
- SIMILAR TO A MANUAL PAD BUT
A TALLER BOX SURFACE THAT LAYS
ON THE GROUND.

• VERT.
- THE PART OF A CURVED INCLINE
WHERE THE RADIUS MAXES OUT AND
ASCENDS INTO A VERTICAL WALL.
RESEMBLING A QUARTER CIRCLE
THAT AT THE TOP CONTINUES TO
EXTEND STRAIT VERTICALLY.

Table 4. Coping, ledge, vert skate terminology.

1.6 Thesis argument

       The argument of this thesis is that there is a fundamental human need for space. The two DIY skateparks that this study examines have both developed in a city where there is no public skatepark. Because of that, this study argues that when community members feel there is a need for something that is not being provided, they will establish their own exclusive spaces whether there is a lack of regulation, or too much control. In doing so, DIY skateparks act as an example of competing use for property. This subgroup is willing to risk a lot to achieve the space that they desire. Estabrook DIY and National DIY, while both are still informally occupying these spaces, and have both improved the spaces they have informally developed in—both in the eyes of the users, neighbors, and local authorities. This study argues that DIY skateparks do challenge the framework on what is acceptable behavior in public space by flirting on that thin line of what is legal versus allowed. Lastly, this study argues that mental and physical maps, and landscapes are capable of being changed or altered through citizen-led initiatives like the development of DIY skateparks.

Chapter 2

Development of DIY Skateparks

Chapter 2.1 DIY urbanism

How DIY skateparks are initially developed stems from creativity, whim, and maybe a little combination of boredom and curiosity. They also represent the human desire to have space and acceptance within shared public spaces. Public skateparks are often developed few and far between; because of this, skatepark users develop their own spaces through DIY urbanism to satisfy their needs. On how these spaces come to fruition, Douglas (2014) said that "DIY urban design can be seen as both a reaction to and product of the structures and processes that define the contemporary city—trends such as state disinvestment, commodification, gentrification, and a general intensification of uneven development." With these informal skateparks often developing in desolate or run-down areas, another thing to consider is how these spaces can invoke curiosity that bring people back to environments that are unknown to them.

DIY skateparks act as a popular form of DIY urbanism. DIY urbanism is a form of what Lydon & Garcia (2015) refer to as *tactical urbanism,* which is an approach to neighborhood building that gives city residents the ability to reclaim, redesign, or reprogram public urban space. Tactical urbanism is "an approach to neighborhood building and activation using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions and policies" (2015). On a smaller scale, DIY Skateparks use this practice to introduce new ways to use unused public space. Lydon & Garcia argue that tactical urbanism is an approach that all urban community members can benefit from. Lafrombois' book *Reframing the Reclaiming of Urban Space* (2015) supports Lydon & Garcia's point of DIY urbanism and tactical urbanism being similar concepts because they are both citizen-led, grassroots urban planning and design interventions, and both foster a range of actor participants that re-adapt and repurpose urban spaces (Lafrombois, 2015). However, Lafrombois argues that tactical urbanism represents a more institutionalized and formalized version of DIY

urbanism that often advocates for developers' and municipalities' desires over the needs of urban citizens. Both concepts encourage environments that re-adapt and repurpose public space. Similarly, DIY skateparks need to be recognized as positive and progressive spaces built by citizen-led communities, without analyzing whether they are deemed important by the government and city planners.

It is important to note that DIY skateparks are fighting for acceptance in public space more than structural preservation. Other cultures look at preservation as saving space rather than the structures themselves. China represents an example of an alternative perspective on preservation. In a sense, DIY skateparks are aiming to practice the alternative perspective suggested in *Historic Preservation'*s chapter on Japan's Ise Shrine (Norman, Tyler, & Ligibel 2009), which is a sacred structure that is torn down every twenty years to ensure the structure's continue preservation. The chapter reads: "The Japanese consider each structure not a replication of the original but a *re-creation* of it. This philosophy reflects the natural order of things, for nature allows things to live and die, and from that cycle comes perpetual renewal." DIY skatepark users do not want their skatepark to be a fixed structure frozen in time because of specific preservation methods. DIY skateparks want to be shifting and evolving *within* their preservation. 'Death' or demolition of a structure within these spaces should not represent the end, but new opportunities for building within the DIY space.

Who is to credit for the development of these spaces? Groth & Corijn (2005) identify how 'informal actors' influence existing urban planning agendas and urban politics through reappropriation and animation of 'indeterminate' spaces. Groth & Corijn explore potential new urban movements or initiatives in unused city spaces as 'alternative urban futures.' Groth and Corijn share that these alternative urban futures are created "in places that are not coded by market-led urban development— since temporarily left aside from the hegemonic visions of configuration of urban space (due to their having become obsolete in terms of their original

function and use value)—where distinct possibilities for practices of innovation and playful intervention arise" (2005).

DIY skateparks represent creative practices that can offer new opportunities and are DIY urban evolutions that are "transitional reappropriations that are assumed by civil or 'informal' actors coming from outside the official, institutionalized domain of urban planning and urban politics" (Groth & Corijn, 2005). The evolutions of these spaces are organic and their pull away from formal urban planning highlight their dissociation from 'logical planning' methods. Frustrated with the formal process, DIY urbanism is "subtle in impact and statement, first and foremost about simply making a positive, functional contribution" (Douglas, 2014). In DIY's pull from modernist utilitarian (Douglas, 2014), they highlight their allegiance to an ideology that Borret (1999) describes as "libertarian, marginal, deviant and certainly disrespectful of the traditional codes of the city."

DIY skateparks can act as a gathering place for community engagement and participation. A leading principle that governs these places is that they act as learning environments. Learning how to do new tricks on a skateboard, BMX bike, or quad skates requires discipline. Learning from oneself and others calls for participation. These skateparks also act as a learning environment in the construction and building of these places, because the do-it-yourself mentality involves a lot of trial and error and learning from mistakes or successes.

Successful DIY skateparks often remain leaderless, which is what contributes to the success of the ones that do survive. The evolution of these spaces could not happen without the informal actors and proprietors. Douglas (2014) describes the proprietors of these spaces as 'do-it-yourselfers,' who "see themselves as aiding the city, their fellow community members, and in some cases even landholders and developers." The informal actors and proprietors of these spaces understand the unique but also fragile position that these spaces are in. Staying under the governing radar is a natural obstacle but continuing to grow a community within a shared space is something that can fall apart just as easily as being kicked out of these informal spaces.

Ungoverned shared space is the element that keeps members of this subculture intrigued. These spaces maintain their intrigue because of their lack of sole leadership, but more so shared leadership and collective communal drive to develop creative, skateable features for everyone to enjoy. Unspoken acts of leadership are more powerful in DIY spaces and hold more longevity than having a sole party or person be in charge.

The topic of DIY skateparks challenges the question of public space, and whether it exists for everyone. Are these DIY spaces a product of lack of governing or available space, or do they exist because of measures of independence, defiance, and to reclaim the realm of public space that urban residents want to reclaim ownership of? From another perspective, DIY skateparks exist as a product of the lack of available public space. DIY skateparks act as an example of competing use for property. When skating or biking on a substantial percentage of public space is considered a criminalized act, where are those who yearn to take part in this activity supposed to go? The inception of these spaces begins because of the human desire to belong somewhere. Decisions about the purposes of public space can be influenced by capital, but primarily by what appears most agreeable. While there are formal public spaces where skatepark activities are welcome, they are not always guaranteed in every city. Currently, Milwaukee County offers no public skatepark. DIY skateparks challenge the blurred line between creator and consumer, and because of that, skating or biking in some public spaces is considered a criminalized behavior because those activities do not fit into the decided-upon framework of that shared space. The structures in DIY places are distinctly created to reclaim urban spaces and generate alternative urban futures.

2.1.1 long-standing DIY skateparks

Are there successful DIY stories, or are they all doom and demolition? Across the country, there are a handful of flagstone informal DIY skateparks that have survived for decades in urban public spaces. Informal actors and skatepark users have fought to persevere, challenge, and fill in the gaps on current planning processes. These flagship DIY Skateparks are both

powerful and influential within the DIY scene. They stand as strong examples of determination amongst the builders and schemers of DIY skateparks. Flagship DIY Skateparks are examples of longevity because they are projects that are built intentionally for the needs of the individuals who occupy those spaces. Because they have never been city funded, they have always been constructed with the needs of users in mind. This does not imply that the needs of the users are not considered in skateparks that involve city funding, however, this goes back to what we were exploring earlier in the construction process; skateparks require fluidity and transitional flow in planning, building, and execution. Within the longevity of these flagship spaces, we can see how DIY urbanism activities can be defined as being "functional, as opposed to being purely aesthetic or deviant" (LaFrombois, 2015).

Flagship DIY skateparks, while not entirely apolitical, are a successful example of DIY urbanism that Douglas (2014) says lack defining elements such as "destruction, self–promotion, or political communication" that would inherently tie them to crime or vandalism. Examples of such defining elements would be graffiti or littering. DIY skateparks are more than crime or vandalism because they are thoughtful displays of DIY urbanism that are "defined far more centrally by their thoughtful, civic–minded design and functional implementation" Douglas (2014). Long-standing DIY skateparks reflect DIY urban design and creative practices that aimed at improving the locally built environments and succeeded. Examples of success stories are necessary for perseverance in any informal build or endeavor. Flagships are the fuel that encourages creative and personal elements to flourish all over the world. Despite the growing and changing of urban landscapes and community values around them, the fundamentals of these DIY flagship skateparks have remained the same: to create a space where skatepark users can actively and creatively engage with one another and their environment.

Located in Portland, Oregon, Burnside Skatepark was created in 1990 under the east end of the Burnside Bridge in what was then a neglected part of the city (Boddie, 2020). Burnside DIY is the nation's mecca for skateboarding. A Portland PBS special described Burnside as "the

birth of the DIY skatepark movement. Since all the skateparks in the '70s closed down, almost all of them, there was a rebirth in the '90s largely due to here" (Booker & Kargbo, 2016). The skatepark is open to everyone and even after 30 plus years of fame, fundraisers, and locally formed petitions to protect it, it is still not recognized as a formal Portland city skatepark today. Portland developer Jeff Pickhardt sees the value in preserving the very thing that keeps the influx of movers to Portland high. Pickhardt says "the interest in Portland right now is the authenticity, and I think the skate park is authenticity sort of at the max. And for people to come in and do this work without a permit originally and create what they have created and have it stand the test of time, it says a lot. And it says a lot about a community that's willing to go along with that too" (Booker & Kargbo, 2016). Burnside has proven to be powerful in positively changing the neighborhood. It has influenced the urban environment around it by re-shaping not only the space itself, but the potential of the entire block. Throughout the 30 years of its reign as *the* flagship DIY skatepark, the formerly desolate post-industrial area around Burnside has become developed with luxurious condominiums and craft breweries. Now on the front line of Portland gentrification, Burnside stands as a counterculture and one of the remaining elements of what makes that neighborhood culturally unique.

Philadelphia's 'FDR' Skatepark is in South Philly beneath Interstate 95 and has been a metaphorically sacred space for skateboarders and BMX riders since 1997. Its story is unique and different than Burnside in the sense that the dirty and abandoned space of 16,000 square feet was 'gifted' to Philadelphia skateboarders from the city with the intention of it becoming developed into a city-built skatepark. When the locals grew impatient and tired of the city taking their time to properly 'construct' their vision of a skatepark, skaters took matters into their own hands and began building the park up as they deemed fit (Transworld Skateboarding, 2001). The community's interpretation of a skatepark has continued to defy and challenge the framework that previous city planners originally had in mind and stands as a testament to demanding more from local officials on shared space. While the physical space has been gifted to the DIY

16

community and the skatepark acts as a formal public skatepark within South Philadelphia's public park, FDR DIY remains informally funded through fundraisers and donations by the participants and supporters of the space and is maintained through volunteer services by informal actors of the DIY community.

In 2010, the City of New Orleans still had no official skatepark for public use. Located at the Intersection of Interstate 610 and Paris Avenue, Parisite DIY came into fruition from a couple of local skateboarders who were seeking out a space of their own. Parisite is an underdog story, because the space began as an illegal and informal DIY skatepark on public property, and five years after its conception it became a grassroots public park that eventually developed into an official New Orleans's skatepark. Local skateboarders and builders now help influence the building and designing of the very skatepark that they illegally began constructing (*Parisite Skate Park | The Albert and Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design*, 2017). Parisite DIY acts as a strong example of the value in design. Formally constructed public skateparks are not always built by builders and planners who physically understand the thoughtfulness needed to construct a park with transition, flow, and creative execution. Additionally, understanding the intended 'flow' of a skatepark and being more aware of potential bad design can reduce injury.

2.2 Investigate how DIY skateparks are developed

DIY skateparks are capable of surviving, thriving, and expanding in contemporary urban spaces, but are also socially frangible and susceptible to being demolished or reduced to rubble. There is no formula for survival, no clear-cut strategies for success. Because DIY spaces are not formally recognized by governing power, the longevity of these spaces relies on testing the waters and flirting with going unnoticed in public space. The documentary *Out of Sight: Treasure Island DIY,* describes the spontaneous building of these spaces as something comparable to the "'wild west:' if you see an open plot of land, you are going to build— regardless of the longevity" (*Out of Sight: Treasure Island DIY*, 2018). When DIY skateparks are

destroyed, builders in the community are motivated to rebuild and improve until they find spatial acceptance.

2.2.1   Local-level public space not being used to their public extent

Modern cities invoke spatial ordering, in which social groups are segregated to a designated smaller locale where that behavior is considered appropriate (Lofland, 1973). For skateboarders, BMX, and quad skaters, this *spatial ordering* would suggest that a locale would be a skatepark. However, often, merely 'going to the skatepark' is easier said than done. There can be issues with accessibility, availability, and admittance. Milwaukee County currently offers no public skatepark to its residents. Executive County Park Director Guy Smith shares:

> We don't have any other skate parks within Milwaukee County Parks. We have 156 parks; we have a ton of different amenities. So, it [DIY skateparks] does provide that niche that we need to frankly provide in our system.

DIY skateparks develop because of many reasons that we will explore in this study, but a primary reason is because of the need for space, and cities do not always have the financial resources to accommodate those needs. Milwaukee County has seen a steady decrease in funding for their park system, which directly affects potential skatepark development. Executive County Park Director Guy Smith describes:

> One of the things that I think about, and this has been a trend over the last three decades for Milwaukee County Parks, is that our resources continue to diminish. I think this niche specifically at Estabrook [DIY] with the old tennis court that wasn't being used anymore—that the skatepark, you know, naturally organically came together with interested parties in the community. And they're providing a space in programming that we don't have the capacity to do. And so, from my perspective, I think it's been a positive experience.

With Milwaukee County offering no formal public skatepark, DIY skateparks pop up out of the basic need to belong somewhere and desiring the space to engage in skatepark activities. One National DIY neighbor says that the informal development of skateparks "speaks to the failures

of the system." Additionally, accessibility remains a large component in skatepark use. If residents do not have access to a skatepark, or a car or public transportation to take them to a skatepark, that influences the need for skateparks which are usually met by the production of DIY skateparks. One respondent shares:

> I feel like some locals can't really have access to more of the public parks, so these DIY parks are more convenient for those who are local and of course not local, but per se if someone uses their transportation (feet, bike, bus, train etc.) for one thing, it's easy access and people come together within a community more with these DIY parks to take care of them together.

Skateparks are stigmatized as being spaces that can generate more injuries than comparable sports that also use public space. In a 2021 injury statistic report by the U.S National Safety Council, skateboarding was fourth on the list at 245,177 for documented sports and recreational injuries resulting in emergency department visits. However, other popular sports like basketball, general exercise, and cycling have their high number of injuries as well, and popular sports like football and swimming are close in the injury count of skateboarding.

Figure 1. Source: US National Safety Council

The lack of accessible public skateparks compared to public soccer fields, basketball courts, etc., do not go unnoticed. Because of the lack of spatial ordering, participants took up the challenge of riding 'street,' which is when skateboarders, BMX, etc., use undesignated public space as obstacles to ride or skate on. Street riding flirts with using public spaces as a skatepark in themselves. Making space for public skateparks to encourage and deter participants from skating or riding in undesignated public spaces could be a solution but creating accessible and free public skatepark options would not entirely replace the existing interest of riding 'street.' Considering sanctioned public space, one respondent shares:

> Having sanctioned spaces is great and the more sanctioned spaces we have for skateboarding is good, because obviously, it's one of the most popular things

[sports] to do. We have all sorts of like baseball fields, and tennis courts and basketball courts. If we had as many skate spots as those with as much variety of stuff, maybe there would be less skating in those unsanctioned spots... but there is always going to be skating.

As previously stated, designated public skateparks are not always geographically close to a participant's residence, and resources like a ride, accessible bus line, or finances for a cab are not always feasible. Some urban environments, like Milwaukee County, simply do not offer a skatepark as a public resource. Additionally, some public skateparks do not allow admittance of BMX bikes due to the fear of their pegs or bicycle frames ruining pool coping, which are concrete ledges that are susceptible to damage if metal objects are banged against them. This continued practice of not allowing or admitting BMX riders in certain public skateparks due to this fear of property destruction is an arguably outdated practice. Advanced technology has tremendously improved the manufacturing of these BMX bicycles with plastic pegs, and tighter, smaller, more compact dropouts that create less of a grind. This practice of creating public space into exclusionary zones involves further segregation of persons from a space that group members were already spatially segregated to.

Jaycees Skatepark, an outdoor skatepark located in Wirth Park in Brookfield, Wisconsin, ten miles from the two case sites of this study, has listed on a sign under their rules and regulations: "Only skateboards and in-line skates are allowed. NO BICYCLES, ROLLER SKATES, OR SCOOTERS PERMITTED" (*Facilities Skate Park*, n.d.). Open since 2003, this is an example of local-level public spaces not being used to their public extent. Considering these restrictions for BMX, etc., from a safety standpoint, one skateboarder shares:

> I think it's dumb. I think that it's miscalculated judgment on their behalf. I think that sometimes they would say that having a bike in a skatepark is more dangerous than having a skateboarder and their whole thought behind that is because of bike 'weighs more,' that it's a bigger obstacle to try to dodge if it's coming at you or the collisions going to be 'a lot worse' because it's a heavy steel frame bike.

The complete purpose of public skateparks is for public use for all participants—they exist to be used and abused, worn and torn, however you wish to phrase it. It is uncertain whether the original rules came from concerns of safety or maintaining capital value of the space. If it is the latter, concerns on how damaging a sport tool can be a bit out of date. One respondent describes:

> They also say that they think that BMX can damage the coping at skateparks and things like that, which I do think used to be true on older framed bikes where the dropouts hung a lot lower than they do now. Because it was more of the frame of the dropout that would destroy the ledges because they were sharp and they really dug in but nowadays a lot of people ride plastic pegs and yeah, so they really don't damage things as much anymore, I'd say.

Listed in Brookfields Jaycees Skatepark Department of Parks, Recreation & Forestry it is listed: "Anyone not using the park in a safe and acceptable manner will be removed. Abuse of facility rules or hours may result I the future loss of park privileges and possible arrest" ("Brookfield Jaycees Skatepark," 2006) But why is this? Is the City of Brookfield, and other cities alike, choosing to protect something from its sole purpose to maintain its capital value? One respondent shares:

> What I'm trying to say is that some of them (the restrictions) are for safety reasons. But all in all, I think it's just probably for capital, it's just dumb.

Those who do not comply can be asked to leave, ticketed, removed, or possibly arrested. This divide of ticketing BMX, quad skates, and scooters creates what can be compared to Lofland (1973) describes as an act of intentional isolation, thus creating the role of *strangers* in shared public space—and in this example, a formal public skatepark. Outside of formally developed skateparks, there have been social group divides amongst BMX riders and skateboarders –and having public space that favors one can contribute to *strangers* being influenced amongst these social groups. One respondent reflects:

> There used to be a lot of prejudices against it all, like say if a skateboarder was super heavily involved with building a skatepark or getting it to be built, and if

> they were very prejudiced against BMX riders, they're going to advocate for it
> to be, you know, a 'skateboard park only' because that's how it used to be. It's
> like skateboarders and BMX riders never used to get along together.

Designating public skateparks for 'skateboarding only,' — or permitting one social group and not the other can cause isolation amongst different 'wheelhouse' users. While some public parks say these regulations are present for safety purposes, it does raise the question of why certain extremes such as skateboarding be allowed but not BMX or quad skates? In 2009 a survey was conducted by the People for Bikes foundation (formerly called 'Bikes Belong' coalition) to better understand why skateparks deny access to bicycle users (Scheider, 2009). Interviewing 100 skatepark managers from 30 different states, the survey concluded that 46 percent of the skateparks did not allow bicycles. Of the participating skateparks, 77 percent were public, 18 percent were private, and 5 percent were a public/private partnership. Survey participants were required to provide reasoning for their decision. The leading survey response, at 75 percent, said "it's too dangerous mixing bikers and skaters." 64 percent said, "bikes cause too much damage," and 48 percent cited "liability concerns." Other concerns of smaller percentages included the skateparks were too small to house both bicycles and skateboards, or that bikers were not around when said skateparks were constructed. The report concluded that that "some parks haven't considered allowing bikes because their insurance or park warranty banned bikes from the beginning. In these cases, it's the insurance carriers and park builders who need to be educated about the importance of making room for bikes" (Scheider, 2009). The report offers insight, sharing that successful integration of bicycles into present day skateparks would require advocacy, renegotiations with insurance companies, and having bicycle users be dedicated to sharing the space responsibly.

Certain contemporary urban environments further develop Lofland's role of strangers through implementing *personal knowing*, which Lofland (1973) describes as a knowledge-of-others that urban-dwellers develop based on role, status, or information they collect. This can be tremendously toxic because this 'knowledge' creates an environment where negative stigmas can develop without rhyme or much reason. An example of this display of personal knowing, or the 'collected information' would be assuming *skater kids* are *troubled youth*. Lofland further describes this compartmentalization and segregation of people as linking these observed identities to '*costumes*' that they associate with problematic activities. I.E, looking like a *skate rat* means you would cause trouble, or riding BMX bikes or being a skateboarder means you are presumably up to no good, or out to cause mayhem in public spaces. This can lead local authorities to target those who skate or bike in informal public spaces. One respondent admits the ways he has navigated avoiding tickets for riding in public spaces but says that local authorities have targeted and used his riding to tie him to other trouble based off his problematic 'costume' and presumed negative behavior to society. The respondent describes:

> I've been fortunate enough to just get warnings [with BMX], but because of BMX being the 'gateway' to police interaction, I've been charged with other stuff such as possession while out riding. Like, I'd be out riding, and a cop would stop and search me, then I would get a ticket for possession rather than trespassing or whatever.

Consistent with this and Lofland's 'costumes,' Marcus Britton's field study research on spatial segregation in public spaces explores the importance of *visual cues* in the dynamics of social interactions in urban public spaces (Britton, 2008). In Britton's study, people thought he was a hippie or a druggie burn-out because of his long hair and tattered clothing. This highlights the importance of visual cues and how they can influence negative reactions and assumptions of others in shared public spaces. Alternatively, visual cues can also lend understanding to those involved in DIY skateparks. Visual clues can encourage trust and comfort amongst participants.

24

DIY skateparks also foster *nonverbal interactions* which are paired with visual clues. Whether or not a participant asks someone for tips or help with a trick or maneuver, these spaces can act as nonverbal places of encouragement: a head nod, holler, clap, or subtle knock of a skateboard nose. DIY skateparks are unique in their fostering of community engagement and participation, because while skateboarding, BMX, and so on, encourage community, they do not always foster formal verbal communication. Non-verbal communication is a pinnacle way of conversing in these spaces. One respondent describes:

> When you're skating, you're not necessarily, like, in conversation that much. You might just be like, sharing the energy and sharing the 'stoke' of like learning new tricks. So, if someone is taking a turn and they get their trick, then you might smack your board on the edge of the coping and be like, 'yeah!' or cheer, you know—that's verbal, but like, the energy is what I'm talking about—and then you might want to do a trick. So, like, you're pumping—you're basically encouraging each other to do your best.

2.2.2   Public skateparks versus DIY skateparks

So far, we have explored the yearning for acceptance in shared space, the lack of available public skateparks, and the instinctual need to create space when facing lack of space. Daydreaming of a city space where there are ample amounts of formal public skateparks available to the public, would DIY Skateparks still develop? Considering the responses from DIY Skatepark participants, the development of DIY Skateparks is not solely contingent on the need for skateparks—but are also developed because of design flaws and lack of character and creativity in formal skateparks. One respondent shares:

> DIY skateparks are my favorite because they have the most character and the most heart. It is like they literally are a labor of love. You know, it is like blood, sweat, tears and all the stuff you must do to make it happen. And I like well-made skate parks too. But, DIY's, just have the most character and you know—people busted their ass to make it work.

DIY Skateparks can influence the construction of obscure structures that you would not necessarily see at a public skatepark. There is an element to even the most poorly built features

that give DIY participants something to view as a challenge to skate or ride on. National DIY

builder and skateboarder Robbie Pauley shares:

> I mean, we definitely got to get as weird as we wanted [at National DIY]. And
> we got to make things that you wouldn't see in a public park. You're not going
> to really see things like a quarter pipe as steep as we built the first one, right?
> Which I still think is my favorite thing to skate there. People that love it, love
> it. People that don't love it, hate it.

Formally built skateparks are often built by concrete workers or city contractors and therefore

lack the understanding of transitional flow of the build. DIY Skateparks are built with a specific

understanding of the layout and the placement of ramps and skateable features. One DIY builder

shares:

> A DIY skate park is constantly changing. It's being built by the people in the
> community, they might have a little better idea [of what users want]. I mean, I
> can't even say that I have a real idea of what people really want, right? But I do
> understand when a park doesn't have 'flow,' I completely understand flow.
> And I understand flow from the perspective of someone that's new at skating.
> Someone that completely fucking rips can handle anything, and I can
> understand being an older guy that sometimes you want to rip sometimes you
> don't or you can't anymore.

Because DIY builders can anticipate desire and the direction that a skateboard or bicycle would

want to go after rolling down a ramp or dropping in, DIY Skateparks are fundamentally more

user-friendly. DIY Skateparks can influence safety because they can be built with a clearer

understanding of the needs of the users. One respondent shares:

> DIY skateparks are 100 percent for the user and that's what attracts folks to
> them – it's the idea of being involved. There's nothing more satisfying than
> riding something that you've built yourself or with your friends. That's what
> makes DIY very attractive – because it's solely for the people and those
> builders consider what others are saying—and that's what makes them more
> for the users than the public skateparks because those people [formal planners]
> don't give a shit about whether its user-friendly –they just want to say, 'I built
> a skatepark.'

Being built by users does not explicitly mean that DIY Skateparks are 'safer' than public

skateparks. Because there can be a more difficult 'level-up' mentality on how to skate in

informally built DIY skateparks, this gives opportunities for more serious participants to

challenge their abilities. One respondent shares:

> I think there's like a little bit of like exclusivity to it almost, even though I
> know that sounds kind of backwards for the whole ideology with DIY and all
> that. But I know I'm not I'm not going to have to worry about like, bashing up
> some angry dad's kid riding at National [DIY], you know? I like not having to
> worry about that. For me, it seems like it's more for—especially National
> [DIY] people are like 'I'm here to skate.' Like, I'm not here because I'm bored
> after school or whatever.

It is important to note that because DIY skateparks are built in desolate or unused urban areas,

there can be a feeling of uneasiness for participants if the park is not experiencing a high volume

of users. While this study does explore the positive ways DIY skateparks can influence safety

through participation, not all DIY spaces experience those sensations all at once, especially if the

participant is alone or female. One female respondent shares:

> I know so many people who don't like going to public parks and would rather
> support the more local spots that are DIY most of the time, which I never
> really understood, because you should be able to feel okay with supporting
> both places. DIY spots can also be the sketchiest and dirtiest if you don't clean
> up after yourself, but you don't get many people who linger or who leave trash
> everywhere if you were at a public park. From a female's point of view, for me
> it can be hard sometimes. I feel safe in a gated area at a public park over a DIY
> spot because there can be a lot of hooligans going on at these DIY parks, but
> they could also be super fun.

Because of the lack of funding available for DIY skateparks, this can lead to DIY

Skateparks being built poorly or having 'sketchy' components. A solution to this would be

having all formally built skateparks be all-inclusive, built with a better understanding of

transitional flow, and be more user friendly. One respondent describes:

The more skate parks, the better. I am opposed to wasting money on shitty
skate parks. So if you are going to get a skate park, make sure that it is skater
owned and operated in the design and the build, and make sure that it
incorporates lots of different features and make sure that you are not wasting
money on things like a fence or like, you know, money could go to more
projects like grassroots projects like this [gesturing to DIY skatepark] instead,
and also make sure that the skatepark is poured in place concrete cast in place
concrete, right? Because that is going to be the best lasting, best quality
product. So, I am definitely not opposed to more skate parks. We need more
skate parks and more indie DIY parks.

The plea is not solely for more city skateparks, but for better built and more thoughtfully
constructed skateparks.

2.3 DIY skateparks as subcultures that foster community

DIY skateparks continue to survive, grow, and blossom in urban environments because
they act as a unique subculture. In exploring DIY skateparks as subcultures, we can identify that
these subcultures are communities of networks, and not merely places. DIY subcultures are not
just groups of people with similar interests, but more so similar patterns of interaction (Neal,
2013). For DIY skateparks, those patterns involve rhythmic connectedness and movement
through skating or riding a bike. Subcultures create what Neal describes as 'bonding ties:' when
someone is deeply connected to a person or a group of people and then meets their friends, you
then become deeply connected with them in turn. In a sense, being a part of a subculture is a
contagious way to form a community.

DIY subcultures come into existence for many reasons, but a detail we are going to focus
on is the need for space and acceptance in public space, and how navigating that desired shared
space can bring together groups of people who are seeking that same thing. DIY skateparks are
unique DIY subcultures because they are formed from a network of people seeking space and
opportunity amidst heavily governed public spaces. Throughout history, governing rules have

existed in public spaces and because of this there has been a compartmentalizing of spaces and places for people to go. Historically, this act of sanctioning people in shared space has limited people in their pursuit of acceptance, survival, and happiness.

Habitually, cities, towns, and publicly governed spaces have used land to segregate particular social groups. Sanctioning off public space is a way of pushing unwanted social groups out, and from that, the interactive patterns of fleeting and survival can form informal groups. During the medieval era, large areas of public land formerly used for hunting purposes became strictly sanctioned off for the hunting of only the royal families or the commonwealth. Those belonging to any other social group were criminalized if caught using the land for their own hunting. This led to communities of peasants to form DIY subcultures of foragers and gatherers to find alternative forms of nourishment to survive, but also to legally gain sustenance from the land (La Cerva, 2020).

Another example of informal subgroups would be the introduction of women in theatre. The traditional Western theatre dates to ancient Greece and Rome, with their practice of tragic plays beginning in 532 BC. With women being deemed as inferior to men, and the practice of these tragic plays being dangerous; women were not allowed to perform in public theatre to neutralize the danger of their presence (*Women in Theatre*, 2015). Additionally, men would play both female and male roles. In the centuries it took for women to become slowly accepted into performing in public theatre, women sought refuge and community in each other and formed their own subcultures of secret theatre groups. Private displays of expression and connectedness, performed under hushed tones and in desolate places led to these theatrical groups forming, taking to the public streets for performances. DIY 'pageant wagons' would roll into towns and

display a variety of performers who were previously shunned and segregated by the public theatrical world (Medievalists.net, 2013).

The truth of the matter is, community members will establish their own exclusive spaces whether there is a lack of regulation, or too much control. Governing authorities want to control public behavior until it fits their desired elements (Blumenberg & Ehrenfeucht, 2008). What these examples of unintentional subgroups all have in common are the ways that they adapted to the behavioral framework pushed on them and became community resources despite the governing control.

2.4 Introduce case sites: Milwaukee's Estabrook DIY and National DIY

In this study I am choosing to not de-identify the location because these are publicly known DIY skatepark locations, but I have de-identified interviews at these two DIY Skateparks based on the consent of the participant. I chose each of these two sites to conduct my participatory research because they are currently two prominent DIY skateparks in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I first learned about the Estabrook Park 'Esta' DIY skatepark when I moved to Milwaukee eight years ago, and I have been following the National DIY since its beginning in Spring 2020. Each site offers unique characteristics because of their distinct locations, but participation amongst both locations appears equally engaging and demonstrates strong community ties. One respondent shares:

> It's pretty funny, because we have two [DIY Skateparks] in the same city, and they are incredibly different. Even the communities are a little different. But in the end, I think the number one way that they are the same is that there haven't been any real complaints. And there haven't been any real issues.

Here we will explore some characteristics of each DIY skatepark:

Estabrook DIY occupies an abandoned County Park tennis court and has been an informal developing DIY skatepark since 2006. The DIY space is fenced in, reflective of its original

purpose as a public tennis court. Local stories say that the site was initially cleaned out by Milwaukee bike polo players, but the early developments of it becoming a DIY Skatepark is credited to local BMX riders. The existing fence is overgrown with vines and foliage that conceal it from the Estabrook Beer Garden roughly 100 yards away. There are wild riverbank grapes growing on the trees, that drop little grapes into a corner of the DIY space that skateboarders must navigate with their wheels to avoid slipping out. Participants use this DIY space year-round, so long as there is no snow, ice, or rain on the courts.

The success of this long-lasting DIY Skatepark is credited to the natural proprietors (Jacobs, 1961) that keep the space clean and the positive relationship between the County Park Service and Aaron Polansky, a local Sky-High skate shop owner. Most important to its success; Estabrook DIY is hidden-in-plain-sight, concealed by fencing, trees, and the Milwaukee River, and a great lawn. 'Not In My Backyard' – *(NIMBY)* (DeLeon, 1992) does not come in the way of Estabrook DIY because there are no existing neighbors in its vicinity to be upset by its presence.

Table 5. East entrance of Estabrook DIY. Photo by Emmy Yates.

Table 6. Skateable features at Estabrook DIY' such as a 'pole jam' (blue, far right), round flat bar (black, left), bank to quarter (white, far reaching right). Southeast facing. Photo by Emmy Yates.

Table 7. Volcano to roller (white, red cap, far left), skateable humps (right). North-facing. Photo by Emmy Yates.

Table 8. Manual pad ledge (front left), roller to volcano (center), large bank (far reaching left). Northeast facing. Photo by Emmy Yates.

Table 9. Large hip/bank (far reaching left), volcano roller image shows width of structure. Northwest facing. Photo by Emmy Yates.

'National DIY' located in Walker's Point under the I-94 freeway, has been an informally developing DIY skatepark since Spring 2020. It began as a spontaneous project during the stay-home order, which was issued by legislatures during the COVID-19 pandemic. A few skateboarding friends looked at the project as an opportunity to be able to connect in the safer outdoors, and it soon turned into the ongoing quarantine project that it currently is. The DIY space exists on the edge of a vacant lot owned by The Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The space was formerly rented by the Milwaukee Area Technical College for parking but has been vacant for years According to participants of the DIY skatepark, in past years the vacancy in the parking lot became a zone for drug use, prostitution, and vandalism. Since becoming a DIY skatepark, this space has maintained a busyness. 'National DIY' is an example of DIY skateparks influencing what Jacobs (1961) refers to as *natural proprietors*, which act as watchful eyes that help keep public spaces safe. DIY skateparks give physical pulse and community engagement back into negatively perceived public space. Through witnessing positive human interaction, community members can feel a sense of security in the traffic frequency they can see for themselves. The sight of people attracts other people, and with this a sense of solitude is developed (Jacobs, 1961).

National DIY does not currently have a positive long-standing relationship with the county in comparison to Estabrook DIY, making it more vulnerable. Currently there are multiple installed skateable features such as quarter and half pipes, concrete structures, and a few obstacles such as a traffic cone or moveable wooden box.

NATIONAL DIY

The impromtpu skatepark underneath I-43 north/south and National Avenue is a special place. It's a rare example of how community members can take initiative to make and take ownership over a derelict area in order to serve a community need.
The skatepark provides what we call "natural surveillance" which fosters stewardship, monitoring and safety to an otherwise dark and hidden urban space. Something that grows so organically in a city is rare and irreplaceable. Even the best landscape design cannot replace the social connectedness, quirky informal uniqueness, overall character, community investment and other intangible, priceless elements that this type of asset provides.
In our opinion, these types of activity generating assets are to be recognized and preserved as part of a successful urban design approach. The skatepark is an excellent example of something that should be replicated. It's colorful and creative, increases safety, promotes physical activity, keeps kids out of trouble, and perhaps most notably, is completely self-sustaining.

Table 10. Community sign attached to a fence reads the rules and regulations of 'National DIY' located in the Walker's Point neighborhood. West facing. Photo by Emmy Yates.

Table 11. Donations of reclaimed materials: plywood sheets, gravel, bricks, and framing lumber. South-facing. Photo by Emmy Yates.

Table 12. Bank to pyramid structure. Southwest facing. Photo by Emmy Yates.

Table 13. (From left) quarter pipe hip to flat wall to bowl corner escalating down to small quarter pipe. The structure is 20' length x 3' tall south end and 20' x 2' tall west end. Off-ramp for National Ave and 6th Street seen in the far center of image. West-facing. Photo by Emmy Yates.

Table 14. Build-in-progress. Quarter pipe forms and back fills getting ready for the concrete pour. Southeast facing. Photo by Emmy Yates.

2.5 *Chapter Conclusion:*

In chapter 2 we examined the impacts of the flagship DIY skateparks such as Philadelphia's FDR DIY, New Orleans' Parisite DIY, and Portland's Burnside DIY. Looking into these longstanding flagship examples is important in this study because they highlight the potential that each informally developed DIY skatepark can have in their community. Portland's Burnside DIY is unique because it has physically altered the landscape around it, leading to a highly gentrified area that has experienced heavy redevelopment. Examining these flagship DIY skateparks spread across the country, we can see similarities with those sites and the two case sites of this study. Other than Parisite DIY, which eventually became a public skatepark—what each DIY skatepark has in common is how they are recognized by governing authorities as positive additions to the community but continue to lack funding or obtain formal security of these spaces' futures. This creates awareness of the unique teetering position informal DIY skateparks find themselves in, where they are not 'legal' but are 'allowed' so long as they maintain positive interactions with the communities and legislatures around them.

In this chapter's investigation of how DIY skateparks are developed, it has been demonstrated that there are existing favors for DIY Skateparks versus formally built public skateparks. Respondents share that DIY skateparks offer elements of obscurity, character, and level-up challenges in difficulty. Something that struck me was one respondent's favor towards DIY skateparks' exclusivity—which can come across as somewhat backwards to the whole ideology of DIY urbanism. This response highlights the importance of skatepark etiquette, which are unspoken sets of rules and courtesies that were developed long ago within these spaces to govern users, facilitate fair turns, and influence safety. Because some respondents express a lack

of skatepark etiquette in present-day public skateparks, they seek out spaces that are less accessible to younger participants and guardians who do not value skatepark etiquette. This can suggest that DIY users seek out DIY skateparks to avoid governing authorities, but also fellow users of those public spaces that do not respect the unspoken rules.

This chapter concluded by introducing its two case sites: Milwaukee's Estabrook DIY and National DIY. Both DIY skateparks are different from each other because of the location and environment around them. At just two-years-old, National DIY is in its early stages of building a positive relationship with the community and is housed in a more desolate and run-down area beneath the I-94 freeway. Estabrook DIY has been an established DIY skatepark for over 13 years in the clean and highly frequented Estabrook Park. In this study we will learn how the long-running Estabrook DIY has proven to have positively impacted the landscape of the county park and we will draw connections on National DIY having the same influence in the community around it.

Chapter 3

Legal Framework

3.1 Informal development of DIY skateparks

LaFrombois (2015) explains that DIY urbanism "fills gaps in current planning processes, at times mimicking formal urban planning, as a way to make improvements to cities." The City of Milwaukee has no public skatepark. Because of this, DIY skateparks have developed out of both necessity and need. Non-planned, spontaneous 'urbanity,' can be viewed as problematic because it occupies space that cannot be used for capital gain. Blumenberg & Ehrenfeucht's study (2008) examines how local officials mediate among varied and competing uses of the sidewalks and other public spaces, calling sidewalks and streets the "quintessential public space." Sidewalks and streets are the pinnacle of 'main public space,' but are also spaces of heavy regulation and surveillance. Despite the constant mediation from city officials, these narrow strips of land are spaces where "social norms have been established and transgressed" (Blumenberg & Ehrenfeucht, 2008). Jacobs (1961) described streets and sidewalks as a city's 'main public place' and its most 'vital organs,' yet private or individual ownership continues to take priority over the needs of the public. Blumenberg & Ehrenfeucht (2008) state that when city officials do decide to get involved in sidewalk regulations, it becomes a manner of selection. They explain, "They [city officials] often selectively ignore certain sidewalk behavior and uses, particularly in low-income neighborhoods or on other undesirable plots of land such as under or adjacent to freeways" (2008). This observation is consistent with the location of our case site 'National DIY,' because it is tucked under the I-94 freeway. Specifically, Blumenberg and Ehrenfeucht note, "In these marginal spaces, residents have established community gardens and

40

skateboard parks" (2008). Importantly, Blumenberg & Ehrenfeucht note that local officials both ignore and/or selectively enforce certain infractions as methods to contain 'disorderly behavior.' They do so by "geographically concentrating certain individuals or certain behaviors in selected areas of the city." If the observed behavior fits that space, officials will allow it, and if the behavior does not fit, those persons will be turned towards space where it is deemed appropriate.

Using Las Vegas sidewalks and streets as an example, Blumenberg & Ehrenfeucht further identify how sidewalk obstructions such as casino volcanos, fountain shows, pyrotechnics, etc., are considered 'acceptable' because they influence capital and "herd people like sheep into businesses," (2008) but other forms of public sidewalk and street usage warrant regulation and control. In support of privatization of streets and sidewalks, Blomley (2004) argues for the 'simplicity' of "private or individual ownership," calling public and nonprofit ownership of land "both ambiguous and confusing" in comparison. To briefly summarize: public streets and sidewalks being used for capital makes sense to city officials, and only when a space is deemed not profitable is there a lack of regulation and control.

Temporary reappropriation and animation of 'indeterminate' spaces are a consequence of what Groth & Corijn (2005) describe as a "rampant deindustrialization processes and the 'shrinking' city." Because of the unclear, undetermined, and unclaimed status of 'no-man's-lands' in cities, DIY spaces emerge and reclaim those spaces. "When exploring the potential of new urban movements or initiatives to offer 'alternative urban futures,' it seems promising to part from the phenomenon of active repossessions and symbolic reconstructions of everyday urban spatial structures that one encounters in almost any city" (Groth & Corijn, 2005). In defining the group practices of DIY urban design, Douglas (2014), describes the practices as "small–scale and creative, unauthorized yet intentionally functional and civic–minded

41

'contributions' or 'improvements' to urban spaces in forms inspired by official infrastructure."
Douglas (2014) divides urban DIY activities into three subcategories: "guerrilla greening—planting or functionally converting unused land, infrastructure, or facades; spontaneous streetscaping—painting traffic markings or installing design elements such as signage, ramps, and seating on streets or structures; and aspirational urbanism—promotional signs, public notices, or other informational installations by which community members express their own policy and development ideas or alternatives" (2014).

Estabrook DIY's development, like most DIY spaces, came into fruition through local actors accessing the potential of an unused space. The condition of Estabrook County Park in the early 2000s was vastly different than what it is today. It was a failing public park and there was not as much positive foot traffic to give off a perception of safety. The lively Estabrook Beer Garden did not open until 2012 (Snyder, 2012), which was a momentous success in revitalizing the County Park. Additionally, the frisbee golf course had yet to be installed. The abandoned tennis court stood as the perfect opportunity for a skatepark to develop in. Though different Milwaukee wheelhouses like the Bike Polo Club had spent time at the DIY location before it became the project that it is today, when the DIY space began developing into a skatepark, it quickly became recognized as exactly that. Natural proprietor, DIY builder, skateboarder, local skate shop 'Sky High' owner Aaron Polansky shares:

> I think I've talked to enough bike polo people where they're like, 'Yeah, we just kind of figured, like, let's let skate people have it,' and then it just wasn't big enough and yeah it wasn't ideal for them.

Through scheming, fundraising, and building, the DIY skatepark went from being an abandoned court full of trash, makeshift bonfires, and rotting ramps—to a thought-out plan of development led by a couple of local skateboarders who saw the space's potential. Polansky shares:

It was like: 'I got a generator,' 'I got this,' 'I got this,' and 'I got this much money, how much money do you want to put in on it?' And then we did that little weird boomerang build there.

Soon after putting more time into the development of the DIY space, the informal leaders at the time knew that if they wanted their DIY space to stay, they would have to start building a relationship with the Park District. Polansky recollects:

But first what we did is we started talking to the County Park, or the Estabrook Park crew, like the guy the kid cutting the grass, we'd holler at him 'Who's the fucking guy we need to talk to?' Now that we talked to the manager and then the manager of the North Side parks and then whatever it went down to and we essentially asked, 'Can we just put a dumpster in the grass?' and after like, weeks, finally it came down to it they were like, 'Hey, you can just use our dumpster.'

These informal leaders and builders at the time knew that the easiest way to make friends in a County Park was by keeping their space tidy and showing that they were improving the space rather than contributing to the existing mess. This is consistent with Douglas' (2014) argument of DIY urban designs as "creative practices aimed at 'improving' the local built environment without permission in ways analogous to formal efforts." Polansky shares:

We cleaned out all the rotted stuff like that mini ramp was still there everything and we just took it all out because in the end it was garbage in all of it. It was so rotted, so deteriorated. It was easier to bike on than it was to skate. But at the same time, we knew we were going to take it [the DIY] somewhere. And you know, like anything you know—you get started, you're hot, you're going, and we did that little boomerang build and then it took a couple of weeks and then we did we did part of the China bank build.

As previously stated, at the time of the early days of Estabrook DIY, there were not any neighbors to heavily oppose to the development of the DIY space. Other than the County Park landscape employees, the park saw much less foot-traffic than it does today, and what it had been like 50 years prior. Executive County Park Director Guy Smith shares:

> Estabrook [DIY] is kind of unique. It literally doesn't have neighbors, it's kind of like an isolated park. Because of that, we do not receive complaints from the county perspective, you know, whether, from my perspective or my staff that operate that part, we haven't had any issues with the group.

The construction of the Estabrook Beer Garden shifted the existing landscape of Estabrook County Park. Constructed just 100 yards from the DIY skatepark, it stood as the first neighbor of the DIY space, and the first voice to potentially have opposition to its informal development. Polansky reflects:

> When we were doing that first little boomerang spine build was when they were working on the beer garden. And this is the pivotal moment because Hans, who has the old German beer hall, walked over, and introduced himself and talk to us, and told us, 'Hey, looks like you guys really know what you're doing.' We all look at each other and say, 'We really don't, we're just winging it.' And he was like, 'This is really cool' and 'I got a bunch of treated lumber over in the corner, I brought that over here and when I saw you guys clean, I thought maybe you're going to want some new wood.' And we're like, 'No, that's a problem. We don't want any lumber. We're just going to do block fill and concrete, and then it won't deteriorate.' And he was like, 'Wow, that's amazing, that's great.' So then because we cleaned it out so well, the park's crew was appreciative.

With the approval and even some admiration from the new neighbors at the beer garden, and the County Park looking the other way because of the way the space was being managed and cleaned—Estabrook DIY found itself in a rare situation of mutual, but not legal, acceptance of informal development. Executive County Park Director Guy Smith shares:

> But I will say that they have done a good job—any of the ramps, any of the components for the skatepark has done a great job there. They also clean up after themselves. And then also, it's almost like a positive symbiotic relationship with them being there.

As previously stated, a consistent theme with the longevity of DIY skateparks is them operating without complaints. Polansky shares:

There wasn't any opposition [to Estabrook DIY] ever. And if there has been it has not come to me, no one has even said anything. The only thing I've ever caught weird was a few parks people—like, some people don't want to pick up trash, like some park's employees see it as a hassle—but not like a hazard, just a hassle.

While the park's crew appreciating the maintenance and cleanup efforts has helped maintain acceptance of the DIY space, there is still a constant navigation of who-to-talk-to regarding maintaining a good-standing relationship with the County Park. Polansky explains:

That always fluctuates, like, who's on the crew? Who thinks it's cool? And who doesn't care? And who thinks 'That's not my job,' you know, because some of them don't want to collect trash from there, because it's another stop, you know, or it's always packed to the top or whatever, you know, so there have always been these like, little inconsistencies. And because it's not necessarily allowed—like DIY is allowed, but it's not County sanctioned. You know, it's still informal, completely informal, to this day. And, and it is just wild.

Table 15. Estabrook DIY during a fundraising event held July 2021. Image taken by Emmy Yates.

Estabrook DIY is a staple skate location in Milwaukee. It has persevered and continues to navigate changes in County Park authorities. Because of natural proprietorship (Jacobs, 1961)

from actors like Aaron Polansky, and other volunteers throughout the years, the DIY space has continued to exist and offer itself as a space for community engagement and creativity.

There is a value that can be recognized in DIY development from neighbors who do not necessarily build or participate but are comfortable with seeing urban spaces change through informal ways. A Walker's Point homeowner at the end of the alleyway connected to National DIY describes the personal value she sees in unsanctioned DIY development:

> I think for me, the significance is like, the permission giving—it can provide and is a form for self-actualization, empowerment, and agency. And maybe folks who had been historically marginalized or didn't have the social location to make decisions in consequential manners, can now experiment, and use this space as a springboard for experimentation and like finding better practices, best practices and connecting with others.

Consistent with Groth & Corijn's (2005) point on when exploring the potential of new urban movements or initiatives, both location and vacancy are a draw in visualizing 'alternative urban futures' that can take place. One respondent describes:

> When there are vacancies that are 'scrappy' and an individual can identify that that is a space to, forgive me, 'activate.' And like, I hate that word 'activate' as a concept keyword, but people are obsessed with it.

Having a free space where participants of all ages can congregate is vitally important in all neighborhoods. National DIY stands as an example of a temporary urbanism initiative that has impacted the urban landscape it resides in.

National DIY has developed much more recently than Estabrook DIY, so in comparison, its relationship on formality with the City of Milwaukee finds itself in more of the preliminary stages. Developed during the COVID-19 city-issued stay home order, a few local skateboarders took a risk and began constructing a single quarter pipe, which stands as the pinnacle developing point for the DIY space becoming what it is today. By 'testing the waters' with that single build

and seeing what they could get away with, informal builders were able to see the potential of the space. Two years later, the DIY space has been 'testing the waters' ever since. The desolate space had already been a skate spot in the Walker's Point neighborhood for years, and skateboarders and BMX bikes would use the existing curbs and ledges to ride their bikes and skateboards on. One National DIY building pioneer shares:

> So yeah, the reason we picked that spot [National DIY], it was already kind of a skate spot. It was called 'bums' nest' and people used to skate the curbs. I guess it used to be like an encampment at one point. Which is how it got the name 'bums' nest.' And then the pandemic hit. There is a quarter pipe that got built outside the Summerfest grounds that was pretty much the reason we did anything at National [DIY]. Because we were skating that and I remember like going there and there was like 30 or 40 fucking kids there skating it [Summerfest skate spot]. And there were cops rolling past and didn't give a fuck about anybody—like about any of that.

Early National DIY builders saw the decrease in surveillance from authorities during early Covid-19 pandemic quarantine as an indicator that a buildout at National could go unnoticed— and if not unnoticed, it was still not the most pressing thing on everyone's minds because so much about that time was just trying to navigate the day-to-day uncertainty of the pandemic. National DIY builder describes:

> I was skating every day. Just because I didn't have anything else to do. And I wouldn't have been hanging out with all of our original crew had we not been pent up because of quarantine. It was totally because of that barrier. That thing [quarter pipe] getting made was what made us think our shit could be possible there.

By 'testing the waters' with skating at the Summerfest spot, the early National crew solidified their intentions at the unused and ill-kept space under the I-94 freeway. National DIY builder shares:

> It's out in the open [Summerfest skate spot] and we would hit that spot and go then to drink beers at 'bums' nest' afterwards. And we're just looking at the

wall. And I'm like, 'Dude, we should just make this thing into like a quarter pipe.' And I was like, that was the first thing we did. We did it two days later.

Table 16. Participants of National DIY pose next to the first developed skate feature, a three-feet tall quarter pipe. May 2020. West-facing. Image taken by Emmy Yates.

While the pandemic had its own role in decreased surveillance giving opportunity for the DIY to develop, the space that now houses National DIY was very much a neglected city space where crime, drugs, sex-work, and homelessness would occur in rotations throughout the years. It is a space that was neglected enough where a developing DIY could have the opportunity to go unnoticed. One National DIY builder describes:

> Being under the bridge and the fact that it's not a city lot—we flew under the radar enough to where like—that was kind of my secret hope was that we could build enough down there to where it would be too expensive or just not worth it to tear down. And it kind of ended up working out that way.

While the development of National DIY was viewed as a success to its early actors, its ongoing survival two years later is still a surprise. One National DIY builder shares:

We figured when we built that, that it was only going to last like you know, whatever, like a couple of weeks or a couple of months or something. And then it was there for a few and me and John were down there and just stacking parking blocks on top of each other, and we made that second thing in the middle that like pyramid, and then others got involved. We got a couple other dudes involved and now it's a lot more organized.

What started with a small quarter pipe is now a collection of multiple concrete skateable features that have been built on-site that participants of all wheelhouses pay a visit to. One National DIY builder describes:

I didn't think that I'd meet people that first year like that. I was meeting people from all around the country that had just heard about it [National DIY] and just swung through to check it out. Before it was even cool when it was still just like a wall and a pyramid, before we even had that addition that got Bart spearheaded and before we finished the wall and before like Grindline folks would come through and help us—like before any of that, like I would meet people from all over, it's awesome.

National DIY has grown incredibly fast in building, organization, and maintenance in comparison to Estabrook DIY. In just two years the DIY space has had several fundraisers, building events, birthday party potlucks, and so on. DIY builder and skateboarder Aaron Polansky describes:

I think [National DIY] it's a really are opportunity for people to connect with one another. And like, that's what we're all so thirsty for sharing values and finding out what brings us joy, and what that looks like and what that means.

Table 17. Aaron Polansky (right) finishes molding a concrete coping alongside local DIY builder Jon Bartels at National DIY. West-facing. November 2020. Image taken by Emmy Yates.

While National DIY is still an informal skatepark, its standing relationship with the county is currently a positive one. Milwaukee County District 12 Chief of Staff Luke Knapp shares his insight on the development of National DIY:

> We are always excited when we can activate spaces that are that are underused or underutilized. So, I think, you know, the location of it right underneath the freeway is a great use of space. You can see that happening more in other cities, even within the city of Milwaukee. I mean, look at those pickleball courts you got over in the Third Ward. So just like using space in any way. And then I think the skatepark is a super creative and fun idea for youth too. And, and so you know, you have these kids that are coming together and doing something. And it's skating, which is an activity that is not typically associated with Hispanic youth. And yet here it is happening right on the south side in a heavily Hispanic district. You know, none of the neighbors complained about it, either. So, we're all for it.

It is difficult to know exactly what would happen to the DIY skatepark if someone were to complain, but potential complaints would be handled and navigated per objection. However, as long as there continues to be no complaints, the city is currently looking the other way as the National DIY skatepark continues to develop.

While National DIY still stands as an informal skatepark, its pioneer builders carried that possibility with them throughout their build because though it could be potentially temporary, the thought of it getting demolished does not deter them from building anyway. One National DIY builder shares:

> If it gets torn down tomorrow, we'll just build another one, you know? When we did the first thing, I remember another builder telling me like, 'Hey man, don't think of this as your baby, like, you know, because this thing could be gone.' In like a week or whatever. And like, it can always go that way, I don't think it will be, but yeah.
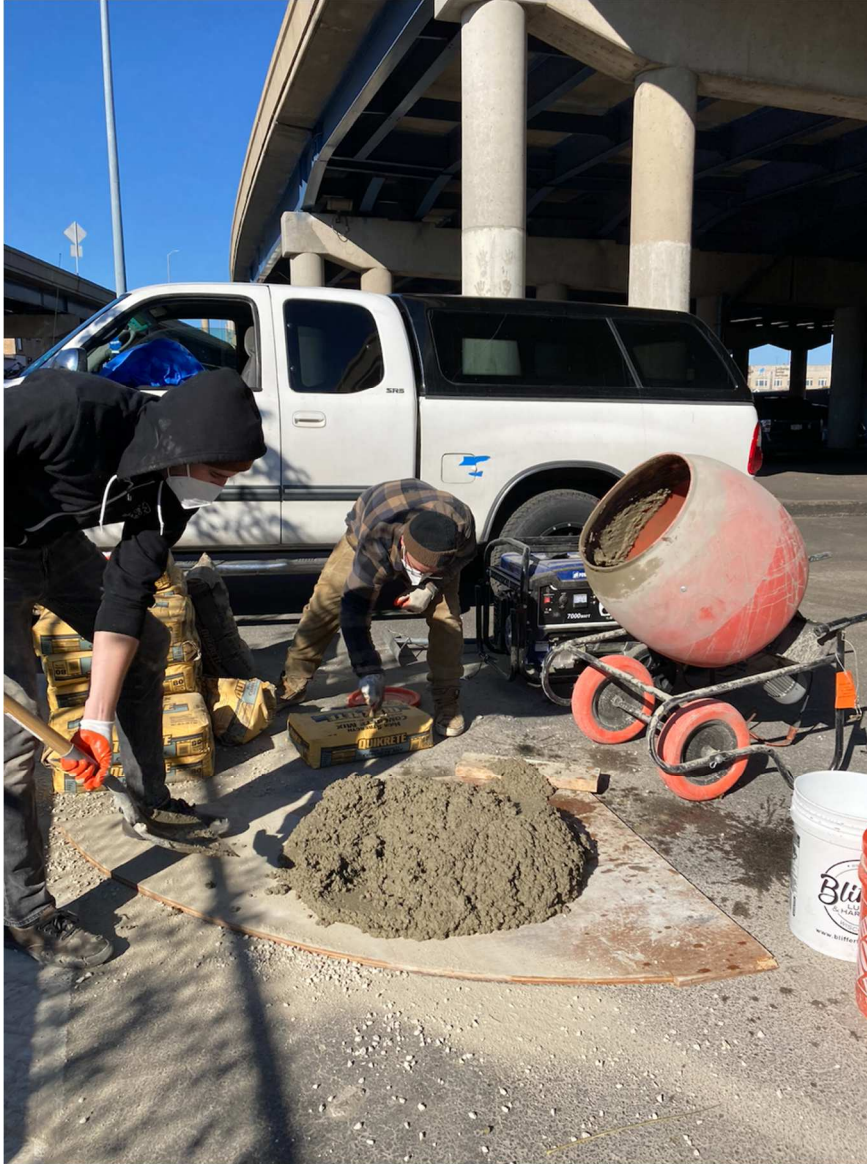
Table 18. Volunteer builders prepare concrete to pour at National DIY. 2021. Image taken by Emmy Yates.

The temporality of DIY skateparks does not influence whether these informal actors will begin development in unsanctioned spaces. The love and interest for the build outweighs any fears of what could be 'temporary.'

Temporary urbanism such as DIY skateparks have the potential to re-assemble urban spaces and cities through their actors. Temporariness is a factor in formal city redevelopment, but less-impermanent assemblages such as informal DIY skateparks are at higher risk of being dissembled and are assemblages that are more conscious of time. Temporariness, though time

conscious, can be viewed as an opportunity within informal city development. Because

temporariness can influence actor participation, it expands beyond being 'temporary.'

Temporariness such as DIY urbanism may not always re-assemble city landscapes, but it attracts

actors who will continue to assemble and put time into these spaces. "The rise of temporary uses

shows that not all plans and projects are meant to, or able to, change the city permanently.

Temporary uses reveal a quite radical notion for urban planning: that there is a time after the

plan, after the project" (Stevens, 2020). Short term transformations and assemblages of actors,

Stevens (2020) describes, can influence the durability and long-term impacts on urban space

because of the assemblages of actors that use and manage these urban spaces. "Labeling of

particular transformations and uses of urban spaces as 'temporary' can be a means of making

them immutable, by durably aligning and associating these urban design projects with a network

of other actors, forces, and interests, assembling a set of relationships that support, stabiles,

defend, and rely on it" (Stevens, 2020). Stevens argues that temporary use helps in resisting

challenges because people, regulations and materials are won over to its long-term impacts and

benefits. 'Temporary' uses can be repeated across time, space, and sometimes even so by

reappearing in the same location year after year, as witnessed with 15 plus year running

Estabrook DIY, and National DIY's second season.

3.1.1 What makes DIY skateparks illegal

> I mean, how do I respond in private—is like, just because something is illegal
> doesn't mean it's wrong. Like, there are things that are legal that are wrong, and
> there are things that are illegal that are not wrong. - Skateboarder, and DIY
> developer

DIY skateparks are an illegal form of DIY public design because they are projects and

activities that are attempts to augment, challenge, or emulate formal municipal designs and

infrastructure (Finn, 2014). Changes, challenges, or the unwarranted redesigning of public space are the key conditions that make DIY skateparks illegal. Unique forms of DIY urbanism such as DIY skateparks, though unauthorized and illegal, are aiming to find a place in what the actors deem as lacking in available formal public resources. Importantly, Groth & Corijn (2005) say that it needs to be stated that the main actors are the ones who determine the 'legal' status of DIY spaces. This raises the question, who determines the legality of developments in shared public space? These determining actors are not just the local authorities, but also the proprietors and volunteers themselves. "They (the actors) determine whether the temporary activities are repressed or not. The longer the action takes, and with the first obstacles arising, a broader field is incorporated: the neighborhood and sympathizers are informed, consulted, and mobilized" (Groth & Corijn, 2005). Proprietors also can determine the legality of a DIY location in consideration by assessing the space's potential. There is a deliberate consciousness when deciding on the location of a DIY Skatepark. The potential DIY is assessed by its location, but more importantly, its proximity to other people and businesses around it.

It is through unique DIY urbanism that such coalition-building opposition unfolds. Opposing or even jeopardizing known or unknown 'official' urban planning results in the status of DIY Skateparks being illegal spaces. Ferrell (e.g., 1995, 2001) says that public urban space has become "increasingly regulated, policed, and commodified over the past several decades," and claims that responses of 'urban anarchy' such as graffiti, busking, and bicycle activism are a reaction to the increased policing and commodification of shared public space. Because of this, Ferrell (1995, 2001) assigns certain urban intervention practices to a group. Similarly, other forms of 'urban anarchy' are seen in other 'outlaw' practices such as bike messengers or skateboarders (Kidder 2011; Vivoni 2009). 'Outlaw' practices such as skateboarding are

symbolic in challenging spatial regulations (Kidder 2011; Vivoni 2009). Douglas (2014) says

that observers who see DIY urban intervention practices as belonging to a group, are suggesting

that the actions done by those informal actors "qualify as instances of outright 'resistance' to

authority, capitalism, or mainstream culture in the critical or neo–Marxian tradition."

Douglas (2014) identifies reasoning behind DIY urbanism as aiding to the community

and city by making functional contributions, but Douglas also carefully notes the thin line of

what makes DIY urbanism illegal by putting it clearly: "one person's improvement may well be

another's vandalism." Executive County Park Director Guy Smith shares:

> I mean, not all things that pop up where someone decides they want to do XYZ
> activity is necessarily appropriate in a certain location. It could cause user
> conflict or things like that. But in this case [Estabrook DIY], it was providing
> access and opportunity in a space that was being underutilized. I think when
> people do see people safely utilizing a park or public space, that can encourage
> other people to do the same thing.

DIY urbanism, while most often is inspiring, anarchial, and for-the-people—cannot be

denied as being preferential and implying self-entitlement among local actors. "Hypothetical

development ideas, and unauthorized street improvements are direct responses to the perceived

neglect of some spaces, while advertising removal, aspirational proposals, and pro-pedestrian

interventions react to the hyper–commodification or insensitivity of others," Douglas continues

"across all of these motivations, justifications, and goals, the decision to make DIY alterations

like these also implies a strong sense of self–entitlement. It involves a value judgment of some

neglect or deficiency or opportunity in the space that the do–it–yourselfer hopes to address, and a

willingness to make changes to the community based on one's own preferences" (2014).

Additionally, Douglas argues that DIY urban design actions seemingly appear in more 'common

in newly hip' or 'gentrifying' areas rather than areas of disinvestment where DIY actions are

most needed. While I do agree with Douglas' argument that DIY actions can be at fault for justifying self-centered motivations for improvement, I do not think DIY urban design actions primarily develop in hip and gentrifying areas, but rather the derelict industrial districts and areas of state disinvestment. There simply would be no opportunity and no space for them to develop and thrive, especially. I argue that DIY actions can influence gentrification because of their strong abilities to improve neighborhoods and alter negative mental maps. I will further argue this point on mental maps further in chapter four.

There are certain forms of DIY urbanism that are more acceptable than others. LaFrombois (2015) identifies celebrated forms of DIY urbanism such as "appropriating public or unoccupied space for an arts project" that eventually become formalized or legalized forms of DIY urbanism—while other forms such as homelessness in a public or unoccupied space are often criminalized and seen as strictly illegal. Additional celebrations of exceptions to this rule are activities such as capitalist driven "pop-up cafes and shops, temporary re-appropriation of streets and parking spaces for non-automobile-based activities, and public art exhibits and beautification efforts," (LaFrombois, 2015). LaFrombois identifies these exceptions as "the creative class" (2015), which are DIY urbanism practices that are excused by city authorities because of social privileges such as class, race, and gender. Because of one's social privilege, reclaiming practices can be seen as 'creative' rather than forms of vandalism, "despite its illegality, because it aligns with desired images of a liberal and creative city and the actors are seen as non-threatening" (2015). This brings to light the ways in which certain bodies are governed in urban spaces. One respondent shares:

> Sometimes developing something like a skatepark in those areas can drive
> homeless people out, but it also invites different people, too. But for say, like
> for homeless people, a lot of times, like say that they were in that area before

and their mental map is going to change and they're going to probably think
that's not a place for them to go to basically live anymore, which is kind of sad,
because they're just getting pushed around.

'Creative' class liberties excuse actions that other individuals could also be partaking in. The

bodies of homeless individuals are heavily regulated in formal urban planning practices, while

the bodies of the white upper class are not. LaFrombois identifies that the 'rise of the creative

class' is a "symptom of neoliberal economic restructuring and that 'creative-city strategies are

predicated on, and designed for, this neo-liberalized terrain'" (2015). This raises the question: are

the DIY skateparks that survive governing rule examples of 'creative' class exemptions? I argue

that DIY skateparks are not a part of the creative class because they are under heavy surveillance

and are vulnerable spaces that can be contested in shared public space. Because of the existing

ticketing and criminalization of skateboarding, BMX, etc., in shared public space, they stand as

examples of regulated bodies that are exempt from the 'desired image' of the creative class.

It is important to note that not only are informally developing DIY skateparks perceived

as illegal, but skateboarding, BMX, and scootering in shared public space are all illegal as well.

Quad skates or in-line skates are more accepted because they are attached to the person using

them and are therefore not as threatening and receive less regulation. People go to designated

skateparks so they can skate, ride, roll, etc., over ramps, verts, quarter pipes and varying

obstacles. Ideally, skateparks are meant to offer cleaner and easier surfaces to skate or ride on.

Subsequently, certain formal or informal skateparks do not always satisfy the needs of skatepark

goers. Street skating gives opportunities for creativity through applying one's skillset to use the

existing environment as obstacles to conquer specific skate or bike tricks on. One respondent

shares:

Everything is skateable, because to a skater, the world is your playground so
that's another thing I wouldn't say if I was trying to get a skatepark approved

by someone I would say, 'build a skate park so that people don't skate in the street.' But that would be a lie, because they're still going to skate in the street... but we still need more skateparks.

In Milwaukee County, it is illegal to skateboard or bicycle on public sidewalk space. According to Wisconsin Department of Transportation Bureau of Transportation Safety's Bicycle and In-Line Skate Laws (Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 2006), Milwaukee County recognizes skateboards in section 340.01 as a "'Play vehicle': (a) Means a coaster, skateboard, roller skates, sled, toboggan, unicycle, or toy vehicle upon which a person may ride" (43m). Section 346.78 states that "Play vehicles not to be used on roadway. No person riding upon any play vehicle may attach the same or himself or herself to any vehicle upon a roadway or go upon any roadway except while crossing a roadway at a crosswalk." As far as repercussions go, section 346.82 explains that the "Penalty for violating sections 346.77 to 346.805. (1) Any person violating ss.346.77, 346.79 (1) to (3), or 346.80 to 346.805 may be required to forfeit not more than $20." Strategically, section 346.78 is not included in these violations list, meaning that it is up to police officers' decision making and discretion to decide on the ticket amount. Reading further, section 349.06 clarifies that "Authority to adopt traffic regulations in strict conformity with state law. (1)(a) Except for the suspension or revocation of motor vehicle operator's licenses or except as provided in par. (b), any local authority may enact and enforce any traffic regulation which is in strict conformity with one or more provisions of chs. 341 to 348 and 350 for which the penalty for violation thereof is a forfeiture. (2) Traffic regulations adopted by local authorities, which incorporate by reference existing or future amendments to chs. 340 to 348 or rules of the department shall be deemed to be in strict conformity and not contrary to or inconsistent with such chapters or rules." Once again, it is up to the police officers' decision making and discretion to decide on the repercussions and the ticket amount.

3.1.2   Who are the actors that build DIY skateparks

The participants who develop DIY Skateparks are volunteers who assemble to engage in

urban interventions and are drawn to formulating different approaches to their existing built

environment. Volunteers for DIY builds primarily assemble through word-of-mouth, social

media posts, or simply being at the DIY during the time of building. Estabrook DIY has been

developing for over a decade and has involved multiple volunteers and individuals taking partial

lead in organizing builds and fundraisers within the old tennis court. National DIY, less than two

years old, began with two or three builders and has since developed into a multiple actor led re-

assemblage of the vacant space under I-94. It is important to note that each actor in the DIY

build may not be physically building. Some organize funding, others make donations of supplies

or materials, and there are actors who merely watch and observe the DIY build in both curiosity

and support. Volunteers can vary across all wheelhouses; skateboarders, BMX, quad skaters, and

even scooter-users. The development of the DIY space does not formally belong to any specific

wheelhouse, but certain builders can formulate buildouts that would satisfy specific needs of a

user. For example, a BMX rider might favor a wider box jump, while a skateboarder would

prefer tighter transitions that are easier to navigate on a skateboard rather than with larger wheels

like a BMX. Regardless, decisions on what is built at developing DIY skateparks is contingent

on who is currently participating the most frequently. With no appointed leader in most DIY

developments, varying degrees of participation amongst actors influence the natural proprietors

(Jacobs, 1961) that keep a watchful eye on the developing DIY space, but who also help

orchestrate larger builds that would require more volunteers, physical labor, or donations. One

respondent shares:

> To me, that's the be-all-end-all. How do you make use of a limited resource,
> i.e., space, for the most hours in the day accessible to the most people anytime
> to maximize the utility? And I don't think it has to be governed so much. Then
> the bigger question is, how do you create a culture that embraces that? And I
> think a lot of it's like, mentors and leadership, and just actors, and I mean, that
> in the most informal sense of participation.

The actors in DIY urbanism are hard to define because exactly what they are doing is hard to formulate definitively in itself. The existing built environment is not something that is normally thought of as having potential to be reshaped or challenged by local actors. DIY actors uniquely perceive public space as being open to reinterpretation, especially where local governance is lacking (Douglas, 2014). DIY actors are drawn to the re-visioning of urban space along with the community connectedness that takes place in the building process. Milwaukee County District 12 Chief of Staff Luke Knapp shares:

> I think we all view it [National DIY] as positive. In fact, you know, there's
> been conversations about growing skating within the community because of
> this. [Residents say] 'Oh, my gosh, we have these youth that are suddenly into
> skating than ever were before. Can we build a skate park or something?' or
> 'How do you do this?' So yeah, the answer is: we didn't do it. The community
> did. They did it on their own.

Unsurprisingly, the actors in the DIY skatepark build do not necessarily hold onto the potential permanence of the space they are creating. A consensus amongst participants is that they are aware that these spaces could go at any time. This does not mean to say that DIY actors are drawn to the potential temporality of DIY skateparks, but more so that there is an established understanding of what could happen next. Stevens (2020) said that temporary uses provide a "desired certainty that arrangements are not fixed over the long term" which enables the participation of new actors who may only be able to make short-term commitments. One respondent shares:

I would hope that we would feel like a sense of ownership over the space and like, want to keep it clean. Because, for example, with DIY there's a lot more 'clean up your shit.' If you leave your shit at a DIY people are going to be like, 'what the fuck are you doing?' Whereas if you leave your shit at a skate park or street spot, there's less ownership over it and people are not as likely to take care of it. So, I guess I would hope that it would look like there is more responsibility and ownership and respect of the DIY space.

This is just an example of the unique rotation of new actors that keep spaces of temporality away from being spaces of sole ownership. "Temporary open space projects often attract human actors and develop relationships that build these actors' capacities, opportunities and durability" (Stevens, 2020). 'Temporary use,' as described by Stevens (2020), "enables a new range of human actors to engage in 'informalized' urban development and space management processes and to be aligned with resources that were previously restricted to professionally accredited architects and landscape architects." 'Temporary use' can influence other actors in city spaces to re-shape space into what they want. Stevens (2020) describes temporariness as: "an actor with specific aims, needs and effects, which define specific kinds of 'building events.'" Considering this, 'temporary use' can also be used to describe the actors themselves, and not only the space or the project at hand—this is a further push beyond the formal definition of 'temporary,' but rather a network of actors who re-assemble space.

3.1.3 How are DIY skateparks funded

DIY Skateparks are informal approaches to urban planning that involves volunteers and informal actors who develop counter approaches to traditional urban planning processes through bottom-up, grass-root manners that have no financial investment from formal city planners. Finn (2014) describes DIY urbanism activities as being "instigated, designed, created, paid for, and implemented by single users or small voluntary groups and *not* municipalities or corporations … the very nature of the intervention is to eschew municipal involvement, funding, or sanction."

The urban space agreed upon by DIY builders is unused or underused with little financial investment because of the high degree of recycling and material donations, as well as labor donations (LaFrombois, 2015). The public is the sole beneficiary of DIY urbanism, due to lack of capital gain (Finn, 2014). Both case site locations, Estabrook DIY and National DIY, have hosted numerous successful fundraisers throughout recent years for building and supplies costs. These fundraisers usually happen in the form of 'jams' or 'fests' that incorporate an afternoon of skating, biking, etc., at the two Milwaukee DIY Skatepark locations. How these afternoons play out are a creative display of community, competition, a little bit of mischief, and rhythmic patterns of interaction. A fundraiser at Estabrook DIY in summer 2021 involved well over 50 skateboarders skating all over the small DIY skatepark of 50x50' all at the same time. Remarkably, participants would skate and cruise past each other, rolling over ramps and obstacles all while attempting tricks. Not to say these intensely populated examples do not warrant a collision or two—but the fact that a flight pattern does appear to exist within the perceived chaos of moving bodies is mesmerizing to witness.

In both of this study's DIY Skatepark case sites, financial donations and fundraising have been a key necessity in these spaces' continued growth and expansion. If a group of actors are aiming to build something out at a DIY space, they are the ones responsible for acquiring materials—whether that be through reclaimed material or store bought. Plenty of structures and features within both National DIY and Estabrook DIY have been constructed through less organized pulling-together of funds and materials. But each DIY space has also hosted formal fundraisers to accumulate funds for larger and more planned buildouts that would require more funding, labor volunteers, and materials. Larger funding opportunities have been formulated through Go-Fund-Me campaigns, mixers held at local bars, and 'jams' hosted at the DIY space

themselves. Reflecting on early Estabrook development, Aaron Polansky was surprised at the donations and enthusiasm participants showed even in the beginning.

> Once we had a couple of things built, and I put a jar out, we got $150 - $180 in one week. And it was all singles and fives. And I have never had a skate park collection canister collect more than $8, ever. But it was because we had done something first and people were skating it. So, yeah, they wanted more.

When DIY participants see something being constructed that they can get excited about, they want that energy and momentum to keep up. Participants want new obstacles and structures to develop because it instills excitement because of the possibility and promise of what is yet to come. Because of this, actors and users put money down, but also facilitate their own fundraisers to give back.

There are some inquisitions about the length of time it takes for certain buildouts to happen. Which actor holds the money can cause rifts in the trust established. Aaron Polansky shares his hesitation on the times when he has been the sole financial holder of DIY money raised.

> I think just as a skateboarder that wants things to happen in their city, that I'm comfortable with whatever I have to do. But in the end, is it smart for me to have a business account that has money coming and going that like, goes to this project that doesn't have like, anything attached to it?

Currently, a large glass milk jug sits on the counter at Polansky's 'Sky High' skate shop where donations can be made, but also where funds can be extracted for planned DIY buildouts.

3.2 Informal rules & governance

Blumenberg and Ehrenfeucht (2008) claim that governing authorities want to control public behavior until it fits their desired elements. They explain, "Rapid increase in pedestrian activity creates more mediating among the use of public space." Community members will

establish their own space whether there is a lack of regulation, or too much control. Blumenberg and Ehrenfeucht (2008) suggest that cities use public design to further control public behavior. In comparing those words to this study, we see this when cities install skate blockers, which are metal plates or knobs that are fastened to rails, ledges, and sidewalks to prevent BMX riders and skateboards from using them as features to do tricks on. Skateboarders and BMX riders represent a specific social group. Cities use land zoning to segregate these social groups by using what Blumenberg and Ehrenfeucht describe as *exclusionary zoning* (2008). This can be witnessed through cities designating space for recreational activity such as public parks, which often leaves skateboarders and BMX riders to skateparks only—unlike other socially accepted recreational activities such as frisbee, baseball, football, and so on. In exploring the framework of shared space and public behavior that encourages officials to perform exclusionary zoning, the question at hand is: what defines obstruction or public disturbance? These 'disturbing' behaviors are controlled through criminalization, such as issuing tickets to skateboarders or BMX riders for riding or skating where they shouldn't, or for building DIY skateparks without permission. To quote DIY skatepark builder and skater Josh Matlock: "I'd rather ask for forgiveness than permission" (*Out of Sight: Treasure Island DIY*, 2018). Blumenberg and Ehrenfeucht challenge that courts are consistently redefining 'appropriate' behaviors to fit their scope of what works and is appropriate for 'everyone' (2008). The urban government focuses their attention on the need to improve the pedestrian experience to such an extent that in turn, they isolate and criminalize social groups outside their framework.

3.3 Opposition to this informal system: property ownership, disruption of other uses of public space, and safety

A contributing reason to the survival of these DIY skateparks depends on the neighbors that surround these spaces. Tensions of opposition around these informal spaces boil down to three categories: 1) Property ownership – in which some person or organization owns a property and does not want people trespassing on it. 2) Disruption of other uses of public space – people want space to remain open and welcome to specific public uses. For example, a skatepark may use the space where bird watchers want to go. 3) Safety – activities like skateboarding and BMX done in an informal space are considered 'dangerous.' Similarly, 'not in my backyard' (NIMBY) is a phenomenon that signifies one's opposition to the location of undesirable structures in their neighborhood (DeLeon, 1992). While this phrase is usually used to advocate against redevelopment changes, it can also be applied to the residential disapproval of any neighborhood scenery changes. The truth of the matter is: people do not always want to see other people use public spaces. Unless neighbors can immediately identify these changes as beneficial for themselves and their role in their community, there is going to be apprehension and judgement from neighbors for DIY skateparks to navigate.

Louis Wirth described urban areas as being "melting pots of different people, races, and cultures that reward individual differences and aren't necessarily environments that foster communities" (Wirth, 1938). Wirth argued that the larger the number of people in a state of interaction, the lower the communication and connection between people. DIY skateparks, however, foster community ties in public urban spaces—they might not just be the perceived public spaces that one might imagine. This is where we can see the negative perceptions of shared space begin to unfold.

DIY skateparks, though made of concrete, are delicate and vulnerable sites. It only takes one negative opinion of a neighbor to dismantle the whole project. Property ownership does

warrant a voice, but sometimes with DIY development, the opposition is louder than the

understanding. DIY builder and skateboarder Aaron Polansky shares:

> Because I know if it falls into like some guy that's got to stick up his butt
> because he is some rich guy that grew up going to Estabrook park when it was
> beautiful in the fucking 30s and 40s. I don't want him saying this is
> 'Impossible,' or 'This can't happen.' 'Not in my park.' You know, that's what
> I'm afraid of is like, some rich guy that has an influence to say, 'This doesn't
> work here.' All it takes, though. Is that one person, right? But it has not
> happened yet. And that is because the 'beer garden guy' thought it was a great
> idea and because the parks crew thought it was cool.

Navigating the neighbors that reside near an informal DIY space is imperative to its survival.

Certain navigations merely involve approaching the neighbors as if they are neighbors rather

than an obstacle in a DIY venture. When defending the development of informal DIY skateparks,

considering the perspective of the neighbor's point of view can help with the survival of the DIY

space. Rather than seeing a response as 'no,' there could potentially be room for negotiation and

further understanding of the needs of the individual. One neighbor of National DIY shares her

insight:

> I mean, speaking, to my experience, as a small business owner of a nightlife,
> and arts and music establishment, right? Are when immediate neighbors have
> issues, it is absolutely imperative to be responsive, regardless of the merit of
> their concerns and criticisms, or what is informing their merits, like their
> concerns and criticism. I think most folks who are engaging in DIY spaces
> have no desire to upset or disrupt the immediate surroundings because they
> want to protect and preserve what they are building because it has this intrinsic
> magic, right? But that being said, there are valid concerns sometimes. I'm not
> trying to be 'noisy,' I want to understand your concept of 'noisy,' but then
> there must be some sort of boundary or understanding of what is a legitimate
> and not a legitimate concern and like, and what are communication styles and
> strategies that can be effective to resolving these kinds of conflicts?

Activities like skateboarding and BMX are often seen as 'dangerous' because of the physical risk

factor. Often, governing authorities are weary about being responsible for allowing a DIY

skatepark to develop and then having someone get hurt and go looking for someone to cast the

blame on. One DIY skateboarder shares:

> People are always saying 'people could get hurt on skateboard stuff,' or 'we
> need to put a fence around it' or 'make it like this' or whatever. And it's like,
> just say, "skate at your own risk," because people can literally get hurt on
> anything. They could get hurt on stairs, they could get hurt crossing the street,
> they could get hurt hiking. They could get hurt driving or anything. Everything
> in the world is at your own risk. Yes, we want to make things safe and
> skateboarding and other activities like that do come with a level of risks. So, I
> think by making those spaces clear that it's like 'at your own risk.'

Public skateparks are protected under their insurance, but informal skateparks are governed in an

unspoken mentality: 'skate at your own risk' code of conduct—but the risk of someone not

honoring that code is an element that is very much present in the mind of local authorities and

the proprietors of DIY skateparks. Aaron Polansky shares:

> I'm sure if you researched it, there are going to be court cases that have been
> handled, but I don't personally know that. And that's always a theme. That's
> why in private skate parks, you know, insurance is a big deal. Because it is that
> kind of thing. You could have a kid get hurt really bad, and have a mom come
> after you. But in the end, it's more about who's whoever is paying for it?
> Which, if you're lucky enough to have health insurance, they're paying for a
> majority of it. Right? And they're going to want to figure out who's
> responsible. Right, so they don't have to pay it.

Being in a Milwaukee County Park, Estabrook DIY does hold more protection liability-wise for

itself in comparison to National DIY because it is protected under recreation immunity, which is

when a property owner owes no duty of care for persons who recreationally use the land

(Silverman, 2016). If someone were to get hurt at Estabrook DIY, the parks department would be

covered. Executive County Park Director Guy Smith shares:

> Overall, we're supportive [of Estabrook DIY]. One of the interesting things
> that Milwaukee County has, as being a park system, is that park systems do
> have recreation immunity. So that does limit some of the liability issues. Of
> course, we take liability and risk and all of those things very seriously. But, but

to this day, literally no complaints and, and really, the only the only effort we
had on our part was just to see if we if they wanted to formalize, you know, an
agreement or anything like that, but there isn't any, you know, competition for
use in that park.

While National DIY is not protected under the same umbrella of recreational immunity as

Estabrook DIY, both DIY spaces are alike because they both have yet to receive any formal

complaints. Both Milwaukee County District 12 Chief of Staff Luke Knapp and Executive

County Park Director Guy Smith have confirmed that both DIY locations have maintained their

good-standing relationship with the city because of the lack of complaints, but also because of

the positive changes that have happened to the previously unused spaces.

3.4 *Chapter Conclusion*

This chapter dug into the legal framework of DIY skateparks. It discussed legalities, the

actors of the build, funding, and informal rules and governance. This chapter explored three

important oppositions to this informal system: property ownership, disruption of other uses of

public space, and safety. Navigating these oppositions is vital to the survival of informal DIY

skateparks. One of the biggest challenges DIY skateparks face would be 'not in my backyard,'

NIMBY, which tends to include all three oppositions to informal development of skateparks. A

key factor for these DIY skatepark users and developers avoiding NIMBY is establishing rich

relationships with neighbors and city workers and improving the space that is being reclaimed. In

this chapter we saw the efforts both DIY skateparks have put into navigating the red tape

legalities and keeping peace with the neighborhood. On the county's end, there is a clear

understanding of why there has been no interference with both these DIY's continued

development: there have been no formal complaints and there has been significant improvement

to the spaces. Both Estabrook DIY and National DIY users, builders, and natural proprietors

have shown governing authorities and neighbors that they can maintain and improve these unused spaces

A big takeaway from this chapter is how the pioneer builders and natural proprietors from both case sites described their thought processes when deciding on DIY development, which ultimately boils down to there being a need for a skatepark. The responses reflected the unique characters of the actors in the build. Milwaukee County offers its residents no public skatepark, and this chapter highlights how that factor itself is an additional consideration in local officials looking the other way when these two sites got developed. But what if Milwaukee did offer a public skatepark? Would local governing authorities and neighbors still be in support of these informally developed spaces if they knew that those skatepark users could take their activities elsewhere? Based on the responses from DIY users and builders, I think these informal skateparks would continue to develop even if there were multiple public accessible public skateparks. There is an inherent need for space, but also a need for creativity. Skateboarders, BMX, other wheelhouse users, etc., see public spaces differently because they can envision obstacles and skateable/rideable features. DIY users see the potential of unused space and materials and want to seize opportunities to create skateparks wherever there is an opportunity to do so.

Chapter 4

Mental Maps

4.1 Development of mental maps

      Amidst the segregation of spatial ordering within modern cities, urban residents develop *mental maps*, which are inherently developed within people to navigate the spaces both physically and emotionally around them. In *The Connected City: How Networks are Shaping the Modern Metropolis,* Zachary Neal (2013) looks at urban spaces as networks formed by the 'crisscrossing of major roads and small residential streets,' but also as landscapes that develop in one's head that helps them understand the layout of a city space. Neal (2013) highlights the importance of understanding the numerous ways that urban residents, workers, and tourists *perceive* the city, not just seeing the city as what it is presented as. It is in this display of perceiving and understanding that mental maps are formed to better understand the city on an individual level. Neal notes that these "mental maps are personal creations that do not necessarily reflect the real layout of a city," but are influential in the ways that people use them to guide themselves in urban spaces.

      Mental maps are also cultivated as a resource for protecting oneself from areas deemed as dangerous or unsafe. Mental maps can develop perceptions or individual experiences, that can be relayed or passed along without context or much reason. Additionally, mental maps can be developed, but also learned. Though most people develop detailed mental maps of the places and neighborhoods they live and work in –these maps are not always complete or accurate. Neal writes: "first, the map may not include, or may inaccurately depict, unfamiliar parts of the city. Second, areas that an individual perceives as more important—one's own house or neighborhood—are often drawn larger. Finally, there is a tendency for mental maps to create

order and symmetry even when they do not exist" (Neal, 2013). Because mental maps can be incomplete or inaccurate, they can be used to create distances between different social groups or subcultures. These distances between different social groups or subcultures can cause urban areas to develop desolate spaces—deemed unsafe, grimy, or poorly maintained. It is in those abandoned, forgotten urban areas that DIY spaces not only blossom, but thrive. In urban environments, mental maps of bad or dangerous urban spaces are challenged and reframed through acts of DIY urbanism such as DIY skateparks, that reclaim and give life back into desolate spaces. Additionally, DIY skateparks can act as subcultures that help positively reframe mental maps in more community-driven ways than luxury condominiums, rustic coffee shops, or craft breweries.

To Neal (2013), communities in urban spaces are seen as place, population, or patterns. Within these communities, networks are developed. Neal describes these networks as being composed of two basic parts: nodes and edges. Nodes represent the actors in the network. Edges represent the relationship between the actors. Neal writes: "Most people see the city as a complex pattern of connections (paths), intersecting at key points (nodes and landmarks), to form boundaries and neighborhoods (edges and districts)." Neal notes that everyone sees the city in slightly separate ways, causing them to pay more attention to some path or nodes than others, and that "by combining these different elements, and placing more emphasis on some than others, individuals construct their own mental maps of the city" (2013).

In an exercise titled "The Construction of a Mental Map," taken from Gould & White's *Mental Maps* (1992), their study recorded a small group's regional rank preference by analyzing their provided mental maps of specific environments. Gould & White noted that usually these environments are "urban areas, and interest has focused on the way in which people perceive

certain landmarks, routes, boundaries and neighborhoods." In their study they were able to collect individual values, overall viewpoints, correlations, and agreements amongst participants. I conducted a similar exercise near my two case site locations. Without mentioning either of the two DIY skateparks, I asked participants to draw a map of the geographical areas surrounding the case sites. For National DIY, I asked participants to draw a portion of National Avenue between 5th and 9th street. For Estabrook DIY, I asked participants to draw their interpretation of the Estabrook county park. In the drawings featured below I have circled where my case sites would be located on their map, whether the participants mentioned them or not.

Something that Gould & White (1992) note is that the participants' ordered preferences are "obviously correlated perfectly with themselves," and that "such images may well determine a person's attraction to these areas." I found this to be true in the exercise I conducted because while my participants did not use language like 'preference' or 'attraction,' I could see small displays of measurement occur and a scale-system develop. Gould & White wrote: "When we ask people to rank their preferences for places, we are really asking them to measure the strength of their likes and dislikes on an ordinal scale—literally a scale that requires people to put things in order from the most- to the least-liked." Landmarks are developed mentally based off experiences, frequency, and place. In my exercise, I learned that the sizing or details provided of certain location points represent the strength of the memory that participants tether themselves to. Longevity in experience of the map, such as residency, schooling, or occupation highlighted more detail than participants who had spent less time in those spaces. I conducted my own version of this exercise to better my understanding of how mental maps function on an individual level.

Image 1 was drawn by a non-residential participant who has been employed at a local business in Walker's Point, two blocks from my National DIY case site. This participant has recently moved to Milwaukee and has only been working in Walker's Point for a few months. Without suggestion, this participant drew only National DIY because they like to skateboard and the local BP gas station on 9th street. Having little experience working, living, or playing in the area surrounding the case site—their map reflects a smaller connection to the area, but a strong connection to a singular location being National DIY.
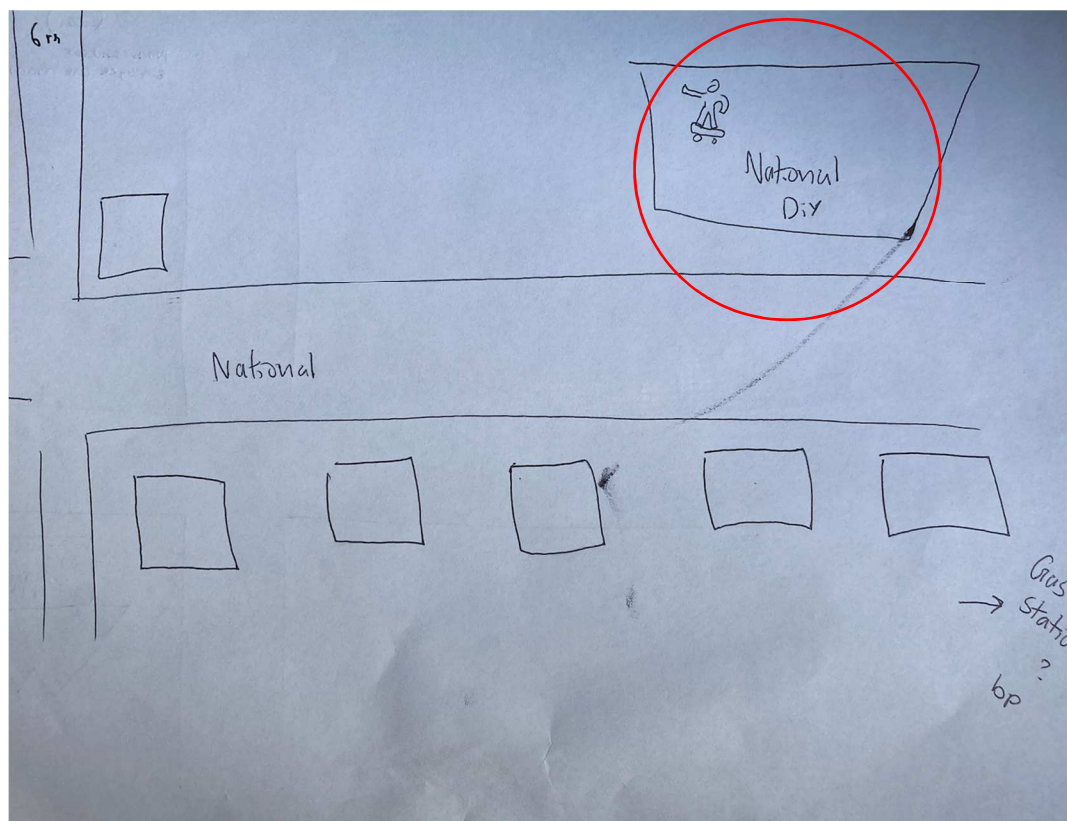

Table 19. Image 1

Image 2 was drawn by a non-residential participant who has been a manager at a local business in Walker's Point for over a year. While their drawing reflects more detail than Image 1—there is still some vacancy in their geography. However, there are still strong examples of the strength of their memory tie to place. All provided landmarks held some relationship to 'Melanie's

House'—whether the two friends had spent time together at the local bar, Hunty's, or browsed antiques at the local antique store. Having never spent time in the area before their friendship with Melanie, this participant shared that their connection to that person completely shaped the way they now see and navigate this area.
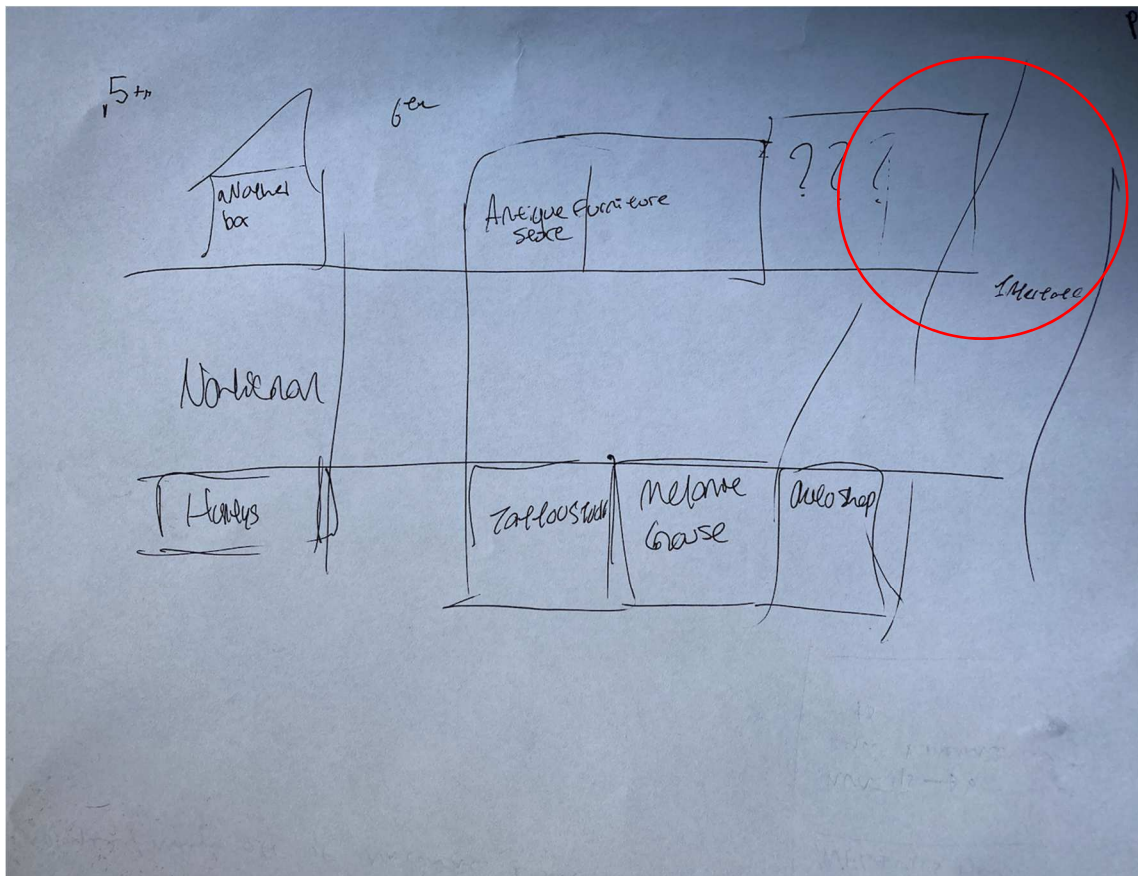

Table 20. Image 2

Image 3 was drawn by a former resident who has been employed in Walker's Point for 15 years. Of all the participants, their map provides the most detail of what their existing memory is to place. Their mental map strongly reflects their own experience and time spent in the area. Uniquely, their mental map has larger space dedicated in their drawing to what they do not know, in comparison to what they do know. Some of their mental map points were outdated in some areas, but sharply accurate in others. This shows that while the landscape may be physically changing, their memory of the landscape has not altered.
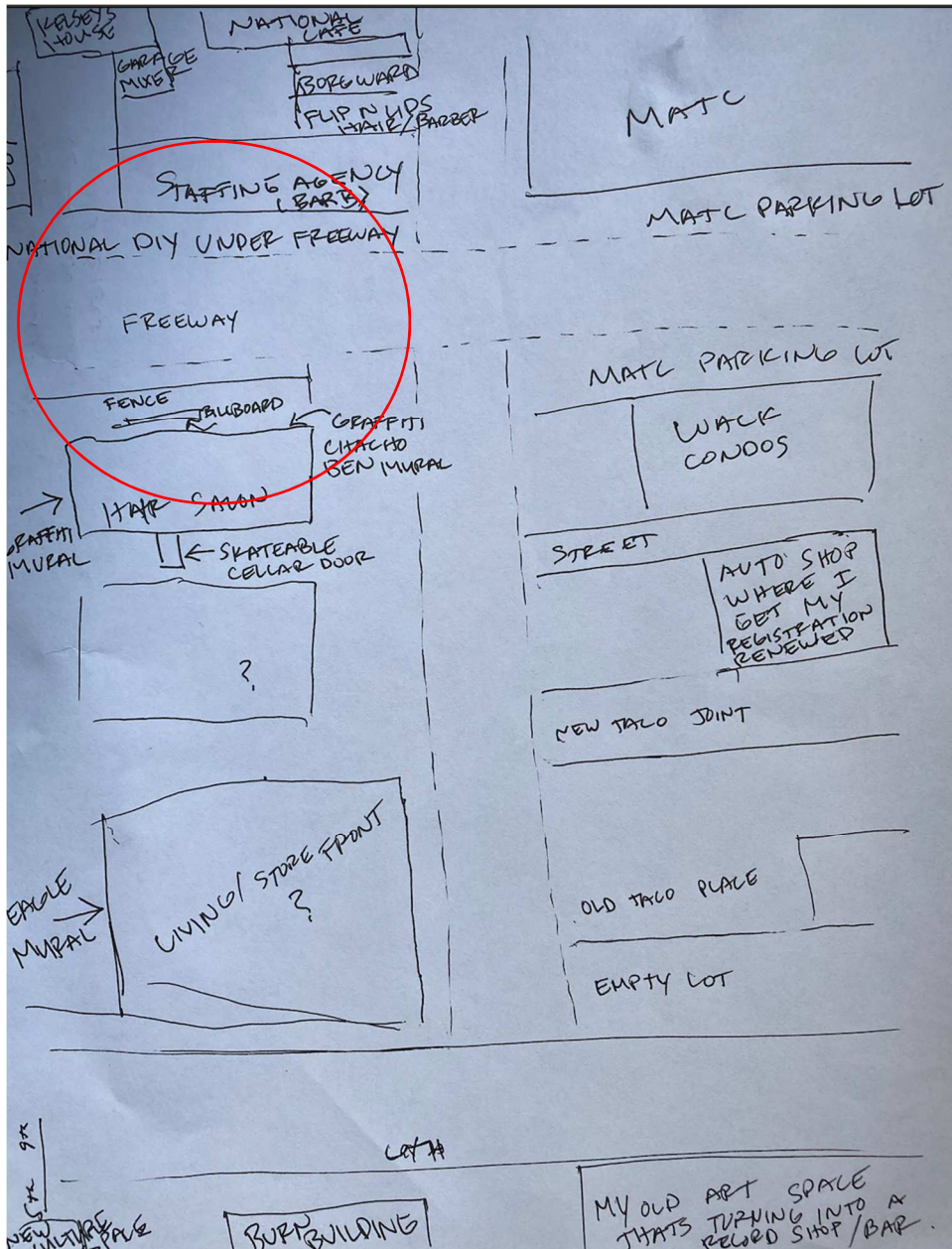
Table 21. Image 3

Image 4 was drawn by a participant in Estabrook county park who shared that they were a

skateboarder and had frequented the Estabrook DIY skatepark for the last decade. Their mental

map drawing highlights extremely specific details of the DIY skatepark, which reflects their own

emphasis on the space (Neal, 2013), as well as the frequency of their time there. We can see the

participants' interests intersecting at key points (nodes and landmarks) as Neal (2013) discussed.
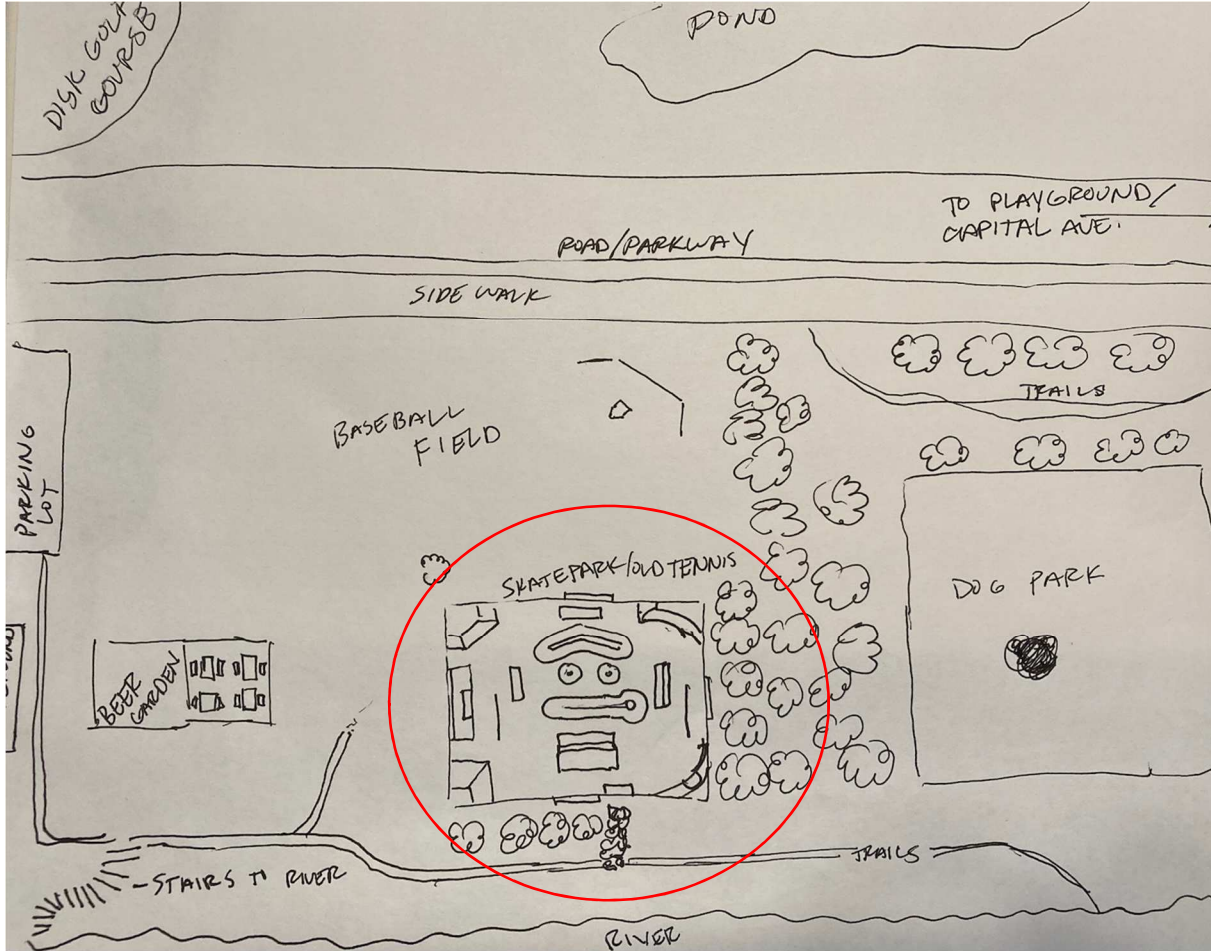
Table 22. Image 4

Image 5 was drawn by a participant who has frequented the park for two decades since their childhood. You can identify the participants' interest in the nature that the county park has to offer because of their drawings detail of the small waterfall, stair set down to the river, and the small flood wall that hugs the foot path next to the river. Additional nature details would be the trail system, small pond, and frisbee golf course.
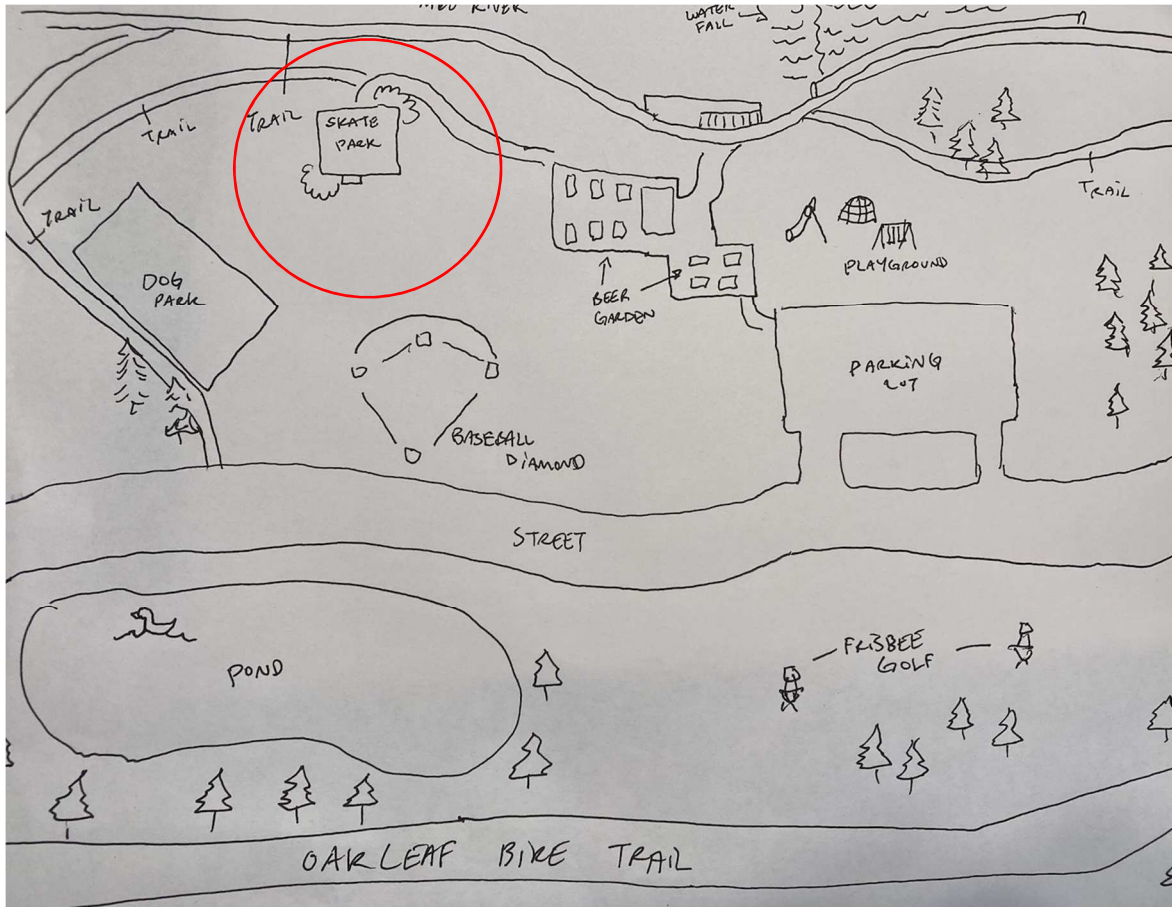
Table 23. Image 5

In this exercise there are some themes that were consistent with both mental map literature by Neal (2013), and Gould & White (1992). Landmarks that were of value to participants were drawn in more detailed and often larger. These provided mental maps can be both incomplete and inaccurate (Neal, 2013), but they did demonstrate that participants do create order and symmetry even when they do not exist (Neal, 2013).

4.2 Environmental shift and re-shaping of public space

DIY skateparks can alter the physical landscape of urban environments, and in doing so, the mental maps of a whole neighborhood or area of a city can change. DIY skateparks do have the ability to create informal 'order' in spaces that do not actually exist on a governing level.

Returning to one of our case sites, National DIY; before it got developed in 2020, the space

under the freeway experienced a variety of drug and alcohol use, sex work, and so on. Those

activities, having previously defined that area, could have kept residents from having a reason to

go to that space. Milwaukee County District 12 Chief of Staff Luke Knapp shares:

> Lately, what we hear now is there's still a bunch of abandoned cars over there.
> But, you know, in terms of crime and stuff, I would say it's [National DIY] had
> a positive impact.

National DIY has re-defined that area, even pushing a generous portion of the crime away from

the location –which in turn has re-shaped the previous perceptions of the space itself. It gave

residents a positive reason to go there. On seeing National DIY informally, but functionally

convert the unused land on her neighborhood block over the last two years, one resident points

out that there have been positive changes to the space since National DIY has developed:

> The reality is that the parking lot [National DIY] prior to that was mostly used
> for sex work and drug use. And I don't say that with any sort of stigmatization,
> but I do think sex work has been driven further south towards Greenfield, like
> in the parking lot. And again, I don't say that with any negative positive
> charge. But what I do observe is that the parking lot [National DIY] is now
> being utilized more frequently, by generally younger, but not exclusively
> younger people, whether they're participating in skateboarding, or observing a
> space. A space where all ages feel comfortable and I think that it's essential—
> to have non-monetized environments to congregate, to socialize, to recreate.
> The importance of that can't be overstated because what other examples do we
> have? Parks and libraries? That's it.

Like National DIY, Estabrook DIY is credited for re-shaping the physical landscape of

the park, but also the previous negative perceptions of that public space. Estabrook park in the

early 2000s experienced long waves of crime because of the low usage of positive activities. As

explained earlier in this study, Estabrook DIY existed before the dog park, beer garden, and disc

golf course. It was a pioneer for positive activity in the park, which in turn encouraged other

residents to begin visiting and using the park. Executive County Park Director Guy Smith shares:

> Estabrook Park 10 to 15 years ago didn't have a lot going on. There was some illegal activity, and at that point, we didn't have the dog park, we didn't have the beer garden, we didn't have all those types of things. And so, the reason I provide that background is like what we always say is that a busy park is a safe park. And so, once we started having all of these other activities going on in the park, illegal activities went down very significantly, and we had just an influx of, of many people.

Considering the responses from legislators and participants, we can identify that informally developed DIY Skateparks can influence what Jacobs (1961) refers to as *natural proprietors*, which act as watchful eyes that can influence safety in these spaces. The sight of others promotes safety and can completely alter physical and mental landscapes because of it. Executive County Park Director Guy Smith shares:

> We [Estabrook] were having issues with vandalism, but then, once we had more people in that park, those issues really declined.

Returning to previous examples of flagship DIY skateparks such as Portland's *Burnside,* or Philadelphia's *FDR*—these are DIY skateparks that have informally and physically altered the environment around them, resulting in a shift of understanding in the way residents perceived that space. The area of Portland's *Burnside,* having previously been desolate and unused, has now fostered a gentrification shift within the neighborhood. Philadelphia's *FDR* developed in the corner of what was once a poorly used neighborhood park and is now a defining feature of a thriving and frequented county park. These examples highlight that informally developed DIY skateparks can influence safety in unused urban areas because of the presence and traffic of participants can encourage a sense of community. Formal urban planning functions are not the only resource for altering the way residents perceive and navigate public spaces. Citizen-led, informal displays of DIY urbanism such as DIY skateparks are influential and capable of creating a shift in the mental maps of residents.

4.3   Safety & Community

Because of the positivity and community engagement observed in physical alterations of DIY urbanism, a different understanding and appreciation of the previous desolate space can occur. An urban corner that was once not on any residents' physical or mental radar can become a landmark in how the urban landscapes around them are perceived. Physical alterations can lead to mental alterations of mental maps of existing space. Revisiting what we discussed earlier with DIY skateparks influencing safety in desolate spaces, Lofland's (1973) use of costumes and identity can be used as tools that can physically represent safety or trust, and the 'costume' can be associated with positive activities that can influence participation. While the sight of skate or BMX costumes does not automatically mean that there is an existing relationship between people, these costumes can be used as a tool for people to recognize shared kinship with one another. Jacobs (1961) describes this shift of recognizing persons and seeking solitude in each other as having the power to influence safety in shared space. One resident shares:

> It absolutely impacts where people's kids or nephews or whatever can go and all of a sudden, you're like 'well, if you're hanging there, then my kid can hang there, too.'

This is reflective of Neal's (2013) 'bonding ties' that can foster deep connections that pass on to friends-of-friends that can influence participation. When one perception of a space formerly perceived as negative is altered, and a positive perception is born, other perceptions can then change because of this alteration. One resident shares:

> In my personal experience, I've recommended to my friends that are parents to send their kids over there [National DIY] that are teenage kids that are having a hard time that don't know what to do with themselves. You don't have to participate. But I think spaces that are non-monetized are so rare. There's an intrinsic magic and empowerment by association, by believing it's possible,

because they are a testament to a world of absolute 'no's,' rules and
regulation—that altruistic defiance is so important to making positive changes.

These mental map alterations are fostered by word-of-mouth, physical witnessing, but also by social media exchanges. When DIY participants see or hear another person using a space that they themselves may have never used before, alterations in their own mental maps can transpire.

4.4 *Chapter Conclusion*

This chapter examines the use of mental maps in contemporary urban areas. By asking participants to draw examples of their mental maps, I was able to learn how they function in the urban environments surrounding my two case sites. Conducting Gould & White's (1992) exercise on mental maps gave me physical materials to examine and better my understanding of how residents perceive the spaces around them. I learned this through watching the way participants drew the maps, but also by listening to them talk out loud about what is important to them and why. This would include more known neighborhood landmarks like a beer garden, but also fewer well-known points that were important to them like a close friend's house or a corner store that they would visit often. Hearing and seeing the relationship that participants have between memory and space made me see how mental maps work in real time.

A primary conclusion I drew from exploring mental maps and their relationship to DIY skateparks, is how my two case sites have each influenced safety in public spaces. National DIY and Estabrook DIY were developed in urban spaces that were not receiving a lot of positive human interactions and were avoided. Since their development, there has been a shift in how residents perceive those spaces. This chapter solidified that positive participation influences safety by exploring how citizen-led, informal displays of DIY urbanism such as DIY skateparks can create a shift in the mental maps of urban residents— not just through formal urban planning strategies. Ultimately, I learned that the new use of these former vacant spaces that DIY

skateparks gravitate towards can influence participation and activity that can completely change

how those spaces are perceived by individuals.

Chapter 5

A Love Story With no Guarantee to Last

5.1 Continuing DIY skatepark development despite their fragility

Considering how fragile these DIY skateparks are with trying to uphold or maintain their space in contemporary urban environments—the motivation to keep building while navigating permission or forgiveness is both puzzling and inspiring. Why do these DIY spaces continue to resurface despite the lack of security? In this study I have learned that when DIY skateparks are destroyed, builders in the community use that disappointment as fuel to rebuild something better. These actors also do it out of love and devotion to their sport and to the community. Additionally, there is the element of the hunt, and the 'getting away with it' possibility that energizes this subculture. Despite their fragility, these DIY skateparks continue to develop on the off chance that they *could* last: a strong 'you'll never know if you don't try' governing fundamental. One respondent shares:

> We do it because you see an area that needs it and because there's always a
> chance that it could last. There's been plenty of examples of people who have
> done it and it has lasted. So, you kind of do it in the hopes of that and in hopes
> that the community wants and needs it. You are just hoping that they'll see it as
> a positive thing rather than a negative thing.

DIY skateparks are developed for the love of it, and because of the participants' deep connection to the community and sport—whether that be skateboarding or BMX and so on. Despite DIY skateparks having a 'let's just do it' energy, these spaces are calculated and thoughtful—the love of the build and of the sport just acts as a driving force for them to keep going. There is shared awareness amongst participants that building DIY skateparks could get them in trouble, and an

even deeper awareness that the building the DIY does not warrant its survival. One respondent

shares:

> [They do it] because they love skating and they love building skate stuff, and if
> they didn't love it, they wouldn't risk it. And because there's a need for it. Like,
> you kind of do it because you're like, 'well, I'm not sure if this is going to last
> one day, but if it does, it'll be worth it.'

The fear of a negative outcome does cross the minds of DIY skatepark builders. Because of the

size, frequency of usage, and the longevity of some DIY skateparks, communities will develop

more emotional attachments to those informal spaces. Despite the shared understanding of the

fragility of DIY skateparks, participants still find themselves sad at the thought of seeing the

spaces they have worked on get torn down or removed. However, as we have learned in this

study; fear does not get in the way of giving effort. One DIY builder shares:

> One of my hugest biggest anxieties is that [a DIY skatepark] would be
> demolished. I have just learned to deal with that anxiety and be way more chill
> about it. But so much blood, sweat and tears have gone into it that there is fear
> and anxiety that someday I will come back, and it'll be bulldozed or whatever.
> You're always going to have the skills that you gain—they can't take that.

Volunteers and natural proprietors (Jacobs, 1961) formulate DIY skateparks because of

the desire to connect with others in the community, but also out of allegiance to the

'wheelhouses' themselves. Skateboarding, BMX, quad, and so on, are more than just 'sports,' but

rather unique subcultures that represent a safe and positive space for someone when they need it.

When there is a lack of available formal skateparks, DIY skateparks develop— the need for these

spaces stems from spontaneity, careful calculation, but also from the heart. One respondent

shares:

> You know, like, I think I owe it to skateboarding. I've always had
> skateboarding, and I got to use it for what it costs to have a skateboard, but I
> never organized any events or built something that somebody else could use.

> And I needed that in my life. So, it's cool to be able to put something back into it, you know?

The hunger to keep building DIY spaces can also stem from the fact that public skateparks are often built through third-party members and general contractors, making it less enjoyable to skate or bike on because they were not built with as much understanding of 'flow' and transitions. As we have learned in this study, DIY skateparks can represent *the* park, the community of outsiders, because they are built by those who understand the symmetry and flow necessary to skate, bike, etc., successfully. DIY gives the opportunity to build the ideal skateable park because these spaces are constructed using input from the people and built by the people. One respondent describes:

> You're just trying to do something creative that the city hasn't done, even if they've been asked to do it. I think people can get behind that. DIY skateparks are quirkier spaces and they offer a lot. It's not just hiring a company to build something—everybody can be involved in it. Anybody can do it and that's what's appealing about it and that's often why they're more fun spaces to ride because they have a little bit of everything rather than just something that skatepark designer decided to do.

There is a sense of accomplishment when DIY users can skate something that they built themselves. Because these spaces are created specifically to avoid the legislative red tape approval, a 'deal with it when it happens' mentality is seemingly engrained into this community. Living in the moment and connecting with friends in the DIY space trumps the fear of negative repercussions that may follow. One respondent shares:

> When we started building this one DIY in Madison, we were like, 'what's going to happen? I don't know.' And it's been six years almost. So, we were stoked, but then another little spot we made was gone 12 hours after we finished it—completely gone. It was much smaller, but I only dropped in and did a rock-fakie on it. But I still am glad that we built it because it was fun to build. Obviously, I wish it lasted at least a session, but we were living in the moment and enjoying that. You're building it so you can skate it, but you're also building it because you like building it. And if you've built it, you gained

that experience and that knowledge and those skills of that build. You know?
And that time with those friends who helped you —so, even if it gets
destroyed, you still have that good thing.

Even if the DIY skatepark gets torn down, can you measure the positive experiences that the

space fostered? To answer briefly, you cannot. In this study, we have learned that informally

developed spaces like DIY skateparks represent more than mere physical spaces. There is a

strong value in these spaces that participants find immeasurable. One respondent shares:

It's impossible to quantify because are you looking for qualitative? Like, as
well? And like, how do you even categorize qualitative experiences? If
somebody goes there and meets their best friends and forms a relationship,
how do you capture the significance and importance of that? Having spaces
that aren't defined by class, or music genre, or, or sports, or medium of
activity, I think, can totally expand what's possible as far as conceiving of
solutions to boredom, to desirability, friendship.

DIY skateparks foster communities that share friendship and kinship, and they act as

environments that can encourage learning new skillsets—whether that be learning how to do a

trick or learning how to build something out of nothing. DIY skateparks are significant to the

wheelhouse communities that use them because every community desires a 'home base,' even if

those spaces are temporary spaces.

Each new DIY skatepark is seen as a 'best-and-worst-case scenario,' where "the more

people get involved, the more opportunity there is for someone to learn, and then they'll put that

knowledge and energy towards something else—some other DIY spot" (*Out of Sight: Treasure

Island DIY* 2018). Perhaps building these spaces can be seen less as a group of people putting

their heart into something that would not last, and more so as putting that energy into a

community that will in turn piggy-back off that shared energy and continue to plug it into DIY

spaces the best that they can. That energy for DIY skateparks fostered by skateboarders, BMX

riders, and quad skaters will continue to reappear. That human desire to belong somewhere and

be given a chance to engage in shared space is instilled within every person you meet. DIY skateparks can experience reincarnation, because while the current spaces they occupy may be temporary, the experiences, lessons, relationships and new skillsets will continue to develop in new spaces. Each dusty corner, scavenged brick, bag of concrete or reclaimed piece of wood represent a different element used to challenge the imposed framing of public space.

5.2 *Chapter conclusion*

This brief chapter examines and concludes the reasoning behind why the actors in these DIY skateparks continue to maintain and develop these spaces, despite the lack of security in their future. It considers the fragility of these unique spaces from the perspectives of those who have seen DIY skateparks both succeeded and fail. This chapter considers the unique optimism of 'what if,' and what these spaces surviving can represent for the DIY community.

Using the perspectives of the respondents, this chapter examines the impact that DIY skateparks have for participants and builders of these spaces. We learned that the energy put into these fragile and sometimes temporary spaces is an energy that continues to reappear whether a DIY skatepark survives or not. We learned that potential demolishment of these spaces is paired with fear and anxiety, but also understanding. Immeasurable values, friendships, and skillsets are gained from these spaces that can move onto the next DIY skatepark built. DIY skateparks can experience a reincarnation of their physical space, but also of their communities and activities.

Chapter 6

Study Conclusion

This research aimed to identify the impacts of do-it-yourself skateparks in contemporary urban environments. Based on a qualitative analysis done through interviewing DIY skatepark users, builders, local neighbors, and two Milwaukee legislators, it can be concluded that the two case sites of my study, Estabrook DIY and National DIY are DIY skateparks that are primarily organized and managed collectively by the informal actors of the DIY skateparks. A key theme throughout this study is that DIY skateparks challenge the legal framework on what is acceptable behavior in public space and strive to give life back to spaces that have otherwise been forgotten or misused. In changing desolate spaces to DIY skateparks, the mental and physical maps of urban areas can change, and the known perception of what is abandoned or unused can be given new life and public use.

My methodology of participatory research, interviewing, note-taking, digital ethnography, and asking participants to draw their mental maps, was effective in helping me answer my central thesis research question. Reflecting on my study, it was primarily through interviewing that I was able to solidify hunches and ideas I had previously before starting this study, but I found some of the responses to be surprising. Going into this study, I already understood a little bit about how these unique spaces operated. I knew that DIY skateparks were developed by informal actors in urban communities. I understood that they were grassroots-led initiatives that received no formal funding from the city and depended on donations, fundraisers, and using reclaimed materials from the environments around them. I knew that building a DIY skatepark is labor-intensive, but I was marveled by the reflections from my interviews on how emotionally exhausting building, organizing, and managing these spaces can be. While there is a

sometimes-unspoken understanding of the fragility of these spaces, the fear of a DIY skatepark being removed is something that lingers in the minds of the actors behind every build-out. Another discovery that I did not fully understand prior to beginning my study were the details of red-tape navigation and how vaguely thin the line is between informal and illegal. The two case sites in this study highlight that these two DIY initiatives can be both informal *and* allowed. However, being *allowed* does not mean that these spaces are formal, a 'public park,' or funded by the city. There is a position of acceptance and understanding that exists in between legal and illegal. In addition to my research of the fragility of DIY skateparks, NIMBY, interviewing neighbors, and two local legislators, I can conclude that a positive-standing relationship with local legislatures and neighbors to the DIY skatepark is imperative for these spaces to survive.

This study highlights that even though DIY skateparks are informal, proper management of these spaces is necessary and requires a lot of mindfulness. Building days, managing material donations, and fundraising are executed and organized by seasoned and more invested actors of the DIY skateparks. These spaces are not controlled by local authorities but are instead self-governed by the informal actors of the DIY space. In addition to organizing buildouts and fundraising, those actors are responsible for the less-glamorous maintenance of the DIY skatepark. Maintaining a clean physical appearance is key because the actors need to show neighbors and local authorities that while they have physically altered the existing landscape, they are making positive efforts to improve it. Maintaining trash cleanup, organizing material donations, and managing graffiti and debris are all necessary 'dirty work' tasks that are required in managing a DIY skatepark and maintaining a positive relationship with local authorities and nearby neighbors.

Some limitations I faced while conducting my research was the available literature on DIY skateparks. I had luck finding material on DIY urbanism and temporary urbanism, but there was limited analysis available to directly support my study. While some DIY urbanism researchers made mention of informal DIY skatepark development, I struggled to find literature directly relevant to my specific study of DIY skateparks. Having a lack of literature highlights the existing gap in this research topic. This raises the question: are there favored forms of DIY urbanism that previous researchers have analyzed? Less attention has been paid to more permanent and successful displays of 'temporary' like DIY skateparks. Another potential limitation in my study for me to note is the lack of negative responses. While I approached each interview with a 'there is no wrong answer' approach, all responses of my two case sites were fairly positive. One respondent mentioned their preference for public skateparks over DIY skateparks and made note of how public parks make her feel safer as a woman, but even her response did not hold much negativity on the topic. Overwhelmingly positive responses do limit the analysis of this study, but those responses were not consciously selected or formulated by me. The only other limitation I faced in my study was climate related. With my two case sites being outdoors in Wisconsin, my participatory research was completely dependent on the weather. There were times when rain, snow, and extreme heat inhibited me from finding potential study participants.

To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could address the unique development of DIY skateparks in contemporary urban environments and the potential these skateparks have in positively altering the physical and mental maps around them. Skateboarding, BMX, etc., have not always held a history of positive interactions with local authorities or neighbors in public urban spaces. Unlike other favored sports such as soccer,

tennis, and even football—skateparks consistently lack designated space and funding in urban

environments. This study can act as a resource for future studies on DIY skateparks. Future

studies might confirm my findings or build on this study. Further research is needed to better

determine how to navigate DIY skatepark development in areas where NIMBY is high and local

authorities disapprove of these informal skatepark developments.

Thank you

Bibliography

o   Blomley N, 2004 Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property
    (Routledge, New York)

o   Blumenberg, Evelyn, and Renia Ehrenfeucht. 2008. "Civil Liberties and the Regulation
    of Public Space: The Case of Sidewalks in Las Vegas." Environment and Planning A 40:
    303–22.

o   Boddie, Ken. 2020. "Where We Live: Burnside Skatepark's 30th Anniversary."
    KOIN.Com (blog). October 12, 2020. https://www.koin.com/community/where-we-live-
    burnside-skateparks-30th-anniversary/.

o   Booker, Christopher, and Connie Kargbo. 2016. "Iconic Portland Skate Park on the Front
    Lines of Gentrification." PBS NewsHour. December 24, 2016.
    https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/iconic-portland-skate-park-front-lines-
    gentrification. Borrett, K. (1999) The Void as a productive concept for urban public
    space, in: GUST (Ghent Urban Studies Team) (Ed.) The Urban Condition: Space,
    Community and the Self in the Contemporary Metropolis, pp. 236– 251. Rotterdam:
    GUST.

o   Britton, Marcus. 2008. "'My Regular Spot' Race and Territory in Urban Public Space."
    Journal of Contemporary Ethnography Volume 37 Number 4 (August).

o   "BROOKFIELD JAYCEES SKATEPARK." 2006. Department of Parks, Recreation &
    Forestry. https://www.ci.brookfield.wi.us/DocumentCenter/View/331/Facilities-Skate-
    Park?bidId=.

o   "Brookfield, WI - Official Website." n.d. Accessed May 11, 2021.
    https://www.ci.brookfield.wi.us/Search?searchPhrase=skatepark.

o   DeLeon, Richard. 1992. "The Urban Antiregime: Progressive Politics in San Francisco."
    Urban Affairs Review, 555–79.

o Douglas, Gordon C. C. 2014. "Do–It–Yourself Urban Design: The Social Practice of Informal 'Improvement' Through Unauthorized Alteration." City & Community 13 (1): 5–25. https://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12029

o "FDR Skatepark." 2001. Transworld SKATEboarding (blog). August 23, 2001. https://skateboarding.transworld.net/magazine-archive/fdr-skatepark/.

o Ferrell, Jeff. 2001. Tearing Down the Streets: Adventures in Urban Anarchy. New York: Palgrave.

o Ferrell, Jeff. 1995. "Urban Graffiti." Youth and Society 27(1):73–92.

o Finn, Donovan. 2014. "DIY Urbanism: Implications for Cities." Journal of Urbanism Vol.7(4): p.381-398.

o Gould, Peter, and Rodney White. 1992. Mental Maps. Routledge.

o Groth, Jacqueline, and Eric Corijn. 2005. "Reclaiming Urbanity: Indeterminate Spaces, Informal Actors and Urban Agenda Setting." Urban Studies (Routledge) 42 (3): 503–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980500035436.

o Heim LaFrombois, Megan. 2015. "Blind Spots and Pop-up Spots: A Feminist Exploration into the Discourses of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Urbanism." Urban Studies 54 (2): 421–36. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098015604078.

o Jacobs, Jane. 1961. The Death and Life of Great American Cities. Random House, Inc.

o Kidder, Jeffrey. 2011. Urban Flow: Bike Messengers and the City. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

o La Cerva, Gina Rae. 2020. *Feasting Wild*. Greystone.

o Lofland, Lyn. 1973. "A World of Strangers - Order and Action in Urban Public Space." Waveland Press Inc.

o   Lydon, Mike, and Anthony Garcia. 2015. Tactical Urbanism: Short-term Action for Long-term Change. Washington, DC: Island Press.

o   Medievalists.net. 2013. "Let the Drama Begin." Medievalists.Net (blog). December 26, 2013. https://www.medievalists.net/2013/12/let-the-drama-begin/.

o   "Native American Sawmill - Sustainable Wood Harvesting | Menominee Tribal Enterprises Neopit, Wisconsin." n.d. Accessed May 10, 2021. https://www.mtewood.com/Sawmill/History.

o   Neal, Zachary. 2013. The Connected City: How Networks Are Shaping the Modern Metropolis. New York: Routledge.

o   Out of Sight: Treasure Island DIY. 2018. Real Skateboards.

o   "Parisite Skate Park | The Albert and Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design." 2017. April 4, 2017. https://small.tulane.edu/project/parisite-skate-park/.

o   Scheider, Kate. 2009. "Bikes Belong Survey Report: BMX Access in Skateparks." Bikes Belong Coalition. https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/static.peopleforbikes.org/uploads/BMX_Access_Report_FINAL.pdf

o   Silverman, Claire. 2016. "WISCONSIN'S RECREATIONAL IMMUNITY STATUTE: HOW MUCH PROTECTION DOES IT OFFER?" 3.

o   Snyder, Molly. 2012. "New Beer Garden Celebrates with Beer." OnMilwaukee. June 20, 2012. https://onmilwaukee.com/articles/beergardenestabrookpark.

o   "Sports and Recreational Injuries." 2021. Injury Facts. 2021. https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/home-and-community/safety-topics/sports-and-recreational-injuries/.

o   Stevens, Quentin. 2020. "Temporariness Takes Command: How Temporary Urbanism Re-Assembles the City." Springer Nature Switzerland.

o Tyler, Norman, Ted J. Ligibel, and Ilene R. Tyler. 2009. Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice (Second Edition). W. W. Norton & Company.

o Vaisvilas, Frank. 2020. "'Our Spiritual Home': Wisconsin's Pristine Menominee Forest a Model for Sustainable Living, Logging." Green Bay Press-Gazette, October 8, 2020. https://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/in-depth/news/2020/10/08/wisconsin-menominee-forest-teaches-foresters-how-sustain-woodlands/5621244002/.

o Vivoni, Francisco. 2009. "Spots of Spatial Desire: Skateparks, Skate plazas, and Urban Politics." Journal of Sport and Social Issues 33(2):130–49

o Wirth, Louis. 1938. "Urbanism as a Way of Life." American Journal of Sociology Vol. 44, No. 1: 1–24.

o Wisconsin Department of Transportation. 2006. "BICYCLE AND IN-LINE SKATE LAWS," 5.