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“You can’t be up there” – youth cultural participation and appropriation of space

Björn Andersson, Yağmur Mengilli, Axel Pohl, Christian Reutlinger

Abstract

This article investigates the relationship between youth cultural practices and young people’s spatial appropriation. For this purpose, we analyse case studies into groups of young people involved in two forms of practices that are marked by particular perceptions of the (urban) space: two Parkour groups and a Scouts group. The questions we are dealing with concern the way to which young members of these groups are appropriating ‘free space’ through participating in activities like the Scouts or Parkour. Furthermore, this article also explores important questions concerning processes of how young people’s participation in urban areas should be understood and what consequences this understanding has for youth policy.

Keywords: participation, youth cultures, space, young people, youth work

„Ihr dürft da nicht hoch“ – Jugendkulturelle Partizipation und Aneignung von Raum

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel untersucht das Verhältnis zwischen jugendkulturellen Praktiken und Raumaneignung junger Menschen. Im Mittelpunkt stehen Fallstudien zu zwei unterschiedlichen Formen der Wahrnehmung (städtischen) Raums: zwei organisierte Parkour-Gruppen und eine Pfadfindergruppe. Die Autor*innen beschäftigen sich mit der Frage nach Formen der Aneignung von ‚freien Räumen‘ im Rahmen organisierter Aktivitäten wie den Pfadfindern und Parkour. Darüber hinaus untersucht dieser Artikel wichtige Fragen in Bezug auf das Verständnis von Prozessen der Beteiligung junger Menschen in urbanen Gebieten und welche Konsequenzen dieses Verständnis für die Jugendpolitik hat.

Schlagwörter: Partizipation, Jugendkulturen, Raum, Jugend, Jugendarbeit

1 Introduction

When experts from the youth field – for example, teachers, youth workers and policy-makers – are asked about today’s youth life worlds and young people’s chances to actively participate in them, they often underscore a discursive line that centres around the loss or the lack of ‘free spaces’ in modern European cities (*Batsleer et al. 2017*). Such free spaces may be public ones, which by definition should be accessible to everyone (*Lofland*

1998). However, they can also be more limited in scope since this "*concerns spaces that are free from external expectations and performance requirements, in which young people can simply be alone and in which they can contribute their own design ideas and become co-creators of the spaces*" (Batsleer et al. 2017, p. 39).

Behind this topos, we assume a certain interpretation of changes in the urban context after World War II that is shared widely among professionals from diverse youth political fields (Thomas et al. 2018). Baacke (1999, p. 165) interprets the urban space of action in its entirety as a highly differentiated mosaic of compartmentalised and functionalised islands that are only seldomly linked to each other (Zeihner 1990). In several youth research areas, negative consequences of this functionalisation process have been the central object of study: the development of segregated youth cultures and of youth violence (Beaud/Pialoux 2003) or the 'street' as a label for problem behaviour (van Gemert et al. 2008; critical: Zinnecker 1980) are closely linked to the problems arising from exclusionary spaces within cities. Often the negative consequences for individual and social processes are emphasised: the city is perceived as a force of structural violence particularly against children and young people where the limitations, the mono-functionality and overwhelming rules and regulations are seen as restricting spaces (critical: Reutlinger 2013). In this discourse, all these problems culminate in the city periphery where social housing blocks were erected to house the growing urban populations. To maintain a sense of self-identity within these alienating urban environments, children and youth often clash with the urban structures (Reutlinger 2013). Vandalism, graffiti, and the occupation of shopping malls and streets are seen as consequences of these tensions and are interpreted as an expression of young people's alienation with the social spaces around them. Such spaces neither provide young people an opportunity to have a say in how they are conceived nor leave space for young people's styles to become visible. On the contrary, young people are locked out of certain spaces and their appropriation attempts are more often criminalised than encouraged in the neo-liberal city (Kallio/Häkli 2011). Youth cultural research has interpreted young people's symbolic appropriation of the city as an expression of youth cultural styles where subcultures can be seen as acts of resistance to these processes of exclusion (Hall/Jefferson 1976). From this reasoning, a certain idea of the relationship between space and youth participation has developed: Although young people need spaces to appropriate in order to develop their identity and integrate into society, city development does not reflect this. Additionally, these spaces are not empty; appropriation also does not completely reinvent them. Appropriation is guided by "*certain structures, patterns and rules that are inscribed in objects of appropriation or mediated through interaction with other people*" (Hüllemann/Reutlinger/Deinet 2018, p. 387). In this way, appropriation as a mutual mediation process between a subject and an object thus accounts for both agency as well as for structure. The task of youth policy was therefore positioned as the responsibility to create these spaces where young people can integrate and participate in the urban society. The spaces were often conceptualised as 'small worlds' where youth cultural styles were allowed and recognised as something valuable.

This article investigates the relationship between space and appropriation for young people by presenting empirical data from two youth movements that are both based on specific – albeit different – ideals about how young people should interact with the urban environment. One of these, the Scout movement, has a long history and was initially formed in order to save young people (in the beginning exclusively young boys) from the alleged social evils of the contemporary city: "[...] to try and lessen the great waste of

human life now going on in our city slums [...]” (*Headquarters Gazette* 1910 quoted in *Warren* 1986, p. 376). The solution was to abandon the urban milieu in favour of the exploration of nature. The other movement, the Parkour and free running movement, emerged much later and followed a quite different path. Here, the urban fabric and matter is at the centre of all activities. Through bodily exercises, the goal is to overcome all obstacles and to move in, and almost blend with, the city environment.

The questions we are dealing with concern the extent to which young members of these movements are provided with any ‘free space’ through participating in organized activities like the Scouts or Parkour. Furthermore, this article also explores important questions concerning processes of how young people’s participation in urban areas should be understood and what consequences this understanding has for youth policy.

2 Methodology

To take a closer look at the link between participation and young people’s spaces and styles, we draw on empirical material from case studies of the PARTISPACE research project (see *Batsleer et al.* 2019). The main research question of PARTISPACE was how and where young people in different urban contexts in Europe participate in public life. In terms of methodology, this question suggests a focus on symbolic and cultural appropriation and access to and by institutionally constituted and organised spaces. This involves a focus on the role of youth cultural styles when looking at the production of spaces. Based on a mapping of youth policies in eight European cities via 100 city walks with young people and 188 expert interviews, the core of the project were in-depth ethnographic case studies across 48 youth cultural contexts in the eight cities. The ethnographic case studies were sampled for their variety of explicit and implicit links to urban public spaces and the potential for formal, non-formal and informal participation of young people from 15 to 30 years in decision-making processes. This article concentrates on material from Zurich/Switzerland and Gothenburg/Sweden as the in-depth cases there offer the opportunity to look into two youth movements originating in different historical contexts that provide different reactions to the question of urban space (for an overview of the overall framework and methodology see *Walther et al.* 2019). The ethnographic fieldwork for all cases started in summer 2016 and lasted until spring 2017 and consisted of participant observation over the stretch of several months with a shared observation protocol resulting in several hundred pages of fieldnotes per case. Additionally, incidental individual and group interviews with people involved directly or indirectly in the activities and 96 biographical interviews with young members of the groups were conducted. Young people from some of the case study contexts conducted their own action research projects with support and guidance from the local research teams.

While the biographical interview transcripts were analysed with a framework adopted from reconstructive approaches (*Rosenthal* 2004), other resulting material was coded using ideas from the ‘Grounded Theory approach’ (*Strübing* 2014).

3 Scouts and Parkour – a similar background

In terms of background, the roots of Scouts and Parkour grew from the same soil. Both organisations stem from the military training and experiences of the early 1900s.

The Scout movement was founded in 1907 by *Sir Robert Baden-Powell* who at that time was a national hero since the famous Siege of Mafeking during the Boer War in South Africa. For *Baden-Powell* it was essential to create pre-conditions to help young people (boys) to grow up to good citizens (*Warren* 1986). In contrast to the unhealthy city slum, a much more adventurous life in the country-side woods was depicted. The Scouts should learn how to manage life in nature through camping, tracking and observation. This was done in small groups, patrols, under the leadership of older boys who had adult supervision. The Girl Scouts was founded in 1910.

In many ways, the Scout movement was organised and modeled in a military fashion. The members have uniforms, belong to patrols, the leadership is hierarchical and there are badges to be worn. From the very beginning, however, according to *Warren* (1986, p. 386), military drill was not part of the training. Instead, individual character training comprised the focus.

Parkour and free running are applications of the 'Natural Method', which was developed in the early 1900s by the French naval officer *George Hébert* (*Atkinson* 2009). In his experience being stationed in Africa, *Hébert* had become convinced about the importance of physical training and fitness among both soldiers and civilians. *Hébert* believed that such training should be organized in open space, preferably outdoors in a forest setting (*Atkinson* 2009, p. 171). The training consisted of running a course where obstacles like bushes, trees, water and rocks provided challenges that needed to be overcome. *Hébert* believed this 'natural' way of exercising the body would be far more effective than athletics or sports training.

David Belle's father was introduced to the Natural Method when he was in the French Military. An enthusiastic supporter of the method, *Belle Sr.* introduced the practice to *David*. Unfortunately, *David* had no access to forested areas and hence Parkour (from 'obstacle course') moved into the city. Thus, *Belle Jr.* and a few friends started to move around in their neighbourhood and city, following the idea of seeing tangible obstacles as challenges participants needed to overcome.

Parkour gained popularity among young people and has developed into a movement with groups around the globe sharing the idea of the city as a training ground. Free running gained global notoriety through the sharing of videos on social media of young people performing spectacular runs and stunts, and it was then adopted by youth workers, sports teachers and sports associations (*Gilchrist/Wheaton* 2011). Like many globalised youth cultures, it was also adopted by businesses that now offer specialised training and by the advertisement industry, which used iconic images and leading figures of the scene to associate every thinkable commodity with the Parkour and free running aura of dynamism and bravery. Still, the idea of moving in the city and taking the urban landscape as a 'natural' challenge for rehearsal and training gave way to a global youth movement appropriating a similar style of movement and similar attitudes towards sports and bodily practices using the cityscape as training ground.

4 Parkour: Case Studies from Gothenburg and Zurich

Parkour in Gothenburg is a self-organised and youth-led activity where young people teach each other skills. Initially, practicing inside a controlled and safe space helps each individual to develop the physical ability needed to do Parkour as it is intended: outside in the city. Audience or witnesses often connect Parkour to the risk of getting hurt while jumping, moving and dropping from heights, as this ethnographical fieldnote demonstrates:

“The woman shouts: *‘What are you doing? You can’t be up there!’* One of the younger guys answers: *‘We’re playing.’* The woman continues in a loud voice: *‘You, this is not a playground, you damn not better be on our roof! Jump down [...]!’* Descending one of the younger guys asks: *‘Have you never been a kid?’*

The woman is now really upset: *‘Yes, I have, and I have children and grandchildren, but they are normal in contrast to you.’*

A guy: *‘Cool.’*

After a while the dispute cools down and one from the Parkour group says: *‘You could also see it like – the place you play, becomes a playground.’*”

(Fieldnote Parkour, Gothenburg 26/07/2016)



Figure 1: An angry woman arguing with the group; drawings by Susanne Liljeholm Hansson, University of Gothenburg

Because Parkour and free running modify the meaning of physical objects with a non-conformist physical behaviour, the activities challenge social norms. Furthermore, the Parkour enthusiast’s – or ‘traceur’s’ – sense of freedom of expression clashes with the normative ideas and regulations of society. Adults and professionals are excluded and alienated by this norm-breaking practice, as they are unable to educate or restrict the ownership of these young people, who they see as being out of their reach and stretching the rules: Part of the traceurs’ group ethics is to leave no ‘traces’ and even to repair any damages their exercises cause to public goods. This autonomy is self-created by young people and is connected to appropriation and driven by mutual empathy and understanding instead of exaggeration and trouble. Structuring the activity under the umbrella of an association could be read as a practice of re-signification (Rowley et al. 2018) and an attempt to get identity-establishing activities recognised by the above-described adults. Parkour participants can learn about the physical dimensions of the city and temporarily appropriate them, primarily by focusing on moving from one point to another in the most efficient way while surmounting obstacles.

The journey for the youth and community involved in the creation of the organisation’s homebase provides an excellent example of this evolution to re-signification. Their story began as a group of young people who started practicing and performing Parkour for interested public audiences. People started to ask for Parkour training courses and this demanded a better organisation and structure. The young people initially decided to collaborate with an existing association, but soon found that this limited rather than helped the group. With the support of some youth workers, they decided to start their own independent association, where they combined both leisure and training. The entire process involved numerous negotiations, during which the group met a better organised skaters

association. Out of this relationship, a creative community of appropriation practice was established, and they started to plan a common physical space where they could train and practice extreme sports. The group described it this way:

"We had meetings and established an outdoor training facility in [a district of Gothenburg], and then in direct conjunction with this we made contacts with the skaters and established this hall. Everything went really fast, from starting an association with a budget of its own, and our own initiative. We went from twenty or so members, to 620 registered members this year." (Biographical interview Parkour, Gothenburg, 01/12/2016)

The conversion of the practices from an informal collective to a structured association can be seen as the resignification of practices and an act of participating and claiming space within the city. The central arena for Parkour may be an entire city, but by establishing a home base, which is important for the provision of training facilities, their activities are gaining recognition as membership grows through this identity-establishing symbolic space. At the same time, this process is typical for the general development of Parkour as a youth movement, as it has undergone a commercialisation process (*Wheaton 2013*).

Then, the question is which kind of appropriation processes can be found in Parkour in its new organised form. One example can be found in a fieldnote from a summer camp with younger kids, where the latter are interested in learning Parkour and meeting some trainers:

"After warming up, the trainer opens up for free training. A couple of trainers put an old bench at the top of the sand box and tried out a couple of somersaults using the bench as a springboard. A couple of kids directly followed and formed a line waiting for their turn to take off. Throughout the practice, the participants discussed the jumps and somersaults, giving and taking advice on how to refine their performances. [...] Both beginners and trainers participated in the training, forming a group that were into the activity on equal terms. When someone succeeded with a beautiful jump acknowledgement was heard from the queue: 'God damn, how beautiful', and the performer displayed a happy and proud face.

In the meantime, one of the beginners had hurt his foot at another place of the playground. One of the leaders was quickly at the place and placed himself lying next to the hurt one, and there talking calmly to comforting him. Another of the leaders explained that small injuries are a part of the everyday practice of Parkour, but it's unusual that something more drastic occurs. [...] She continued with that it is better if the trainers don't exaggerate by making a big deal out of it." (Fieldnote Parkour, Gothenburg, 25/11/2016)

This fieldnote demonstrates that trainers focus on being truthful and frank with young trainees by explaining the realities of small injuries and how training can help avoid or these and larger injuries. They never attempt to suppress their trainees' excitement for Parkour. Interested younger persons have a safe space where they can try out Parkour, without the restrictions, regulations and social norms of society. The trainers do not prevent them from 'harm'; they confront them with the challenges of Parkour and how to stretch normal ideas of the power of the human body. It mirrors intergenerational social relationships with a strict hierarchy connected to one's abilities.

In an in-depth case study out of Switzerland, one participant of the Parkour association describes the fascination of an outdoor activity that is performed no matter what the conditions are:

"That's a big part of it. Because it's just really important, that's exactly what you have to learn, to deal with these different conditions, so that first of all you get to know your own limits, for example

with the hits, and that you know if it's like ice cold outside, how it is with your hands. Or if it's wet, when it gets slippery, that you like know all these different situations and that you don't get scared all of a sudden if you ever – even if it sounds stupid – in an emergency really need it. That's really what it's all about, that you are prepared in whatever way and know exactly, 'How does a surface react? [...] and should really be personally important that you go and think – even if the weather is really bad right now, or when it's sunny, 'I'd rather be somewhere else right now!', I don't know, that you then think, 'Alright, I want to test this right now', because in reality, yes, it's like you're totally pumped up, you want to try it out right away!" (Group discussion Parkour, Zurich, 06/2016)

By doing Parkour, these young people create something new out of the existing city space. In fact, they have created two new separate spaces in the city: one which we could call an 'action space' where they practise Parkour. The other one is the training hall where they offer training and social networking for younger kids. Accordingly, the latter looks like a space created by professional youth workers, while the first is not bound to a particular building or structure but simply uses the city space. Thus, it is not that they have created some utopian ideal playground or some 'small world' itself, instead they use what is already there. The fascination stems from the challenges posed by the cityscape itself, from facing and overcoming the fear of dangerous moves.

The material world is regarded as the instructor. The aim is to appropriate the material cityscape, develop moves based on knowledge of local topography and on the usability of city objects such as stairs, hand rails, benches, and walls. Parkour is a temporal re-interpretation of these standard objects and results in a temporal re-signification of the city by questioning social and physical norms and the normal use of the body. At the same time, the re-signification process is bound to the very moment of action: traceurs do not want to leave permanent traces on the city structure; the mark they are leaving is transient and ephemeral.

From a youth cultural perspective, Parkour can be seen as a highly diversified global youth culture that is locally interpreted and appropriated in many different ways. Some common traits are promoted by the imagery spread via social media. For example, traceurs do not wear specific sports gear or clothing, but they wear comfortable clothes that reflect their personal values of serenity and coolness. Accordingly, the traceurs reflect the ideal of an active person defying all challenges with a cool, distant stance.

The two Parkour communities in our study thereby emphasise the aspects of peer culture, self-enhancement, and a community that tries to share experiences of appropriation as inclusively as possible – despite the fact that the activity is, in reality, restricted to those with certain bodily abilities. Hierarchy among the groups is based on seniority in the organisation, but also on the recognition of different skill levels. Participation in this world is created by gradually becoming more involved in the larger Parkour community and by establishing structures and spaces within the city.

This activity is created by young people for young people who then organise their activities to ensure that as many individuals as possible can take part. Each individual needs an outside space that allows them to develop their personal style of Parkour as well as an inside space that is safe for practicing and building their community of like-minded youth. Each of these important aspects of Parkour nurture young people's deep appreciation for urban spaces and being active members of their community. Onlookers who see these young people merely as troublemakers demonstrate their lack of understanding of identity-establishing practices which are the youth's attempts at participating in a closed-minded society. On the one hand, the onlookers see danger whereas young participants,

on the other, use their bodies to participate in the urban landscape in creative ways that foster personal awareness and skills. The group states:

"I give you one word that explains all of that, or which really defines Parkour really well. It is awareness. Because you will become aware of every single muscle that you have in your body, and you know what causes what happens. You know that every action has a reaction, and you know... you get so much awareness. [...] So, it is definitely awareness. You need to know what the problem is, because otherwise you keep facing that problem. [...] Parkour is every moment and every muscle of your body." (Group discussion Parkour, Gothenburg, 06/2016)

This quote from an interview in Gothenburg can be read as an implicit comparison between Parkour and other everyday activities: for the interviewee, it illuminates a direct link between his lifestyle and the physical activities that gives him direct feedback that is missing from other parts of his life. Parkour thus provides him with the opportunity to experience self-efficacy and a feeling of authenticity that is, arguably, at the core of all youth cultures (Thornton 1995).

5 Scouts – nature as free space

The Scouts represent the largest youth organisation in Switzerland with about 42,000 members. In Zurich, there are 19 different groups and the one studied was founded in 1964. Typically, the activities within the Scouts are organised in different age-based groups. In the case studied, there are four such age levels, ranging from 5 to 17 years. Then there is a group of young leaders, who in the actual case are between 15 and 22 years of age, and above them there is a layer of adult leaders who supervise the younger ones.

Central to the activities the Scouts engage in is being outdoors to learn how to manage in nature through different practices and exercises. This is often done by arranging camps, which can last for several days or weeks. Additionally, each age group, or 'troop', in Zurich has a meeting every Saturday. It is the young leaders who are responsible to arrange these for the group they lead, and there is much planning and preparation work that has to be done.

The Scout movement has a long history of traditions. These are practiced in everyday life through different kinds of Scout activities (fire ceremonies, a summer camp in the mountains or night hiking excursions). As the leaders need to plan, organise, participate in and repeat these activities they can create stories which become traditions for each individual Scout group. *"Once, eh, one evening I met some people and we talked about Scouts for four hours, just told stories and it was so cool"* (Group discussion Scouts, Zurich, 3/10/2016). Remembering and telling stories helps to develop and habituate the group's own traditions. The leaders' role is to establish a framework for delivering the main traditions, but this framework is interpreted and shaped by the young members themselves over time. Out of these community bonds and practices of collectively practicing and shaping Scouts' traditions, the group expands.

Society recognises Scouting because they contribute to their surroundings in a supportive way: *"A request was received from the Community Centre xy. The Scouts department xy has the opportunity to operate a Crêpes stand at a market there in December from 11 AM until 10 PM. The booth fees would be 80 francs."* (Fieldnote Scouts, Zurich,

26/09/2016). The leaders will make the decision on behalf of the entire group as to whether their troop will take part.

The leaders also have a special position as role models to the young members. As decision makers, organisers, and planners of all Scouting activities, they are watched and emulated by the younger Scouts as role models. Taking responsibility for a group of children is community work and recruitment at the same time: *'Yes, that's true. In [the camp] there were 90 children. We're like, we alone are responsible for them'* (Group discussion Scouts, Zurich, 03/10/2016). The children see the leaders as significant influencers, look for their feedback when attempting to solve personal problems, learn from their extensive Scout knowledge, and from their longer life experience. More often than not, the leaders are admired by the children and serve as role models and pass on Scout traditions in a light-hearted manner, as Emanuel states: *"It is like a different kind of relationship. I mean someone that is like closer and yet still a little, like, a little like a role model in a way. And they speak pretty openly and say things to you, as if there was a trust there."* (Group discussion Scouts, Zurich, 03/10/2016)

Scout camps and activities serve as an alternative world in which young people adopt and develop traditions. They create their own space in nature and build their own places, where they can establish their own personal narratives and stories and shape traditions, a major part of Scouting culture: *"Some group members proudly declare that they would have needed about five hours to set up the tent. Behind this is a natural oven, like a hole in the Earth, lined with large stones. On the right side is a fireplace. In the rear area of the 'Pioranch', a large tarpaulin serves as a living room."* (Fieldnote Scouts, Zurich, 22/07/2016) Building physical spaces and reconstructing a home in nature under a specific motto is a basic tenet of these camps. The summer camp's motto was madhouse, so everybody acted crazy against norms. Mottos like these allow the young campers to break out of societal norms to which they predominantly adhere and push boundaries. One of the older Scouts states:

"Once, we were allowed to plan the night practice, that was mega fun, [...] we planned, that [the others] were sneaking up to raid me – so of course I was involved in the whole thing – so I struggled with them [...] one jumped on a table and really kicked and threw all the stuff [an expensive camera, a music box] on the ground, have swept a ladder under the table, and I hurt myself really by doing this. And then we ran uphill – a mountain just so completely with [...] then we called the kids and told them: 'Yes, if you do not do this, then we will not give me back!', and [...] finally the camera was not broken, because we were very lucky. And then one pretended as if they were going to the gallows, we organised a rack and it really looked as if it was hanging on their neck from a branch on a barrel and then the children came, and we acted and they were like: 'Ah' [...] the children really freeze for five seconds. [...] After that they told us that we did a great job" (Biographical Interview Scouts (female), Zurich, 2016)

What is described here is a playful way to develop some of the skills from the classical 'Scoutcraft' set of skills like pitching a tent, making a fire in order to prepare food or finding directions at night etc. The Scout group's activities use a classic form of peer community: the younger Scouts are guided in activities that have been decided upon and prepared by their elder peers. This model depends on a hierarchy of on age level, never on skills levels (Rodrigues et al. 2015).

The Scouts' homogenous uniforms document membership and status within Scouting groups, but also make them easily identifiable by the wider society. Being a Scout means belonging to a huge and well-known international organisation with a long history. The

young leaders are aware that some connect the Scout movement with military training and conservative values. They oppose this, and feel it is important that they position themselves and their local Scout organisation as left oriented when it comes to political matters. However, there is a certain ambivalence between maintenance and change:

Nathanael: "So, we are what we are. One must, like we're not gonna change for the participant's sake. Meaning that we don't need to be a good fit for the participant, rather the participant has to fit in with us [...]."

Fabian: "And it [the Scout movement] also has a deep military background. Somehow people say, in the Scouts we used to say uniforms, or the activities were called exercises and when starting them, they used to say report and [we are] against that."

Andrea: "Yeah, we are striving towards breaking away from that." (Group discussion Scouts, Zurich, 03/10/2016).

The young Scout leaders acknowledge the long organisational history they are parts of and in their engagement, they admit that they uphold some while passing on other values. However, they also want to change elements of the tradition to make the Scout movement better correspond to what they believe are important issues of today.

6 Discussion: Is space the best teacher?

We started out with the question about young people and their access to urban spaces that are 'free' in the sense that they allow for self-governed appropriation processes. The two youth organisations that form the empirical base of our discussion both have certain relations to urban space and specific spatial practices comprise their core activities. Their ideas about where free space is to be found are, however, quite different.

At its beginning, the Scout movement centred around certain anti-urbanism where the city milieu was interpreted as being harmful and deceptive to young people (boys). To work against this, city space was abandoned in favour of the 'free' space of the natural environment. The only remaining significance of the city neighbourhood was to function as a space where 'the good turn' could be carried out. As we can see from our example in Zurich, this distribution of spatial activities still structures engagement in the Scout movement.

Thus, the Scouts' appropriation of free space for young people is characterised by *detachment* from city life. The attraction lies in the contrast between nature and urbanity; the natural environment is 'free' because it is not restrained by all the built-in purposes and rules of city space and because it represents something different that should be investigated. The spatial pedagogy of the Scouts is very active and hands-on. The young participants really work on, change and learn to master the material world of the camp surroundings.

Though based on a method designed for a similar mastery of nature as the Scouts, the Parkour movement has developed a fundamentally different relation to urban space. This is built on *attachment*; an appraisal and recognition of the inherent possibilities for physical containment in the city environment. Basically, the mastery of the traceurs lies in a very practice-oriented and corporeal appropriation of city space in a manner which contradicts planned intentions and regulations. By un-packing spatial potentials, Parkour adds

something to city life. In this process, free space is created but in a very momentary sense. The liberation is intrinsic in the movement, the physical exercise, and, once performed, things go back to normal. Parkour does not create any new structures for others to enter and participate in, aside from the possibility to join the physical activity. The traceurs leave no traces behind except the footage that can be seen on various Internet sites. There is no camp to be revisited.

In both organisations, learning processes are quite related to leaders as instructors and role models. The Scouts have a hierarchical organisation, which gives space for youth leadership. The young leaders we interviewed were mainly in their teens. They impart important knowledge for younger Scouts, which in turn facilitates these younger Scouts abilities to complete the tasks they are provided. But the leader is also someone to look up to and have a personal relationship with. However, this vertical dependence on leaders is balanced by the horizontal belonging to a troop, which underlines the collective character of being a Scout.

In comparison, the Parkour movement is much more based on an individual membership and loose organisation. Indeed, the leader is important in so far as teaching the others the technical ability they need to complete the physical movements. There are risks involved in Parkour and the leader is very important in order to gain skills, but also to realise one's own limitations. The traceurs talk about how vital the group is when performing and how one must learn to rely on others. Still, in relation to the Scouts, the Parkour movement is distinguished by an individualistic and cool attitude.

This has to do with the different "moral geographies" (Matless 1997) that the two organisations represent. The Scout movement is connected to militarism and conservatism; of being the preservers of social and moral values. The central goal for the Scout organisation has from the beginning been to create good citizens. Through history there have been changes in the formulation of what this means (Mills 2013), however, as we can conclude from the interviews, the young Scouts in Zurich are really affected by the long tradition. Moreover, this is something that they themselves consider they are about to change.

The moral geography of Parkour has been interpreted in terms of "late modern flaneurs" and "anarcho-environmentalism" (Atkinson 2009). The overrun of expected and 'normal' spatial practices gives the Parkour traceurs an aura of rebellion. In a less explicit way, the Parkour movement also educates participants for citizenship, however, on a different level, as the Parkour movement is attempting to foster citizenship in the sense of being an active member of an urban community.

One characteristic of the organisations is their gender imbalance; both are largely dominated by young males. The Parkour groups try to encounter this through special arrangements and specific membership conditions for women. Actually, this is about the same road as the Scout movement has been taking for many years and has thus far been more successful.

Judging from our interviews, there is an atmosphere of possible change within the Scout movement. The young leaders were keen to position themselves as belonging to the political left-wing and to express how they are trying to move away from parts of the old, conservative tradition. Perhaps here, we can see a youth organisation in the re-making.

There are signs that the Parkour movement risks moving in a different direction. Today, we can see, for example, how schools and private companies are attempting to adapt Parkour exercises and approaches and turn them into physical education and sellable

items. This process has been labelled "sportization" (Atkinson 2009, p. 173) and is about the incorporation and mainstreaming of alternative styles of sports and leisure.

This leads us back to the question of what the discussion about young people's participation can learn from these cases. Both, the Parkour and the Scouts use physical space as an arena for their activities. Where the Scouts traditionally see the woods as the ideal play- and training ground, which is also ideologically opposed to the city, the traceurs embrace the cityscape as their wilderness that provides them with a sense of adventure and challenges to overcome. At the same time, both groups re-interpret their environment and create youth communities through this re-interpretation.

These spaces provide opportunities for collective appropriation that even works with some adult involvement. The Scout model seems to have beneficial outcomes for representative and liberal democratic societies: Adults in the US who had been involved in Scouting during their youth are more likely to get involved in civic engagement (Kim/Jang/Johnson 2016). Parkour does not fit this model: the original forms of Parkour were loosely coupled groups of young people and within only two decades it has turned into a globalised youth culture with all the side-effects of a lifestyle sport (Wheaton 2013), like many – if not all – (former) mainstream youth cultures that began as subcultures. Parkour has now become part of regular sports curricula both inside of and outside of school, and big business has appropriated the sport's coolness factor for advertising purposes. Locally, the demand to learn the skills more systematically has given rise to a whole range of for-profit and non-profit associations with former activists making a living from their symbolic and social capital as traceurs. In the Scouting groups, the skills that are learned are closely linked to the woods as imagined counter-worlds to the 'modern' city. In Parkour, the necessary skills are closely related to the city and as the quotation of the young man in Gothenburg above shows, while the performance subverts the order of the city for a short moment, the body can become part of a project that demands a lot of discipline.

7 Conclusions

In the light of these results, the 'lack of free spaces' discourse seems not to reach far enough. Firstly, the discussion needs to consider an understanding of the styles of appropriation of space; the meaning-making processes linked to place-making as described in both the Parkour and Scouting cases. Secondly, youth policy's role is not to create 'free spaces' for participation which tend to be domesticated by pedagogical ideas, but to make sure young people can develop a multitude of styles to appropriate the existing cityscape or wilderness (and be aware that this is a contradiction in itself!). Thirdly, we need to understand participation as something momentary or instantaneous (fluid democracy as ideal and not 'small worlds'). Parkour may also provide an excellent example of the limitations of involvement and leadership by adults working in the youth policy field. Spatial appropriation remains a tactic (Geertman et al. 2016). Or, conversely, it is the case that youth policy has to make sure it stays out of the way as young people's cultural politics unfold (Wheaton 2013)? Or, as one participant at a group discussion in Gothenburg puts it: *"They [the adult policy-makers] think more about their own problems they had themselves than of today's problems. It's because of this that there are 1000 football facilities,*

because when 'Tommy' was young, he wanted to play football, and at the time there were no football pitches. [...] I think the best would probably be to construct building sites where one can develop one's own stuff and have a budget for it [...] We'll try to get politicians to realise that maybe to unleash a budget that young people themselves can use. As in this place, young people have budgeted and built up all by themselves." (Group discussion Parkour, Gothenburg, 06/2016)

The discourse about 'free space' reconstructed above has taken up the relationship between the youth cultural appropriation of space and the lack of urban spaces. It has developed a rationale for youth policy that can counter these developments by turning around the logics of youth interventions from an offer-based perspective to a social-spatial perspective (Kessl/Reutlinger 2017). The offer-based perspective conceives interventions from the point of view of course-structured programs from which young visitors can choose. The socio-spatial approach instead would try to organise social spaces to offer the potential for youth appropriation, whereby appropriation is understood as spatial action that transforms the relationship between a subject and its material and symbolic environment through engagement with the constituting objects. Still, youth policy seems to concentrate on efforts to create spaces for appropriation as 'small worlds'. Maybe 'loose spaces' (Ameel/Tani 2012) are the best conceptual starting point for thinking about new forms of participation that allow for a reflection of young people's alienation with urban spaces instead of creating "small worlds" apart?

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