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ON FRICTION AND URBAN CULTURES

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The built environment has evolved to accommodate the human body, yet human beings have evolved to engage with the natural environment. As standardization of function as well as form has shaped our surroundings, we have assimilated norms of behaviour that correspond to and uphold existing frameworks of use. Users of urban space intuit the area of acceptable behaviour based on often unformulated notions of social contract. If a bench is made for sitting, would not other uses challenge our sense of community? In public space, we are all agents of social control. This raises the question of what values we lose in the pursuit of imagined social harmony. Can they really dance there?

As use of space becomes more defined, cities run the risk of becoming less open to initiatives of exploration. Urban dwellers can be construed as being effectively disenfranchised from engaging in potentially significant behaviours engrained in our evolution. Skateboarders have hacked this dynamic and opened up ways to be human in a constructed environment.

By stepping onto a board, spaces accommodated for walking, sitting or driving open to new uses. The body that the city was designed to accommodate is changed and as a result, options to play, create, roam and explore open up. Skateboarding challenges sanctioned uses by engaging with the built environment through a holistically human framework of expressions. In doing so, skateboarders have been successful in generating important value for cities. Skateboarding is inherently cultural. Skate-spaces are predominately social spaces that offer cultural engagement without introducing demographic barriers. Through engaging in and expressing their culture, skateboarders provide important social networks, promote their cities and generate health, social mobility and innovation.

In Malmö, Sweden, the municipality has worked closely with the skateboarding community for over two decades to evolve Malmö as a city and skateboarding destination. Gustav Éden will talk about this collaboration and importance of skate culture for the city.

Tom Jungbluth will discuss his work with skate culture in Luxembourg. With a deep commitment to fostering skateboarding culture, Tom has been instrumental in creating platforms like the LXB Cup and LXB Street, ensuring strong partnerships with key sponsors such as the City of Luxembourg,

GUSTAV SVANBORG EDÉN works closely with Malmö's skateboarding community and the local skateboarding organization Bryggeriet as a project manager for the Streets, Parks and Property Department. Informally known as the City of Malmö's 'skateboarding coordinator', Gustav works with a holistic approach to spaces, activation, social outreach and events.

TOM JUNGBLUTH is a photographer and skateboarding advocate based in Luxembourg. As the co-founder of the LXB Cup and LXB Street, he has played a pivotal role in shaping their growth since 2017, focusing on partnership management and communications. Tom also handles PR and community management for the Skateboard Club Luxembourg and the Luxembourg Skateboard Federation, working to promote and develop skate culture locally. His expertise extends to branding and strategy, as seen during the pandemic, when he helped transform Olliewood Skateshop into one of the world's most sought-after skate shops.

MORITZ AHLERT is a senior researcher and lecturer at the Habitat Unit at the Institute of Architecture (IfA) at TU Berlin. He studied architecture in Hannover and the University of Arts in Berlin. He received a PhD at the HFBK Hamburg. His focus areas are actor-based urbanism, mapping as a collaborative tool, and urban interventions. He is author of several publications and exhibited his works internationally. From 2021-2024, he was part of the transdisciplinary research project ›Transforming Solidarities‹. In this context, he curated the exhibition ›Spaces of Solidarity‹, which was shown at the German Architecture Center (DAZ) in Berlin. He also initiated, together with Constructlab, the ongoing urban intervention project ›Kiosk of Solidarity‹.

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CP NVST, Munhowen, Porsche and VW. Joining him on the panel are Dan Gantrel, founder of Olliewood Skateshop and president of the Skateboard Club Luxembourg, and Alex Welter, president of the Luxembourg Skateboard Federation. Both have been pivotal in developing skateboarding in Luxembourg, including building several skateparks across the country. Together, their work continues to inspire and shape the future of skateboarding in the region.

Moritz Ahlert will share about the exhibition ›Spaces of Solidarity‹ (Deutsches Architektur Zentrum, 10/23-01/24), which he curated, and the ongoing transdisciplinary urban intervention series ›Kiosk of Solidarity‹.

The Kiosk of Solidarity is an urban practice format that intervenes in the contested social fields of work, health, and housing in Berlin. Since June 2023, over 25 solidarity-based Berlin initiatives and projects have used the kiosk for a few days at different locations in Berlin. In various formats, they bring together neighbors, fellow campaigners, and other interested parties and temporarily bring their solidarity practice into the public urban space. The kiosk creates visibility for marginalized groups (e.g. migrants, refugees, queer communities, or homeless people) and connects them with other initiatives. The kiosk project team, together with students from TU Berlin, supports the initiatives in realizing their ideas for using the kiosk: designing the posters, applying for stand permits, logistics, documentation, and financing.

The kiosk aims to create new solidarity-based places for encounters, networking, knowledge production and transfer, protest, appropriation, support, public relations, and participation in public space to strengthen the approaches to socio-ecological transformation supported by the initiatives.

The presentation of the ongoing kiosk project at this event will serve as a basis for how and where the kiosk can contribute to The Esch Clinics project in 2025.

RAHEL SÜß is a political scientist and philosopher exploring desirable democratic and digital futures. Her work engages with key questions, including what a more empowered democracy might look like, the role of everyday democratic experiences, and the link between anxiety and democracy. Combining insights from political philosophy, social theory, and social psychology, she investigates how transformative change can be envisioned and realized. Rahel contributed to the award-winning ARD documentary Der Autokraten-Code (2024), exploring AI and autocracy.