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Abstrakt:

In meiner Abschlussarbeit unterstreiche ich die Stellung von Frauen und nicht-binären Skatern in der Skate-Community von Barcelona. Diese spanische Stadt ist eine der besten Skateboard-Städte der Welt, da sie aufgrund ihres besonderen städtischen Geländes und ihres Klimas immer wieder Skater aus der ganzen Welt anzieht.

Die Untersuchung untersucht die eigene Skateboard-Szene der Stadt unter einer Geschlechterperspektive: Ich konzentriere mich auf weibliche und queere Personen, die historisch vom Patriarchat diskriminiert wurden, und ich frage, wie diese Personen ihre Präsenz in der städtischen sozialen Aktivität des Skateboardens definieren, die stark ausgeprägt ist cis-heteromännlich dominiert. Diese Frage interessiert mich, weil ich in den letzten Jahren durch soziale Medien, persönliche Kenntnisse und die Teilnahme an diesem transnationalen Feld eine zunehmende Präsenz weiblicher und queerer Skater beobachtet habe.

Im Oktober 2022 bin ich für ein Austauschsemester für meinen Master in Anthropologie von Wien nach Barcelona gezogen. Während meines Auslandsstudiums nutzte ich meine zuvor erworbenen Fähigkeiten als Skater, um Kontakte zu Skatern in Barcelona zu knüpfen. Die Arbeit ist das Ergebnis der Auseinandersetzung mit einem teilweise vertrauten, aber dennoch fremden Gebiet. Mir ist aufgefallen, dass Skaterinnen dazu neigen, sich mit anderen Skaterinnen und nicht-binären Skatern zu versammeln und gemeinsam zu skaten und schließlich ihre Leistungen visuell aufzuzeichnen, um sie lokal und transnational über die Medien zu verbreiten. Ziel der Forschung ist es zu erklären, warum dieses Phänomen auftritt und welche kulturellen und sozialen Strukturen sich darin verbergen.

INTRODUCTION

In my thesis I underline the position of women and non-binary skaters in the skate community of Barcelona. This Spanish city is one of the best in the world for skateboarding, due to its peculiar urban terrain and its climate, it continually attract skaters from all over the globe.

The inquiry examines the city's own skateboarding scene under a gender perspective: I focus on female and queer persons, which have been historically discriminated by the patriarchy and I ask how these persons define their presence in the urban social activity of skateboarding which is strongly cis-hetero-male dominated. I am interested in this question because I have observed through social media, personal knowledge and participation into this transnational field an increasing presence of female and queer skaters in the last few years.

In October 2022 I moved from Vienna to Barcelona for an exchange semester for my Master in Anthropology. In this period of studying abroad, I used my previously acquired skills as a skater to connect with skaters in Barcelona. The thesis is the result of the exploration in a partly familiar yet still foreign field. I have noticed that female skaters tend to gather and skate with other female and non-binary skaters and eventually record visually their performances in order to spread them locally and transnationally through media. The research aims to explain why this phenomena is happening and which cultural and social structures are hidden within.

1. Theoretical frameworks

In this chapter I examine scientific literature inherent to my theme as a theoretical support for my thesis. I am presenting three main aspects under which I have decided to contain and analyze my field, namely, transnational community, gender and media. Thereafter, I am going to examine why and how are these concepts connected to skateboarding and in so doing I am going to structurally contextualize my field under a cultural and social anthropological perspective.

1.1. Transnational community

In my paper I describe the community of skateboarding active as a local and a transnational community. Basically, a community is a group of people that is composed by individuals which have something in common with each other and distinguish themselves from other ones. Indeed, as Cohen names them, “boundaries” are fundamental in the understanding of the identity of the community: “boundaries are marked because a community interacts in some way or other with entities from which they are, or wish to be, distinguished.” (Cohen 1985, 71) Although, boundaries are not so objectively perceivable, but there are symbolic aspects or behaviors in a community’s definition.

In previous cultural and anthropological studies, the analysis of community has been concentrated on the investigation of social structures and norms as a form of human’s organization and communication in life. Additionally, Cohen underlines the importance of the meaning of community rather than the form, so to lay the focus on culture rather than on structure (cf. Ibid.).

Boundaries of communities weaken as a consequence to social change, so people hold on to symbolic behavior of the community to reconstruct its boundaries. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to assume that communities are unable to face up present imperatives: “the past is used as a resource [...], it is a selective construction of the past which resonates with contemporary influences.” (Ibid., 99)

The product of the community-belonging results as a foundation for the individual’s orientation into society and into the own’s life. This reference point is fundamental in a transcultural flow of connections and relationships, namely, transnationalism, which was born as a new paradigm for migration studies, in order to analyze simultaneous embeddedness, since migrants were living across borders.

In migration studies, transnationalism is understood as a process where migrants maintain and construct social, political, and economic relationships between national boundaries (cf. Schiller 2004, 488). Nonetheless, when we study transnational fields, we cannot focus only on migrants, transnational experiences are not only about migration phenomena: “even individuals who never move are influenced by values and practices from near and far.” (Knott, McLoughlin 2010, 41)

With the development of transnational studies concepts like ‘network’ and ‘social field’ were redefined. According to the anthropologist Glick Schiller, a ‘social field’ is “an unbounded terrain of multiple interlocking egocentric networks. ‘Network’ is best applied to chains of social relationships that are egocentric and are mapped as stretching out from a single individual. ‘Social field’ is a more encompassing term than ‘network’ taking us to a societal level of analysis.” (Glick Schiller 2004, 488) Skateboarding itself is a social field, thus networks occurs between individuals connecting in the field – and also outside the field in other social fields. Furthermore, mediation and communications technologies had a strong impact in the development of the nowadays world. Yet understanding the difference between transnational ways of belonging and transnational ways of being is fundamental. Indeed, transnational ways of being involve “various quotidian acts through which people live their lives across borders.” (Ibid., 458) When we analyze transnational ways of belonging, we examine cultural representation through which individuals recall with memory and imagination distant lands or persons.

Yet, people who internalize or adopt specific forms of cultural representation can be participants in a transnational social fields: an interconnected field which underlines the boundaries that arise and investigate the relationship between its individuals (cf. Knott, McLoughlin 2010, 40; Glick Schiller 2004, 458-459). Therefore, transnational communities are marked by a system of relations throughout the world. The affirmation of such ties is influenced by mediation and technologies (cf Wang 2005, 3).

For instance skateboarders are into the field of skateboarding, however not every person who possess a skateboard is into the community of skateboarding, it depends on the personal contacts with the culture and how much influence did these experiences had and/or still have on the individual’s development and being.

In Barcelona, skaters talk about a “community” when they discuss their relations with other skaters and they articulate a certain sense of being different from others, which enlighten their boundaries in the transnational field, since they are globally bounded by this practice.

Some literature already exists about skateboarding communities in different part of the world. For instance, in their study of skaters in California, Beal and Weidman argue that skateboarding developed from a non traditional, marginalized, urban, youth activity: the practice itself was not organizes by adults, nor did they, generally speaking, dictate the norms of what it should be done: “This contrast to adult-organized leagues is very important for the identity of skateboarders. [...]. Skaters have a completely different culture from the norms of the world's society.” (Beal, Weidman 2003, 338).

The transnationalism framework is relevant for my thesis because skateboarding present itself as a local and a transnational community, it is a performance which find place in urban public spaces and gets visually recorded by its participants. Skateboarding is embedded into the capitalist system and its market and has completely developed its own industry worldwide. It is a social activity, a sport, a lifestyle, but apart from all that, reduced to the core, the question is, what is skateboarding for a skater? How does it feel for a skater to skate? How can a teenager, a child, an adult, keep on skating persisting and facing failure?

In their research, the philosophers Seifert and Hedderson explain what is being intrinsically motivated, this mental, physical and spiritual state where a skater is in while practicing and performing skateboarding. To be intrinsically motivated means to be in the flow of trying to master a challenge, where you give all yourself, all your intent, all your capacities, all your focus, you face failure but eventually you will achieve it. This experience will culminate with a sense of pleasure, satisfaction, freedom, confidence, control, leaving the being fully alive and in the present. The individualism and autonomy of skaters set possible the state of persistence – which, with an intrinsic motivation – results in a state of flow, in order to achieve mastery. Mastery can be intended as a meaning of creation, to make possible what it was not, to make something that before it was not here. This process creates different form of pleasure and consequently, will lead to the subjective establishment of new challenges (cf. Hedderson, Seifert 2009, 12).

Furthermore, the individual performing the activity becomes agentic. Agency involves self-efficacy – when an individual believe in his/her/they capacity to act in the ways necessary to achieve mastery: “to be agentic is to believe that one is capable of achieving the outcome; but it also means to adopt a mastery goal orientation, including attributions to internal, unstable causes. [...]. Without high self-efficacy or an internal, unstable attribution pattern, they would not have been able to achieve their goals.” (Ibid.)

It is necessary to consider that “internal, unstable causes” can be emotions, thoughts and trauma(s) states where the individual cannot concentrate, persist or believe to be capable, however he/she/they will find a way to deal with this unstable patterns if the subject is willing to achieve mastery of the own challenges and create pleasure for the own life.

While this study focuses primarily on the individual experience of skating, we can indirectly draw from it a commonality between skaters, which is also a boundary that distinguishes skaters from other people: the mastery over a skateboard.

In the research of the geographer Jeffries et al. (2013) about skateboarders and freerunners in North East England argue that free spaces in urban places where people, adults and youngsters, can play and simply enjoy their life-time, are restricted by the regularization of the city’s institutions. There are playgrounds and delimited areas where people can play or just being outside, but also the development of Internet, the advent of social media and video-games made contemporary children and teenagers more isolated and sedentary. Thus, skaters reinvent the city as a free playground. Likewise, Barcelona, due to its urban’s architecture, is one of the best playgrounds in the world. However, when skaters go street-skating, they are playing outside the regulated spaces and are sometimes perceived as a trouble (cf. Jeffries et al. 2013, 121). Nowadays, the construction of skateparks controlled by the municipal government is spreading transnationally, since skateboarding has been recognized globally as a sport but also as an activity which improves children’s and young adults’ physical and mental life also for the ones who lives at the margin of society.

From this study we can infer that spaces are of great importance to the skateboarding community. People who skate are drawn to specific kind of urban forms that are “good for skateboarding”, and these spaces become sites where skaters can go to meet other skaters. It is in a city like Barcelona that the existence of a transnational community takes place also due to the perception of urban spaces as a playground.

1.2. Gender

Gender is a fundamental aspect of my research since I inquiry the women and non-binary skateboarding community in Barcelona under a cultural and social anthropological perspective, additionally I ask why women and non-binary skaters were perceived as anomalies in the past and how are they redefining their space in the skate community nowadays. Indeed, gender meanings shape the behavior of individuals, how to act, to believe, to make sense of their experience and how to think about themselves personally. Moreover, gender constructs are “cultural interpretations of physical differences” (Mascia-Lees, Black 2016, 1). Around 1970s and 1980s with the rise of feminist anthropology the approach on gender studies has developed, bringing attention “to structural inequalities, the role of economic disparities, global dimensions to gender politics, the role of language, sexuality and masculinity studies, and health and human rights, [...], a wide range of perspectives that challenge Western or monolithic assumptions about women and the experience of gender” (Upton 2012, online).

Notwithstanding, class religion, ethnicity, sexual preference and physical ability are now studied for their interaction with gender to produce different degrees of privilege and experience of oppression. Globalization and transnationalism have also their own impact on gender structures. The global world is shaped by a patriarchal system, which presents itself in private and public forms: in private patriarchy women are controlled by their menfolk within the family and their powerlessness is reinforced by restricted access to the public space. Men were more used to in the course of history to be entitled to public spaces and women where confined in subordinate secondary roles (cf. Bradley 2013, online). However, it does not mean that all men have a privileged position in this system, on the contrary, men can be oppressed by the patriarchal structure too and be affected by toxic constructions and expectations of masculinity.

Patriarchy reinforce the binary conception of gender, depicting women as more fragile, less powerful and connects them with kinship-caring. It is a system of domination, which is a trans-historical and trans-cultural phenomenon – women where more or less oppressed by men in different places and cultures and in different times in history: “such notions of patriarchy tended toward a biological existentialism that provided no basis for theorizing the vast historical and contemporary variations in women’s situations.” (Acker 1989, 235)

In contemporary anthropology, gender is conceptualized as fluid since it is evolving from the old binary-shaped construct. Non-binary identities have transnationally emerged, although, they are underrepresented and discriminated by the patriarchy too. In a study about health professionals in Europe for instance, “binary identity is more easily accepted by wider society and healthcare professionals than ambiguous gender presentation or self-identification, or identities or presentations that are between or outside of established binary gender categories.” (Nicholas 2018, online)

Indeed, there is a difference between sex and gender: sex underlines the biological differences between individuals and gender describes the social expectations on an individual because of his/her/their given sex. In early cultural and social anthropological studies gender was connected with kinship and family, however women and family issues were not deepened in most cases. Only around 1970s and 1980s with the rise of feminist anthropology the approach on gender studies has developed, bringing attention to the disparities and inequalities in the structure of the system and the “global dimensions to gender politics, the role of language, sexuality and masculinity studies, and health and human rights.” (Upton 2012, online)

In the previous sub-chapter I have taken in consideration intrinsic motivation as the core of skateboarding. Yet, masculinity is another aspect that has defined skateboarding through history, in their research on skateboarding, written in 2003, Beal and Weidman affirm that female were not taken as seriously as males, they were considered less capable: “masculinity was assumed to be the norm on which authenticity was evaluated. Females are not accepted as legitimate participants until they become guys (that is, like males).” (Beal, Weidman 2003, 345). Although, norms and values are shifting nowadays and female are starting to get recognized to their space in the transnational community of skateboarding.

I have followed the philosophers Seifert and Hedderson in their argument that mastery of challenges is a common feature of skating communities. It is fundamental for the individual to believe to be capable in order to master challenges. Looking at this defining feature of “mastery” from a gender perspective exposes a tension in the skateboarding community: how should it have been possible for a girl to skate and believe to be capable of skateboarding if her access to the community was and sometimes still is dominated by the common thought – defined by the patriarchal structure of society – of her being less physically capable, less brave, less powerful. In my observations regarding the last 10 years of the skateboarding field, women have been trying to unite themselves transnationally to create a sub-community into the masculine skate-community in order to spread

the thought that yes, they are capable too. Additionally, the women skate community tries to include non-binary individuals which are underrepresented even more.

Even in the northern countries of Europe, where they claim to have reached gender equality, women have not a granted legitimacy to urban public spaces or leisure sports as men have. It can happen, that they minimize their presence into the performative spaces and the majority of the skate-space gets occupied by males. In order to change that a strategic entitlement of spaces for women (and sometimes non-binary) found place. For example, in Austria but also in other countries, in skateparks or skate halls, there are limited time slots for girls only: “because usually girls and women do not feel entitled to public space and/or time for themselves. Strategic entitlement introduces a new way of thinking about girls and women’s entitlement to space and time to skateboard [...]” (Bäckström, Nairn 2018, 425)

The discussions and feelings of legitimacy regarding women presence in urban public spaces, as regulated (the skateparks) and non regulated (the streets) skate spaces are, “reveal how unequal gender relations play out socially and spatially in ways that can then provide insights into how gender relations are operating at a broader societal level.” (Ibid.)

Overall, studies of skateboarding show that patriarchal structures and behaviors tend to get reinforced in skating communities. These studies highlight the importance of gender norms as a site of inequality in the community and in urban space. In this thesis I enlighten how women and non binary skaters are responding to previously existing patriarchal patterns and in so doing to define their presence into skateboarding.

1.3. Media

Through media communities from all over the world can come in contact, skaters communicate transnationally and exchange suggestions, opinions, comments or just simply relate through media. In this thesis, I follow the anthropologist Boyer in his definition of media as a “communicational media and, more specifically, communicational media practices, technologies and institutions, especially print, film, photography, video, television, radio, telephony, and the Internet, among others.” (Boyer 2012, 382) Skateboarding has developed itself mostly thanks to media practices, skate video-clips in VHS and printed magazine were the basis for the expansion of skateboarding from USA to the rest of the world during the 80s-90s. Media technologies have evolved through time, nowadays with mobile phones and social media we can communicate easily, the spread of news has never been so fast.

Communication technologies ease connections and speech contexts. Consequently, more and more people can get access to information, yet it is fundamental to question what kind of information is sent around and how do people interpret and reuse it: “Information work is crucially about power to control what gets circulated, and different media constrain users’ power and agency differently” (Tenhunen 2019, 9).

Media anthropology aims to describe the production and reception of communicational media texts and technologies and their effects and affects on processes of cultural production and reproduction: “mediation produces and reproduces certain configurations of close-distance, mediate self-understandings that depend on the routing of the personal through the impersonal, the near through the far, and the self through the other” (Mazzarella 2004, 361). Nowadays, parallel to technological progress and the social media development media anthropology examines also social media. According to the anthropologist Miller in the book “How the world changed social media,” the offline world has been previously depicted as real and the online world as virtual, however nowadays there is no such differentiation since the online is as real as the offline. This affirmation is supported by the evidence that social media have become an integral part of our everyday life. Social media is an outcome of sociality and communication, a place where people live (cf. Miller et. al 2016, 7). Moreover, “social media has provided new tools for self-presentation and management of gender identities.” (Miller et. al 2016, 114)

Media is a broad concept, especially nowadays, where social media are integrated in the quotidian life of most people. Therefore, I have chose two platforms, namely Instagram and a paper skate-magazine called “Dolores Magazine”, where to deepen some aspects of mediation.

Instagram, as a social platform has a huge influence on the nowadays social life. On Instagram, users can monetize their influence – so called influencers – when some investors use their visibility (how many followers you have) to advertisement purposes. They have capitalized advertisement from peers since it is more effective, since authority (on Instagram) is dictated by how many followers you have: “which determines their potential for generating social and material capital. [...], the social media platform works to embed the logics of late capitalist consumerism into the very rudiments of how the self is imagined and positioned in relation to ‘others.’” (Smith 2021: online)

However, on Instangram, there are the hashtags which make possible a filtering system, where you more or less get to see on your news feed the videos that you are interested in or supposed to be interested in according to the algorithms. Feminist visibilities and other kind of “resistance” messages can also get widespread. Thus, the majority of the material promote aesthetic norms and individualism.

A gendered strategic visibility is also present in social media. It is common that female are made strategically more visible, resulting in a “shifting between feeling ‘visible and acknowledged’ and ‘visible and scrutinized’.” (Bäckström, Nairn 2018, 435)

On this app skaters communicate and show skateboarding and its culture markers defining boundaries within the skateboarding scene: “social media practices act as identity claims, which are confirmed or denied by other skaters through online and offline behaviors and discussions.” (Doupont 2020: 649)

The second platform I consider is “Dolores Magazine” a paper magazine representing girls and non binary skaters which I will analyze in the empirical chapter “5. Media”. From my observations of the field and my experience I have noticed that printed skate magazines are a specific media in skateboarding for the transmission of skate pictures.

2. Methods

A clear methodological path is decisive for the production of scientific anthropological material.

Methods and a decolonized ethic are fundamental for the validation of the research.

Cultural and social anthropology aims to describe, analyze, concertize in words and sometimes with (audio)visual material, human's cultural realities with comprehensive, traceable and transparent modalities, in order to be as objective as possible and in so doing, being understandable.

This different cultural and social realities are directly or indirectly all interconnected on an institutional and historical level. Consequently, methods are the only compass for the researcher when explores the wild jungle of human's social interactions with the intent to produce an understandable explanation of a little reality within a world of multiple ones.

Furthermore, postmodernism in cultural and social anthropology underlines that the claim to plurality should go hand in hand with a critique of modernity's oppressive violence, with decolonialized methodologies. However, in order to express the interaction between researcher and research subject to the level of intercultural relationships, on a socio-theoretical perspective is fundamental to underline how society and individuals, its structure and actions are related and how these relationships affect the concrete research perspective (cf. Braun et al. 2014; Fardon 1992). For fear of repeating the mistakes of our previous anthropological colleagues, the ones from the "grand theories", postmodern anthropology tend not to define universal categories of reason and justice. Yet, the postmodern decolonization of one's own ethnographic practice is basically taking ethically in consideration the colonial history of the world, understand it, explain it and not repeating it. Nonetheless, decolonialized methodologies are fundamental for the contemporary social sciences but are not sufficient for destructing power structures which are intrinsically present, in the field but also on the anthropologist, the ethnographer, herself/themselves/himself (cf. Ibid.) Why is the ethnographer writing the paper, which reasons are there behind, from where does the funding come from? Who is controlling the paper, who is approving the ethnography?

We do live in neocolonialism times. Colonialism is here just in a different form as it was in the past: colonies got (for saying) independent, but the economic relations between the core and the periphery just strengthened worldwide: the rich get richer the poor poorer, the capital disparities are intensifying, the Global North is still exploiting, through financial relations and technological advancement, the Global South (cf. Hryniewicz 2014).

It is fundamental to be aware of the power structures and role played during an interview, or also in general, during a field research: “to think in advance about the question of power and subjectivity or one's own perspective based on gender, skin color or nationality.” (Englert, Dannecker 2014, 240). Power structures permeate the construction of the nowadays world, including the research: power structures have shaped the structure of the methodology of cultural and social anthropology, “the colonial expansion and the formation of the capitalist world system have led to a shared history, [...] which has a double meaning, a common history with variable interactions and a history of asymmetrical power relations, the exploitation and social inequality, that is a separate history.” (Berkin, Raltmeier 2012, 21-22).

Cultural and social anthropology has been defined by methods influenced by ethnocentric and colonialist ideas. Therefore, it becomes necessary a decolonization of the anthropological methods used. During an ethnography it is fundamental to keep in mind that each actor, each participant is differently characterized by different thought patterns, “depending on their positioning in different social fields, institutions and contexts. In this constellation, the strategic and tactical behavior of the actors depends on how they design their positions in relation to the others.” (Ibid., 26).

I discuss decolonized approaches since they implement the fieldwork and are fundamental to consider in cultural and social anthropology but especially in this thesis since some research objects of my research come also from colonized places.

2.1. Research question

The aim of this thesis is describing how women and non-binary persons define their space into the skateboarding, since they are a strong minority in the skate reality, focusing on the city of Barcelona. In order to guide my investigation I have developed a main research question, which asks:

How do women and non-binary persons define their presence in the skate community in Barcelona?

Although, in order to orientate myself in my fieldwork I also ask, through the following sub-questions:

How does the skate community manifest itself in Barcelona?

Why women were perceived as anomalies in the skate community?

How can the women and NB skate community of Barcelona be characterized?

How do women and NB skaters experience and redefine gender norms in the skate community of Barcelona?

How do women and NB skaters use media to carve out a space for themselves in the skateboarding community of Barcelona?

I follow three main social theoretical themes, namely, transnational community, gender and media, so to guide myself into this inquiry. Additionally, I made use of the following cultural and social anthropological methods: participatory observation, photography, narrative, expert and biographical interviews.

2.2. First contact with the field, living and language

In February 2022 I visited Barcelona for two weeks to skate and have a first contact with the city; to have a first image of the field. In this two weeks I had the pleasure to have my first contact with the Italian skater community of Barcelona, which was eased by the fact that I am Italian I was invited to skate with them and they made me feel welcome, I have met also skategirls from different places of Italy who live in Barcelona. Seven months later, on the 13th of September 2022, I have arrived in Barcelona and took contact with the same network of people.

The second time I stayed in the field for eight months. I then expanded my network from the Italian group to the other skaters by skating with different people. Actively reaching out to

different groups and importantly by living in shared flats with other skaters. During my eight month research period I lived in seven different shared flats.

I moved a lot around Barcelona, thanks to that I have extended my relationships in my field even more. My mother language is Italian, I can speak English, German and Spanish, I understand mostly Catalan and Portuguese.

In a way or another, every skater-person I have met, helped me entering in the field, but more then everything else, my own skate, as a piece of wood, and my own ability to skate, connect with people and empathize with them. Moreover, I got funding from the Erasmus+ program and so for some months, also because I have saved money from my previous jobs, I could focus only on my fieldwork and did not had to work for money in the meanwhile.

Who controlled my access into the field? Nobody apart from my own mind.

In the period from October to December I have struggled enough to adapt myself in the city and in the community. I was confronted with defining my own presence in the field and my own character, believing in myself, feeling watched, feeling afraid about all this people, feeling lost because of the city, fear of being judged, fear of not being accepted. It was more a matter of believing that it is a process, that I have the trust in myself and that the answers will come and also the possibilities to make connections to find them. To feel the power that I can feel bad and insecure because it is normal and things will go on in a way or another. And with the beginning of the new year, January, February 2023 I got more comfortable. For example, at the beginning some of my field participants scared me and I did not want to have contact with them, but with the months flowing I have established relations with so many people that I do not even remember why I was scared to begin with. I can say that the true gatekeepers are just in my mind and I have dealt with them since now, at the end of June 2023, I am satisfactory integrated in the skate community of Barcelona.

2.3. Participant observation

The most useful action for me to undertake for understanding the field was to do participant observation which was going to skate in different places to see who is around and relate with skaters. In so doing I have met some world-wide celebrities but also I got to know more and more people which helped me to concretize the field. Of course I have participated to different form of gatherings, like events, jam sessions, premieres and similar. Nonetheless, they are just a little part of the skate-life but I also wanted to see alone how the community is and let me surprise for the situations I could land in and I can say that my perspective on my field has changed or better amplified itself so much and every day is a new discovery.

I am a skater and a woman, I went skate, I met and became friend with women and NB skaters. My gender and my previous skateboarding experiences helped me to orientate myself into my field.

I wrote my observations in my field diary, at the beginning I was really diligent in my notes and had kind of an order. Then, the months passed and the notes written with pen became more chaotic. I did not always have the occasion to have the diary with me. So, I took notes on my phone, on my pc, and on random papers which I did not lose.

Sometimes I came home at night and I just wanted to sleep, sometimes my brain did not want to work, sometimes was my body who was sick or tired, sometimes I was not motivated, sometimes I had to move (like literally, to relocate): so sometimes I have simply skipped them. However, the reader needs to understand that my fieldwork is my life, my informants my friends.

I did not decide when to go on fieldwork, when to do participant observation, I lived my life normally. I basically did participant observation 24/7 when not sleeping, I live with skaters, I meet skaters, I spend my time with skaters, I eat with them, I party with them and with some I have established really deep relationships. I live in this transnational field, it does not matter where I go: I have developed my own identity through skateboarding even before writing my thesis concept.

Firstly it is important to know that the ethnographer's aim is to examine the behavioral constructs of their fellow human beings, in order to analyze their social organization and describe its patterns.

Secondly, there are some social – collective, behavioral – rules that are transmitted from the older generation to the younger, some from parents to children (cf. Maeder 2008, 251-252). Moreover, individuals pay attention not only to their personal space but also to the one of the people nearby. Sometimes body contact, or other's body perceptions, happens and "when it occurs with the opposite sex, it strengthened the requirements of the body-management." (Ibid., 255)

Furthermore, the gender of the ethnographer has an impact on several areas of the field experience. Of course, if I would not be a woman, I could not have the possibility to go to join some female and NB skateboarding meet ups.

While doing participant observation you have to converse with the people, to observe them, to remember what is happening because you have to record it in some ways and moreover, do not forget to participate in order not to appear alienate and also because you can gain more information if you converse and participate at their actions: “Participation implies emotional involvement; observation requires detachment. It is a strain to try to sympathize with others and at the same time strive for scientific objectivity.” (DeWalt, DeWalt 2000, 262). It was a bit confusing at the beginning to be involved emotionally but to be detached in some moments in order to produce this paper, but it was a process to learn to deal with.

2.4. Interviews

I have had a lot of informal talks with different skaters from Europe, Africa South and North America in the course of my fieldwork in Barcelona, some relationships with the informants became extended in time and I gained a trustworthy relationship with them, some became friends. Generally my informants were between 18-45 years old, mostly women but I have men and I only two non-binary skaters. I had so many informal talks that I have decided to exclude some to keep just 30 informants, five from Barcelona, five from Italy, five from Chile, one from Austria, one from Germany, one from Russia, one from England, one from Portugal, one from Algeria, two from USA, four from Brazil and three from Argentina.

Between my informants I have decided to conduct and register narrative interviews with 10 of them. At the beginning, I did not know exactly who to interview, but I wrote in my notes and in my thesis concept “once I enter the female and NB skate community I will get to know its members and individuate proper interview partners. I do not want to have too many preconceptions before entering my field of research. I know some members already through Instagram, once I get to meet them in person I firstly will have to present myself and get into a relationship, they need to trust me and most important they need to be willingly spend time with me or I will not get proper information during the interviews.” And so I did through the months. I had of course some members which are

really visible on social media, like Raisa Abal, the photographer and writer of Dolores Magazine, which I knew I wanted to interview even before arriving in Barcelona.

I have record the interviews, partially transcribed them and analyzed them. I have conducted interviews with skaters of different nations, mostly from Europe and from Latin America. With skaters from other countries, like Africa or Asia, I mostly had informal conversation, since the amount of skater's migratory flow from Africa and Asia is not as high as the one from Europe and Latin America.

Additionally, from October 2022 to March 2023 I had to attend at courses at the partner university of Barcelona (in order to get the Erasmus funding) and there I got the pleasure to attend at different lessons but the one that interested me the most was about "Historias de vida/ Life's histories" and underlined that when in an interview asking about the biography of one's life is fundamental for empathizing and in so doing understanding others.

I have categorize my informants depending from their place of origin, because it sometimes determines how privileged you are. If you are legal or illegal if you have a legal job or not. Who lives in an occupied space and who pays the rent. However, all information will be anonymized. I know the personal history of all my informants because I have asked it and I did not registered most of them because some are highly private and I preferred to establish trustworthy relationships, also I am sure that if I would have registered some of them the result would not have been the same: the partner would not have been so honest and open with me.

I also choose age as a category, because of course youngsters are living in a completely different perception of gender, the oldsters had to experience others form of gender in skateboarding as the youngsters nowadays: the 90s-00s are different as the 2020s. Additionally, I include gender as a category and how many years is the individual into skateboarding.

Scientific use of memories, biographies, or basically life stories are an instrument of social analysis and theoretical construction, they question traditional believes (cf. Sarabial 1985, 165). At the same time, life stories form a phenomenological perspective, looks at human's behaviors, what people say and do, as the product of defining their world. In order to make a cultural and social anthropological analysis it is necessary to understand what is studied, how it is studied and how it is interpreted. In this sense, life history, as a qualitative methodology, tries to capture such an interpretation process, seeing things from the perspective of people, who are constantly interpreting and defining themselves in different situations (cf. Cordero 2012, 50-51): "humans are not a piece

of data, but rather, a process which acts creatively in their quotidian world, where the latter implies acknowledging its evocative and re-creative sense, elements that imply the possibility of self perception of the individual subject of the history of life in its experiential relation with the contextual environment.” (Ferroarotti 2011, 95-96)

2.5. Photography

In my thesis I capture in a written form a “whole, general” perspective of the “doing” of gender in the Barcelonean NB and women skateboarding scene. Therefore, I aim to describe in a visual form a more fragmented yet more specific expression of “their presence”.

When I started thinking about the concept of my thesis last year I realized that visual materials are fundamentals in the skateboarding culture, so I thought, better start to use them if I want to understand them. For my thesis I have planned just to use photography, not video-making.

However, in March 2022 I have started to photograph skateboarding moments and practices with my skater friends (all genders, male, female, trans, non-binary) of Vienna and come into the position of a photographer. Moreover, around the same period of time, I have also started to film my friends of Vienna with a video camera and became so a filmer. Of course, Vienna and Barcelona are two different skate communities under different aspects but we are all part of the same because we do skate and we have this thing in common. Now, almost one year after, I can say it was a good decision. Coming into my field without have never being in the position of a filmer or a photographer would have been a bad idea. Reality is subjective and when recorded it gives a feeling of being more real, however a reality which is absolute objective, and in so saying “true”, does not exists because we are just human beings and we perceive reality within our own body and social environments which define our mind and our identity. We understand reality just by the experiences, teaching, educations, relations and numbers. But also numbers have their limits on reality and the visual too. Working with visuals in the skateboarding field opened up my understanding in how the skateboarding system works.

Of course I was a bit anxious the first times because at the beginning in Barcelona I had to define my identity in the community and let the people know me. But after some tries I have managed it and relearned (for the almost infinite time) that this kind of fears, the fear of the unknown and the inexperienced are useless.

I ask verbally for consent before if I take the picture or sometimes after I have taken it. Till now everybody agreed and most of them were wondering why I was asking.

I also have seen that individuals generally film and photograph without asking for permission.

When I skate it happened to me, in Vienna and in Barcelona, that random people photograph or films me, sometimes it bothers me and I go speak directly with the interested person. But sometimes I do not care.

In skateboarding there are no rules regarding privacy or this kind of things at its best everything is recorded and nobody asks, but it is not only in skateboarding, it is in the world generally. Also, I normally take pictures when I feel like it is the right moment. I did not feel there were or there are any restrictions regarding photography in skateboarding.

Videos, photos and magazines are one of the biggest feature in skateboarding. It is due to this tool of communication that skateboarding has expanded itself worldwide in so little time. I have chosen to work with analog photography, is my personal choice and makes me reflect more on the momentum of what am I capturing and the picture itself. The moment gets a different perception since I pay the film, the development, the scan and technical errors. Analog is a different process then digital and I personally prefer analog. Nonetheless, both analogical and digital visual tools are present in the skateboarding scene. I have collected media in both paper and online form, also by asking suggestions from my informants.

The visual material I collected aims to will visually explain a part of reality I have chosen to capture. I will describe the context the picture is in and analyze how skateboarding is from an insider perspective. I will explain and offer a visual supplement so that the reader can imagine the reality of my field also with a visual help.

3. Skateboarding as a transnational community

Skaters manifest their social acting and grouping as they conceive of themselves as a “community”. I see the skater community as a locally specific community that manifests itself visibly and audibly on the streets of Barcelona and also with events and video-premiere. Moreover, the Barcelonese skate community is also a transnational community that is enacted physically and mediatically through individuals all around the world. In the capital city of skateboarding there are also skaters which come to live to the city for a limited period of time, on vacation, just for skateboarding practices and lifestyle.

Because of this reflections and theories regarding skateboarding as a local and transnational community I have asked:

How does the skate community manifest itself in Barcelona?

In this chapter, I follow the interpretation of “community” as examined by Cohen: the sections thereafter focus on the narratives of community as articulated by the members themselves. Aside from interview fragments, I will explain which symbols of community the members share – what is being a skater, what is skateboarding, the role of visual representation, the sponsors, the gatherings, the premieres. Additionally, I aim to describe which narratives does the skateboarding culture present, questioning which boundaries demarcate the community transnationally – they are defined by the meaning of skateboarding, which is a fluid concept, but it is demarcate by the depiction of the performative practices, of the manifestation of communal activities.

I speak of community as a system of meanings which are defined by its culture. As Cohen affirms, in order to describe a community and how it works its fundamental to delineate its boundaries which consequently depicts the symbolic behavior of its individuals and functions as a compass for the individual’s orientation into the nowadays globalized society and into the own’s life (cf. Cohen 1985: 99).

I explain what is skateboarding and how this activity is embedded into the market, additionally I underline that the visual is an outcome of skaters interactions and is both: a tool for the market and a form of art.

Thereafter, I describe why Barcelona has become through time the “Mecca of Skateboarding”, or better the epicenter of a transnational community and report some first hand talks I had with some of my interview partners.

Through my studies, my experiences, my fieldwork I have understood that everyone lives within their own reality made by meanings – which some are structured in form of institutions to create the frames of the common reality that is called society. Cultural and social anthropology focuses on examining realities-patterns through other's acting and doing, through their representations and interpretations of the world. Additionally, the outcome, the product, the paper, the research, the analysis, aim to transmit in understandable, scientific manners a reality from A to B, from the research object the anthropologists looks through other's realities, describes it, transmit it to the reader, which could live in a completely different reality, with different life experiences, social status, commodities and historical backgrounds.

3.1. Context and setting

In order to give the reader a perception on skateboarding as a transnational community, I firstly want to introduce a description of what this activity actually is.

Once, I was writing my thesis in a social club, which is strongly frequented by skaters, and one of them was sitting near to me so I spontaneously asked to P., male, from Chile, born in 1996, “what is skateboarding?” and he answered me: “Skateboarding is a nation, you can go wherever with your board and you will find your people, in Chile, in Perú, in Colombia, here in Barcelona, the skate-capital. Skateboarding is like a family, the passion that we like, we are sharing something pure, like searching for our energy. [...]. The pro [professional skaters] celebrates also the easiest tricks because they know that it is difficult. [...]. Every person manifest its art in skateboarding but at the end we get together on the streets to overcome each the own's self.”

Skateboarding was born around the 50s-60s in California when surfers took a smaller board and went surfing on concrete. In the 70s the structure, the form of the board developed and adapted even more. Before the 90s skateboarding in the streets was “freestyle skateboarding”, you basically danced on your skate more or less stationary, you did not jump around the city, you just stayed on a single place and made some spinning (Mortimer, Mullen 2005). Around the end of the 80s and through the 90s skateboarding evolved more in the one we see nowadays in the streets, mostly thanks to some skilled skaters, like Rodney Mullen and others, who were the first to perform some board rotations, like kickflip [your body stays in the same position but you jump and under your feet your board rotate 360 degrees on the horizontal axis of the board] and many other tricks, which

remained in history iconic and symbolic tricks, like caballeria, darkslide, the 900, and many more which were visually reproduced and spread worldwide to other skaters (Ibid.).

The development of technology, the VHS, the CDs, the Internet, Youtube, the arrival of the videogames, it all made possible the spread of the culture transnationally.

Moreover, visual skate material gave the observer the possibility to expand their own imagination and knowledge on skateboarding. Nonetheless, skate-videogames dictated a transnational dictionary: for skaters to learn the names of all this tricks and understand their differences. Once learned the terms of the skate-language, made by the names of the performances but also from urban slang, the skater will reproduce the same terms in discourses with other skaters.

Skateboarding was born as an underground movement, mostly composed by marginalized youth in society (cf. Arasau 2020, 30). Underground cultures develop in social recesses, in the suburbs and in degraded neighborhoods. The desire to detach from social conventions gives life to this kind of movements, there is a propensity to break the rules, to do something that is forbidden by the law of the system or by social norms, which mostly is the first cause of the ghettoized and marginalized situation they are in. The underground cultures were and still are a reaction to the visible, rigidly programmed, organized and institutionalized society. However, this irrepressible transgressiveness is a consequence of the given – historicized, institutionalized – social role of constituting the common ground in which the society's destructive and unmoral tensions converge with the survival necessity of the younger generations to search of an area of belonging, of an enlarged and shared identity in which to recognize common symbols and languages and acquire a role, if positive or negative depends from the point of views, in society (cf. Ibid.).

Skaters sometimes get stopped by the police, the security guards and even civil people because they are not allowed by the law to do this practice everywhere they want. It is common to “get kicked off” while doing skateboarding in the streets: sometimes because of the noise, sometimes because they just do not want you, sometimes because they do not know what you are doing, sometimes because you ruin the structure while performing tricks on it.

According to my observations and field experiences I describe skateboarding as the practice of riding on a skateboard, a piece of wood with four wheels and two trucks. On it you can make tricks, like jumping, kicking it and spin it, rotate your body while flipping it, grab it with your hands; every direction and combination of movements counts and names a different trick. Additionally, the board

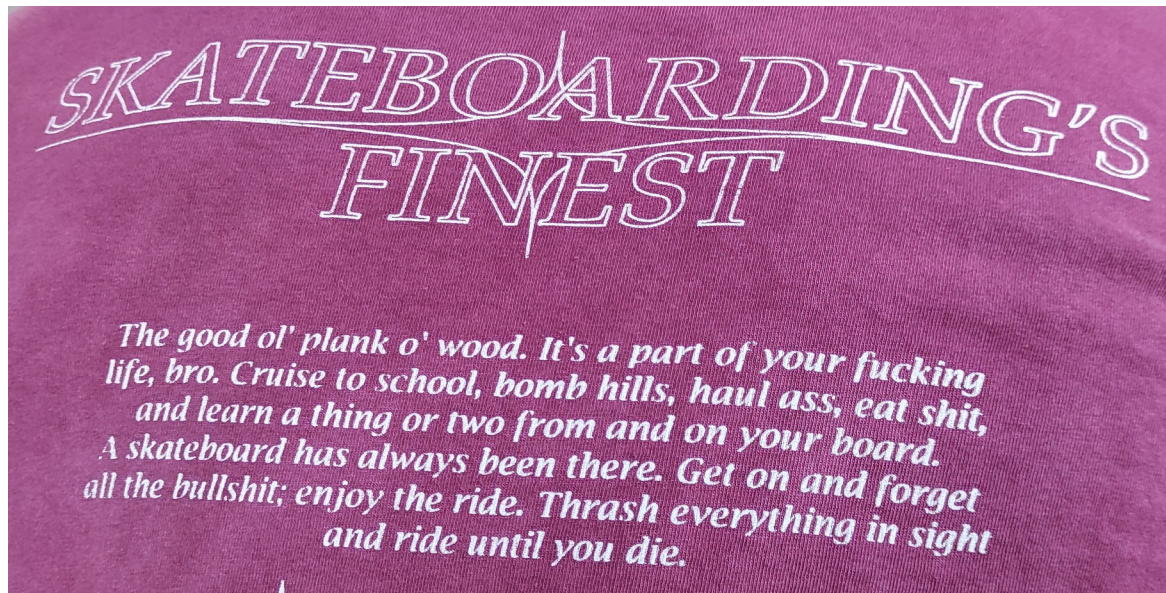
as the piece of wood itself is composed by the nose, tail and the part between the two trucks, you can combine the movements with slides of the board or grinds of the trucks or just balancing on one truck. Moreover, where, on which object, on which spot, do you do the trick, influences the variability of skateboarding and on the tricks variations. Is it on flat, on a bank, on a rail, a ledge, a drop, a quarter, a halfpipe, a bowl, a wall, a manypad, a gap, some stairs, a pyramid?

Nowadays, there are more and more skateparks flowering around the world: institutionalized skate places, where skaters have a defined space to skate. However, the streets are full of this kind of forms which make the urban ground an almost infinite playground for skaters. Skateboarding on the streets is different then skateboarding in a skatepark, on the streets you shall skate whatever, you can be more creative, since the streets differs more in kind of objects and objects sequences as a skatepark. But in the skatepark you are by the rules allowed to stay there, then the space is entitled to you is another kind of discourse.

Likewise, skateboarding is a performance, you are watched by the people around you when you skate and generally skaters want to record their tricks visually, for themselves and also to post it on social media like Instagram or YouTube and/or to create a video-clip to share with friends or in a premiere.

Skateboarding is also defined as an extreme sport, a lifestyle, a pastime, a gateway to creativity, a form of art, a way to define your own identity. In order to learn a new movement you have to practice, to believe you can land it, to commit and then you have already done it. If you want to overcome the barrier between what your body and your self already knows and what you do not know, throw yourself, spring, then mostly you fall and fail, you get frustrated, demotivated, you can hurt yourself, you can break your body, but eventually if you put your will and your energy you are going to make it. The practice of skateboarding strengthen values like self confidence, a positive attitude, perseverance, determination and trust.

Additionally, I found the following definition of skateboarding printed on the T-shirt from an Italian professional skate-filmer, Ronco, he told me that this definition is taken from Urban dictionary, I searched on that website but I did not find that exact definition anymore but a similar one, anyways I took a picture:



IMG 1: “Skateboarding finest: The good old plank of wood. It’s a part of your fucking life, bro. Cruise to school, bomb hills [when you cruise downhill], haul ass, eat shit [when you fall and fail] and learn a thing or two from and your own board. A skateboard has always been there [you can always skate it does not matter where you are or how you feel, you can go skate]. Get on and forget all the bullshit: enjoy the ride. Thrash everything in sight [don’t look on what is not your goal but focus on what you want and go for it] and ride until you die.”

Likewise, I have found the following definition on Urban dictionary: “Skateboarding: the worlds greatest sport, art, lifestyle, and complete and utter freedom ever known to mankind” (Urban Dictionary 2022: online).

I am letting the reader interpret this two definitions as they feel, they are not objective, but the most of the skaters would agree with it. I specify that every person is different and has a different life-story, not every skater will skate till she/he/them die, but for sure this two statements describe what skateboarding is in its pure form. Then of course, we live in a capitalist system and every individual needs to adapt her/his/their life to the system (most likely to have some kind of job and a household) and will take a personal approach to skateboarding.

A skater is an individual who not only rides a skate but defines and redefines what skating is. Skaters presents different styles which depends not only from how a person appearance is, but also by the way and the place the person performs the tricks. Also, some skaters can prefer a baggy style

some more a tight, what they wear, from the shoes to the hat, has an influence on the outward presence. Along arise the question on how the very own individual has been influenced by the kind of the (skate-)environment experienced in life.

Nonetheless, skateboarding is an individual relation to a piece of wood with wheels and you can make tricks out of it. This relation is manifested by the acting, the process of playing, of learning: landing tricks confronts you with your fears, emotions and personality.

Although, the history of skateboarding was never written in its whole. It presents differences transnationally within its culture. You can grasp its essence in different ways, inquiring different persons, crews, brands, video-clips, films, magazines, photos, that have marked the skateboarding history because they were renowned. How? Mostly through the propagation of information and respective visual material shared in different forms like magazines, VHS, on Youtube and the propagation of gatherings/events like demo, contests, jam sessions, premieres.

Nowadays, skateboarding is becoming mainstream, due to the impact of social media the circulation of the skate-content has improved exponentially. Furthermore, skateboarding was a kind of a possible practice during the Corona-lockdown, since you can do it alone also in your backyard or in the street in front of your house. Likewise, since skateboarding has joined the Olympics (2020, but actually in 2021) it gained a global recognition as a sport and it is not more interpreted as an outcasts activity. Skateboarding was absolutely not considered as a socially accepted activity from the general public, more a criminal, since in the 90s-00s and was more related to drugs, demolition, devastation, underground culture, punk, parties, illegal practices and so on. However, it is confirmed from a lot of informal conversation I had with skaters in the past years but also from academic material and also non-profit organizations, like “Concrete Jungle Foundation” and “WAW: Wonders Around the World”, that skateboarding has a huge positive social impact since it operates at the margin of the society: “Skateboarding saved my life” is also a saying in the community. Skateboarding gives you a community, friends, a feeling of belonging but also a performative activity, a sport, a movement to hold on when everything around you is not going well. Moreover, since skateboarding is perceived as an underground culture it affects and involve the youngsters that can be affected by different traumas and do not have the social and familiar capability of dealing with it.

Overall, the interviews and conversations I had with skaters in Barcelona taught me that skateboarding has improved the life of many. Of course, there are other activities which stimulates

creativity and joy, like music and may more, but skaters have chosen skateboarding as a tool to appreciate or try to appreciate the ride of life and sometimes to get some kind of recognition from it.

3.1.1. The market and the visual

The capitalist system is the constant environment we are in as humanity. An individual can try to manage money and consume in a more responsible way, but it is a fact that we are all affected by the system, the climate crisis, exploitative core-periphery structures, global economic and financial relations, power elites, are just some aspects of the neocolonialist era we are in. Individuals have fully adapted their life to the perpetual chain of consumerism and production and as such skateboarding too has defined its own way into the system and its market.

Through my fieldwork and experience, I have notice two kind of categories of visual propagation, so called media, which utilize the visual as a neoliberalized agent but also as a form of culture. These two are namely, video-clips and magazines, which are at the mercy of the neocolonialist and global capitalist system but are a form of creative expression which, in its happening, consequently entail a manifestation and ongoing transformation of a transnational community.

Additionally, the state of sponsoring and being sponsored, influences the production of the visual material and its circulation. Sponsors are brands who gives materials to chosen skaters so that they can make video-clips with them and in so doing making advertisement. There is a huge amount of brands who sponsors skaters nowadays, like Real, Antihero, Baker (board brands), Vans, Adidas, Nike (mostly for shoes) and some are local skateshops or local owned boards brands. Nonetheless, there is a huge amount of skate brands, for trucks, bearings, wheels, boards, shoes, clothes.

When skaters perform skateboarding on a good level they could get sponsored by a brand and they will take care to deliver to that mark visual material that will be used for marketing purposes.

Visual material is fundamental for marketing purposes and in order to collect that skaters take care to deliver to the brand skate-clips and/or photos. Additionally, the brand itself is financing a skate-tour – with professional filmers and recording material – in order to film the best tricks you can land and create a video to screen for the community.

Although, the filming and the production of a video-clips happens not only because of advertisement reasons, but also because it is a part of skateboarding. Skaters are in the streets, with their crew, their group, to film skate tricks or just to skate and gather. Skateboarding performances

get filmed, with the phone or a digital or analogical video-camera, for creating a clip for Instagram or for a bigger project, like a video for a premiere.

Furthermore, it is common to skaters to post a clip on Instagram and tag the defined brand so that they can repost it. The individual shares their products through the own profile and image.

I examine Instagram, the magazines, the videoclips, the premieres, the gatherings as a product, as an outcome of humans activities interacting with each other and categorizing reality.

I feel to add that not every skater films her/his/their tricks only for posting it on social media, but it is a matter of notice that this media has a massive influence on the spreading of skate-clips on a transnational level.

Another visual product present in the skate market consist of skate-magazines, which exist in paper but also as an online form, they reproduce videos on their platform, like on Youtube or on their web-site, they finance skate-clips sometimes. Like in every magazine there is advertisement in it, skate advertisement of course. When a skater gets filmed for a defined sponsor there are the filmers filming (sometimes you have more then one angle/one filmer for one trick) but there are also photographers taking pictures. This photos gets in the magazines, sometimes as advertisement, sometimes just as photos.

To summarize, not only having sponsors but also getting visual material to transmit, watching skate-clips are symbolic characteristic of the community. Premieres, gatherings or just simply skate with your friends are boundary-making aspects which create the network of the community.

3.2. The Barcelonean skate scene as a local and transnational community

In Barcelona there are people from all over the world also because the urban public spaces of this city are mostly skateable. Other capital cities in the world too present a strong skateboarding response which is shaping the perspective and branding of the city itself, like Los Angeles, Copenhagen and many more. However, Barcelona is considered one of the best ones, because it is in Europe, in the First World, which means that the city presents opportunities for Central and South American individuals to migrate. Likewise, the sunny weather, the beach, the coffee shops, the nightlife are also attractive characteristics of the city itself which skaters generally speaking, do enjoy.

Furthermore, the transnational process of skateboarding is strongly present in Barcelona, professional skaters too are attracted to its streets. From my fieldwork experience and interviews with my informants. With the beginning of the 70s Barcelona start to develop a metropolitan urban development Barcelona undertook an urban-architectonic renovation: the hosting of the Summer Olympics in 1992 and the project “Barcelona ponte Guapa” (Barcelona make yourself beautiful) from 1985 to 2001 consequently comported the building of new urban structures – like stairs, banks, ledges – transforming the Catalan city into the perfect playground for skaters. This renewal made Barcelona, during the 90s-00s, one of the most attractive cities in the world for skateboarding

F., born in 1996, male, from Italy: “Barcelona has deep significance for skaters. There are so many people. Because the Olympics were held in here in 1992 and the city was filled with architecture that suits us. People have been coming here for the spots for the last twenty years. Javier Sarmiento, Daniel Lebron, Jesus Fernández, are just some names of the ones who went to America in the late 90s and filmed in Los Angeles but they were also skating in Barcelona and have stood out skating also in Barcelona. That’s it, it attracted the Americans, the first connections were created between the pros, the Americans and the locals. In the early 2000s came out an incredible amount of clips and then it Barcelona became a “Mecca”. They come here and some stay here to live. [...]. For me here is the apotheosis of the skate community as it should be, as naturally as it should be. The level doesn't matter anymore, the relationship with people is more important. [...]. Also the skate is a means of transport but there is something that binds you when you meet another skater. For everyone it is what he wants in the end. Now it's becoming something normal, mainstream, children who do it with their parents, parents who tell their child what to do....”

Moreover, in my fieldnotes, I have tried to describe the ongoing days of a skater and I wrote:

“When you get out from your home you jump on your skate and start to push, you meet your friends and basically you skate the whole day, if you do not feel like skating anymore, you can always take some time for yourself or do something else, like graffiti, go to the beach or in a coffee shop. Of course not everybody can skate everyday, the most skaters I have already spoken with in Barcelona affirmed to have a job, study or both, but also some do not work and do not study, they enjoy their freetime. Furthermore, your body get injured and tired so it is really important to take some days-off in order to rest.”

Also, I see the importance of the grouping and gathering of skaters in the streets, as a social pastime but also as a fundamental characteristic for the positive development of the skate performance itself. Skaters hang out on the streets most of the time, some skate, some drink, some smoke, some film. With time different constellations of grouping find places, some however will meet more frequently and establish a stronger affect relationship, creating so “a crew”. They hang together as often as they can and film together in order to produce visual material. There is the saying: “landing tricks, stacking clips”. The hype of the crew, the fact that your friends are there with you function as a support in trying to achieve what you want, sometimes when you struggle, the incitement, the love from others, they transmit energy to you and it helps to land a trick. You will not easily surpass your own boundaries without the presence and the energy of others.”

3.2.1. MACBA

If you ever go to Barcelona, go to MACBA, the Museum of Contemporary Art, although you do not need to go inside the museum, stay outside and take a look at the skateboarding performances that take place there. MACBA is world-wide famous as one of the best skate-spots in the world, due to its flat and its structures, gaps, stairs, ledges and the so called “big-three”. Professional skateboarders from all around the world too go there, strengthening the hype surrounding Barcelona, which is real and inspires skaters on a daily basis. Thus, Barcelona present an active local community, with premieres, skateshop and events, and is the epicenter for the transnational skateboarding scene.

The Plaza de los Ángeles, so called MACBA, taking the name of the museum, is a transnational reference for street skateboarding. This urban space is characteristic also for being an area of innovative urban policies and control: “when designing the whole city, [the plaza] masks the purpose of filtering complexity, encoding the space and reducing the urban stress. Thus, the current analysis is intended to recognize that the apology to spontaneous appropriations have a close relationship with the super-organized and opulent societies, and with the necessity of developing antagonistic practice.” (Fontes 2010, online)

It is common to see in MACBA junkies, skaters, some tourists and you could probably see people stealing, fighting, even with objects, like bottles and knives, but it is also a space where different people unite for spending time with different activities. The individuals feel the stress of the urbanized and organized society which oppressively structures the one’s identity and within present injustices and historic institutionalized forms of violence. They reappropriate of this public space, doing within the activities they want, then as it is an open space, public control can get access and regulate their activities.

The appropriation of public spaces, the spaces “for all”, is for the individuals an opportunity to redefine their free time-space, if in the plaza they want to skate, to dance, to perform, to act, is possible, also to communicate in forms of verbal and physical fights. Additionally, people who lives on the streets, which some consume crack and heroin, can spend their time on this space too.

IMG 2-3-4: People in MACBA some skating, some “chilling”.

(from Piconese, 05.2023, Plaza de los Ángeles, Raval, Barcelona)



3.2.2. Photo history: skateboarding in the streets

At the end of May 2023 I went street skateboarding with Dave, Kevin, Evan, Frank, Jechu and Dadi, we went to Artigues Sant Adrià, a rural district outside the city center and walked all around to see the spots. For street skateboarding sometimes you know where you go sometimes you just go in an area and look what is around.

In the following picture you will see Kevin doing a nollie heelflip in the bank. This trick was in a line [in a sequence of tricks, he performed], which you will see when the clip is out – increase the difficulty of the tricks and affirm the capability of the skater.

Behind, in a blue T-shirt, you will see Dave, recording with his VX videocamera [with cassette, which gives then at the outcome itself, the video-clip an artistic “old-school touch”]

Look at the board under Kevin’s feet, look at the bank and their proximity to the stairs. One month later, when I have developed the picture I have contacted Kevin and asked him if it was a heelflip [you pop, when you press the board on the ground to create the resistance energy that will make it jump, with your back foot and kick the board on its horizontal axis on its backside direction with the front foot] or a nollie heel [you pop with your front foot and kick with your back foot, the pop is on the nose of the board and because of that named “nollie”].

Kevin, his board, the trick, is exactly above the left boarder of the bank which connects with the stairs. He stands between an illustrative form of “life and death” of “making it or not making it”, since the bank is tight and he could land the trick into the stairs and being thrown by physic forces on the ground, but for Kevin would not be a problem, since he is a skater and that is what skaters do. Moreover, he already slammed some tries before, he is trained and practice constantly, he is not afraid to fall, he is used to fall.

But Kevin made it, he landed the trick, the try of the following shot, everybody was extremely exited and amazed by Kevin’s capacities, also because in the moment of the picture he cached the board in the air and redirected it into the bank and he landed extremely near to the boarder. I have asked him how he made it? And he told me: “I believed till the end.”



IMG 5: Kevin nollie heel, at the limit of the possible.
(from Piconese, 05.2023, Artigues Sant Adria, Barcelona)



IMG 6: seeing the recorded material, the landed trick, is a communal celebration moment.

(from Piconese, 05.2023, Artigues Sant Adria, Barcelona)



IMG 7: We moved a bit forward and we found some others spots, here Jechu looking at the green down-ledge and wondering if she would ever come back for trying a noseslide. She has all the skills of making it just she did not want to try it that moment and that is alright, you do not have to skate and prove your skills every time, just when you want and you feel like, you can also just chat with your friends the whole day.

(from Piconese, 05.2023, Artigues Sant Adria, Barcelona)



IMG 8:

We moved a bit more around and we found another spot, now Frank was recording Dave, which was performing a 5050 on a rail.

(from Piconese, 05.2023, Artigues Sant Adria, Barcelona)

IMG 9: after the landing, all watching the clip, to enjoy the moment and the happening of the trick.

(from Piconese, 05.2023, Artigues Sant Adria, Barcelona)



In this photo-story there are no photos of girls performing tricks, also if we were in three. We did not feel like to skate and to record the tricks, but we skated a bit around.

In the next chapters the reader will see also pictures of girls performing.

3.3. Premieres as transnational community gatherings

Events are an important site of community-making for skaters in Barcelona. This is because they are announced skate gatherings and everyone can participate. Events can be skate jams, contests with live music, magazine releases, premieres. Below, I focus on one type of event that is particularly important in the skate community generally, namely premieres.

Premieres are similar to a premiere of a film, only it is not a normal film, is a skate video, but the premiere is when the filmer shows his audiovisual work to the community and is a moment of gathering and celebration.

Skate-premieres are the natural outcome of the manifestation of the skate-community: a group of skaters meets regularly on the streets, skate and film, with the recorded video material they cut a clip with music and when finished they show it locally to the skate community. The location of a premiere can be everywhere, in a bar, a cinema, a park with a projector, a DIY (“do it yourself”: self-managed skate-spaces). After the screening of the video, people drink and speak: the party starts.

Premieres find place almost every weekend in Barcelona and sometimes there are more than one at the same day. Skaters gather in the evening in a location with a projector and a skate video get screened – different length mostly from 10 minutes to 1 hour. The gathering is composed by skaters but also friends, family or business-related people. They smoke, drink and converse and sometimes there is music and people dance or sometimes when the video is finished people just move with their friend in another place.

“Labirinto” is a one hour long skate video, representing the Brazilians community, you can watch it on Youtube, from the channel Labirintosv.

This premiere found place on the 10th December 2022 and it was in a cinema in an occupied building in Barcelona. The cinema was full so I suppose there were around 100 people or more. We had popcorn, water and juice for free. Outside the cinema I have spoke with different groups of

people, Chileans, Brazilians, Italians, but there were of course many more I did not speak with. At this premiere there were also children and wives from skaters.

The skate-video/film started at 20:00 around 20:40 there was half an hour break (for smoking) and then other 30 minutes of video. The filmer Bruno Rocha filmed for 5 years, 2018-2019-2020-2021-2022, in Sao Paolo, Lisboa and in Barcelona, mostly Brazilians but also Italians and probably other South Americans skaters. The songs which accompanied the videos were some from Brazilians rappers, strong lyrics, speaking about the reality of Sao Paolo. In the video the military in SP was represented, on a tank with a soldier on it shooting and then a skater skating.

At this premiere there were people from all the places and was also transnational in itself because it was screened in Barcelona, but also a week later in Sao Paolo and in Lisboa – I have seen the events on Instagram.

I went to another premiere, “Newèn”, from the Chileans, on the 16th December 2022, in a social club. “Newèn” means energy and comes from the language of the Mappuches, an indigenous population in Chile.

I arrived at 18:00 went inside, is like a bar, we played janga, uno and other cards. We were Chileans, Italians, Argentinians, speaking and playing together. At 20:00 the premiere started, we sat on the floor, in front of the screen from the projector. There were like 50 people. There were three videos of 10 minutes each. The first video was an artistic clip with urban and natural images but also skate tricks. The second video you have to watch it is called “Sacandome la Chucha” which means when you fall and get hit strongly but you make a big effort to get up again. The video is representing Jetchu and her story with migration struggles. The video was filmed by a Portuguese skater girl.

The third video was “Newèn”, a clip representing the new Chileans skaters immigrated to Barcelona through skateboarding. The Chilean skate community presented their new immigrated skater-friends from Chile. Some cried. After the premiere, people smoked and they all went eating.

In these two examples of premieres underlined above I underline the importance of premieres as gatherings for the creation and maintenance of social skate relations. The screening is an epic moment, all watching together the performances of other skaters, perhaps your friend. Or perhaps the video-clip in the premiere is even showing your own tricks and you share it with others. Premieres are moments of sharing skateboarding and in so doing creating a reproduction of culture which remains in the intrinsic narrative of the community itself.

3.4. Summary

Barcelona is different from any other cities in the world for skaters because of the intensity and the speed of its specific transnational flow made possible by the architectonic urban structure of the city and relations within the skateboarding market. Due to this characteristics I depict the skate community of Barcelona active as a local and transnational community

The material presented in this chapter aims to explain the boundaries of a community which is in a fluid, transnational, global field; illustrating some fundamental meanings of its culture.

In this chapter I have described the context and setting in which skateboarding is in, underlining the importance of visual material and the influence of the market.

Gatherings like video-premieres, contests, skate jams but also the simple skate session with your friends are an important site of community-making. I have chosen to depict skateboarding in Barcelona with the narrative above chosen, mostly because this has directly grown from my fieldwork experiences. And a bit from my personal and direct background and involvement in skateboarding which gave me the possibility to access to some information or reflections more easily.

I have followed theoretical frameworks regarding descriptions and interpretations of a transnational community but also as articulated by its members themselves.

Through my fieldwork I have understood that this chapter could be expanded even more questioning the environment of non-European migrant skaters but also I still ask how it changes within the years.

4. Gender aspects in skateboarding

The nowadays world has historically established itself through the patriarchal system – the domination of men in public aspects of society and even more in the ones of decision taking position. This societal categorization strategy was reinforced by colonialism and Christianity. As I have already mentioned in the chapter “1. Theoretical frameworks”, patriarchy reinforces the binary conception of gender, depicting women as more fragile, less powerful and connects them with kinship-caring. It is a system of domination and hierarchization which is a trans-historical and trans-cultural phenomenon – women and non-binary people were more or less oppressed in different places and cultures and in different times in history.

Gender is a fundamental aspect of my research since it affects each individual in a social system. The practice of skateboarding happens as a performance in public urban spaces and in the history of mankind, women had a different access to public spaces as men. Gender meanings shape the behavior of individuals, how to act, to believe, to make sense of their experience and how to think about themselves personally. Indeed, these constructed meanings are shifting nowadays, including to the binary female/male structure a queer one. Moreover, typical historically constructed “men behaviors”, like being strong and brave can be attributed to women too and typical “girls behaviors”, like beings sensible and emotional can be attributed to men too.

Additionally, we see this progress with feminism and the manifestation of the queer community. Although, the improvement of female rights is still at its beginning worldwide – let’s only consider abortion rights, sex education, education on consent just to make some examples. Themes like gender pay-gap and other forms of gendered inequalities, domestic and sexual violence or abuse are a matter of discussion on media nowadays but specifically in groups of women. Furthermore, transgender-rights, the acceptance of homosexuality and queerness are at its dawn and we only will see in the future this social evolution.

Masculinity is an aspect that has defined skateboarding though history and female were not entitled to skateboarding as men were and they were considered less capable. Yet, in the same structure of the patriarchal society, which forged the nowadays world, the same gendered meanings are present. Skateboarding reflects gendered meaning of society.

My main question asks *how do women and NB skaters define their presence into the skate community of Barcelona*, since women were a strong minority in the community in the past and

through time they have redefined – and still are redefining – its boundaries. I analyze the development of the sub-community of women and NB skater through the following sub-questions:

How has the role of women and NB persons in the transnational skate community changed, since the inception of this community in the 1970s until the present?

How is the women and NB skate community of Barcelona? And how did it come into being?

How do women and NB skaters experience and redefine gender norms in the skate community of Barcelona?

4.1. The presence of women in the transnational skateboarding community

Doing “crazy” or kind of extreme actions were strongly reflected in visual-skate. American culture’s behaviors were marketized by brands and transmitted along with skateboarding performances on Youtube and MTV. Activities like, performing tricks, drinking, smoking, partying, having an extreme life and sexualizing the perception of the body are typical behaviors represented in visual skate material. Nonetheless, skateboarding comes into being as an underground culture, a counterculture, where the desires to detach from social conventions, to fight norms or flee from the system are present. Skaters, “back in the days”, were for choice or not at the margin of society. Their position into the perception of the mainstream has changed through time and it has been mostly influenced by the spread of visual skate-products and their consequential adaptation into the market. These factors have operated as propagators of the culture transnationally and consequently uniting more and more participants into its culture.

Women were never new in skateboarding, or better, since the beginning of its narrative there was one woman into a crew of men, for instance in the 70s, Peggy Oki in the Zboys – a Californian crew that has laid the foundations of the history of skateboarding. Additionally, another important milestone was put by Alissa Steamer from USA, the first woman who became pro (“professional”) for a board brand, namely “Toy Machine”, in 1996. In the past women could be into a crew (of men) but not every group, or every region, or every nation, had a girl which performed skateboarding. As a matter of notice, the gender bias in skateboarding was enormous and is starting to close. Women, were never completely new to the sport but they were really a few in comparison

to nowadays.

For instance, the 2000s have slowly brought to a development in the visibility of women in skateboarding. In 2003 Jen O'Brien and Cara-Beth Burnside (two USA's skaters that got a kind of visibility in the skate-scene) convinced ESPN – an American sport channel – for inclusion for women in the worldwide-known contest created in 1995: the X Games, securing a women's demo in 2002 and a women's division in 2003. However, in 2005 women boycotted the X Games because male winners earned 25 times more than their female counterparts. In 2008, Burnside and Mimi Knoop (another USA's skater) created 'Hoopla', the first female-focused skate company, in order to support female visibility in skateboarding. Other skate brands were not sponsoring women-skaters and they wanted to provide support, encourage and sponsor other women (cf. MasterClass 2021, online). Additionally, in the international competition "SLS", Street Skateboarding League, one of the most prestigious competitions worldwide, the women division was insert in 2016, but the contest itself was founded in 2010.

For example, if you type on Youtube "Skate like a girl, Pushing Forward", which is a video documenting the project 'skate like a Girl' in 2018, in USA, where the professional skateboarder Vanessa Torres affirms: "My introduction to skateboarding was something like: Oh men do this and women don't. Society was like oh that's not something a girl should be doing. [...] I was the only woman that was part of that team. There are moments maybe the first four or five years of skating that I questioned whether or not I should be doing this [...] earlier on that was a challenge for me just not really seeing anybody that looked like me. When you can't relate how could you feel like you belong. [...] skate parks are a really a tough place to go and learn especially as female it's just kind of like all eyes are on you you can sense right away its immediate judgment like how good is she, can she skate?"

A skater girl I have interviewed, from Algeria, born in 1984, with 26 years of skateboarding experiences, affirms: "Before there where no girls. Maybe one per country, or four, now it is almost even, it is market. Before skateboarding was really street, a subculture and was really a closed community. But at the end skateboarding is about what you do, having fun then the energy shines, I have really enjoyed it. [...]. Nowadays it is a trend, women are a trend, we were put down in society, people of color, women..., and now they are trying to do something about it. It is a bit overwhelming. Before they did not utilize women in the market because they did not really get it that girls can be in skate too, now they get it and women are in the skate market, it is a different world from when we started. It was such a men club, I was very strange and special because I was a

friend. They are against gay but they love each other ((laughing)) all these cool dudes! Grow up testosterone-men and they put a girl inside and then they do not know how to react anymore! [...]. The moment you become accepted [so to say sponsored], you become a product. It does not matter the gender. Even back in the days, because you represent brands. When I was pro I was wearing man stuff, I was accepted but how do you identify, if even the clothes you have to wear are for men. How can you identify? I mean, at the end you do it because you want to skate and want to be included. But now we make man clothes our clothes: we appropriate. But back then there was no understanding in being a woman and this made me feel out of the box.”

The performance of skateboarding expanded and evolved through time worldwide, including more and more participants till it became mainstream. Nonetheless, it is recognized as a sport and entered the Olympics, for the first time ever, in 2021. Nowadays, there are courses with skate-teachers for everyone and everywhere, there are projects in the Third World or in warzones where skateboarding and its values are being transposed for the improvement of the well-being of the local community: skateboarding teaches courage and self-confidence, which is fundamental in order to face reality, especially out of the comfort-zone of the First World.

4.2. The presence of women skaters in Barcelona

Asíplanchaba was the first women and NB group in Spain and in Barcelona. It exists since 2008-2009 and was born as a female surf, snow and skate community, firstly as a blog online and then developed with more and more events. They did what skaters do, meet up, have a good time, go skate (snowboarding or surfing), filming tricks, making clips, going on skate trips together. They created and documented the first female skate community.

In an interview I had with Raísa Abal, the photographer of Asíplanchaba and of Dolores Magazine, affirmed: “In 2010 I saw a video of Asíplanchaba of the W. twins and Andre B. skating, and I said how heavy! How can it be that they do it? Or better, if there are girls who do it it has to be possible and I can do it too. [...].”

According to the interview with Raísa, Vero started Asíplanchaba with Claudia B. and Maria V. and was a snowboarding surfing and skating media because each one was specialized in a specialty.

In 2016 they made the first events like the international woman day in skate Agora, and others, like skate jams, just gather and go skate. Consequentially, they started to collaborate with Nike SB. Raisa adds: “I took photos because I was going to take them anyways, even if it [female representations in skate photos] didn't exist at all and we put it in the articles on the Asíplanchaba website [...]. Videos always come out, so if you go on Youtube there are like 150 videos, it's crazy eh, there are a lot of videos [...]. If they didn't do it, nobody did it!! That's why Vero ended up being a filmer and for me “Dolores” was supernatural because we went to skate every weekend [...] there was no goal, it was like, picking up the phone and calling each other to meet up.”

According to the informal talks I had with some participants they describe the community as inclusive, welcoming, empowering and supportive. Girls know how hard is to learn skateboarding, how strange it is to go at the park alone when you do not really know how to skate, when you are not confident. Additionally, the constant occurring of girls and NB skaters events, which are communicated through media, connected the individuals even more and the community strengthened itself and its boundaries. The reproduction of visual material through social media consolidate the presence of the sub-community of women into the community of (men) skaters.

On the 27th January 2023 I have invited Yulia at my place, which at that time was near plaza de Espanya, to have a brunch. Yulia was born in 2003, from Rusia but she is living in Spain since nine years and in Barcelona since five. She had a “shitty” skateboard from a supermarket when she was 12 but she never learned how to skate, she rolled on it with her brother. Only after the Covid quarantene she went to MACBA with a friend and: “my friend brought a girl who skated super well and did fips, for me it was, you know, I didn't know how to skate, for me it was professional! Before, it never occurred to me that there could be women! I mean, I knew there were but I've never seen them.”

Then I have asked if she follows women skateboarding on Instagram and she affirms: “Before I didn't look at Instagram because of skateboarding, I didn't get skate stuff on my page because I was not following the correspondent content. But now I see and follow many girls who skate on Instagram.”

After the interview we went to Sants DIY. We played a game of skate, a game where the person X (me or she in this case) shows a trick and then the other has to repeat it, if the first fails the second is on. But if the first masters the trick and the second fails, the second will get one letter from the word

SKATE. When one has completed the whole world she loses. Additionally, there are many variations of this game.

After that we skated in the DIY and I asked Yulia if I could get a picture of her performing a trick and she answered me she wanted to try a boardslide on a ledge and after some tries she made it and was very happy because she had never tried it before.



MG 10: Yulia, boardslide on a ledge.

(from Piconese, 01.2023, Sants DIY, Barcelona)

4.2.1. Gender norms

In this section I aim to describe experiences of gender norms and their redefinition in the transnational skateboarding community of Barcelona. Through my field participation in the last months I have noticed how women are trying to redefine their presence into skateboarding, hereafter, I am going to underline this manifestation.

Individuals directly or indirectly are affected by the patriarchal system. Women and NB persons are tired of experience a form of gender full of restrictions so they are redefining it, by saying that they are strong, brave, that they “can do it”. The creation of the women and NB skate community comported values like women support, empower and encourage each other. There is a lot of mediated and visual material that transmits the message that girls and NBs are better, stronger, more powerful when together.

In the first female and NB magazine of Portugal, “Betesega”, firstly published in April 2023, Leti, a Portuguese skater who lives in Barcelona since seven years and skates since 15 years affirmed in the interview: “I exist, this is who I am and this is my space too. I think that’s precisely why it is so empowering, we are not asking anyone for anything; we are coming and conquering what’s rightfully ours. [...]. Skateboarding is like love, is a universal feeling. [...]. Skateboarding is a subculture within a misogynist society, it is hard to escape misogyny wherever you go. The girl skate scene in Barcelona really inspires me, because there’s people with the vision and motivation to do things, like skating and documenting skateboarding. Nowadays, more then ever, skateboarding is a voice for minorities and we’re creating spaces for everyone. We’re changing up the status quo and that’s precisely what its always been about. But, up to recent years, skateboarding wasn’t really about inhabiting a safe space. It was and still is a space where we constantly have to reclaim our existence – like the society we live in.”

D. from Chile, born in 1996, affirms: “I feel that in general in these contests, championships, women are valued much less and they also discourage women from participating. Why should I expose myself if you have men, guys, looking, judging? And also the prizes they get are different, men get money women do not, or if they get some the price is not equal anyways, there is an inequality in the structure. Why participate then? Of course, all people are different, I try to get together with people who make me feel good and who make me feel comfortable.”

On, the 8th March 2023, C. and J., from Chile, came at my place, which at that time was near Sants, we ate and I had a combined interview with the two, born in 1996 and 1997, they have explained me that in Chile there are many girls who skate and that the group is called "better together".

One affirms: "my ex boyfriend used to skate and so he left me a board but it's not the same, he taught me, I don't know if he motivated me 100% and when I met other girls, it was more motivating there. [...]. We found a skate class from pure girls and there we have met many more girls, and we were going to skate spots in the streets [...]. It happened to me that my ex-boyfriend's friends were very good so when we went skating they skated for their owns. On one hand when you skate with women there is more camaraderie and when you get together with girls who are just learning there is the same vibe, we try things together, you support each others. On the other hand, a boy, who already knows a lot about skating, goes to skate to do his line and he doesn't care much. They also get angry when you interfere with their line and so you are more careful. With the girls there is more camaraderie, you know you are learning."

And the other adds: "In general I feel much more comfortable with girls, I also feel good with my friends, but when I go to a skatepark, there are like a lot of people I don't know and it's hard for you to take the first step. And when I started it cost me much more, besides the shame, also you don't know how to ride etc, it also happens to me a lot in Chile, you used to arrive at the park or spot and feel ashamed, now I don't feel that that much. But before, when a trick didn't come out, a guy always came to tell me how I have to do it, but not in a way so to teach something to me, more I felt it was as they needed to feel superior and because of that they are telling you what to do and how you have to do it. And of course there are days when nothing comes out [where you cannot do what you normally do]."

After the talk, we went to plaza de Espanya, where we had a meeting with other skaters, manly female and NBs. In the meanwhile:



*IMG 11: me, Cami and Javi arrived a plaza de Espanya and we noticed some stairs.
(from Piconese, 03.2023, Plaza de Espanya, Barcelona)*



*IMG 12: Cami, wanted to Ollie [jump straight, back foot pops, front foot moves foward in order to
lift the board], people looking from nearby.
(from Piconese, 03.2023, Plaza de Espanya, Barcelona)*



IMG 13: Cami falls, stands up, people curiously wondering, she trys again and she lands it, the trick was recorded in form of a video and then posted as an Insta story.

(from Piconese, 03.2023, Plaza de Espanya, Barcelona)

While we skated we noticed we were late and actually in the wrong spots, the gathering was happening nearby, so we rashly moved and reunite with the others for the women's day parade.

4.2.2. 8th March skate parade

On the international women's day, the Dolores Magazines together with "Juntas Mejores/ Better together" organized an event to reunite skatergirls and NB skaters in order to participate at the women's parade together.

The 7th March, the day before some of the participants have met in the office of Raisa to prepare some posters/signs, but when we arrived they were still preparing some others.

According to the local news, to this march participated 40,000 to 100,000 people. We have reunited near Plaza de Espanya and walked (we skated at the beginning) till Arco de Triumf following the march.



IMG 14: we met with the others, Raisa, Jechu and Ane among others. Reuniting and waiting for the parade to start.

(from Piconese, 03.2023, Plaza de Espanya, Barcelona)



*IMG 15: The preparation of one of the signs, “Skate and destroy the patriarchy”
(from Piconese, 03.2023, Plaza de Espanya, Barcelona)*



IMG 16: "La calle es nuestra/ The street is ours"
(from Piconese, 03.2023, Plaza de Espanya, Barcelona)



IMG 17: during the parade, dancing, screaming chores, showing signs.

(from Piconese, 03.2023, Plaza de Espanya, Barcelona)

One of the chores of the march, invented in Chile, by the Juntas Mejor group from Chile, says:
 “Tablazo! Tablazo! Tablazo pa el baron, tablazon al quien me toca sin autorizaci3n!”

“Tablazo” comes from “tabla”, which is “board”, “tablazo” means the act of utilizing the board with meaning of hitting, it is saying: “Throw the board on the baron [the mister] throw the board on who touches you without your authorization.”

More clear as that, expressed with words, a redefinition of boundaries.

Sexual violence, molestation are normal themes in groups of women. These things happens and it is important to speak up. Rape, sexual assault, patriarchal educational structures: all is visible in the transnational community of skateboarding. The social differences between women and men are brought into light in the manifestation of the skateboarding community.

I had an interview with a skatergirl who has been victim of rape, she told me that: “obviously there have been stressful situations, but you try to handle it well because we try to support each other and I don't feel like I can't deny space to another person when he makes me feel uncomfortable. [...]. I feel that in the end when you try to be calmer, like when you were a child, unconsciously you're happier, playing, and then you're older, more mature, and grabbing the skate is like playing another game again, being in that child-time.[...] in that period when I didn't skate I joined a feminist group at the university, as a support for the girls who study there [...] I felt that this has done me super good, the energy of many girls, like skating, but sometimes in skateboarding is difficult to maintain a group where activities come out because they all have to work or move places. The girls from Dolores here have been doing their jobs for many years, where I come from there is no support, the brands do not support girls so it was more difficult to continue doing.”

Another skater girl from Chile, born in 1997, affirms: “there are many boys who skate and are abusive, who were violent with friends, of course when you skate you feel uncomfortable because there you have the boy who violated a friend so in these situations we kicked him out of the skatepark. [...]. And the guys keep skating with the same group in the same place, also if they know everything, it doesn't seem to matter, that's still demotivating, very toxic, and they keep skating. It also generates a relapse, there were a lot of spots that we didn't go to because we knew those guys were there so they are going to reduce your space. Because they continue to live their normal life and do not care. Also in Chile on March 8th all the girls are going to skate together, as well as giving a focus to the skate community, to accompany, to break a little that machism that there is because between them they continue to copy each other's shoulders.”

Another skatergirl has been victim of sexual assault by the owner of the skateshop told me: “I would have ruined my relationship with the whole group because he was the one who took us around with the car, caravan, had the skate shop, gave us things, filmed us, so I was sure he would have excluded me from the group because they lived it super well and I, on the other hand, always had these things that annoyed me a lot so the desire to skate was stronger than anything else, because in that period I skated hard, I threw myself, I really believed I could go and do anything, there I tried a lot, but yes that thing slowed me down a lot because it wasn't exactly pleasant.”

This narratives enlighten the experiences of women skaters and some affects of the patriarchal structure on them. Their response is to support and empower women when confronted with problematic of entitlement in public spaces and in skateboarding but also with issues like rape and sexual assault.

4.3. The presence of NB persons in the transnational skateboarding community and in Barcelona

I analyze the women and NB skate community in Barcelona and investigate the construction, development and “doing” of gender in this group. Non-binary identities define people which could be transgender but also simply do not conform with gender norms, like a-genders, bi-genders and gender-fluid. Yet, the language itself is starting to shift now and the queer community is expanding. Thus, there is a difference between being a NB person and a woman, not always, a woman can be NB and a NB a woman. However, the category of “woman” is perceived differently in our society. For example, there is the toilet sign for women but is pretty rare to find a toilet sign for NB (in the mainstream society). There is a woman skate division in contests, but there is not one for NB: do trans-men compete with men or with women? And trans-women? They mostly do not compete because they do not feel accepted! We need to evolve!

The category of women is recognized in our society since the beginning of time, but the one of NB is not. Nonetheless, non-binary gender patterns were presents in the structure of some societies of the global South, like the Latin American ones, where hermaphrodites were a part of the community. Yet Europe destroyed every ancient culture in the colonialist era with the help of Christianity and violence so nowadays we have to reintegrate the non-binary conception of gender into our system and institutions.

Additionally, I have noticed that there are not so many non-binary skaters, they are a minority in the sub-community of women. Notwithstanding, the pro skater Alana Smith from USA was the first person ever to openly used the pronouns they/them in the Olympics and declared themselves as a non-binary person who participated in the women category (getting also misgendered by the American Television BBC).

Moreover, between 2019 and 2020 another professional skateboarder from USA – who got assigned to the gender of girl at birth – openly declared himself as a trans-men, being the first person ever in

skateboarding history: Leo Baker. They created also the first queer skate brand “Glue” which is one of the few in the world which is sponsoring NBs.

Furthermore, the urban social activity of skateboarding happens in public spaces, which are strongly cis-hetero-male dominated. There is a lack of women representation in specialized skateboarding media and the lack of NB’s depiction is even bigger. In the last few years the scene has been expanding and with it an improvement of women visibility in skateboarding, yet the one of NB is pretty minimal worldwide. A NB skater from USA, born in 1996 affirmed: “I guess you have to find it a community where they support you, because it is hard to be yourself alone, even more if you are trying to overcome the binary aspect of gender. Having fun, gathering with people is important.”

Women and non-binaries had and still have to create their own market and to produce more of their own visual material, but yet NB are represented as a minority in the minority of women. However, non-binary presence in skateboarding is still at its dawn so I think another kind of research should be done in the near future to deepen this group. I would inquiry how NB are getting their way into skateboarding and into its market since I see that NB are included into the women skate community. But I still think in the next years there will be an expansion also of the NB representation into skateboarding but also in the system and institutions, I guess society will adapt in order to include the queerness of its individuals.

I had an interview with a non-binary skater from Russia, A., born in 1997, which lives in Barcelona since three years. She affirms to have suffered problems originated by their gender:

"I have suffered bullying and I did not feel accepted, I had to wear girl's clothes, dresses and such, but now I feel good in Barcelona, people are freer here and in Spain, in Europe, the gender is a bit more free. It's also like I don't want to identify myself in something either, we are nothing, I do not want to say I am gay, I am queer whatever, I am just me. But I feel more like that.

I started skating alone, I bought a "shitty" skate for 20 euros in the supermarket and I started alone in front of my house. I have been skating for 10 years, learning, I met another guy in my town, sometimes I went to the skatepark but I was a little far, we were crusting some spots. I have never had a queer crew or something like that, well at first I started with the boys because there were no women who skated in Belgium and as always I was the only one like the only different, well sometimes they looked at me badly, but okay it was 10 years ago, now things have changed a bit. I feel like they have changed a bit but there is more work to do.”

The interview partner argues that cis-men are strongly present in the skate scene and the person felt bothered by male skaters, but the change happened when they decided not to care about the opinion

of others. The interview partner underlines that is horrible when a person with a feminine look gets bothered or sexualized because of pre-existent patriarchal structures.

4.4. Summary

Groups of people, were women or NBs can speak up and tell how they feel and what is happening in their intimate life is fundamental in order to strengthen the development of their own identity and in so doing their self confidence. This is important even more if the individual has been victim of patriarchal patterns of violence. Women are a minority in the community and NBs even more and because of that I have underlined in this chapter an historical development of gender in skateboarding and with it I have delineated some of the boundaries, challenges and positions of the participants of this sub-community.

I have underlined that skateboarding in its history has been an activity strongly dominated by cis-hetero-male behaviors which consequently developed in a mostly male community, of course women were present but they were always a strong minority and often not even perceived as women. Additionally, I explain that other forms of genders, like non-binary persons, are also present in skateboarding, thus they are defining their presence into society and are a minority of a minority in the skate-community as in the gendered system itself. Both under-groups of skaters women and NBs are starting to define their presence into its transnational community and market. However, the non-binary presence into mediated skate material is even less than the one of women transnationally and in the community of Barcelona I did not find enough non-binary visual material to take it in consideration in this chapter. I see that women are including NBs into their community and the production of mediated content however I ask if perhaps in the future NBs will be more accepted in the general society and if they will produce, represent and reproduce more specific non-binary visual skate material.

In the cultural and social anthropological material I propose in this chapter I aim to explain the shifting of boundaries in the transnational community of skateboarding. The women and Nbs transnational community is creating a narrative of its existence with representative tools but also with communal gatherings. Within the structural patterns of the patriarchal system are visible and the participants show an understanding on it, moreover, they are active in the communication of the

redefinition of this norms.

The next chapter will keep with the theme of gender, now focusing on the media through which women seek to represent themselves as genuine skaters and as members of the skating community.

5. Media

Through mediation communities and individuals from all over the world can come in contact and exchange experiences, opinions, comments, suggestions, news – basically subjective and individual-made perspectives of reality. A media, like a TV-channel, a radio-channel, a news-paper, a magazine, a fanzine, or a social-media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and many more are all a communication system where visual, audiovisual and written material gets produced in order to be transmitted to the public. The need, the act of transmission, to connect, to share, creates media. Likewise, the public – which differs dependently from the kind of media, from the kind of algorithms and hashtags, the kind of information transmitted – will receive, interpret and create meaning from that mediated content.

In the course of history media and especially mainstream media have been controlled or owned by governments, single politicians or people of the elites, mostly for propaganda meanings. However, nowadays human beings are overwhelmed globally by the amount and the kind of information we get and individuals themselves are the ones who produce, transmit and mediate contents. Media technologies have evolved through time, nowadays with mobile phones and social media we can communicate easily, the spread of news has never been so fast. Besides, communication technologies ease connections and speech contexts, likewise, more and more people can get access to information. The technological development which made Internet and mobile phones possible created a chain of (virtual) exchanges, although the kind of content produced, reproduced and represented generally through media is as variable as the subjectivity of humans.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, skateboarding is a practice which takes place in public urban spaces, by single individuals, the skaters, which united – in a local and transnational community – by this common activity, they record with filming, photographing and writing, skate-content, in order to transmit it, show it and share it. Skateboarding has developed itself mostly thanks to media practices, skate video-clips in VHS or CDs and printed magazine were the basis for the expansion of skateboarding from USA to the rest of the world during the 80s-90s.

Nowadays, skate material is spread through paper-magazines, VHS, CDs, social media, online channels like YouTube or Vimeo, premieres, gatherings, events – with others.

In this chapter I analyze women and NB-skate media and I ask:

How do women and NB skaters use media to carve out a space for themselves in the skateboarding community of Barcelona?

Skateboarding is embedded in the capitalist system, however it can be taken as a chance for individuals to invest for their career and evolve into the system and become professionals or find a way to achieve profit or attention. I had a lot of talks in this past months with Latin American skaters who immigrate to Barcelona and they see in Europe, in Barcelona, in skateboarding, an easier way to make money, to live a more secure life, where the chance to experience shootings, narcotrafic, violence, is not as high as where they are from. Death and insecurity are normalized there and it is a way easier to live a settled life in Europe, once integrated bureaucratically into the system of course. From the many interviews and informal talks I had I can say that making profit, is essential for people who move from a social and institutional system where it is structurally kind of impossible to gain enough money to survival needs or to save money to invest in the development of the own identity, stability and future.

Media with the help of pictures and video-clips influence also the own identity: strengthen or weaken it, dependently on how you use it. Moreover, the creation and circulation of visual material is fundamental for the functioning of the (skate-)market. Skaters when they do not skate watch skate videos, a lot, for fun but also for seeing what other skaters can do, to be amazed, to be inspired. Different videos are financed by different brands, the skater who watches it is influenced by the style of the skater in the clip and eventually will buy the material of that brand.

Additionally, creating a good skate-video is an art between the capacity of the rider itself, the filmer and the crew who hypes the skater, the support of your friends.

This chapter enlighten the importance of media and especially skate magazines and skateboarding fanzines as a tool for communication and transmission of community-making. I analyze “Dolores Magazine” and “Respectful skate-zine” as two examples of media utilized for the manifestation of the women and non-binary skate community in Barcelona.

5.1. Skate Magazines

A skate magazine is a publication in paper or online on websites which contains skateboarding visual and written material. In paper magazines the visual material represented is defined by photos of skate tricks and the written part is normally characterized by interview with skaters. The magazines normally have an online website and/or Youtube channel where they can transmit skate-videos.

Skate-magazines are distributed locally when the issue release finds place, but are also sold in local skateshops, dependently from where the magazine is from. They are also sold online.

Skate magazines mediate skateboarding culture, represent and narrate about events, tours, skaters, projects, videos, spots, tricks and more.

Additionally, photography itself is a practice that is embedded in the skate culture. There is an understanding and techniques in how to make “good” skate pictures. Furthermore, photos are a fundamental part in skate magazines along with skater-interviews. For example, Trasher Magazine, FreeskaMag, Transworld Skate Magazine and many more are known worldwide, transnationally, and with their presence have defined the history of skateboarding.

Nonetheless, like in every magazine there is advertisement in it, skate advertisement of course.

When a skater gets filmed for a defined sponsor there are the filmer(s) filming but there are also photographer(s) taking pictures. This photos get in the magazines, sometimes as advertisement, sometimes just as photos. If it is an advertisement the logo of the brand is really distinguishable, however also in pictures which are not utilized as advertisement you can see what a skater wears what does she/he/they ride and so you can guess which sponsor do they have. Because of that sometimes brands (more multinational, than local brands) are financing magazines directly, but also video-clips production or skate-tours. Sometimes, magazines, dependently on their budget, finance video production too, in order to reproduce the recorded and collected material on their platform in virtual (online) or concrete (in paper) form, Trasher Magazine for example has undoubtedly signed skateboarding culture and its visual reproduction and presence in the market.

Magazines do have their online platforms too, like Instagram, but also a website and a YouTube channels give the opportunity to upload longer skate-videos, which are the core of skate-culture transmission. Without skate-videos skateboarding would not be skateboarding, videos – and then along with photos, magazines, video-premieres and zine-releases – became a natural outcome of skateboarding acting and individuals socializing.

Jones, in an article of Vice, a digital media which focuses on youth and youth adults activities, affirms: “Skate videos are weird because they don't look like any other medium on Earth. They last like a movie, but they don't have a plot. They are full of people, but everyone is acting alone. They portray a physical sport, but one that is not competitive. They are held together by masculinity but deep down even not, because at their epicenter are free expression and aesthetics. And the glue of all this, from beginning to end, is the music.” (Jones 2017: online)

In Barcelona there are different skateboarding magazines, for instance Dogway Skate Mag. and many more, however, through my fieldwork I have focused mostly on the female and NB visual representation in skateboarding and in the next sub-chapter I am going to examine the presence of the Dolores Magazine into the Barcelonian skate community, underlining the need of visual representation and reproduction as a method of affirmation into the transnational community.

5.1.1. Dolores Magazine

In Barcelona I have noticed the strong presence of the Dolores magazine, a transnational girl and non-binary skater magazines edited by Raïsa Abal. The magazine is distributed in paper form in different skateshops in Barcelona, but also in other parts of Europe and in USA. Dolores magazines represent the transnational women and NB skate community. The magazine started with the Asíplanchaba crew in Barcelona and was born in 2009 as a crew and an online blog with advice, description of experiences, videoclips, photos and pictures. In 2010 they were one of the firsts female crew to produce video material in form of skate-clips and shared it on Youtube. In 2019 they collected the pictures taken and created the magazine. Seven editions already exist and the eighth will be released in June/July 2023.

Raïsa has developed in 2019 her first “Dolores” Magazine. Dolores is the name of her mother but also means “pain” in Spanish. She published the first edition of the Magazine in 2019 without any funding from sponsors. Then after the first edition she attracted sponsors and now Nike finance her to publish three times per year the Dolores Magazine. She photographed skater girls from all over the world and with the reproduction of pictures through media a creation of a transnational NB and women community found place through time.

The pictures in the magazines represent a fluid group of skaters which variate in every issue: a local part composed of Barcelonean skaters and a transnational part composed by skaters from all over the world. The contacts, the relations, the skate sessions, the photos, the filming, the events, the partying can happen everywhere, in New York, in L.A., in Vienna, in Barcelona, in Madrid, in Paris, in Berlin, in Munich, and many more places. The Dolores crew members organize or participate at events and gatherings outside Barcelona too and come in contact with other local women and NBs skaters and crews.

Through my fieldwork observations by participating at different skate jams and projects with the Dolores crew I have noticed that the magazine is a media which unites and relate individuals and groups, for instance, the transnational NB and women skate community exchanges suggestions, opinions and inspirational content through different media like magazines, fanzines, blogs, Instagram and other online networks.

I firstly saw the magazine on Instagram in 2019, then I started to follow it and when I came to Barcelona I saw it lying around in skater-flats. During my fieldwork I realized that skateboarding content is produced and reproduced through media which influence the manifestation of the community.

I had an interview with Raisa, a skater girl from Spain, born in 1991 she had her first contact with skateboarding with 17-18 years old. She studied audiovisual communication and is the editor and photographer of the Dolores Magazine. She explained me its development and evolution and underlines that Asíplanchaba also has a Youtube Channel to transmit their videos and underlined me the importance of visual representation and reproduction: “The videos! Videos always come out! If you go to Youtube there are like 150 videos, it's crazy eh, [...] if they [Asíplanchaba] didn't do it, nobody did it!! That's why Vero ended up being a filmer, and for me “Dolores” was supernatural because we went to skate every weekend at Stiges [city near Barcelona] or somewhere else, and for the record, there were no skateparks like now. [...] There was no goal, just meet up and go skate.”

She adds: “Vero started Asíplanchaba in 2009 with Claudia Bustos and Maria Vernal. Asíplanchaba, which comes from a song that says “I used to iron so”; is a snowboarding, surfing and skating crew because each one was specialized in a specialty but then Maria had a son and Claudia is in Burton and in Bataleon [two snowboarding brands known worldwide]. Already in 2016 we did the first international woman day at the Skatepark Agorá and other events like jam sessions and little by little we started to do things with Nike SB. I took photos because I was going to take them anyways

also if they would have no means, it was like let's use them for the web and we put them in the articles on the Asíplanchaba website [...].

Then I have asked her how did the Dolores Magazine come into being? And she answered me: “For Dolores 0, well, we had accumulated photos, okay but it all started surrounded by the Olympics [in 2016 started the organizational and institutional process by the International Skateboarding Federation which is now into the World Skate Federation to make skateboarding a sport recognized in the Olympics for the year 2020, which actually found place in 2021 due to the CoronaVirus] skaters started to see who could be the candidate in order to get prepared to go to the Olympics.” This is fundamental to understand because skateboarding became recognized as an Olympic sport only in 2020 and for all sports of the Olympics there is a female and male division but actually, in 2016 it was the first year for women to enter in the Street League Skateboarding, which is one of the most famous skateboarding contests, before there was no division for women in that contest because they were not represented so much in the community. How could women skate “good” as men if they did not have access, nor inclusion nor representation in the same practice, in the same space?

Then Raisa explained that she had a knee injury in 2017 and so she had some free time to think about what they wanted to do with all the pictures she has taken: “Let's see, we have a lot of photos, we can make a fan zine, and Vero told me, well, it would be cool to make a real magazine, and I told her, yes, it would be cool, and I started to do it, I started it!!! [...]. A whole year passed, we proposed it to Nike, we proposed it to Vans, and to some others. However, everybody said ‘how cool’ and nobody did anything, nobody told me take 500 Euros to print it, nobody. At Christmas 2018, I said, look, I'm fed up with nobody paying us, we're going to pay for it ourselves and Vero told me, well, yes, and we paid for it and took it out, I printed 300 units on color but it was very little. Then it was the loop of the Lizzie Armanto [a skater girl from USA which made different pro model shoes with Vans, basically, the Lizzie Armanots were one of the firsts female pro models which sold incredibly good] then the vans girls nights global campaign began [Vans organizing and sponsoring girls events worldwide] and there was a Vans girls night here in Barcelona and Ivan from Vans told us ‘shit cool, we want more’ and so we printed a second round of Dolores 0. It was glorious, it was surreal!”

Then she continues: “it seems that now everything is super good, that there are a lot of girls who skate and who have support, but they are machists, they support women because they give money,

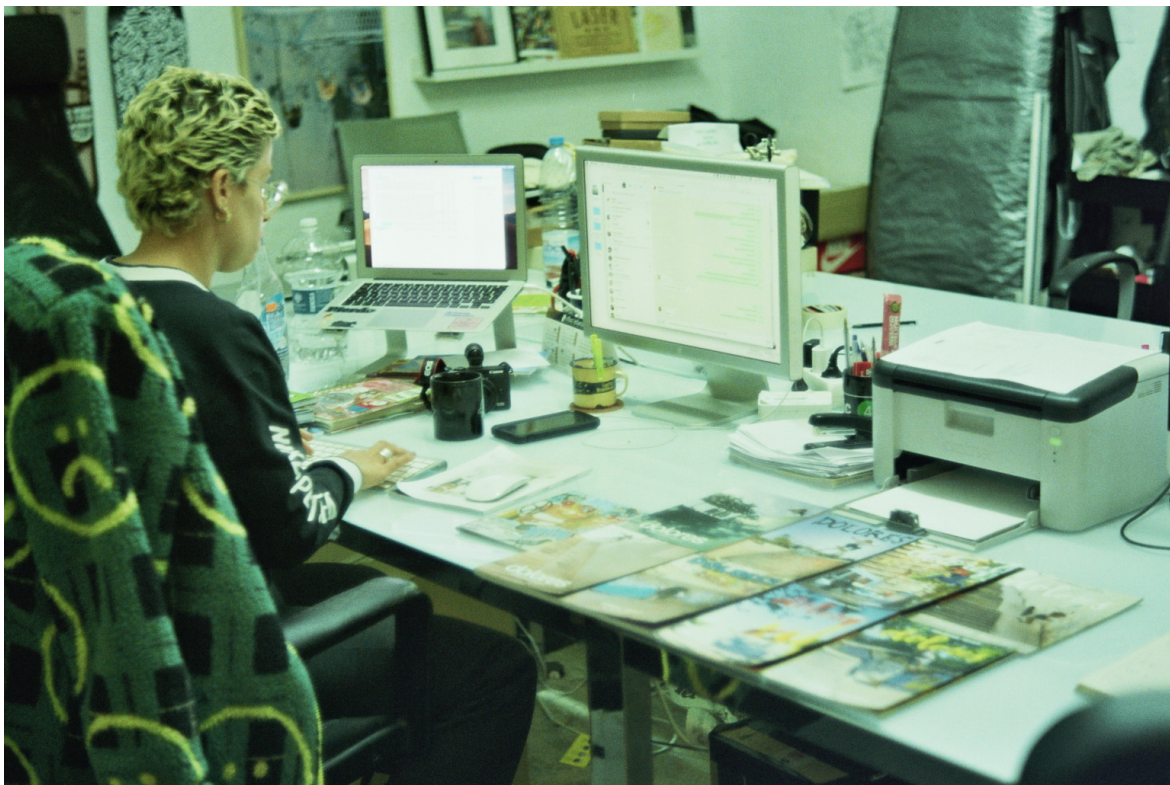
and they didn't get even paid for it! They wouldn't support any woman, I would love it if it were, but it seems like they don't and the people who tell me 'oh girls don't appear in magazines because there's no level', I don't care. In fact, it took three years to Vero to force the national skate committee to make the prize equal to men and women in national circuit competitions. [...]. All that of what we have achieved with Dolores, of having the freedom of not caring, I don't care men, I don't care, because zero Euros comes from this country, all the announcements of Dolores or what sustains Dolores does not come from this country.”

Raisa owns also the Instagram page of @doloresmagazine, and thanks to the printed magazine and the online activities, thanks to Instagram, but also with the connection and relationships that the transnational women community tries to establish in order to make skateboarding a place for women, she tries to give a voice to enlighten some problems in the skate community. In local contests, where female skateboarding representation is not existent outside the online world, the contest are mostly for men, it is called “open category” because there are no girls or no NB participating, is open for everyone but if you compete you compete with men, because the price or the prices are organized financially just for men. It also happens in some contests that if there is a divided category for women and men, then men get a prize money and women get goodies, like a board or some socks.

Anyways, Raisa adds that of course there are male skaters that support Dolores. “For example, there are people like Alex, the guy from Macbalife and that Dogway, who have always taken us into account. But other says 'It's just that girls don't come to the competition', it doesn't bother you, you would go to a competition in which you win stupid clothes and men win money? Don't fuck with me!”

5.1.1.1. Photo story of fieldwork practices: Dolores Magazine

I firstly met the Dolores crew at Spotter DIY, then through the months I have got the pleasure to interview Raïsa and participated at events, encounters, and once I went to Raïsa's office, to read all the 7th Editions of Dolores Magazine. I have met her at her normal job, because making the Dolores Magazine is more her hobby since there are not enough funding.



IMG.18: Raïsa invited me to her job to read the magazines.
(from Piconese, 02.2023, Raïsa's office, Barcelona)



IMG 19: I was sitting here reading the magazines next to her working, you count them and they are actually nine. There is Dolores 0, then the seven official magazines and a fanzine representing the building of different obstacles in Bobila DIY and Piknik DIY.
(from Piconese, 02.2023, Raisa's office, Barcelona)

I also went to skate with the Dolores crew, at Spotter DIY, so is basically how they shoot pictures, see Leti, on the left, recording the trick in form of a video with a mobile phone, Raisa with her camera and the flash and Roxana skating.



IMG 20: Roxana, performing a backside melon, backside is the rotation of her body in the air, melon is the name of the grab she is doing with her right hand. Can you imagine how high is that ramp, can you feel the speed you need to get to go up there? Imagine your body going up, you press with your back foot on the tail of the board, your front hand taking the backside middle part of the board, your face, your shoulders, rotate 180 degrees. You are in the air and yet you already are back on concrete: rolling away or slamming hard, it depends. But it happen so fast you do not think it, you just do it, you have to feel it and in the case you are in the middle of the performance and you check you will not land it your instinct and reactions will hopefully get you in a good position ready for the impact on concrete so to amortize the slam and not get serious injuries.

(from Piconese, 02.2023, Spotter DIY, Barbera del Valles)



IMG 21: Roxana made some tries, slammed hard and then she landed it. You will maybe see her picture in the next Dolores magazine, the eighth edition coming out in June/July 2023. But the feeling of landing it, to have overcome your fears, to have achieved what you desired, is a bliss. And then the pictures, the magazine, the visual reproduction of what happened in order to transmit it and show it, so to reproduce reality and affirm it.

(from Piconese, 02.2023, Spotter DIY, Barbera del Valles)

5.2. Fanzines

There is a difference between a magazine and a fanzine. A fanzine is intended as an unofficial or amateur magazine, it is created to transmit significance, activities and passions to interested others. Fanzines often tend to stand in contrast as an alternative to mass culture or popular culture. Yet, skateboarding itself was born as an underground movement at the margin of society and has developed itself through the market becoming more and more mainstream. Skateboarding culture is transmitted in magazines but also in fanzines yet the last do not spread their content online and produce and reproduce content within the local community. Magazines tend to reach a public outside the local community.

The world of counterculture and above all of punk found in fanzines the way to give space to their interests and to disseminate the underground word through these small self-produced magazines (cf. Arasau 2020: 10-11). In the 1970s, the fanzine became a press instrument of the musical underground, with the punk movement spreading it as an instrument of a true independent press in an amateur form: fanzines, under the motto of do it yourself, published reviews and interviews of records and concerts ignored by the official music press. Inside was all sorts of more or less useful information and obviously they were full of art: from psychedelic drawings to satirical ones against strong powers or institutions. Every type of reality, which does not find space in the so-called mainstream publishing, is achieved by taking the path of self-production of these low-cost magazines. It can be said that underground culture developed within advanced capitalistic societies in an era in which the cultural industry underwent strong transformations due to the development of the means of mass communication; in response to these changes, the underground culture proposed an alternative use of the same means of communication aimed at the diffusion of lifestyles and principles of life different from those of the official society (cf. Ibid.).

5.2.1. Respectful skate-zine

I had the pleasure to discover a women made skate-fanzine in Barcelona. They are a group of girls from different part of Europe and in 2022 they have started Respectful skate-zine for creative purposes, just to meet as a group go skate make pictures and as a group create together a fanzine. The fanzine is distributed to the audience during the zine release. The audience is mostly composed by the crew itself and the friends and family of the members, but also from skaters that did not heard speaking about it before and are curious about it. Respectful skate-zine does not have an Instagram page or any online media so consequently the members reach directly only a part of the local skate community of Barcelona since only the people who have already heard about the fanzine and are interested in the manifestation of that kind of group are willing to participating at the gatherings, which are not only constituted by the fanzine release but also by meetings and skate sessions.

I had an interview with Kerry, a skater girl from England, which lives in Barcelona from 2018 and has 21 years of skate experience. She is one of the founders of Respectful skate-zine. She told me: “The only reason we do it is for our friends, that’s why it is underground, we are doing it for friends, that's why we are underground because we are not doing it for the people, we do not do it for the market, we spend our money in it. We put 60 copies every issue, it is for the love with the friends, it is super fun. We did skate trips, we document them. If you have a look it is represented more the fun facette of skateboarding but we actually agreed we should integrate more skate pictures. Every middle section is from the editors, but we are still evolving. [...]. We are basically a group of friends that has met trough skateboarding but now we hang out every single weekend, whoever wants to come is welcome. We are like family, we skate, we hang out we have the zine, it is a creative activity we make collages and it is basically fun to make it, bring it together.”

5.2.1.1. Photo-story: zine release

On the beginning of April 2023 I went to Piknik DIY in the afternoon for the release of the 4th issue of the fanzine. People gathered and waited for the event to start, some skated, some went buy some drinks and food. There were around 30-40 skaters between men and women, the most of the participants were women but in the audience there were also around ten men interested in the event, there was also one non-binary skater.

The fanzine release is a concrete example of women and non-binary skaters utilizing media, in this case the creation, the making, the diffusion and the transmission of the fanzine in order to carve out a space for themselves in the general skateboarding community of Barcelona.

Hereafter I present through photos the happening of the release:



IMG 22: People, friends gathered.

(from Piconese, 04.2023, Picnic DIY, Barcelona)



IMG 23-24: Kerry and her crew presenting the 4th edition of the zine. The presentation continues with an explanation of the contents, the group, the community.

(from Piconese, 04.2023, Picnic DIY, Barcelona)





IMG 25: The fanzines were finally distributed for free and everybody was focused in reading their adventures, advice, talks.

(from Piconese, 04.2023, Picnic DIY, Barcelona)

5.3. Instagram

Next to the paper magazines, social media are an important feature of skateboarding. I focus on Instagram as an example of a widely used medium by skaters from all genders.

Nowadays, there are skate-brands from all over the world. The skate material is sold in skate-shops (nowadays also online directly by the single brands or buy bigger distributions). Brands sponsor skaters, mostly with free materials or with discounts on the products. The skater who becomes sponsored makes advertisement in the skate community for that brand by utilizing that product and by delivering visual materials like videos and/or photos to the defined brand or nowadays by posting it on Instagram and tagging the brand.

Additionally, also individuals have Instagram and they use it to capitalize on their skating.

Anyways, the constant posting of yourself doing skate tricks on Instagram will probably attract sponsor if you are good enough at this practice. To summarize, it depends what the single person wants for his/her/they own life and consequently will use (or use not) Instagram.

For instance, on this app, it is interesting to reflect about the circulation of female skate clips, the comments they get and the image they are transmitting and marketing purposes that some videos have. Thus, due to hashtags, feminist visibilities and other kind of “resistance” messages can also get widespread, for instance just take a look at @asiplanchaba or @doloresmagazine on Instagram, it “proves a more challenging environment for feminists seeking to criticize competitive individualism and aesthetic norms” (Savolainen et al. 2022, online).

Nonetheless, this app has a huge influence on the skate-market, since it has created a new space for the neoliberalization of the individual, where individuals can make a profit from the image they deliver of themselves. Basically, skaters tag their sponsors in their Insta skate-clips. Is more easy, you do not have to find (and maybe pay) filmers, you film with the phone, you edit it, you post it, you tag the brand, the brand re-posts it, occasionally the video will be re-posted by other pages on Instagram too. In so doing the advertisement principle (where skaters are constantly bombarded with skate-visual material) keeps on rolling, the market keeps on flowing and the skaters keeps on riding. Anyway, skaters utilize Instagram as a media to make themselves visible and maybe make profit out of the image they have from themselves, attracting sponsors and it is a possibility for making a career out of skateboarding, or just having fun by going on skate-trips payed by that brand.

However, watching an entire skate clip, with your friends (maybe at home drinking and/or smoking) is another type of (social) activity as scrolling skate clips on Insta, moreover their are shorter then skate videos.

Instagram is a media for the skateboarding market. Nonetheless, some skaters, some filmmakers, affirm that Instagram is destroying the culture of skateboarding because is making it more mainstream also on a (audio)visual perspective and the art of the video-clip itself takes a different meaning.

5.3.1. Informant perspective on Instagram

I had a talk with Gabriella (@gabirinja), a skater from Brazil, born in 1997 and since she is active on Instagram I had a talk with her about the app.

She affirms: “It happens to me that everyone can know who you are and also that you can use that for job’s functions, not only to connect with other people, it's good also because it's a way to have your content together, to be able to express yourself there and also because you can keep things in a place where you don't use up your mobile memory. The cons are that people use this too much, this ends up influencing life in reality, like real life, and many people are sick, many people feel bad because you don't have something else, they don't have knowledge about it and are feeling bad at the same time. You can have inspiration but can also feel bad. For having that the social network has to have responsibility you know, mental responsibility, I use it for my skate videos and for my art work and this works, but a person who doesn't play sports or post sexualized things because.. I don't know what, to be careful about how you use social networks because sometimes you attract different people and intentions, even I have people who bother me.”

In May 2023 I was skating at Marbella Skatepark and I met another girl from Brazil, Natalia, and she told me that she wrote Gabri on Insta to ask her on advice on skating in Barcelona, she was surprised and amazed when Gabri answered. Then I told Natalia I know Gabri too and she was really happy. Natalia told me that she sees Gabri as a source of inspiration and was happy for the contact. So I have told this story to Gabri and she responded me: “This happened to me a few years ago, when I moved to Sao Paolo, because before I saw my friends of nowadays also on Instagram or through magazines, they were not my friends back then, we did not know each other, but I identified a lot with them, I felt that I could do the same, I felt inspired, so today I ended up being

friends with all those people that I met. Also, in general, social networks bring people closer together, of course, it is like a way of connecting, but people need to have mental responsibility.”

Afterwards I have asked her about the influence of Instagram on her own development and she affirmed: “Well, if you are talking about my story, I grew up without structure, this system is a little broken due to violence, inequality, and lack of security. I understood this, there was a time when I did not have this power in myself. Now I have also more connections in social networks and everything and I use that and of course through Instagram I have begun to have more possibilities to connect with the skate market and the work of tattooing and that has helped me to get out of the situation I was in, faster. It has given me more opportunity the fact that people shared my videos and that is why other people began to give me opportunities but also to get to know me. But skateboarding is not just Instagram, you have to skate well!”

5.4. Summary

In this chapter I have analyzed the use of magazines and fanzines as media for the affirmation of presence in the skateboarding community of Barcelona.

Through my fieldwork investigation and examination I underline the presence of Dolores Magazine and Respectfully-skate zine as two forms of media – which in visual and written form – establish, affirm, communicate and transmit reproduced forms of mainly women’s skateboarding performances, thoughts and gatherings. For the interested public, who perceive this, gets involved, get a grasp of a reality, a community, and may get a sense of belonging.

The chapter underlines the role of magazines and fanzines as a tool for transmission of the community-making and for the mastery in skateboarding practices, since pictures of skate-tricks are the main content in a paper skate-media.

I see “Dolores Magazine” as a transnational women and NB skate magazine which represent and describe the manifestation of the skate-community. I argue that Respectful skate-zine’s activity is present locally in Barcelona but not online, however this group too, is evidencing a women and NB skate community through the making and happening of their medium.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Through this inquiry I have tried at its best to describe the fluid and transnational skate community of Barcelona, underling within, how women are defining their presence, in practice but also on a representative level.

I add that the non-binary community, the queer gender, is yet not so included. Although, I suppose that the presence of this group will be stronger in the future.

This thesis argue that the skate community of Barcelona present itself as transnational, in this flow also women and non-binary skaters are present, yet, they are confronted with the historic process that in the past this space was not entitled to them. In order to define their space in this field the researched group uses media as a tool for evidencing their presence. Moreover, gatherings, events, meetings, skate sessions are an occasion for women and NB to connect with each other and strengthen the affirmation of their entitlement in the practice of skateboarding but also in the community itself.

I have noticed, through the Barcelonean skate flow and all the conversations I had with female skaters in Barcelona and in Vienna, that the skateboarding community boundaries are shifting, including more and more female in their space. Skater girls get represented visually through different kind of media, thus I bring to light media owned and produced by skater-girls themselves: through this analysis I affirm that they are pushing the boundaries of the general transnational skateboarding community in order to define their presence and get an entitlement to the space they are in. They are not only in a male-dominant community but also in a public urban terrain, which was historically not entitled to this gender.

7. APPENDIX

Hereafter I present some guiding questions I made to my interview partners and informants. I specify that I always gave the possibility to my informants to not answer if they did not want to:

- Name, age, gender, place of origin
- How many years of skateboard experience
- When, where and with whom did the interview partner start to skate.
- Why are you in Barcelona?
- Do you have a Visa, are you legal or not?
- Do you have a job, study, both or none? What do you do in your free-time?
- Have you ever been raped or did someone tried to rape you?
- Do you skate with girls? Why? How is your experience with it? With whom do you skate normally?
- How is the relation with your parents? Did they support you or denied the access to skateboarding?

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8.1. IMAGE LIST

IMG. 1: Piconese Sofia, on mobile-phone, 10.2022, Paralel, Barcelona.

IMG. 2-4: Ibid., on film, 35mm, 05.2023, Plaza de los Ángeles, Raval, Barcelona.

IMG. 5-9: Ibid., on film, 35mm, 05.2023, Artigues Sant Adria, Barcelona.

IMG. 10: Ibid., on film, 35mm, 27.1.2023. Sants Diy, Barcelona.

IMG. 11-17: Ibid., on film, 35mm, 8.3.2023, Plaza de Espanya and nearby, Barcelona.

IMG. 18-19: Ibid., on film, 35mm, 02.2023, Raisa's office, Barcelona.

IMG. 20-21: Ibid., on film, 35mm, 03.2023, Spotter Diy, Barbera del Valles.

IMG. 22-25: Ibid., on film, 35mm, 04.2023, Piknik Diy, Barcelona.