"THE CITY IS OURS"[1] – ZAGREB'S SUBCULTURES AND SPACE

Andrej Ivan Nuredinović, Dino Vukušić i Jana Vukić

Andrej Ivan Nuredinović
Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar
Marulićev trg 19
andrej.ivan.nuredinović@pilar.hr

Dino Vukušić
Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar
Marulićev trg 19
dino.vukusic@pilar.hr

Jana Vukić
Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu
Ivana Lučića 3
jana.vukic@ffzg.unizg.hr

Abstract

This paper presents the results of research on the relationship between subcultural groups and spaces in Zagreb. Three ethnographic studies were conducted on three different groups – punks, skateboarders, and football supporters. By using qualitative methodological tools from an ethnographic approach (participant observation and interviews), the goal was to research different dimensions of the relationship between these groups and spaces within the urban environment. We were interested in how the subcultural identifications of subcultural groups influence the understanding of space. We approached the phenomenon of space primarily relationally, relying on the theory of Martina Löw, and then expanded on the understanding of space for the subcultural actors themselves by using the subcultural theory of Erik Hannerz and Patrick Williams. Our results suggest the existence of common aspects of the use and experience of space among all three researched groups. At the same time, the relation to the mainstream through the prism of space is also evident, either on the convex or concave dimension of their subcultural identity.

Keywords: *Bad Blue Boys, punks, skaters, space, subculture*

1. INTRODUCTION

Our work on the topic of the relationship between subcultural groups and space discusses the interactions between subcultures and space in a way that suggests both the material use of space and its symbolic significance for subcultures. In doing so, we

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1 Originally "Grad je naš" is a song by the Zagreb Oi! punk band Šank?! from 2011, which quickly became popular among Zagreb's subcultural actors (notably Oi! punks, skinheads, graffiti artists, and football sup-

view subcultures as collectives that identify with subcultural elements in various ways and consequently with the locations intertwined with their rituals. However, the presumption is that there are some shared characteristics. These similarities are perceived here through the conceptualization of their subcultural identities in contrast to the mainstream[2]. Studies of marginalized or deviant youth groups date back over a century. Research on youth subcultures[3], as identified in Phil Cohen's (1980) four dimensions of style (music, clothing, rituals, slang), on youth resistance through the rituals of the Birmingham School, or on the declaration of the absence of style by post-subcultural authors, are dated slightly later but continue with a similar research theme. In order to address social norms and values during a certain period, it is especially important to study people on the margins of society. Today, we talk about groups that incorporate a special sense of collectivity into postmodernism, scarred by globalization (Muggleton, 2000), commodification (Lash and Urry, 1994; Featherstone, 1995), and individualization (Putnam, 2000). Collective identification can stem from marginalization (Castells, 2004) or even stigmatization (Anderson, 2017), but it can also simply be a search for a community of like-minded people (Williams, 2011) who are different from the perceived "normal" environment. From the beginning of subcultural research, space has been one of the key elements of their identification (Kidder, 2011; Macdonald, 2001; Clarke, 1973; Cressey, 1932). The need for their own spaces, territorial defense, or carving out their identity in a specific location during their presence there is an inseparable part of the subcultural *modus operandi*. The significance of space for deviant or marginalized groups has already been mentioned by sociologists of the Chicago School, who even attributed somewhat deterministic characteristics to urban locations. Identification has been key throughout the development of subcultural theory. The Chicago School, delinquent subculture theory, and the Birmingham School perceive the phenomenon of subcultural (marginal) identification as a symbolical solution to a collectively experienced problem or situation in which actors find themselves. These problems and situations are defined by socio-geographic, ethnic, moral, professional, class, or other differences, and consequently create subcultural belonging (Hannerz, 2015). However, whether it is an individual or group problem, the challenge of this approach lies in the fact that

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porters, among others). The song portrays the vision of the city as an "alternative place" symbolically ruled by youth subcultures.

2 Throughout this work, we use the term "mainstream" as a synonym for dominant culture or conventional society, although this term is defined in various ways within subcultural theory and actually eludes a singular definition (for more on this discussion, see Hannerz, 2015; Haenfler, 2014; Williams, 2011).

3 The concept of subculture is not consistently defined, nor does it hold a singular meaning today. It is used to denote various social groups, ranging from those with alternative worldviews, such as sects, to broader categories like women's subcultures, which reflect a certain relationship to male culture, often perceived as dominant in certain contexts. Such variability in the definition of this concept (Yinger, 1960) is often not particularly useful. To clarify which subculture is being discussed, subcultural theorists often use the term "youth cultures." In this paper, we are thus referring to youth subcultures, although recent research highlights subcultures as lifelong pursuits that include increasingly older members (Ventsel, 2020; Pearson, 2012; Williams, 2011).

subcultures tend to create an alternative "moral equilibrium" (Hannerz, 2015:14). In a way, subcultural actors are denied agency. On the other hand, post-subculturalists perceive the understanding of subcultures differently. They recognize the heterogeneity of the subcultural fabric, and this heterogeneity becomes a crucial element in constructing fluid postmodern identities. The consistency of style or resistance is no longer the case, and class or other foundational affiliations are not decisive or prevalent characteristics. Still, the emphasis on heterogeneity among post-subculturalists is so great that similarities within the same group of actors almost do not exist, raising the question of how these actors even socialize (Hannerz, 2015).

In this paper, we address the relationship between subcultural groups and space, in which "subcultural places" filled with subcultural meanings emerge, through which subcultural actors identify. Although it does not exclusively address the manifest form of subcultural groups, but also the symbolic dimension of their identity, Williams (2011) points out that the position of subcultural actors is determined by two parallel processes. One is the "process of marginalization," in which members of the dominant culture label subcultures as "problematic, pushing them even further away from opportunity structures" (Williams, 2011:11). The second process is based on the subcultural group members themselves, manifested in their desire to be different from the rest of society, i.e., their non-normativity (Williams, 2011).

The gatherings of subcultural youth groups at specific locations in Zagreb have been present over the past few decades. Benjamin Perasović (2001) wrote about examples of various nightclubs that, during the 1970s, were meeting places and centers of cultural production primarily for young people. Public space "occupied" by a group of young people gradually becomes an important element of that group's identity. Examples of this can be seen in the "punks from Mažuranac[4]," "skaters from Mimara[5]," "metalheads from Ribnjak[6]," and so on. The places we mention became recognized as gathering spots at least during one part of the history of these subcultural styles, only to be replaced by others over time. What is important to emphasize is that although there were (or still are) symbolic labels like "metalheads from Ribnjak," this does not mean that these spaces were unified. The common feature of almost all of the mentioned public spaces where young people gather is the diversity of users. The processes of marginalization of subcultural actors are visible in the chronology of relocating their spaces from the broader city center of Zagreb over the past 15 years. For example, both the supporter and punk subcultures have "lost" several important identity-defining places in the period from 2008 to 2013 (Melin, Krivi put, Purgeraj)[7]. In addition to this, public places – especially parks, which have almost traditionally been

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4 Mažuranić Square.
5 Mimara Museum on Roosevelt Square.
6 Ribnjak Park behind Zagreb Cathedral.
7 These primarily concern private nightclubs, whose common characteristic is the gathering of alternative youth.

gathering places for young subcultural actors – are transforming to make them safer (lighting, more frequent police patrols, raids) and more organized for multifunctional or different uses (popular events, landscaping, and cleaning up previous subcultural artefacts such as skate ramps or graffiti), which has significantly changed their atmosphere (Ribnjak Park, Mažuranac Park, King Tomislav Square, Adolf Mošinski Park, Svačić Square, Mimara, Victims of Fascism Square or "Džamija", the Student Center, and others).

The existence of such a somewhat conflictual reality for subcultural members has already been covered in previous research on this topic. In their text about the Zagreb squat "BEK," Vukušić et al. (2022), speak of the existence of "urban struggle." David Harvey (2012) describes "urban struggle" as a conflict (latent or manifest) between privileged and deprived classes in the urban environment, or the discrepancy between two concepts of presence in the city's public space. Andrej Ivan Nuredinović (2019) writes about the spatial struggle of football supporters with symbols and meanings on city walls, reflecting mutual conflicts as well as conflicts with urban, state, and football structures. Particularly noteworthy is the recent work of Perasović et al. (2023), in which the authors discuss several examples of the relationship between space and subcultural youth groups in the context of their everyday lives and activism. The authors view this relationship through the lens of space, examining how space influences power relations, its appropriation, and ultimately the strengthening of subcultural actors and their identities. Subcultural members and informal youth groups fight for their spaces through various tactics and rituals incorporated, in the end, from their everyday lives. In this way, the subcultural conflict with conventional or generally accepted social norms is also reflected in where they reside or are considered important. Differences in spatial dynamics and power relations can result in the prohibition or permission of certain social practices and thus influence how those practices are performed and perceived (Kidder, 2011).

In this study, building on previous research on subcultures and space in the Croatian context and beyond (Perasović et al., 2023; Nuredinović, 2019), space is viewed relationally. This suggests that space cannot be considered fragmentarily, as a container of social relations, where social actions and space are separate, but rather as a synthesis of the material and symbolic (Löw, 2016). This generates places and atmospheres in certain locations. In other words, a single location can contain multiple spaces that intersect through various relationships such as cooperation or conflict (Löw, 2016:232-233). The repetition of social practices, such as spatial situating and spatial synthesis, creates institutionalized space, which is marked by norms and protected by actors' resources (Löw, 2016). At the same time, we do not view the subcultural group as monolithic but also relationally determined (Hannerz, 2015). This means that the diversity of actors within a subculture is crucial for the use, appropriation, and perception of subcultural space. A relational view of subcultural identification can reveal different opinions regarding distinction from the mainstream (concerning external actors and concerning members of the subcultural group itself).

Given the complex identifications with the "subcultural" and considering that space is perceived as a relational construct, our research question is: how does subcultural identification affect the understanding of space among subcultural actors?

2. SUBCULTURE AND SPACE

Like all social practices, subcultural ones emerge in a certain place, at a certain time, and exist in relation to someone or something (Hannerz, 2015). The constitution of space generates places, and places are necessary for space to be created (Löw, 2016). Two processes are present during the constitution of space: situating and connecting with space. Situating can be understood as the arrangement of material goods and people in space and their synthesis (material), while connecting with space is its symbolic domain, where an image of space is created (symbolic) (Löw, 2016:232-233). The reflection of a particular arrangement of material goods and people in a specific setup generates places. Such places, through their social institutionalization, are imbued with atmospheres. These atmospheres in turn influence the perceptions and identifications of the users of those setups. For example, when a certain place is used long enough by one group of actors (in this case a subcultural group), it becomes recognized by them, but also by other social actors, as a place filled with subcultural meanings. Such a place usually entails a set of rules (Kidder, 2011) that separate it from other similar places, give it meanings, and make it a place of special social symbolism. Subcultural styles and identities are performed and realized through space, but they are also created through space, and spaces are imbued with symbolism that in turn affects the consciousness of being a subcultural member of a group (Hannerz, 2015).

Erik Hannerz (2015) suggests that subculture should be viewed as a collection of different patterns of meaning. Therefore, for him, identifying actions and objects as subcultural is a way to separate their subcultural foundations from the mainstream. Understandings of the mainstream among subcultural actors can vary significantly, and group identity arises from shared perceptions that are reflected through performance (rituals and practices of the subculture). In this context, neither subculture nor mainstream have a defined position; it changes depending on the specific contingents of people who perceive them. For Hannerz, "SUB" means separation from the mainstream, while "CULTURE" reflects that separation within the rules, symbols, rituals, myths, and similar, where it perpetuates but also depends on the specific context. Authenticity and identification of subcultures are not constant nor unchanging, but vary depending on different patterns of defining oneself or one's group, as well as the groups and people considered external in a given situation. In light of this, it is important to note that Hannerz (2015) sees performance, which arises as part of the perceived separation from the mainstream (SUB) and is embodied through various subcultural practices, as crucial for defining one's position through stable appearance before an audience (Goffman, 1963). This appearance before an audience, in our case, means the presence of subcultural actors in public space. Although it does not exclusively refer to the manifest form

of subcultural groups, but also to the symbolic dimension of their identity, Williams (2011) emphasizes that the position of subcultural actors is determined by two parallel processes. One is the "process of marginalization," in which members of the dominant culture label subcultural members as "problematic, pushing them further away from opportunity structures" (Williams, 2011:11). The second process is based on the sub-cultural members themselves, manifested in their desire to be different from the rest of society, i.e., their non-normativity (Williams, 2011).

Since subcultural members identify in opposition to the perceived mainstream, it is essential to highlight that Hannerz (2015) recognizes two dominant patterns of meaning: convex and concave. The convex pattern suggests opposition to the mainstream and looks outward – beyond the subcultural group. Namely, subcultural members perceive the mainstream as normal, controlled, and commercial. In the concave pattern, differences within the subcultural group are evident, as these differences arise from the perception of other members as superficial, hedonistically oriented, and dependent on the mainstream (Hannerz, 2015). Subcultural members differ in terms of distancing or approaching the aforementioned characteristics. Collectively, these characteristics mark the subcultural as "sacred" and positive, while the mainstream is seen as profane and negative.

More specifically, space can be divided into its subcultural use and its subcultural significance in a given situation, as well as in relation to different members of the subcultural group. A "subcultural place" in such a constellation of relationships would mean something that is filled with meaning for subcultural members and that, in turn, affects their individual and collective identifications.

3. METHODOLOGY

For this research, following the sociological tradition of studying subcultural groups using qualitative methodology, we used an ethnographic approach. This involved participant observation and semi-structured interviews. These approaches are suitable for relatively closed groups such as football supporters, skaters, and punks. The selected groups cover different sources of subcultural identity, where skaters can be described as a sports subculture, punks' identity is based on music, while supporters' subculture is primarily centered around supporting a sports club or individual[8].

The three ethnographic studies whose results are presented in this paper were conducted as part of the research for two doctoral dissertations by the authors. The results and their

8 Such delineations are relative because skaters can build their identity precisely in opposition to skateboarding as an institutionalized sport, though its foundation is physical activity. Fans or supporters can also construct their identity around various other objects of adoration (e.g., Harry Potter), but here we are primarily discussing the fan subculture that follows a sports club.

9 Both dissertations were defended at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb. The dissertation presenting the results of the research on four subcultural groups, including punks

interpretation in this paper, however, deviate from the dissertation topics[9]. This research focuses on the relationship between subcultural actors and space. The one dissertation on subcultural and post-subcultural practices examined the relationship between theoretical assumptions related to class, style, and resistance as determinants of contemporary subcultural groups. Meanwhile, the dissertation on football fans focused on collective identity, specifically establishing the subcultural determinants of the identity of organized fan groups. In both studies, space was included as one of the elements of research, both in interviews and in participant observation. We should note that the aspect of research involving participant observation is crucial for this work, as using this method provides the best insight into the use of space. Therefore, diary entries from the doctoral research form the backbone of this study, alongside semi-structured interviews.

We should also mention that both researchers have been, or still are, part of the scenes they are studying, which reflects on the research in two ways. On the one hand, this position has enabled in-depth exploration of these phenomena, as the researchers have access to groups that can be considered relatively closed (especially in the case of the Bad Blue Boys). On the other hand, this research position brings the potential risk of "over-immersion" in the phenomenon, which can result in certain ethical dilemmas during the research process. In short, while these dilemmas do not affect the research results, they need to be addressed. For instance, while the study guarantees anonymity for members of these groups, the groups' size and characteristics make it possible for participants' identities to be detected by other members unless the researcher carefully removes all potential "traces" (e.g., any mentions of specific tattoos of an individual, contextualizing events and situations through which others might identify the individual, etc.).

Furthermore, the aforementioned "over-immersion" can lead to researchers making a priori assumptions and predictions about potential situations in the field. Thus, the researcher must continually reflect on his position and make a clear distinction between himself as a researcher and as a member of the group.

The ethnographic study of the punk subculture was carried out from September 2019 to June 2020, while the study of skaters was conducted from June 2021 to January 2022. In addition to participant observation and keeping field diaries, a total of 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted with punk subculture members, with the longest lasting 89 minutes and the shortest 39 minutes. Through participant observation, 24 field diaries were created based on individual events the researcher attended, with a much larger number of informal meetings with the actors. For the skaters, 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted, the longest lasting 101 minutes and the shortest 33 minutes. As with the punks, a research diary was kept with a total of 19 entries. The study of the football supporter subculture, focusing on members of Dinamo Zagreb

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and skaters, is titled "Subcultural and Post-subcultural Practices of Young People in Zagreb" and was defended in 2022. The second dissertation, on which this paper is based, focused on the fan subculture, was defended in 2023 under the title "Subcultural Identity of Organized Fan Groups – The Case of the Bad Blue Boys".

football club's supporters group, the Bad Blue Boys, took place from 2019 to 2023. In this research, 41 semi-structured interviews were conducted, with the longest interview lasting 92 minutes and the shortest 10 minutes. Participant observation in the case of supporters involved 102 diary entries. Due to the sensitivity of the content, participant data were thoroughly anonymized, with pseudonyms assigned to each participant.

In this paper, the data analysis in all three cases was thematic, with the main themes derived based on the research questions and the theoretical framework used in the study. When discussing thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2021) emphasize the necessity of interpreting data within its social and cultural context. Similarly, our research highlights the importance of understanding the subject matter primarily from an "insider's" perspective. Only through such an approach can we grasp the specific aspects of the relationship between space and subculture. This is particularly crucial because mere observation, without insider insights, deprives us of actors' interpretations related to spaces. Furthermore, without an "insider" approach, it is impossible to comprehend the ritual dimension of how subculture manifests in space. The derived themes in our case pertained to: the use of space, the meaning of space, the convex pattern of positioning, the concave pattern of positioning, and the symbolic impact of space on actors. NVivo software was used for the qualitative data analysis.

4. RESULTS

The results of our research are presented here through three subsections related to the researched groups. The separate results for each individual group follow a logical structure that was envisioned prior to writing, which is based on several different theoretical assumptions used to approach this phenomenon. Additionally, the structure is shaped by the methodological approach, specifically thematic analysis.

1. Skateboarders

Skateboarding, or simply skating, first emerged in the U.S. in the 1970s and has since spread worldwide. From the very beginning, there have been different views on skateboarding. On one hand, some see it as vandalism (Wood et al., 2014), and therefore as a deviant phenomenon. On the other hand, skateboarding has been included as an Olympic sport since the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics. We approached the research of skateboarding with the idea of a subcultural group of youth that has existed within Zagreb's subcultural scene since the 1990s. Benjamin Perasović (2001) emphasizes that the "birthplace" of subcultures is the urban context, and when it comes to skateboarding, this conclusion gains additional strength because, for skaters, the city represents not only a symbolic element of identity but also a necessary "equipment" for this activity. Accordingly, with the emergence of skateboarding in Zagreb, various skate spots appeared – places that skaters appropriated and, through years of gatherings, inscribed skate meanings into certain city locations. Four places stand out as the most important in the history of Zagreb skateboarding: Mimara (the space in front of the museum); the Stu-

dent Center, specifically the "skate ramp" placed in its courtyard; the area in front of the Croatian Association of Artists (HDLU) building[10], colloquially known as "Džamija" (mosque); and more recently, the space in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art.

"Mimara, the Džamija used to be, still is sometimes, the Museum of Contemporary Art also used to be, now it's not as much – I don't know, it's already a matter that people in the city know that we are there. Like we talked about identity and everything, well that's identity, you go to Mimara, I go, I skate, and that's our place!" (Maks, 23)

These places serve as illustrations of the relationship between skaters and space in Zagreb. On one hand, the "permanence" of these places indicates their importance to the group, while on the other hand, changes to these places point to the relationship between the mainstream and skaters, primarily through the lens of attempts by city authorities to displace skaters. In the interviews, many respondents emphasized the importance of manifesting skating activities in public spaces as one of the fundamental characteristics of the subculture they belong to.

"It's a loud sport, let's say, you can be heard, you know, it's not, when you're going, you can be heard, when you're going down the street, you can be heard, when you're jumping. So, in that way, you let people know that you're there and that you're doing your thing." (Hrc, 29)

From the quotes, it is evident that the presence of skating in a public space of the city represents an important element in the construction of their subcultural identity for our respondents, and it also serves as a way to express their subcultural style and activities associated with group norms and values. It is important to note that the respondents highlight the desire to be present in the material, but also the symbolic layout of the city and community, and how these efforts come into conflict with city policies for preserving public spaces. Primarily, we refer to the removal of the "skate ramp" in the Student Center area, which caused skaters to lose one of their permanent gathering places. Additionally, along with the disappearance of the "ramp" in the Student Center, changes have occurred in the area surrounding the "Džamija," where we encountered the emphasis on the change in atmosphere during the research.

"My idea is that there's no problem if we're in some place, meaning if we're not bothering anyone, and often there's no one to bother if you're in front of the MSU[11], which at that moment isn't working, just let us use that place because there's nothing wrong with it. And when we make videos, come on, let me freely show some places and be on them, the video will look nice, Zagreb in the background and everything." (Kor, 22)

After presenting the results regarding the importance of public spaces deeply rooted in Zagreb's skate scene, we will turn to another dimension of the relationship between space and this subcultural group, which is the distinction between street skating and skate park skating. For our respondents, the "skate park," as a place designated for practicing skating activities, signifies a departure from the original skating, or "street riding." The

10 Victims of Fascism Square in the center of Zagreb.
11 Museum of Contemporary Art.

relationship between riding in a skate park and on the street is multidimensional because it contains stylistic differences, which ultimately lead to the existence of different levels of subcultural capital.

"Yeah, the street is definitely harder. Like it's not meant for that, it's just some bar on the street, like, some pipe. And the skate park, well, the idea of a skate park is that you have a course where you can practice. But the street, it's raw, sometimes the ground is bad, sometimes the element you jump off of is bad, the landing is bad, the concrete is cracked somewhere…" (Grg, 28)

The distinction between these two places is most often known only to the scene's actors, making it "coded" for the mainstream, and thus leading to the emergence of another form of skate place construction. This refers to occasional gatherings in places that part of the scene occupies "temporarily" and then, according to external factors (municipal guards, police, neighbors), abandons and finds new ones.

"Honestly, when I was a kid, we would go around like this because we didn't want to be seen, just so we could ride longer since people usually get pissed, they either come to you or call the cops or start arguing with you, throwing water at you. They even threw boards and we experienced all kinds of things, so I'd rather, I know you can't avoid it, but I'd rather just like, 'Leave me alone, let me just enjoy the ride and that's it.' When you find a place like that, you ride it for a while, but then at some point, if more people don't start coming, it's just your tight group, and it's not the same. Then you ride the main places in the city and try to find some new spot again." (Pako, 25)

As an example of what the respondent Pako is talking about, we will mention one note from the research diary, which refers to a gathering of skaters in a Zagreb neighborhood.

"For several weekends in a row, in the afternoon hours, a group of skaters and in-line skaters gathered on the 'rails[12]*.' It was a group of about ten young people who performed tricks for several hours at a busy spot in Vrbik. Several times passersby approached them and showed interest in what they were doing, with a few people commenting negatively about the noise they were making and that they were damaging the 'railing.' The group came to this place every weekend for almost two months, then didn't appear for a long time. The reason for this was finding another place that proved better and more challenging for riding. Interestingly, later, the name 'Rails' became part of the slang for a group of young people living in that neighborhood who are not connected with skaters."* (Diary entry, September 2021)

Thus, there is a limited temporal dimension to such gatherings. At the same time, they represent an important meeting point for members of this subculture in response to the displacement they face in some other, more "visible" urban spaces.

2. Punks

The second group we focus on in this paper is the youth gathered around the punk subculture. The history of punk in Zagreb dates back to the late 1970s and early 1980s,

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12 Rails are the colloquial term for the handrails that skaters use for their tricks.

with each new generation contributing to the development and changes of this subculture in their own way. Without delving into the changes related to the visual and verbal expression of punk on the Zagreb scene, we will focus solely on the spatial dimension, which has been an important element of the group throughout history. Over the past 40 years, punks have appropriated certain places in the city that then became "theirs," only to be replaced by new locations in subsequent stages. Over the years, punks have gathered in central city locations: in front of the Croatian National Theatre; in Ribnjak Park; in front of "Melin" on Tkalčićeva Street; on King Tomislav Square ("Tomislavac"); on the southern side of the Main Train Station; in the park behind the City Hall; on Mažuranić Square, and other spots. These places were often mentioned in punk band songs[13], and we can say that references to the city, neighborhood, park, or street are typical of punk expression, especially for certain "substyles" like Oi! punk[14]. Today's generation of Zagreb punks occupies some new places in the city, while also drawing on the tradition of their subcultural predecessors.

"For me, it's not important because I honestly don't care what anyone thinks of me, but it would still be nice if someone sees me on the street and thinks, 'Ok, punk, cool.' When I shaved my head, my only concern was someone seeing me and thinking, 'Fuck, Skinhead, now there's going to be trouble.'" (Drvo, 21)

We see that the continuous appropriation of urban spaces partly stems from the desire to manifest a subcultural style in front of an audience, which in turn helps form a demarcation line between subcultural actors and mainstream society. We must also mention that gathering in public spaces can encompass another dimension, which we might call the economic-symbolic dimension. Drinking in public spaces is, plainly put, cheaper than frequenting cafes and clubs. On the other hand, this reasoning cannot omit a certain "rebellion" motivated by prices and the aesthetic-symbolic characteristics of "mainstream" venues in the eyes of the young punks we studied. Interviews with scene participants clearly show that the choice of gathering places is influenced by numerous external factors, as is the case with skaters. Respondents categorized these factors into several groups, ranging from changes in the aesthetic and functional dimensions of urban infrastructure, changes in subcultural scene locations, and changes prompted by violence.

"The only time we move away from our safe zones, let's put it that way, is for a protest or a concert, but we stick very closely to our zones because, well, it's really divided. Nazis and Skinheads hang out at the Main Station." (Kezo, 28)

"We used to hang out at the HNK[15], yeah, and then in the second month of this year, we were also at the HNK until there were a ton of problems with Skinheads and the police, and

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13 For example, the band Skretničari sings about the "gang from Mažuranac."
14 Oi! punk is a subgenre of punk rock that emerged in the late 1970s in the United Kingdom. It is characterized by melodic, anthem-like songs, with lyrics often centered on the working class, solidarity, everyday life, and a sense of belonging to the local community, city, neighborhood, and similar themes.
15 Croatian National Theatre.

then we moved back to the Džamija. But now that they (the police) are chasing us from the Džamija, we go to Ribnjak to drink and stuff…" (Luks, 19)

The way punks view urban spaces through the lens of the aforementioned external factors largely determines punk places. On the other hand, internal factors have also influenced the process of creating and recreating these places, driven by a special subcultural logic. Punk has never been a straightforward concept throughout its history, as numerous variations and cross-overs quickly emerged after the style's inception, leading to the existence of multiple different styles under the common punk label (differing in terms of musical aesthetics, visual expression of group members, and ritual elements in punk activities).

"Our crew, for example, is called Kaosers. We're the ones totally without political beliefs, except for anarchy, and chaos is anarchy. So, we don't have left or right, but they're mostly leftists: Klaoničari, Medičari, and so on, even though maybe not all of them, but as far as I've understood, they're vegans and stuff." (Hrčak, 27)

What is visible from this quote is the awareness of different dimensions of the scene among the respondents, and consequently, the gathering places are experienced differently. The respondent mentions "Klaoničari" and "Medičari," highlighting the distinction within the scene based on location[16].

"What I now consider punk, for example, means not going to Vintage for Goblini but going to underground punk. You meet very few people who are into that, but they really are. I've always been attracted to that anarcho vibe around Attack, Klaonica, that's always been the most appealing to me. Even though gigs were also at Vintage and Boogaloo[17], that's, like, mainstream punk, and there'll be people there who don't understand anything in the sense I'm talking about." (Mia, 25)

Similar to Hrčak, Mia mentions the distinction between different punk places, grading them based on the ideological-value dimension within the punk subculture, while also placing them on a continuum of closeness or distance from the mainstream. For the sake of text conciseness, we will not delve into a more detailed elaboration of the political dimension as a form of distinction within the punk scene. However, it is important to mention it here, as our research indicates that some actors emphasized a significantly greater presence of politically motivated actions and symbolic expressions of political views within certain spaces, such as Klaonica, compared to other punk gathering places. Through participant observation, we found that the punks from our research group

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16 Klaonica is a squat in Zagreb, while Medika is a place that initially started as a squat but over time evolved primarily into a club and concert venue. From the perspective of the interlocutors, there is a division of actors on the scene based on the gathering place. Along with the physical location, there are also certain differences in rituals, the type of music that is listened to and performed, and the openness of the place to outsiders.

17 Vintage Industrial Bar and Boogaloo are two nightclubs/concert venues where performers from various genres, including punk bands, occasionally play. For some respondents, these venues represent too much of a shift towards the mainstream. Others, however, see these places as important for the scene because they occasionally host "significant" punk concerts featuring both local and international performers.

occasionally attend concerts they consider closer to mainstream punk, followed by an appropriation of space. At one concert in "Vintage," which another respondent mentions, a group of actors took over the front rows of the audience and spent the entire concert "pogo" dancing[18], while the rest of the audience mostly did not participate in this ritual. The actors believed that by this act, they temporarily took over the space, turning it into a punk place through the use of punk rituals.

3. Bad Blue Boys – Zagreb's Football Supporter Subculture

The football supporter subculture in Zagreb "officially" began in 1986 with the establishment of the Bad Blue Boys (BBB). This group is arguably the most visible subculture in Zagreb and boasts the largest membership of any subcultural group in the city. In recent years, the city has been almost entirely "marked" by BBB graffiti, murals, and street art, explicitly showcasing the significance of certain locations for the group (e.g., graffiti depicting Zagreb Cathedral, Maksimir Stadium, or symbols of specific city districts intertwined with the motifs of the supporters' group and football club).

Of particular importance for this study is the distinction supporters draw between two domains of their rituals – those of the "terrace" and the "street." The "terrace" and "street" are spatial symbols distinguished by different rituals in which the supporters engage. From the beginning, the Bad Blue Boys have occupied certain "subcultural" spaces where their understanding of space, and conversely, the symbolic importance of specific locations, is manifested through street and stadium rituals. Foremost, this refers to Maksimir Stadium, and specifically the "supporter stands" (North, East standing, South), which have been central to Bad Blue Boys' rituals (e.g., lighting flares, chanting, banners, flags, scarf displays). At any encounter with the symbolic materials of this group, one can observe a clear territorial identification (e.g., tattoos, graffiti, banners).

"Maksimir Stadium represents a statute of the city of Zagreb and Dinamo in general (...) also a symbolic building where, when I am present, I forget about the outside world." (Tram, 20)

The spatial domains of the city identified as significant during supporter rituals (including violent acts) are the city center, the approaches to Maksimir Stadium, the Kranjčević Street Stadium and surrounding streets, as well as the Bus and Train Stations. The Main Train Station is particularly important to the supporters as it has traditionally been a primary location for violent meetings between football supporter groups. However, perceptions of the spaces associated with supporter rituals have changed in recent years.

"Some of the older guys didn't understand how the younger ones couldn't organize better and defend certain streets in the city center from 'invading' rival supporters. The younger ones had a different perception. It's about the police and surveillance infrastructure in the city

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18 "Pogo" dancing is one of the rituals present at punk concerts. It refers to a specific type of dance that may appear to an outside observer as pushing and fighting, but for the participants, it has its own rules and meanings.

preventing supporter rituals from unfolding freely in the center itself. Supporters are recorded or arrested as soon as they arrive at such locations during home games. Moreover, it seems that all those gathered have more respect for rival supporter groups who manage to avoid the police and appear without an escort at various places in the city, not just in the center or near the stadium (the example of Legia supporters in Dubrava[19] was mentioned several times during conversations as a positive example)." (Diary entry, September 2023)

Important spatial markers for the Bad Blue Boys are also the supporter associations or fan clubs. However, since these are legally recognized social entities, open to the public, much of the supporter activity takes place in secret, yet culturally significant, locations, such as specific cafes and parks where supporter actions are planned.

"Members of the group told me that they used to simply go to places where the crew gathered on a certain day, as the exact place and time was often not pre-arranged, but was linked to specific events of subcultural importance – like the arrival of rival supporters, organization for a match, protest organizing, and similar." (Diary entry, February 2022)

Some of these locations were eventually "discovered" by authorities and then replaced by other spots, as the original locations came under strict surveillance and institutional control.

"We used to gather at Svačić, or Ribnjak… or at Opatovina. Today, that's almost unthinkable. I mean, we still go there… but now it's a landscaped park, people with kids, police… It's not really a supporter place anymore. You see… I actually don't even know if anyone still goes there." (Vatrogasac, 34)

The supporters' understanding of space is deeply embedded in their identity. Participants frequently talk about "conquering" other cities by arriving at specific locations – squares, parks, stadiums, stands, pubs, etc.[20] At these moments, even though they do not consider these spaces their own, they become occupied and, as such, an integral part of their subcultural identity.

"In Timișoara, we marched through the city, through the main square… in Belfast, we marched through the Protestant part with the Vatican flag… there's even a video somewhere with drums and everything… there are countless examples… Just look at Atalanta, in front of their stands…" (Ledo, 45)

The Bad Blue Boys also demonstrate their command of space through supporter marches ("Corteos"[21]) when they parade through the streets on their way to a match. Uniformity, demonstrating unity and solidarity in front of an audience, is of particular importance in this supporters' performance. In this ritual, they assert "control" over certain

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19 Clash with Legia Warsaw fans in the Dubrava neighborhood of Zagreb.

20 One of the newer songs by Bad Blue Boys specifically refers to the "conquest" of territory from rival fan groups: "When you play, I follow you. Because of you, we conquer other cities. Neither bans nor cells will ever separate me from you."

21 "Corteo" is the term for a fan procession through the city streets, during which they demonstrate unity, showcase their materials and artifacts, and chant fan songs in unison.

spaces, with an implicit threat of violence toward bystanders and others, as without this element, the "us" and "them" dynamic does not exist.

"I often take a walk with a scarf while the match is on, or even if I'm not going to the match, or I drive around with a scarf in the car to mark more places in that way." (Fanatik, 26)

Street control is also translated into rituals such as choreographies in the stadium domain (and vice versa), where, in a stable performance, the norms and values that the Bad Blue Boys strive for are demonstrated before an audience. Choreographies, entry into the stadium, or songs are often banned, leading to a deterioration of relations and conflicts over access to these spaces due to their subcultural social role.

"There were five checks from the entrance to the stadium. If I were a terrorist, they wouldn't check me that much. Then they ban the flag, then you can't wear that shirt, then they arrest you if you're rude – and they decide who's rude... and so... you start to hate them." (Totem, 28)

There are significant differences in perceptions of space depending on the level of immersion within Bad Blue Boys' subcultural practices and rituals. This primarily relates to knowledge about certain places – those that are "shrouded in secrecy."

"You knew… when we were going to Belgrade, or when… or when they were coming to us. And nothing… you're at the station, waiting, knowing that there might be a clash." (Gospodin, 53)

This also extends to the understanding of subcultural places. The significance of Maksimir's North Stand holds immense value for the Bad Blue Boys, and outsiders or supporters who have not undergone extensive initiation within the group are not allowed into the *kop*[22]. Such individuals will be expelled from the area, and their insignia will not be allowed to be visible from the home stand of the Bad Blue Boys, as it would tarnish it. Subcultural places, particularly the supporter stand, are sacred spaces. The presence of outsiders in such places is considered sacrilege.

"(...) and they pass through all of us, you know… And we're in the middle of the kop, and no one knows them... and O. yells at one of them and kicks him... like 'get the hell out of here, don't you see there's a meeting going on.'" (Satrap, 21)

5. DISCUSSION

Each group studied exhibits specific aspects, but this discussion will not delve into detailed comparisons or differences between them. It is clear from the results that the three subcultural groups have distinct rituals, shaped by their spheres of interest. For instance, punks congregate near concert venues, supporters gather around stadiums, and skaters frequent spots suitable for skateboarding. However, public spaces in the city center (squares, parks) emerge as frequent gathering places for all groups, suggesting varied interactions, ranging from conflict to coexistence.

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22 "Kop" is the established term for the section of the stands where the core of the fan group gathers.

The relationship between subcultural groups and urban space directly relates to the theoretical premise of the relational interaction between space and society. How do subcultural groups utilize space? Urban spaces, as encountered by subcultural groups, represent a given environment that is transformed into "places" through subcultural creation. These places are defined by the subcultural logic of their use, influencing how broader mainstream society perceives them. For instance, when skaters set up ramps at Mimara, that space becomes imbued with "subcultural meaning" and atmospheres unique to the skateboarding subculture. Similarly, when supporters display banners on their designated stands, the location is suffused with supporter subcultural symbolism. Punks occupying Mažuranić Square every weekend similarly mark the place with lasting subcultural identification.

The dynamics of subcultural spaces are in constant interaction with other social actors present in these locations (Löw, 2016). For example, during supporter marches, certain urban locations temporarily become supporter spaces, marked by their symbols and transformed into supporter territory. Over time, the consistency of such social practices makes these places subcultural sites, perceived as such by both subcultural and mainstream actors (Hannerz, 2015).

Institutional forces often attempt to modify the spatial dynamics to align with what is socially acceptable. For instance, the increased surveillance of football supporters in the city, enabled by legislation aimed at preventing violence at sports events, allows authorities to remove supporters from certain spaces even outside match times. Similarly, the redesign of Mimara to exclude skateboarding ramps represents an effort to displace subcultures from central urban areas.

Given that the respondents frequently emphasize the significance of specific locations for the development and maintenance of their subcultural values, norms, and rituals, it is evident that such places radiate subcultural symbolism. The tattoos of some actors – depicting benches in parks, the Džamija, Ribnjak Park, or the North Stand of Maksimir – clearly illustrate the importance these places hold for subcultural members. The atmospheres created in these spaces can influence a wide range of people (Löw, 2016). The presence of subcultural members in these spaces may provoke various reactions from what they consider the mainstream.

Relations with the mainstream differ significantly among Zagreb's skaters, punks, and supporters, as their rituals and spatial practices vary widely. Skating may be viewed sympathetically as it involves tricks associated with sports, while punk gatherings, involving drinking in leather jackets, boots, and mohawks, may project a more dangerous image. Supporter marches, pyrotechnic displays, or even violent clashes at the train station, carry a far more negative connotation for the public.

As seen in the results, these perceptions also vary based on the meaning patterns that subcultural members assign to certain practices and spaces. For example, some skaters may view gathering at Mimara as too mainstream and instead choose more private spots like the rails at Vrbik. Similarly, some punks may perceive Medika as having lost its authentic punk expression, deeming it too commercialized. Certain Bad Blue Boys

may question why some members of their group gather at the Main Train Station early in the morning. These interpretations depend on specific contexts.

What is important to note is that the subcultural "occupation" of space can be understood through two dominant logics. The relationship with the other is crucial because it is in this relationship that subcultural identity is distinguished from the mainstream. Without this relationship in public space, subcultural identity does not exist (Hannerz, 2015). For a subcultural sacred space to exist, there must be a relationship to something profane. This creates the "starting" position of any place where subcultural members or groups appear. When Bad Blue Boys occupy a park or streets during a march, these spaces become temporarily filled with subcultural meanings, both for the supporters and the mainstream around them. The mainstream observes something unusual, a temporary 'institutionalization' of space that diverges from the "normal" perception.

This pattern continues within subcultures themselves, as not all subcultural places are equally valued by the entire group. For example, the Main Train Station may be perceived by some as a place where supporters are catalogued and expelled (convex pattern), while for others, it is a place where the "chosen" few gather, those who are unafraid to risk their freedom for supporter rituals (concave pattern). These members possess enough subcultural knowledge to understand the timing, context, and participants involved in events at these places, differentiating them from mainstream Bad Blue Boys, who may not use or interpret these places in the same way.

As mentioned in the introduction, the displacement of subcultural spaces from the city center reflects the relationship between the mainstream and subcultures. Nevertheless, two dimensions of this relationship and their impact on spatial dynamics must be emphasized. To be visible to the mainstream, and to be subcultural at all, a relationship with others is required. Therefore, the logic of non-normativity is crucial (Williams, 2011). Subcultural actors differentiate themselves from others, operating outside mainstream control. However, when spatial regimes involve multiple groups occupying the same places, deviating from the "normal" can lead to the marginalization of subcultural actors. This is particularly problematic when more powerful actors, such as the city or police, are involved. The removal of ramps at the Student Center exemplifies this, as skaters united multiple times to try and save the ramp. In such cases, the logic of marginality provides a raison d'être for subcultural ideology and the formation of identity around specific urban locations. This sense of marginalization can further lead to a clear distancing from other actors in the same location.

6. CONCLUSION

Subcultural groups utilize space by presenting their values, style, norms, and rituals at specific places and times, transforming perception of locations into subcultural spaces over time. Whether it is skating, drinking, listening to punk music, or occupying streets on the way to a match, these actions represent the spatial extension of subcultural identity (Löw, 2016).

For subcultures and people alike, certain places are consistently seen as "theirs." The atmospheres created at these locations embody subcultural symbolism, reinforced by shared interpretations. For example, the fight for the skate ramp highlights the symbolic significance of place and the solidarity of the group.

The spatial arrangement and symbolic perception of space vary depending on context and subcultural identity. Since subcultural identification typically stands in contrast to the perceived mainstream, this study aligns with Hannerz's (2015) dual pattern of subcultural identification. Convex meaning is evident in the constant desire for visibility in front of "others," with subcultural spaces intertwining with those perceived as "normal," "controlled," or "commercial." In response to this, subcultural actors often intentionally behave "deviantly" to emphasize their non-normativity. The noise from skateboards, the visual "shock" of punk style, or the violence of supporter rituals at the Main Train Station are examples of this desire to differentiate and provoke marginalization.

Conversely, whether intentionally or not, conventional society marginalizes these groups spatially through institutional control, surveillance, and physical displacement, further reinforcing group solidarity and non-normativity. In concave intra-group relations, there are distinct patterns of spatial identification within the groups themselves. While some members attribute higher subcultural significance to certain places, others distance themselves from these locations, perceiving them as too close to the mainstream.

This study has shown how three subcultural groups situate themselves in the space of Zagreb, how they create subcultural places, and which places are inscribed in the subcultural history of the city. Moreover, the research illustrates how the perception of specific locations influences subcultural identification, and how spatial identifications differ due to the heterogeneity of subcultures, which are separated from the mainstream through concave and convex identification patterns. The exploration of the relationship between subcultural actors and space presents a challenging topic for sociological research, as it involves a dynamic process in which contextual circumstances change over time. The perception of urban spaces often varies with each new generation of youth subcultures, and consequently, the ritualistic dimension of space usage is also subject to change. The limitation of this study lies in the fact that its findings cannot be generalized to other cities and the spaces within them. However, it can certainly serve as a reference point for further research about the relationship between subculture and space, and its results provide an opportunity for comparative analysis in the future. Therefore, in the future research on this topic, we believe ethnography should be understood as a key method for studying spatial relationships. Additionally, it is important to frequently and systematically investigate subcultural groups in relation to spaces, as the frequent changes in these dynamics highlight the turbulent coexistence of youth in urban environments.

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GRAD JE NAŠ – ZAGREBAČKE SUBKULTURE I PROSTOR

Andrej Ivan Nuredinović, Dino Vukušić, Jana Vukić

Sažetak

U radu su predstavljeni rezultati istraživanja odnosa supkulturnih skupina i prostora u gradu Zagrebu. Provedene su tri etnografske studije na tri različite skupine - punkeri, skejteri i navijači. Korištenjem etnografskog pristupa i kvalitativnih metodoloških alata (promatranje sa sudjelovanjem i intervjui), cilj je bio istražiti različite dimenzije odnosa između ovih skupina i prostora u urbanoj sredini. Zanimalo nas je kako identifikacije supkulturnih skupina utječu na razumijevanje prostora. Fenomenu prostora pristupili smo prvenstveno relacijski, oslanjajući se na teoriju Martine Löw. Zatim smo oslanjajući se na supkulturnu teoriju Erika Hannerza i Patricka Williamsa produbili razumijevanje prostora za same supkulturne aktere. Naši rezultati pokazuju da postoje zajednički aspekti korištenja i doživljavanja prostora kod sve tri proučavane skupine. Dodatno, vidljiv je odnos prema mainstreamu kroz prizmu prostora, kako na konveksnoj tako i na konkavnoj dimenziji njihova supkulturnog identiteta.

Ključne riječi: *Bad Blue Boys, punkeri, skejteri, prostor, supkultura*

DIE STADT GEHÖRT UNS - SUBKULTUREN UND RAUM IN ZAGREB

Andrej Ivan Nuredinović, Dino Vukušić, Jana Vukić

Zusammenfassung

In der vorliegenden Arbeit werden die Ergebnisse einer Forschung über die Beziehung zwischen subkulturellen Gruppen und Räumen in Zagreb vorgestellt. Es wurden drei ethnografische Studien mit drei verschiedenen Gruppen - Punks, Skater und Fans - durchgeführt. Durch den Einsatz qualitativer Methoden im Rahmen des ethnographischen Ansatzes (teilnehmende Beobachtung und Interviews) sollten verschiedene Dimensionen der Beziehung zwischen diesen Gruppen und Räumen im städtischen Umfeld untersucht werden. Wir waren daran interessiert, wie die Identifikationen der subkulturellen Gruppen das Verständnis von Raum beeinflussen. Wir näherten uns dem Phänomen des Raums in erster Linie relational und stützten uns dabei auf die Theorie von Martina Löw. Anschließend stützten wir uns auf die subkulturelle Theorie von Erik Hannerz und Patrick William, um das Verständnis von Raum für die subkulturellen Akteure selbst zu vertiefen. Unsere Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass es in allen drei untersuchten Gruppen gemeinsame Aspekte der Nutzung und Erfahrung von Raum gibt. Gleichzeitig ist die Beziehung zum Mainstream auch durch das Prisma des Raums sichtbar, entweder auf der konvexen oder konkaven Dimension ihrer subkulturellen Identität.

Schlüsselwörter: *Bad Blue Boys, Punk, Skater, Raum, Subkultur*