

# Parkour and the Built Environment

## Spatial Practices and the Plasticity of School Buildings

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We are aligned with a surface. We exchange mineral components with an historical territory less like cyborgs than like speaking, ambulatory dirt. (Robertson, 2006)

### Introduction

**I**N THIS PAPER, I explore buildings as composite sites constituted through spatial practices, and I argue that various kinds of counter-movement can redefine the contours of the built environment. I explore ‘subversive’ spatial practices as symbolic and material instances of resistance that target the physical contours of buildings and dislocate the structuring binary of inside/outside. In particular, I examine Parkour as a counter-movement that transforms the built environment and speaks back to the dominant spatial practices prescribed therein. Rather than dismissing Parkour as simply anti-social, I draw on postmodern theories of place to re-imagine these counter-movements as a tactic of spatial misuse that strategically confronts and transforms the totalizing space of the school building.

Parkour, defined variously as the “art of movement” or a “course of obstacles,” has become a popular expression of youth culture (Atkinson, 2009; Fuggle, 2008; Thomson, 2008). Parkour is an acrobatic traversing of urban spaces - leaping, spinning, swinging, climbing - using no props or tools. Parkour is the art of moving quickly and deftly through and over physical structures, following alternative and unexpected paths, using carefully mastered techniques such as the cat-leap, the monkey vault, and the cat balance, across and against the movements conditioned and sanctioned by the built environment. Close to 500,000 Parkour (or free running) videos can be found on Youtube as of this date, and many of these are set in school buildings. These short two to five minute videos – usually filmed and edited by students - are evidence of a popular form of youth culture that explores the plasticity of bodies and buildings. Parkour videos tend to document students ‘misuse’ of school space and furniture, as they leap over tables and through

windows, scale the façade and clamber over concrete barriers, and handstand down stairs and along corridors (de Freitas, 2009).

Instead of simply pathologizing these subversive acts as anti-social or anti-authoritarian, I suggest that we consider Parkour as a form of student resistance that inserts the *body* back into school architecture. I hope to open a space for making sense of Parkour as not simply (or only) reactionary to an oppressive power realized within the built environment, but rather as a subversive practice that *transforms* the built environment. I read this practice through the lens of current curriculum theory that draws on critical geography and cultural studies to rethink curriculum in the making (Gulson, & Symes, 2007; Helfenbein, 2006, 2010).

In the first part of the paper I discuss school architecture and pertinent theories about the built environment and perception, drawing on cultural theorists and philosophers who have explored concepts such as place, space and embodiment. I offer a few examples of architecture in which the relation of body to built environment is reconfigured, and I discuss the work of Gordon Matta-Clarke as an artist and architect who “worked the ruins” of old architecture in order to create new ways of moving through old buildings. I then discuss recent literature on Parkour as a spatial practice that similarly redefines the built environment, and suggest that school Parkour be read as a strategy of putting the body back into school architecture.

### The pedagogy of the Built Environment

Elizabeth Ellsworth argues that we must attend to the pedagogy of place, be it a designated “proper” place of learning, such as a school, or an “anomalous” place in which the learner is addressed through less prescribed ways (Ellsworth, 2005). She argues that architecture has a significant impact on the learner, and that learning must be conceived as relational to the built environment. Ellsworth claims that for too long we have neglected the influence of built environments on the trajectory of the learning self.

Architecture consists not only in the uses and meanings of buildings and spaces. In architectural spaces, bodies have “affective somatic responses” (Grosz & Eisenman, 2003, p. xiv), and these responses arise out of the “assemblage” (mind/brain/body/building) that is the time and space of a building’s inhabitation. Our experiences of a building arise not only out of our cognitive interpretations of the building’s allusions to historical or aesthetic meanings but also out of the corporeality of the body’s time/space as it exists in relation to the building (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 4).

We relate to buildings in complex embodied ways. Our individual and collective identity is formed in relation to the many rooms and corridors and entrances we occupy and traverse. Our experience of buildings is both explicitly cognitive and implicitly affective or “somatic”, as Ellsworth suggests. Buildings play a crucial role in our daily lived experience, and in our sense of belonging to particular communities of practice (de Freitas, 2007). Research on identity and learning must begin to analyze built environments to discern how we are addressed and interpellated by our buildings. A building interpellates a subject by way of material constraints that hail, recognize and position bodies within social hierarchies. If schools are “spaces of enclosure,” (Lankshear, Peters & Knobel, 1996) and students are both included and excluded by way of particular spatial practices, we need to interrogate the material structure of the building

itself as a site of identity contestation (Thomson, 2007). “Aspects of space are strongly tied to identity because they define who has the right to occupy a particular space or who may be seen to be ‘out of place’”(Dillabough et al, 2007, p. 135). Research in this area might transform both the practices of school architecture and the practices of inhabiting or occupying these buildings. If architecture is that which organizes, hierarchizes, and systematizes our activities, and if much of our behavior is defined as deviant precisely because of the way we refuse to submit to this spatial organizing, then it seems urgent that we attend to the diverse ways that built environments define legitimate participation. Instead of treating school architecture as “mere background phenomenon, with limited power dimensions,” one needs to see how the school itself is subject to redesign and reformation through the spatial practices that occur therein (Gulson & Symes, 2007, p. 105).

Like other buildings, schools are the products of social behaviour. They should not be viewed merely as capsules in which education is located and teachers and pupils perform, but also as designed spaces that, in their materiality, project a system of values. In turn, the ways in which the buildings are used and experienced give them meaning (Burke & Grosvenor, 2008, p. 8).

Burke and Grosvenor (2008) examine school design and the subsequent reshaping of such buildings as evidence of how schools stand as “fragmented sites of cultural memory and creation” (p. 10). The school building is a material embodiment of cultural assumptions regarding education, learning, and youth, while at the same time functioning as an “active agent” (p.10) partially determining our collective vision of these constructs. They recognize the diversity of school design in the West, but note the “marked continuity” (p. 21) of explicit concern for the controlling of children’s bodies. Mass schooling institutionalized the separation, containment and control of children’s bodies:

Control was in the buildings, the spaces created, and in the material contents of this space – furniture and equipment. Under the influence of school architecture the child was transformed into a *schoolchild*, into a subject of school culture (Burke & Grosvenor, 2008, p. 65).

Despite the “open-air school” of the 1950s and other attempts to break with the past of school architecture, it is difficult to not see the same control embodied in the buildings of most urban and suburban schools today. The recent discourse about “safe” schools (safe from the unruly youth within and the violent intruder from without) has led to cage-like buildings with reduced numbers of entrances and exits (Burke & Grosvenor, 2008). The prevalence of surveillance cameras and “smart” buildings, which detect intruders, points to the heightened anxiety about violence in schools.

In the UK the British government is exploring new ways to overhaul the education system through the building of partly privately funded state schools in areas where there are problems of “under-performance” (Ford, 2007, p. 56). For instance, Capital City Academy opened in 2003 in an area of London named Brent where student “defection” was high (Burke & Grosvenor, 2008). The building is meant to resemble a downtown set of street intersections, with one large central avenue and merging streets each lined with classrooms with partially glazed walls, allowing for more natural lighting, ventilation, and visibility for all occupants. Burke and Grosvenor (2008)

suggest that the building resembles a supermarket or airport, and that the transparency and openness make for few small intimate socializing spaces.

In schools such as these we see once again the concern to contain, discipline and protect the schoolchild. There are few places to hide in such an environment, and the all-seeing eye of the teacher is enhanced through basic materials – glass walls and partitions – and technology (Burke & Grosvenor, 2008, p. 176).

In response to such trends, the architect Bruce A. Jilk argues that we over-design schools by attempting to define and determine the future use-value of every nook and cranny. He suggests that contingency become a central theme and that a “montage of gaps” – a set of incomplete and dysfunctional spaces within the building - needs to be built into the school site so as to recognize how students and other occupants co-construct the embodied space (Jilk, 2005, p. 33). His approach of participative design demands that the building be comprised of built-in ambiguity regarding the functionality of particular spaces. Students and teachers are then invited to make the conjunctions between form and function as they see fit. Jilk has built a number of schools, such as the 2005 Ingunnarskoli, an elementary school not far from Reykjavik in Iceland, and the 1996 School of Environmental Studies outside Minneapolis. A recent study of the school culture and curriculum in the School of Environmental Studies (Gislason, 2009) reveals that teachers and students’ spatial practices are significantly impacted by the alternative school building design. Teachers work collaboratively due to the open structure, students flow through the space in less controlled ways, and the curriculum itself becomes fluid with the building<sup>1</sup>. Schools like this, however, are very rare exceptions, while the dominant design for school architecture continues to reflect institutional aims of controlling the movement of bodies (Augé, 1995). Indeed, so dominant is this design element, it’s as if bodies in motion, and mobility in general, threatened to disrupt the fundamental functionality of the building, that being containment.

### Perception, embodiment and containment

The feeling of containment is powerfully induced within institutional school buildings. The concrete walls, florescent lights, heavy fire doors and guarded entrances add to the effect. Schools are seen by many to be places of confinement for “warehousing kids” (Dillabough et al, 2007). Containment determines the distinction between the inside and the outside, and construes the walls as barriers to freedom. Although we may feel contained by our bodies, especially when we are uncomfortable, more often it is the built environment that overwhelmingly structures our feelings of containment. And while the containment of our bodies might offer up an intermittent and perhaps necessary moment of reflection, the containment of a building always comes from without. Buildings announce another kind of inside, they surround and envelope, but unlike landscapes and other sublime experiences of immersion, we *build* our buildings and occupy them precisely in order to be surrounded. Unlike the mountain or the prairie, the building is “*made* to elicit such a response and that fact ‘loops back’ on one’s experience of it” (Rush, 2009, p. 4). This looping back on one’s experience of the material surround effect of architecture is a way for us to reflect on our own embodied nature (Rush, 2008). Being “in” a body, however, is not like being in a bottle or a box. Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1968) describes how the mind is “among” or “alongside” other parts of the world, and that the body is the site where the mind and other parts

of the world overlap, that consciousness is “comportement” or orientation in relation to these experiences of foreground and background. The body is thus “something that I move with, not something I move, i.e., it has the characteristic of direct motility – I do not have to place my body in order to move it” (Rush, 2008, p. 18).

Our feelings of containment relate to how we construe inner and outer experiences, how we imagine our relation to “motility”, and how we fold into the barriers and the surfaces that surround us. Folding is the process by which inner and outer are constituted. Deleuze (1993) argues that feelings of containment and the construal of an inside/outside, whether they be in relation to the self, the body or architecture, result from the pleating, folding and twisting of matter and mind, as though the experience of depth or interiority was the effect of the folding process.

When one folds, say, a piece of fabric back upon itself the fabric becomes convoluted. Folding puts the surfaces of a self-same thing in contact with another in a way that can render the distinction between “inner” and “outer” questionable (Rush, 2008, p. 20).

Thus the perception of enclosed space and our relation to its contours is a massive topological relation connecting bodies to buildings and to all other surfaces. The encounter between bodies and buildings is always dynamic and shifting since “no one occupies a completely stable, immobile perspective from moment to moment of perception” (Rush, 2008, p. 3). To “perceive” is actually to engage with this topological surface in such a way as to fold back onto it. Buildings become “bodily prostheses” and continuations of bodily movement: “All things within a perceptual field are present to me as part of a projection of my aims regarding that space and objects.” (p. 21) This reading brings to the forefront relations of agency and interaction, instead of passive objectification. The learning self is a *becoming*, not a being. This is a kind of agency that precedes conceptual reflective judgment, and points instead to our continuous activity through perception – perception as an active exchanging of material parts, a mixing or entwining with the world. Learning is less about cognition – as typically understood – and more about the embodied flow of perception as a continuous and often unconscious process.

Such a reading also highlights two relational concepts: proprioception (the sense of being in or out of balance) and parallax (the effect of perspective on the apparent positioning of two objects). Each of these concepts points to the ways that bodies and buildings are co-constituted through movement. Parallax and proprioception are perceptual processes by which relations within the material world are structured. As one moves through a building, the “proprioceptive potentialities” (p. 38) of the body are continuously reconfigured, as are the relative locations of objects in the foreground and background. Since body and building are fused through the folding back process of perception, the building itself is reconfigured as a body moves through it. A moving body best captures the perceptual constituents of the learning self precisely because of these two perceptual processes. Movement, by its very nature, disrupts the containment of institutional buildings, and creates a space of learning. For Deleuze & Guattari (1994), motion is an intrinsic quality of becoming and possibly a condition of it. Becoming is incarnated in a moving body that deviates from the laws that govern its location. A thing becomes a body when it “undergoes changes in coordinates” (p. 122), when it ruptures a space, when it captures (composes) an invariant under a group of transformations.

The architects Arakawa and Gins design buildings that conspire to elicit radically nonstandard perceptual experiences. They use the term “landing sites” to refer to their buildings

as a means of emphasizing the proprioceptive relation of body to building. The “landing site” is a provisional site where the body orients itself in relation with/in an unfamiliar environment. Their buildings are potentialities “to test how far one can distend experiential categories without them breaking down completely” (Rush, 2008, p. 49). The building is a “surround” which conditions the potential phenomenological response to it, but their aim is to make buildings that address the body in unfamiliar ways, to address the body as fold, so that the body then participates by folding back and co-constructing the embodied space of the architecture.

But how disruptive of normative perceptual encounters can a building be, especially a school building? How can a building sustain both community and the disruption of common sense simultaneously? Is it really a matter of building particular school buildings with this aim in mind, or might there be a way to attend to any architecture, to interfere with it, so that one bends the perceptual relationship between body and building? In the urban abandoned buildings of New York City in the 1970s, the artist (and architecturally trained) Gordon Matta-Clark performed “building cuts” where he literally cut holes out of walls and floors and sliced buildings in half. Matta-Clark recorded these actions on film. In a 2008 retrospective at the Whitney museum, documentary films revealed the careful decisions regarding where to introduce these destructive cuts so that the building would still “stand” while troubling the relations between inside/outside or floor/wall. Matta-Clark introduced disorienting alterations that pushed the traditional structural relations into unanticipated forms. According to Rush, drawing on the art historian Pamela Lee, Matta-Clark wanted to show how “boring” architecture might be transformed into “challenging architectural surrounds” (Rush, 2008, p. 86). Matta-Clark literally *worked the ruins*, making cuts that emphasized the materiality of soon to be demolished buildings, and then documented the strange experience of moving through these altered buildings. He created new ways to experience the architecture, ways that were deliberately disorienting and disruptive of the normative embodied space of the building. His work inspires us to consider the prospect of material interventions at school sites that might allow us to rethink the spatial conditions of the learning self. What sort of experiences might afford students the same sort of empowering intervention of their own normative embodied space?

### Movement and spatial practices

Examining movement within buildings is crucial if we are to understand the ways in which we are constituted through spatial practices. Although our concept of *place* is usually grounded in particular static locations, the concept of *space* is often associated with temporal processes of duration and movement (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977)<sup>2</sup>. Unlike the static notion of place, space “exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 117). Space is produced through movement, just as position and object are constituted through passage and action. According to this reading, movement is ontologically prior to position or space. Movement is precisely what we must study if we are to understand our individual and collective identities. Many cultural geographers have similarly tried to prioritize movement over place (Harvey, 1996, Creswell, 2004). For instance, Pred (1984) argues that place is the effect of processes and practices, and must be studied through the interaction of social structure and individual agency,

and Thrift (1996) and Seamon (1980) suggest that we look at embodied spatial practices, and define place in terms of the movements of bodies.

If we attend to the kind of movement enacted within the school - the kinds of movement that are accommodated within typical school architecture - we might thereby begin to imagine a wayward movement, a movement that misuses this extra-functional building in unexpected ways. When the controlled rhythms are disrupted and the building is misused, we often feel deviant or disobedient (for instance, I recall the wayward indulgence of running through the empty halls of schools on the weekends), while the building itself may be wired to detect and punish our trespassing. The smarter the building, that is to say, the more efficient the building is in terms of its intended function, the more likely it is to resist our misusing it. Functionality is the overarching force in architectural design, and yet functionality never fully captures the role of buildings. Buildings always exceed their functionality in some way – their meaning is always more than what they intend. Indeed, following Grosz (2001) and Ellsworth (2005), one hopes that buildings offer anomalous or “improper” spaces, where the functionality is suspended. “We must ask,” suggests Grosz (2001), “how to engender an architectural ‘bestial monstrosity’, a radically anti-functional architecture that is anti-authoritarian and antibureaucratic. An architecture that refuses to function in and be part of, as Deleuze names them, ‘societies of control’” (p. 154).

If we “shut up motion in space,” as Bergson suggests, then we shut space up in quantification, without ever being able to think space in terms of quality, of difference and discontinuity (Grosz, 2001, p.116).

Grosz is interested in an architecture that opens itself up for radical forms of mobility and corporeality. According to Grosz, bodies are the unspoken condition of architecture, but are absent in institutional buildings.

Bodies are there in a way that architects don’t want, or can’t afford, to recognize. But the body is there in an incontrovertible way. The point is to affirm that it’s there, and to find the right kind of terms and values by which to make it profitable for architecture to think its own in investments of corporeality (Grosz, 2001, p. 14).

She imports notions of virtuality from Deleuzian philosophy –derived in turn from Bergson - to talk about buildings that might engender new forms of becoming. According to Grosz, the virtual is that which promises surprise. The virtual – unlike the mere possible – cannot be anticipated or predicted by the actual (Grosz, 2001, p.12). This notion of the unanticipated relies on unscripted practices of mobility and transformation. A virtual space is “nomadological” or “rhizomatic”; it is founded on movement. She wants to trouble the usual assumptions about buildings as containment and protection from the outside, not to abandon this basic requirement, but to emphasize the way that *bodies in motion* constitute the border of an interior space. She aims to think “the relationship between building and subjectivity in different terms” (Grosz, 2001, p. 58). These terms describe a building that somehow rises above the distinction between outside and inside, a building that refuses to contain insiders and expel outsiders. Such an impossible building addresses a community of strangers whose principle gesture is to invite all strangers in (Grosz, 2001). This future building is a “spatial process, open to whatever use it may be put to in an indeterminate future, not as a container of solids but as a facilitator of flows” (Grosz, 2001, p.

152). Grosz asks us to imagine a built environment that honors the flow of the learning self, an environment of which the learning self participates. She spurs us on to consider the ways that school buildings might become places that invite strangers in, rather than sites of containment and exclusion. And although it may seem difficult to imagine an utter inversion of school architecture, it is well worth pursuing the image of a school building founded on movement, an image that might help us understand the phenomenological relationship between learners and the built environment. In an attempt to pursue this image I next discuss the wayward movement of Parkour as a “nomadological” spatial tactic for re-imagining the school building as a facilitator of flows.

### Parkour as a reclaiming of space and place

Parkour is usually traced back to the Paris suburbs in the 1980s and 1990s where groups of adolescents developed the pastime of traversing the urban environment with disregard for its intended use (Atkinson, 2009; Fuggle, 2008; Thomson, 2008). Defined variously as the “art of movement” or a “course of obstacles,” Parkour has antecedents in the military tradition of physical training for difficult and unfamiliar terrain. In the urban context, Parkour is a determined movement from one “lived” site to another, using carefully mastered techniques such as the cat-leap, the monkey vault, and the cat balance, across and against the movements conditioned and sanctioned by the built environment. There are no intermediary objects, such as a skateboard or scooter, to facilitate this counter-movement, only the body. Parkour questions and indeed contorts architectural space, redefining how such spaces can be used. The subversive moves of Parkour are a negotiation of the built environment, and do not involve damaging or vandalizing. Parkour and its offshoots, such as the more flamboyantly acrobatic free-running, have received a great deal of media attention of late, including the prolonged parkour chase scene during the opening of the James Bond movie *Casino Royal* (2006). The BBC documentary *Jump London* (Christie, 2003) pointed to how practitioners from the 80s and 90s bemoaned the commercialization, sportification, and ultimate commodification of the art. Like all subversive or oppositional cultural practices, absorption and appropriation by the mainstream is fast and furious. In schools in particular districts of London, for instance, Parkour courses are now offered to help engage students in physical activity and discipline. Competitive free-runners have become a large part of the global Parkour demographic. These tend to be white males between 18 and 25 with “lower, middle or upper working-class backgrounds” who value alternative sports cultures (Atkinson, 2009, p.173).

Atkinson (2009) refers to urban traceurs as the late modern flaneur in their aesthetic explorations of the city “starkly opposed to the tightly corseted normative movement within commercialized city zones” (p.174). Drawing on Lefebvre’s concept of “social space” and the disciplining of the body by the built environment, Atkinson argues that the traceur as flaneur disrupts the architectural determination of movement within cities and thereby troubles the “tacit logics of market capitalism” (p.175). According to Atkinson, Parkour “destabilizes and disrupts technocapitalist meanings of a city’s physical and social landscape for its practitioners” (p. 169). Atkinson followed a group of devoted traceurs in Toronto for two years and found that many practitioners were committed to a rigorous form of discipline and training, and that the ec-static goal of this discipline was a feeling referred to as “flow” (or becoming water) achieved during long sessions of continuous movement across the surfaces of the city. “Flow” is achieved, often



after hours of practice, when the time between grasps and provisional landings is felt as a sustained movement or flight.

Fuggle (2008) claims that the metaphor of the jungle figures prominently in Parkour in that traceurs tame the concrete jungle as they successfully traverse its trappings. She argues that Parkour must be understood through a radical theory of perception whereby body and built environment are co-constituted through their interaction.

In scaling the walls of a building rather than using the stairs inside, the *traceur* touches areas and surfaces of the building largely untouched, viewing the building from angles not usually perceived. In doing so the *traceur* not only changes his own perception of the building but also changes the building itself as perceived object (Fuggle, 2008, p. 215).

Fuggle asks that we consider the social meanings of this kind of misuse of architectural space. She draws on Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh and the process of coiling or folding perception back onto perception by which bodies of all kinds are produced. It is the folding and coiling that is engendered through perception which is simultaneously the condition for the possibility of perception. As the traceur traces a trajectory across the built environment, touching and being touched by various surfaces, folding and unfolding himself into and onto these surfaces, he traverses the 3-D landscape and rearranges the borders between inside and outside. Spatial experiences of depth, confinement and exclusion (and most importantly stasis) are altered along with the material structures that participate in those experiences. The construct of "chiasm" describes this criss-crossing of layers and layers of surfaces folded and entwined as the flesh of being (Fuggle, 2008). Running vertically up a wall, as Fuggle points out, exemplifies this notion of chiasm since the wall touches back in such a way as to propel the traceur upward and onward. It is crucial to keep in mind that Parkour *is* movement, and that its aim is to set in motion both the body and the built environment.

Saville (2008) suggests that Parkour is an exploration of our emotional engagement with place, a reconfiguring of that emotional engagement through the leveraging of fear. After exploring Parkour for one year – as practitioner and ethnographer – he found that fear of bodily injury is always present for traceurs, and that experienced practitioners found that "Parkour has led them to new spatial awareness, and most importantly of all, has given them the ability to participate more deeply in the formation of their emotions and the experience of the places they move through" (Saville, 2008, p. 911). Fear functions to materialize into consciousness aspects of the building or site that were previously imperceptible. Quoting a traceur:

You develop what I call parkour vision, you know. Round here people might see just a pretty rundown backside of a building, but it's actually a great playground of rails and pipes, steps – it's got it all. That's what parkour does to you. I can't go many places without seeing some nice-looking obstacles (Saville, 2008, p. 901).

Parkour, according to Saville, is a process of re-enchanting the body in place through an increased awareness of the plasticity of space. The intense fear of the building's brute resistance to the body matches the sense of achievement when one successfully redefines movement across the site. In the context of school buildings, that fear is shackled to a multitude of related fears regarding school culture. Thus the place itself upon which one traces a trajectory, that is to say the particularity of the building, must be considered in the analysis of Parkour. It is the place,

after all, which is constituted in the many memories that touch one before one's grip can touch back. Place, as Massey and others have shown, is a sediment of time, an aggregate of the many emergent spatial practices that have come to overlay at the site; place is a kind of doing, a moment in spatial relations, unbound and unstable (Massey, 2005; Grosz, 2001, Thrift, 2004). This view of place emphasizes the multiple conflicted subject positions constituted in/through the diverse spatial practices that define a particular place (Massey, 2005, p.181). When the traceur scales the school building, or misuses the windows or exits, he or she is undoing (and redoing) the emotional bonds that have accrued over the many years of his or her attendance.

Might School Parkour then be a testament to students' emotional re-engagement with place, a re-imagining of place? The refiguring of spatial possibilities and mobilities at school is a way of setting the school building in motion. School Parkour is more than simply a pushing back at normative institutional architecture; it's a means of reclaiming or seizing the building, of occupying the building in un-prescribed and unanticipated ways. School Parkour is a radical reconfiguring of the building itself, a redefining of its contours through the scaling of its walls, the misuse of its exits and entrances, and the counter-movement against its controlled conveyance. The traceur traces the coiled flesh of the school building, revealing how its depth and power are simulated through the layering and folding of surfaces. The traceur unfolds the school structure and refolds his or her body back into the building. The body is put back into architecture. In touching and being touched, the traceur affirms the materiality of the site, destabilizing the building's status as symbolic signifier. The traceur deliberately undoes the ideology built into the built environment, and addresses the building in terms of its physicality. And in so doing, the traceur is *present* at school in ways that re-introduce his or her body back into the building. This analysis raises important questions for those studying embodiment and spatial practices in schools: If place is a kind of doing, as Massey (2005) suggests, then what sort of place does Parkour make of school? How is Parkour constitutive of school as a new kind of place?

### Notes

1. Teachers state that they are *forced* to work together due to the physical environment. The research suggests that collaboration remains a matter of sharing responsibilities rather than integrated curriculum development.
2. A place of movement contradicts the definition of place according to Yi-Fu Tuan and many other Humanist geographers from the 1970s (Creswell 2004, 8). This distinction between space (as movement) and place (as position) runs through cultural geography since the 1970s. Tuan developed "a sense of space as an open arena of action and movement while place is about stopping and resting and becoming involved." (Creswell 2004, 20). There are, however, many differing accounts of the difference between space and place. In some accounts, space is considered measurable and static while place is subjective and dynamic. Harvey problematizes the binary, and critiques this reading of place, by pointing to the fear of difference that often characterizes the Humanist tradition of place consciousness. According to Harvey, it is the tension between place as fixed capital and non-place as mobile capital that produces an uneven distribution of resources across the globe (Harvey, 1996). For the purposes of this article, we will simply work with the Tuan definition as a way of talking about the role of movement.

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