POSITIONS THROUGH TRIANGULATING

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How to Define Safety?

Shift the issue of safety from *"feeling"* to *"fact,"* supported by specific examples and situations.

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Taking roller skating as an example, skaters combine elements like height, sound, and speed into an activity that disrupts my sense of safety.

How Does Roller Skating Affect Safety?

How to Define Safety?

1. Suppression of Presence
2. Sound
3. Speed
4. Spaces

Roller skaters appear taller, which amplifies their presence in the space. Their fast and fluid movements intensify this sense of dominance, forcing others to adjust their behavior. My fear is not just the risk of collision; it's encountering something *bigger, faster, and harder to control than myself*, making me feel like I've lost control of my surroundings.

Gert Stulp's (2015) social experiment confirmed that height is positively correlated with interpersonal dominance in various social environments. Here, *safety is about the distribution of control and power within a space.*

Stulp, G., Buunk, A.P., Verhulst, S. and Pollet, T.V. (2015) 'Human height is positively related to interpersonal dominance in dyadic interactions'
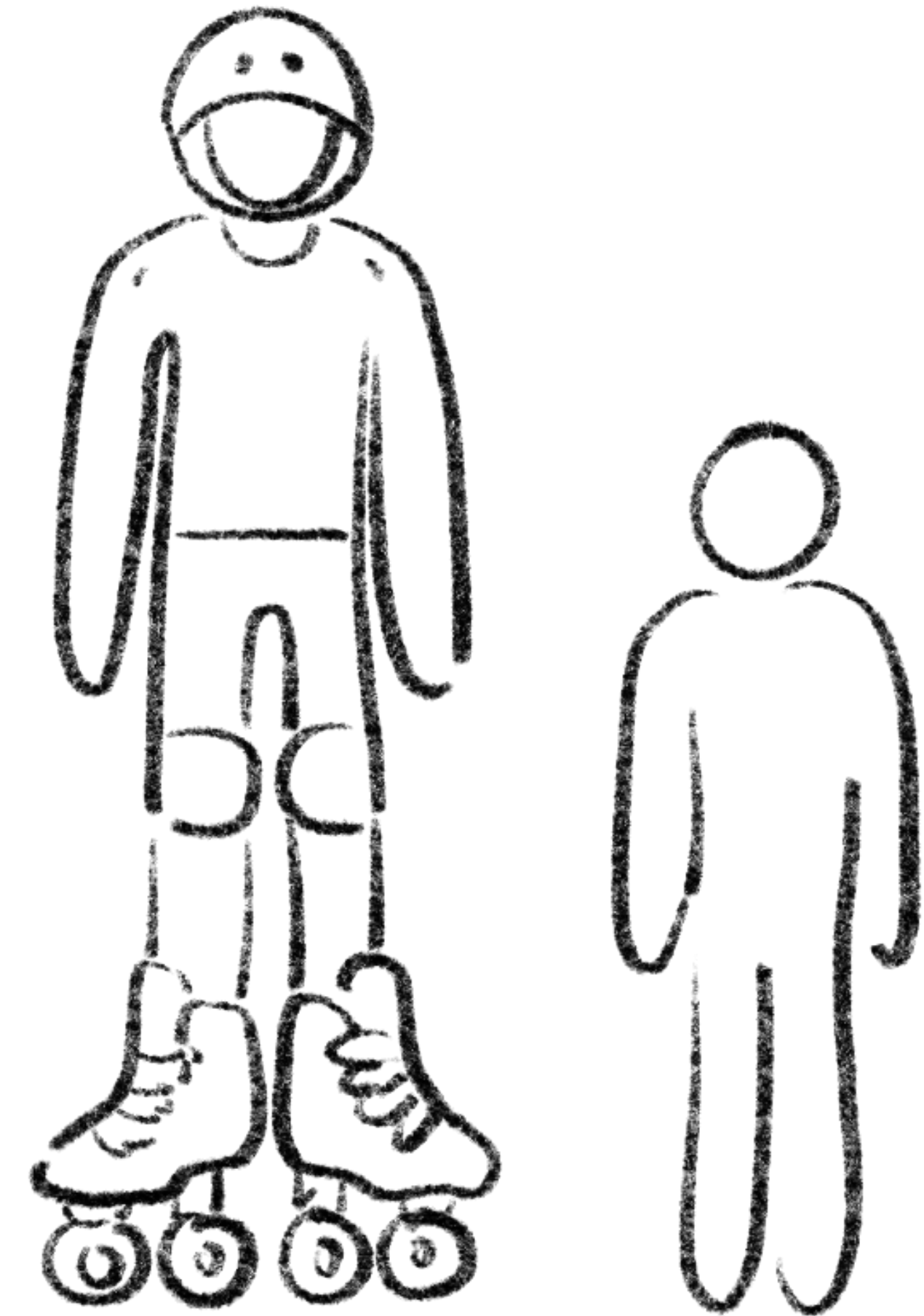
How to Define Safety?

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The sound of skates cutting through the space is *sharp, swift, and often unexpected*, heightening my anxiety even before I see the skaters. I realize that *auditory safety* is another critical factor. According to a study published in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, unexpected or sharp sounds in urban environments can increase stress levels and lead to feelings of insecurity (Aletta et al., 2016). Moreover, soundscape studies show that certain sounds can be perceived as threatening, especially when they occur suddenly and lack visual confirmation (Kang & Zhang, 2010).

Aletta, F., Kang, J., & Axelsson, Ö. (2016). Soundscape descriptors and a conceptual framework for developing predictive soundscape models. Landscape and Urban Planning, 149, 65-74.
Kang, J., & Zhang, M. (2010). Semantic differential analysis of the soundscape in urban open public spaces. Building and Environment, 45(1), 150-157.

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Roller skating introduces a dynamic, fast-paced element into pedestrian spaces, conflicting with the slower movement of pedestrians. *People who move faster may unintentionally dominate public space*, as faster-moving individuals (such as skaters or cyclists) displace slower users (pedestrians, the elderly, or disabled people), even if only temporarily. Pedestrians are forced to step aside, wait, or change their path.
This *creates a temporary hierarchy where skaters dominate pedestrians*, aligning with Sheller and Urry's (2006) discussion of "mobility," where movement becomes a form of social capital. In this context, safety means having equal opportunities and the ability to navigate a space without excessive risk or intimidation. When speed becomes a tool for excluding others, safety is compromised.

Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2006). *The new mobilities paradigm*. Environment and Planning A, 38(2), 207-226.

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In some parts of Stratford, narrow roads or transitional zones create compressed spaces where close encounters between pedestrians and fast-moving skaters are inevitable. When skaters enter such spaces, it feels like pushing a fast-moving object into a confined area, creating a sense of impending collision or the need to quickly vacate the space. However, this feeling lessens in more open areas. *Safety can be defined as the management of spatial compression and release.* Hall's (1966) theory of proxemics emphasizes the *importance of personal space for comfort and safety*. When skaters enter narrow spaces, they disrupt this personal buffer zone, causing anxiety to intensify. Additionally, studies on crowding and spatial behavior show that high-density conditions combined with rapid movement increase stress levels and perceived risk (Evans & Wener, 2007).

Hall, E. T. (1966). *The Hidden Dimension*. New York: Doubleday.
Evans, G. W., & Wener, R. E. (2007). Crowding and personal space invasion on the train: Please don't make me sit in the middle. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 27(1), 90-94.

How to Define Safety?

With in this context, safety can be understood as *control within a space, a sense of belonging, predictability, and inclusivity*. It is the product of how a space manages different speeds, behaviors, and the psychological impact of these dynamics on users. Safety means *balancing power and control within a shared environment*, ensuring that no group feels marginalized or overshadowed by another.

(Next: Visual Map)

Whose Sense of Security is More Important?

By contemplating this question, I aim to *reflect on whether my research focus, arguments, and priorities have shifted.* I have decided to take a step back and analyze this question from a more *macro perspective*.

1. Homogenization
2. Stratford's "Identity"
3. Race, Class, and Social Control

Homogenization—standardization and the stripping away of local characteristics to attract a global audience—creates non-places, fostering anonymity and weakening informal social networks that contribute to safety. Stratford's Westfield shopping center and certain areas of the Olympic Park are examples of homogenized environments. Westfield prioritizes transient users (tourists, investors, and commuters), while the design of the Olympic Park is meant to showcase a refined international digital identity. But is this design for London and its people? Not entirely. It is also *for London's image, its narrative, and its digital identity*, targeting not only those physically present but also those who aren't here at all.

Whose Sense of Security is More Important?

1. Homogenization
2. Stratford's "Identity"
3. Race, Class, and Social Control

Initially, I viewed digital identity as an extension of physical space. Stratford's identity is not wholly designed for the residents living in the area, but also for a global audience that consumes the space through digital media, tourism, capital investment and international trade. Here, I realized that *digital identity could also be spatial, geographical, and not sole about human—it has become a place-based narrative*, *constructed and controlled to fit a digital vision serving global commercial interests rather than the interests of local people*.
This shift also made me realize that emphasizing the creation of an international digital identity can lead to the erasure of local identities. The security measures taken around high-profile areas are intended to protect Stratford's image as a safe, modern city. *Residents, particularly those from marginalized or low-income backgrounds, are often overlooked in Stratford's digital narrative*. In Stratford, I often feel that many spaces are designed to appear safe but not necessarily to be safe. For example, the area around the stadium is brightly lit and well-maintained, but the streets just outside these prominent areas feel neglected. Zygmunt Bauman's critique of modernity in *Liquid Modernity* (2000) applies here. Bauman argues that in a globalized world, cities are increasingly shaped by the need to attract global capital and tourism, creating a disconnect between what is presented and what is actually experienced. *Digital identities, though seemingly neutral, are inherently exclusionary, catering to those who align with the projected image.*

Whose Sense of Security is More Important?

1. Homogenization
2. Stratford's "Identity"
3. *Race, Class, and Social Control*

Stratford's selective safety measures—such as placing "no skating" signs in areas primarily used by Black skaters—highlight how race and class influence who is deemed worthy of protection. This selective spatial enforcement reflects David Harvey's analysis in *Rebel Cities* (2012), where he argues that urban spaces are often designed to serve the interests of capital and power, with *safety functioning as a mechanism to protect the investments of the economically powerful, often marginalizing already marginalized communities.*

On the other hand, excluding certain behaviors or groups (such as banning skating) is not necessarily intended to alienate people, but rather to ensure pedestrian safety and enable the majority to comfortably use the space. For example, *hostile architecture*—urban elements deliberately used to guide or restrict certain behaviors to prevent crime or maintain order—is one such example of a control mechanism, including features like bollards, sharp metal barriers, or slanted floors. While these designs *appear to exclude certain groups, they also ensure the comfort and safety of the majority.* The concept of safety itself is contested: *is it truly about collective well-being, or is it about reserving space for the benefit of specific groups?* This unequal distribution of safety highlights that urban design is inherently political.

Main reference

Guy Debord 《The Society of the Spectacle》

"The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images."

Debord's theory about society's shift towards representation rather than direct experience influenced my understanding of the connection between media, images, and urban spaces, particularly in grasping how Stratford prioritizes its global image over the lived experience of safety. His critique of modern capitalist cities helped me transition from focusing on personal identity to analyzing how urban design shapes collective behavior and alienation. His ideas clarified the role of spectacle in creating homogenized spaces that cater to capital rather than the local community.