INTERSTITIAL SPACE:

Skateboarding in an urban context

Making creative spaces by using skateboarding as a resource for the city.

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2018

ABSTRACT

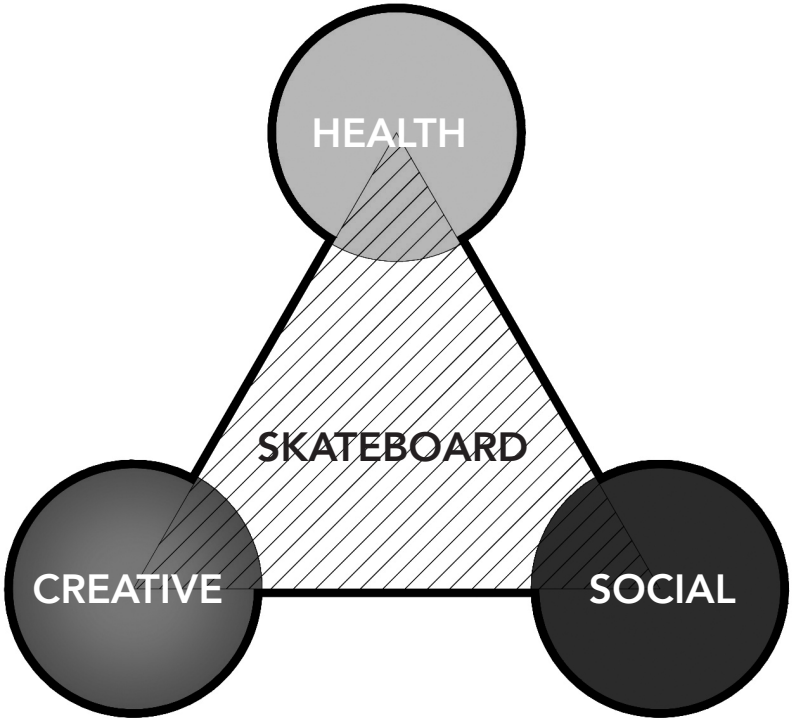
For more than half a century skateboarding has had a close connection with the city. Skateboarding is a creative urban subculture that alters the use of urban spaces.
Instead of deploying defensive architectural strategies many cities today have realised that skateboading can be a resource which can bring health beneficial, social and creative capital to the city. However, despite this new attitude towards skateboarding there are relatively few investigations within architectural studies that examines the many ways skateboarding can be used in the city. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to bring more knowledge to the subject by analysing how skateboarding is executed and how it relates to urban spaces. The main question for this work is, how can skateboarding be used as a resource to produce a health beneficial and creative space that also brings social capital to public spaces? To accomplish this, the work consist in creating an urban path with three focus points with different characteristics along the new city boulevard of Dag Hammarskjöldsleden. The path will be situated between Linnéplatsen and Marklandsgatan. The idea is that these three spaces relate to each other in an intersection that takes advantage of the original characteristics of the existing space at Dag Hammarskjöldsleden and the new space which is to be built.

The main quality is that each of these four new urban spaces take skateboarding into consideration in all levels of the design process. They are all optimised for skateboarding but in an urban landscape that doesn´t look like a skatepark. To understand how an urban space can be adjusted for skateboarding a presentation of skateboardings twelve primary obstacles is made, along with a description of the different styles that exists in skateboarding. Merging these two presentations makes it possible to create a skateboarding matrix, an assessment scheme that functions as a guideline for possible combinations of skateboard obstacles and the different types of skateboarding styles that are included in every combination. The idea is that the skateboarding matrix, conceived in this work, could be used as a foundation in the planning process of a skateboard facility. Since the matrix includes every type of obstacle and skateboarding style it can be useful whether it is for building a skatepark or refurbishing a public square.

TABLE OF CONTENT

CLAIM:

Skateboarding is a social, creative and health bringing urban activity, an important resource for any city in the world. It´s marginal position in architectural studies demands thorough examination to find new architectural strategies to include skateboarding in the city.


HEALTH
SKATEBOARD
CREATIVE
SOCIAL

INTRODUCTION

Skating is a popular activity with thousands of skaters and spectators visiting skateparks and public spaces all over the world.
Skateboarding is both an accessible and demanding activity that has many active participants. Since it requires a lot of time and dedication skateboarding can often become a lifestyle and form an importante art of the identity of the riders, skateboarding becomes something you live and breathe. Due to the shared experiences between skateboarders, it has become a global community with people from a wide range of backgrounds and demographics. Many cities worldwide have shown that, with strategic thinking, strong communications, good design and investment, skateboarding can be successfully integrated into the city in a safe, intelligent and inclusive way.
In Gothenburg, there is a vision to build a new city boulevard along the Dag Hammarskjöldsleden with new urban settings and residential areas containing around 20 000 apartments.
In the future, the tram tracks will be moved towards the center of the road which will open up for a new string along Slottskogen towards Marklandsgatan. By creating a new urban path along the old tram tracks it´s possible to connect Linneplatsen with Marklandsgatan and hence unite the inner city with the new residential area. This project aims to maintain the historical layer and characteristics of the area around the tram tracks and add four new urban spaces that are designed for skateboarding.

AIM

By analysing what skateboarding is and how it is executed, the purpose of this study is to bring more knowledge to architectural studies on how skateboarding relates to urban spaces. The aim is to find design strategies to integrate skateboarding in public spaces and in particular our object of study; the site between Linnéplatsen and Marklandsgatan. To do this, the work will consist in creating four urban spaces that takes skateboarding into consideration in all levels of the design process. The idea is not to build places that looks like skateparks but to construct a public space that uses skateboarding as a resource to create a lively urban space that can function as a path with several meeting points, not only for skateboarders. For street skateboarding, which is the biggest branch in skateboarding, a public square that works good for skateboarding is more interesting than a skatepark solely built for skateboarding. To accomplish the aim of the study the following questions has been set: What design strategies can be used to include skateboarding in urban environments? Also, how can skateboarding be used as a resource to produce a health beneficial and creative space that also brings social capital to public spaces?

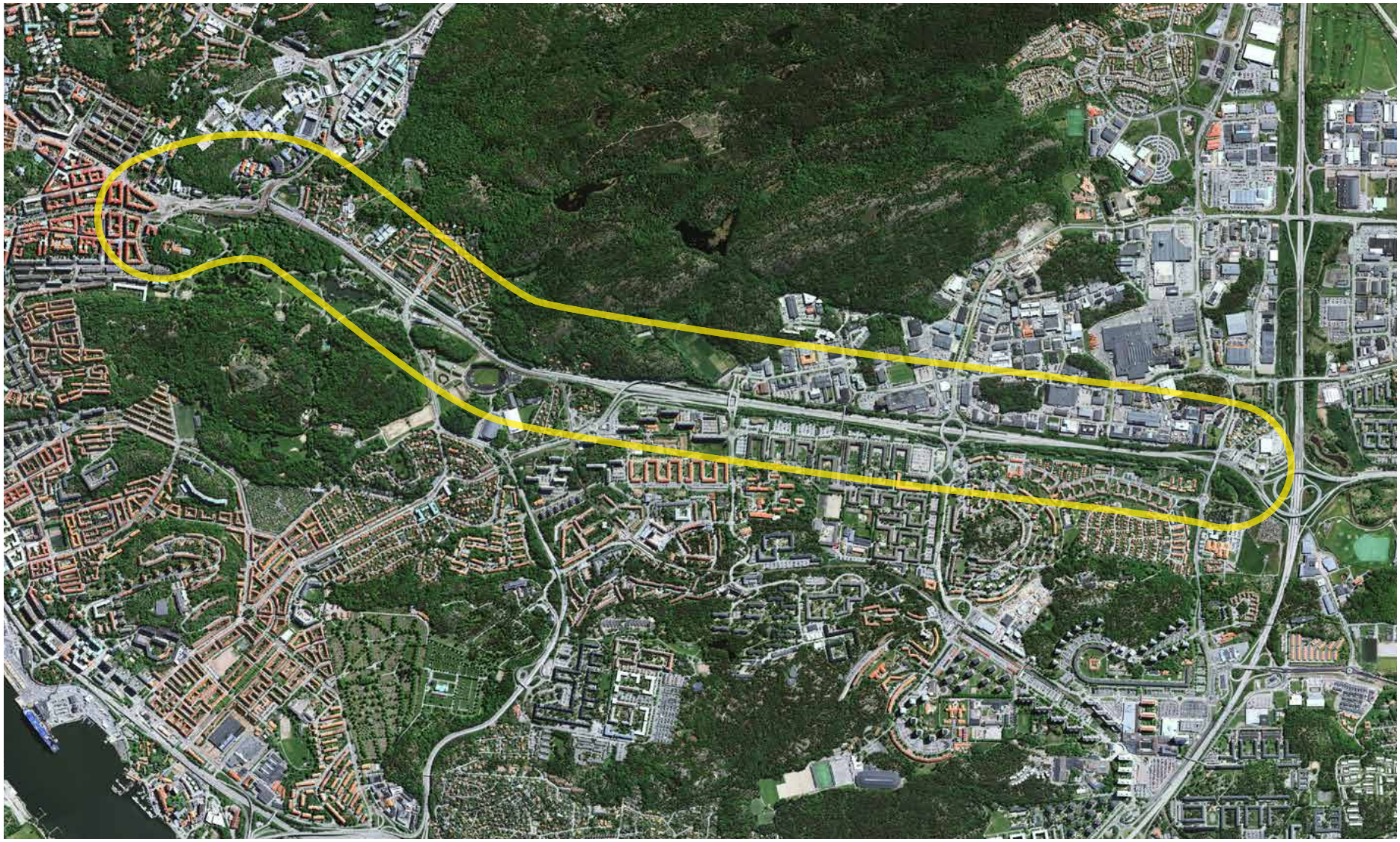
METHOD

As mentioned earlier, skateboarding and its relation to urban spaces is a relatively new field of research within architectural studies. However, since skateboarding is more and more taken into consideration when planning new public spaces there are a few documents regarding the subject from organisations and municipal departments from cities around the world. The city of Melbourne for example has a program called Skate Melbourne Plan that opts to “support and manage skating in the city”. In this work, an effort is made to use this document along with existing academical investigations on skateboarding such as Iain Bordens book “Skateboarding, Space and the City”. Before we present the skate designated sites, a presentation of skateboardings twelve primary obstacles is made.

And also, to understand the many ways skateboarding is executed a description of the different styles that exists in skateboarding will be provided. Combining these two presentations makes it possible to create a skateboarding matrix, an assessment scheme that functions as a guideline for possible combinations of skateboard obstacles and the different types of skateboarding styles that are included in every combination. Along with the skateboarding matrix it is also important to present a space calculation for each obstacle and a scheme of other aspects for every object such as energy and difficulty level. The idea is that these schemes, along with the skateboarding matrix, can be used as a base and guidelines in the process of creating a skate friendly public square.

SITE AND CONTEXT

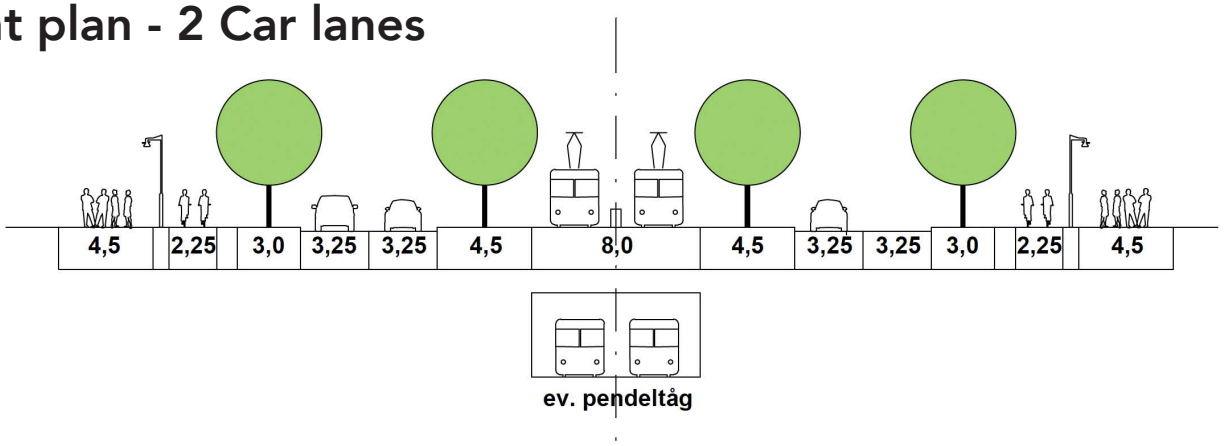
Dag Hammarskjöldsleden - Göteborg



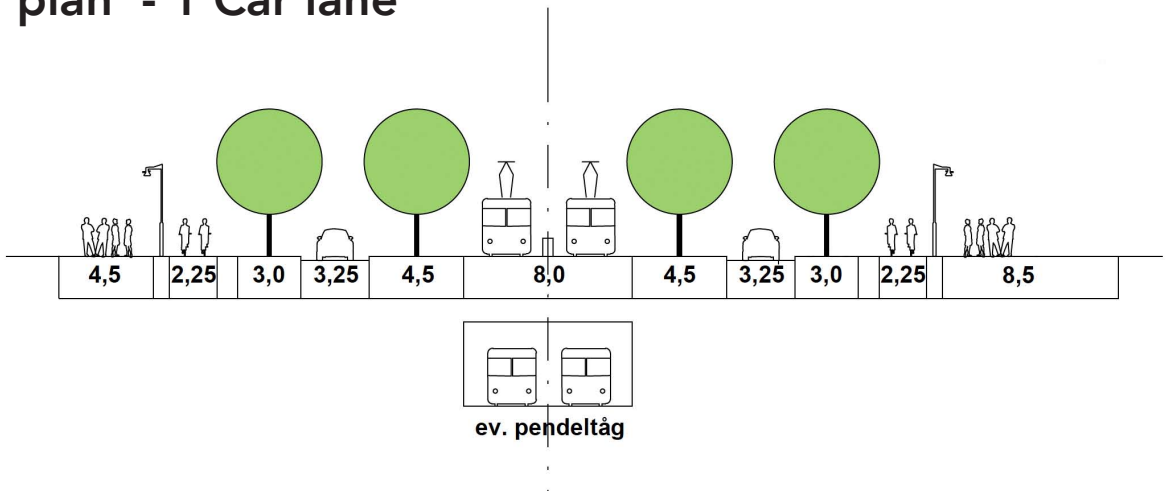
Reverse reference

Highline Park - New York

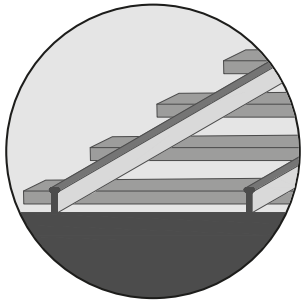
Current plan - 2 Car lanes

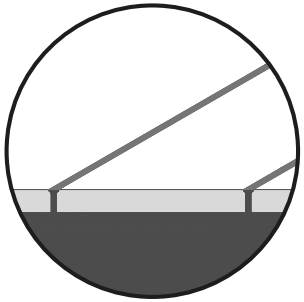


Proposed plan - 1 Car lane



Proposed plan - Tram tracks



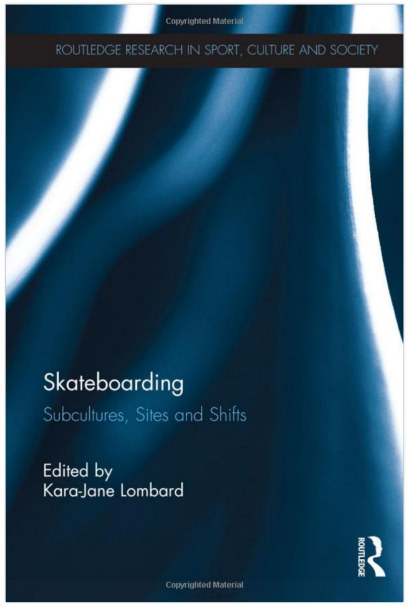


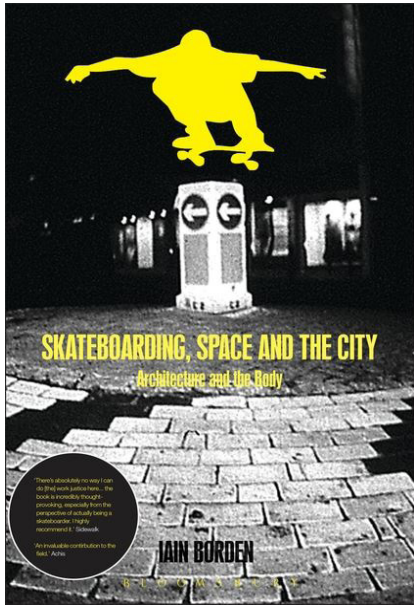
Tram Tracks:

Along the new urban path the old tram tracks will be preserved as a historical reference. This detail will also visually connect the two main points Linneplatsen and Marklandsgatan. Only the tracks will be visible and they will be flat with the new surface.

THE STRUCTURE OF SKATEBOARD

WRITTEN REFERENCES





"Skateboarding is perhaps an unusual object of study for a study in architectural history. But it is precisely its marginal position which enables skateboarding to function historically as a critical exterior to architecture. As such, skateboarding helps to rethink architecture´s manifold possibilities."

Iain Borden, *Skateboarding, Space and the City:*
Architecture and the Body
(Oxford: Berg 2001)

Skateboarding in an academic context

Skateboarding has an over 60 year history with a profound impact on urban life and popular culture. There are millions of active skateboarders all around the world and in 2020 skateboarding is entering the Olympic games i Tokyo. In spite of these facts, skateboarding has rarely been a subject for academic research, and less so within architectural studies. However, in 2001 the English architectural historian Iain Borden presented "Skateboarding, space and the city", the first extensive study on skateboarding and how it relates to urban space and architecture.

Today, 17 years later, the academic landscape has changed and skateboarding is more often a subject for investigation. One example is the anthology "Skateboarding-Subcultures, sites and shifts" which aims for collecting texts from various academic writers, including Iain Borden, examines everything from social and cultural dynamics in skateboarding to urban sites, politics and city planning.
To present all of these aspects would be to exhaustive for this paper, but a short list of key words that are relevant for this work and that also appear in the discussion might give a better view of the subject. Also, a brief summary of the work of Iain Borden is in its place since it directly explores how skateboarding is linked to architecture and the city landscape.

Some of the main key words that can be found in academic texts about skateboarding are: the body, motility/movement, space/time, streetskating, architecture, city space, public space, creativity/spontaneity, inclusivity/marginalization, politics, including/excluding architecture, appropriation of space, popular-/urban-/subculture, skate culture, identity.

In "Skateboarding, space and the city" all of these aspects are discussed by Borden but his main focus is on presenting how skateboarding as a body centered urban practice produces space, time and social being in an architectural environment (Borden 2001:1,12). This is made through the history of skateboarding which main archive consist of skateboard magazines. The theoretical framework of Bordens book is based on many different academic writers but the most important one is Henri Lefebvre and his theories about the production of space. Based on the thoughts of Lefebvre, Borden direct criticism to architectural studies by saying that "architectural historians limit their conception of architectural space to the space of the designed building-object - a fetishism that erases the social relations and wider meanings" (ibíd:7). Borden also adress that "Modern architectural space… tends to concentrate on the visual, on objects and surfaces, and correspondingly to ignore the space of the body" (ibíd101). With this in mind, one of the challenges with this work is to present a string of sites that not only blends visually with the surrounding space but also takes the bodily movements and practices of skateboarding in consideration in all levels of the design.

The experience of skateboarding: motility and urban space

There are many ways to describe the experience of skateboarding. It´s also a complex task to fully examine how the bodily movements of skateboarding relates to urban spaces. One way to approach this subject is to look at the philosophy of Maurice Marleau-Ponty and his theories on the phenomenology of the body. According to Merleau-Ponty our bodies are not in time and space, they are part of it (Merleau-Ponty 2005:161). He also adress that our bodily experience of movement is not a special kind of knowledge, it is the way we access the world and the objects (ibíd:162). So, how does this relate to skateboarding? Just like the surfer needs a surfboard to be able to surf a wave, a skateboard is basically the intermediary between the body of the skateboarder and the architectural space. In this sense the skateboard becomes an extension of the body of the skater which in turn becomes connected with the urban landscape in a way that would not be possible without the board. When rolling down the street with a skateboard the surface is literally felt flowing through the body via the vibrations from the skateboard; from the feet and throughout the whole body. For a skateboarder the board under the feet can be likened to the stick of the blind man as expressed by Merleau-Ponty:

"The blind man's stick has ceased to be an object for him, and is no longer perceived for itself; its point has become an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch, and providing a parallel to sight." (ibíd:165)

The same way goes for skateboarding, the board gives the skateboarder access to physically experience architecture with the body and the skateboard becomes incorporated in the bodily space of the skater.

Merleau-Ponty further notes that: "To get used to a hat, a car or a stick is to be transplanted into them, or conversely, to incorporate them into the bulk of our own body. Habit expresses our power of dilating our being-in-the-world, or changing our existence by appropriating fresh instruments" (ibíd:166).

PRIMARY OBSTACLES FOR SKATEBOARDING

WALL

FLATGROUND

LEDGE

GAP

RAIL

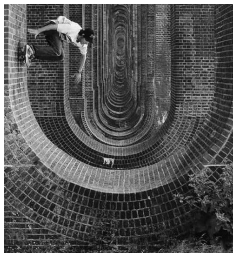
STAIRS

MANUAL

FLY OFF

HIP

HILL



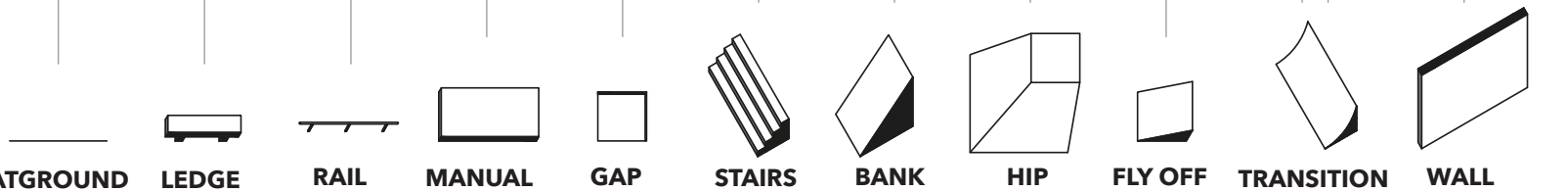
TRANSITION

BANK

DIFFERENT STYLES OF SKATEBOARDING

POPPING THE BOARD
(DOING TRICKS)

NOT POPPING THE BOARD
(NOT NECESSARILY DOING TRICKS)



FLATGROUND | **LEDGE** | **RAIL** | **MANUAL** | **GAP** | **STAIRS** | **BANK** | **HIP** | **FLY OFF** | **TRANSITION** | **WALL** | **HILL**

TRICKS MADE ON FLAT SURFACE

GRIND AND SLIDE TRICKS

MANUAL TRICKS

(BALANCING ON EITHER THE BACK OR THE FRONT WHEELS, INCLUDING TRICKS IN AND OUT.)

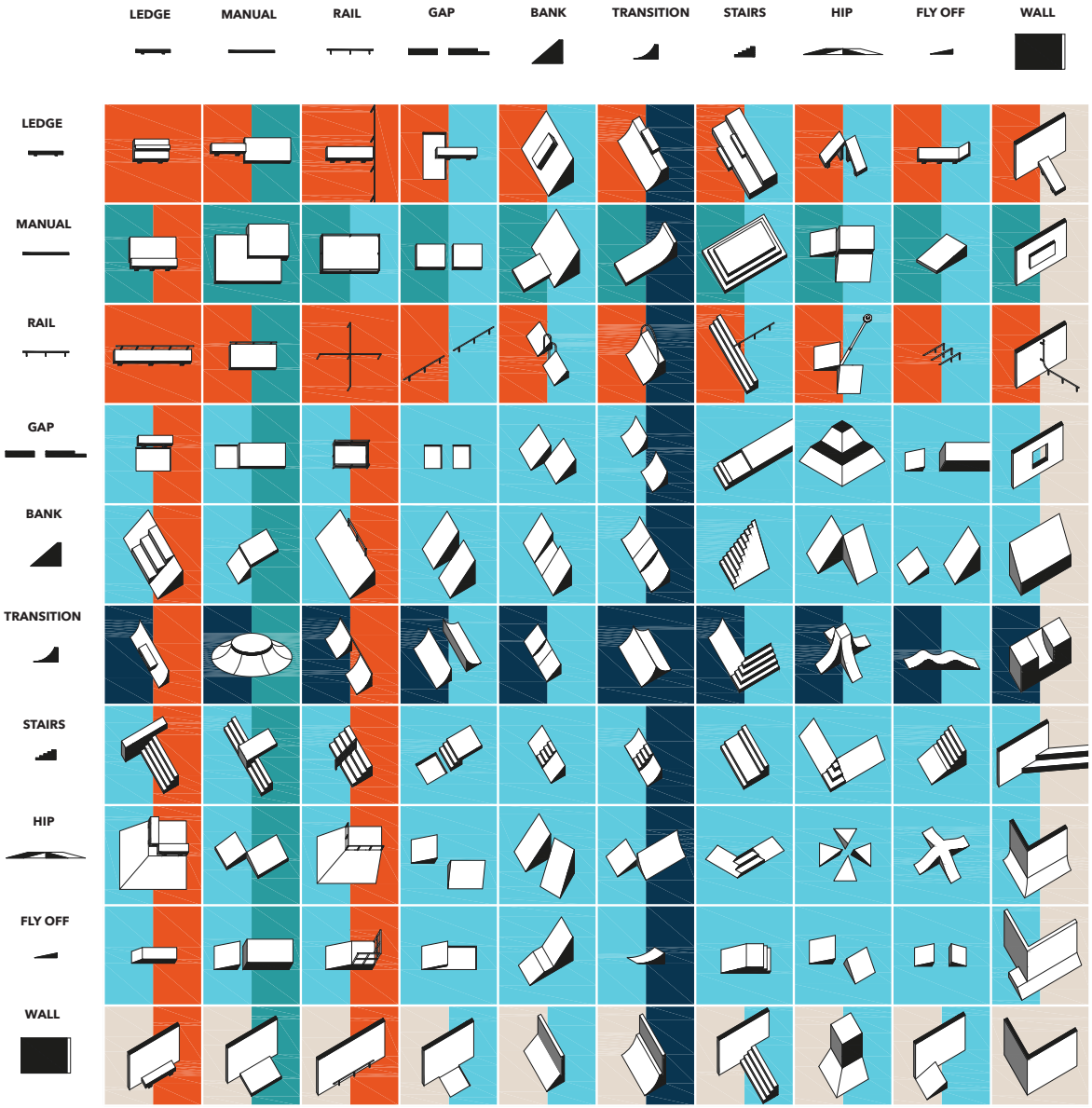
FLATGROUND TRICKS MADE ON AN OBSTICLE

SKATE-BOARDING ON A CURVED SURFACE

SKATE-BOARDING ON VERTICAL SURFACE

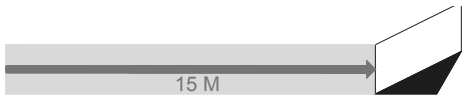
SKATE-BOARDING ON INCLINED SURFACE

SKATEBOARD MATRIX

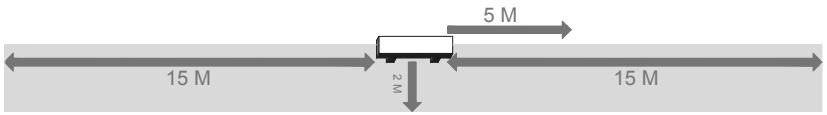


SPACE CALCULATION OF EACH OBSTACLE

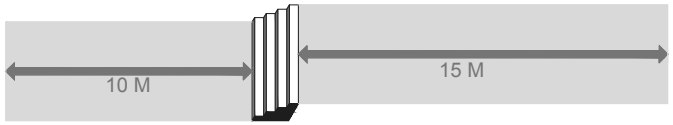
(In use of one direction and also both ways)



BANK

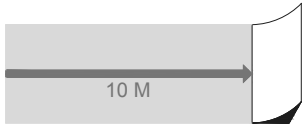


LEDGE

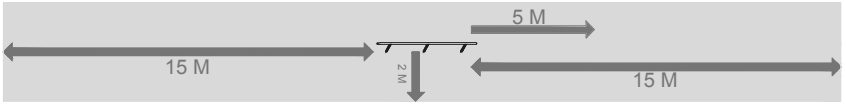


STAIRS

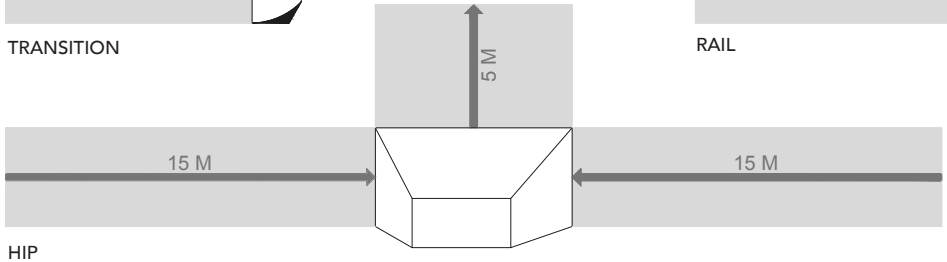
FLY OFF



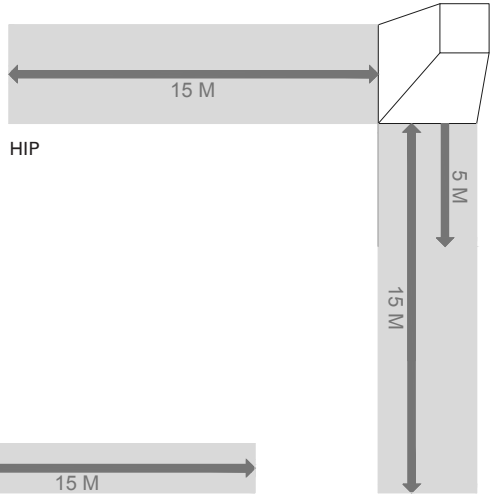
TRANSITION



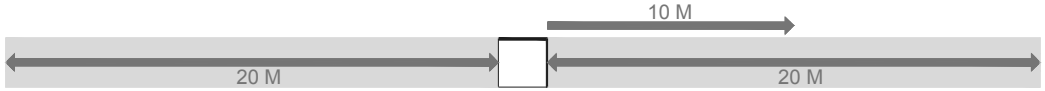
RAIL



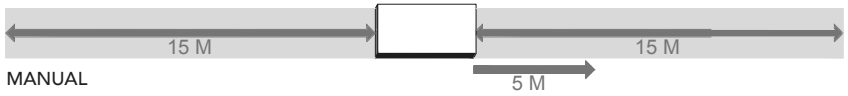
HIP



HIP

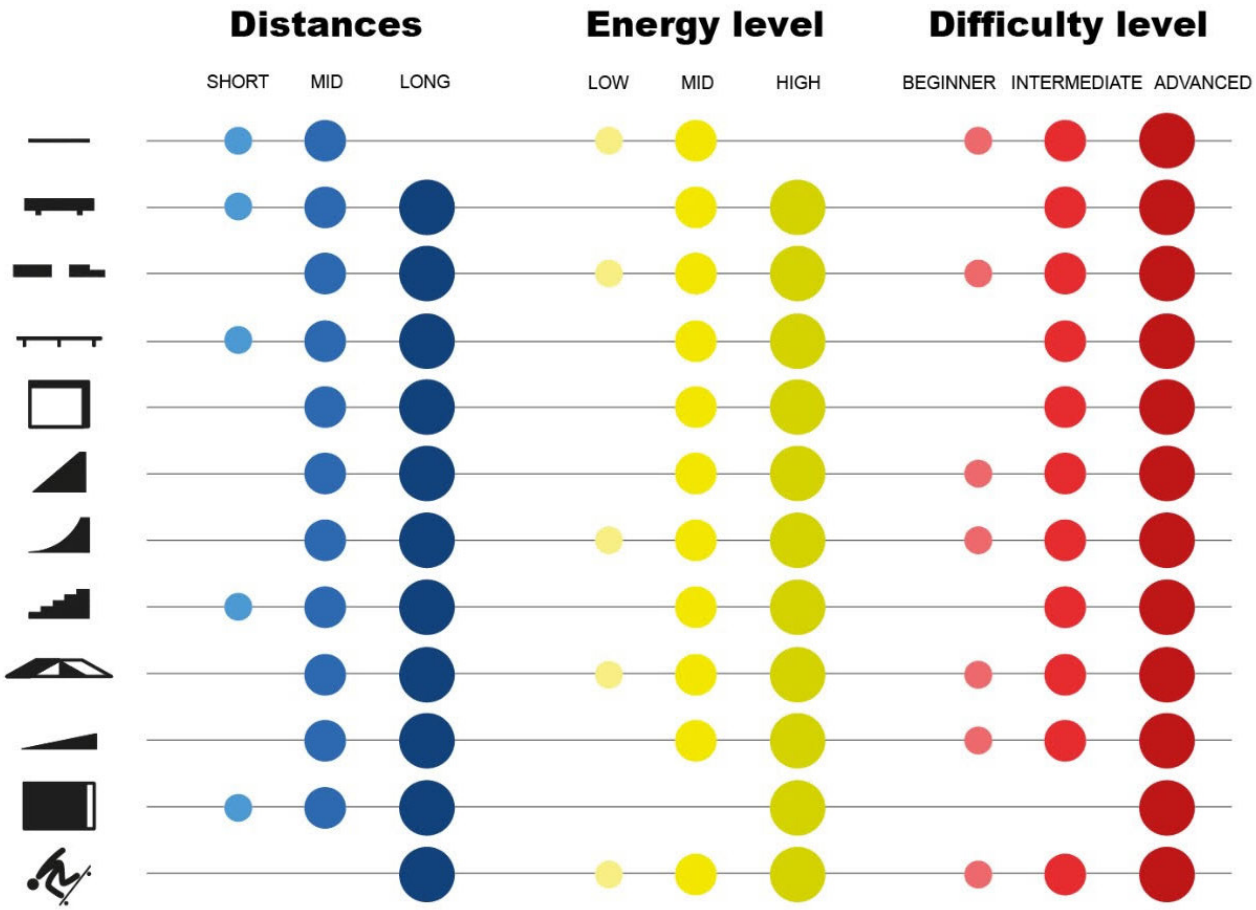


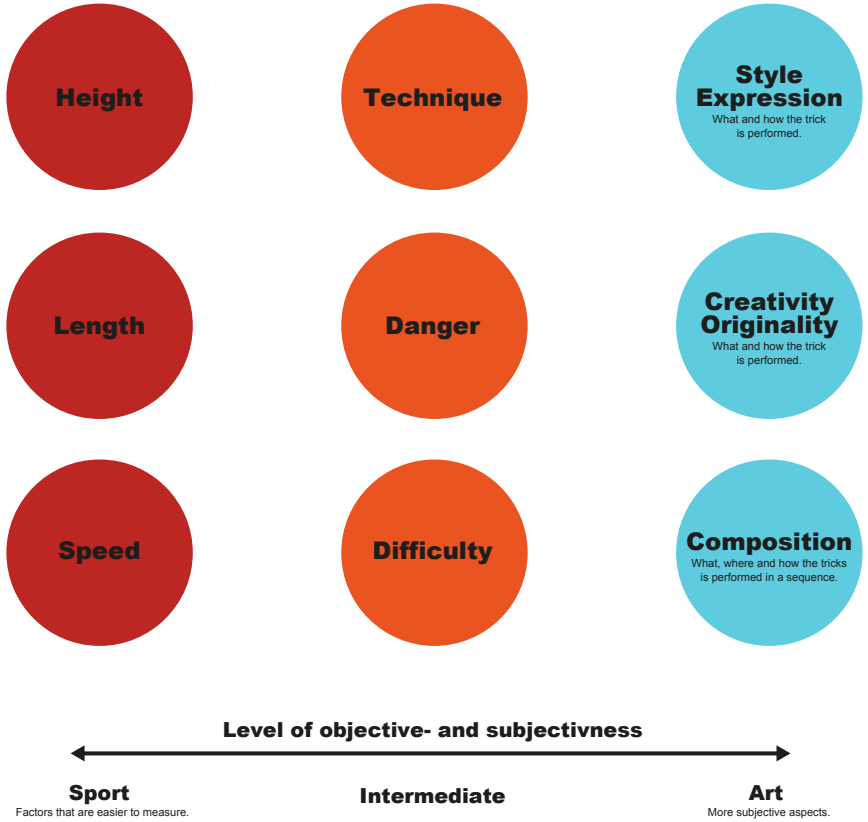
GAP



MANUAL

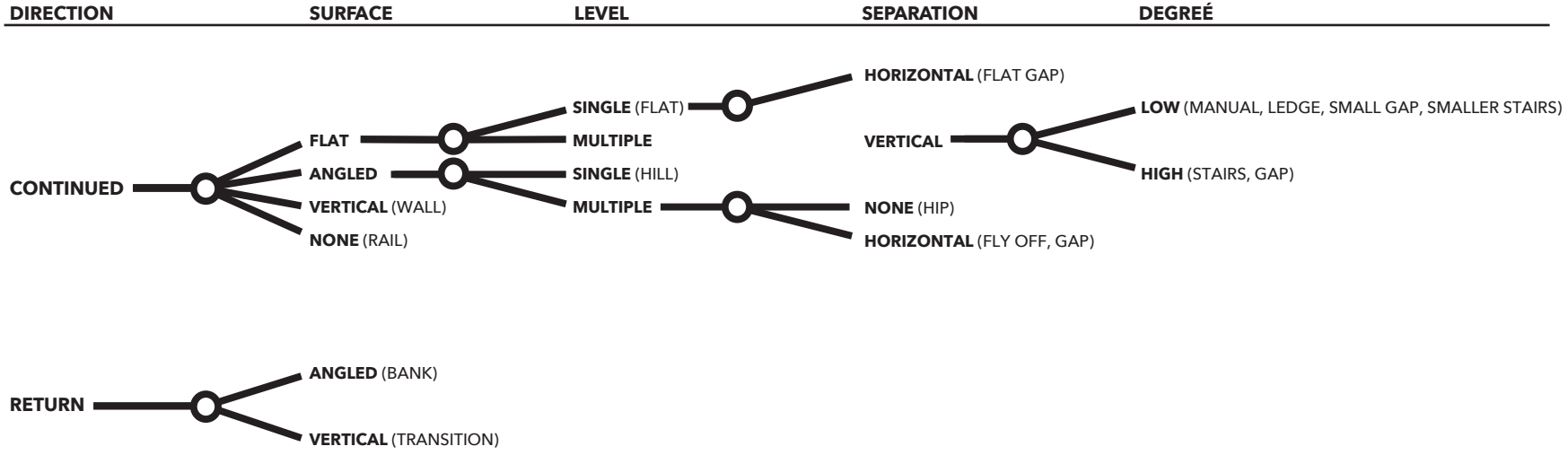
FLAT


Distances
SHORT
MID
LONG
Energy level
LOW
MID
HIGH
Difficulty level
BEGINNER
INTERMEDIATE
ADVANCED
Distances for each object, used in a sequence.
Energy level for each object.
Difficulty level for each object.



Skateboarding is a mix between a sport and an art form.
Therefore judging skateboarding is a complex task.
All of this components is used together to evaluate a trick / sequence.
There are no strict rules that says which of this factors are the most important ones, it depends on the circumstances.

STRUCTURE OF SKATEBOARD ELEMENTS



According to the City of Melbourne, skateboarding has many benefits to the individual, general community and the city including:

- Skating provides physical, mental and social benefits. It´s a fun, unstructured activity that promotes being active, creative and outdoors.

- It´s a global indrusty and can be a legimate career path for some, especially now that skateboarding will become an Olympic sport in 2020.

- Skating injects vibrancy, economic benefits, performance and culture into the city.

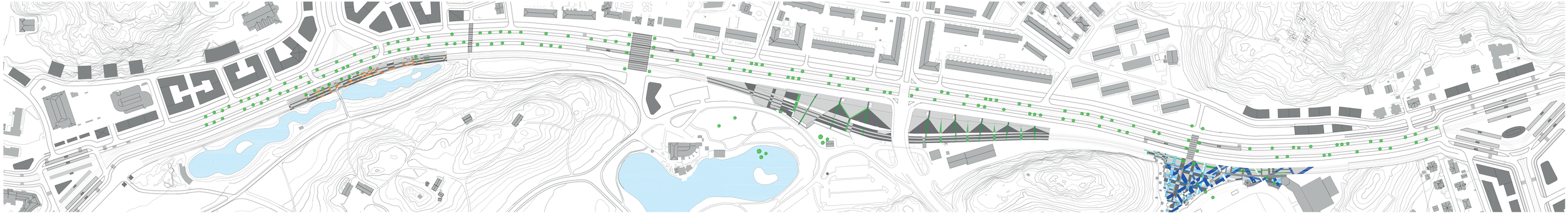
- It can make spaces safer by increasing natural surveillance at all hours of the day and night.

- Skate facilities can be less expensive to install and maintain then other recreational facilities (eg a sports oval or indoor facility) and infrastructure, and they have high volymes of use in small footprints.

- Well designed skate spaces and facilities attract high levels of use, activity, host major events and attract local, national and international visitors.

- Skating is regarded as a sustainable transport method.

DESIGN PROPOSAL



Site A - Overview

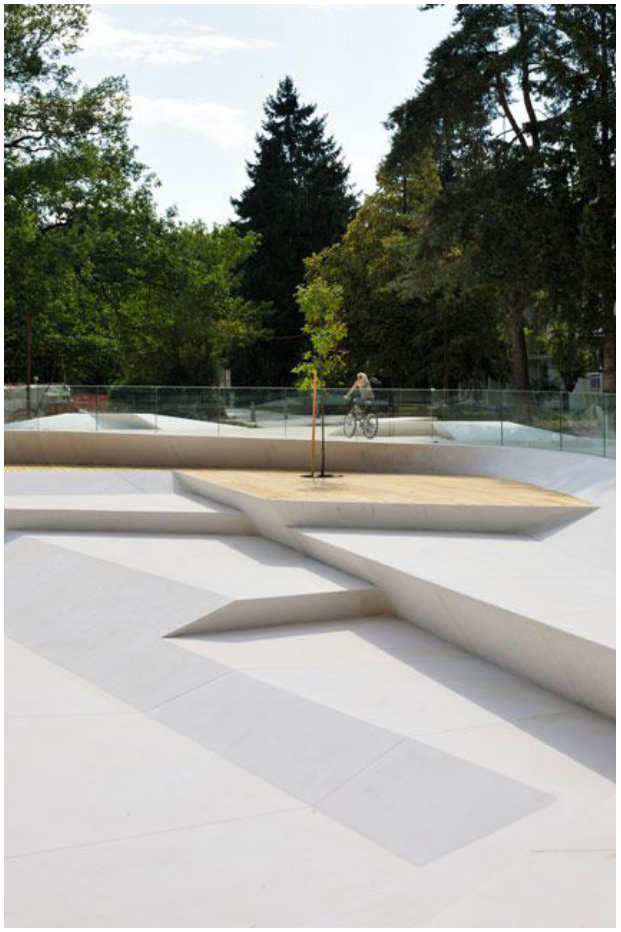
Site A - Close up

Narrow path surrounded with forest and water.
Dirt bank/slope right next to the tram tracks.
Existing path (old entry) that connect with Slottsskogen.

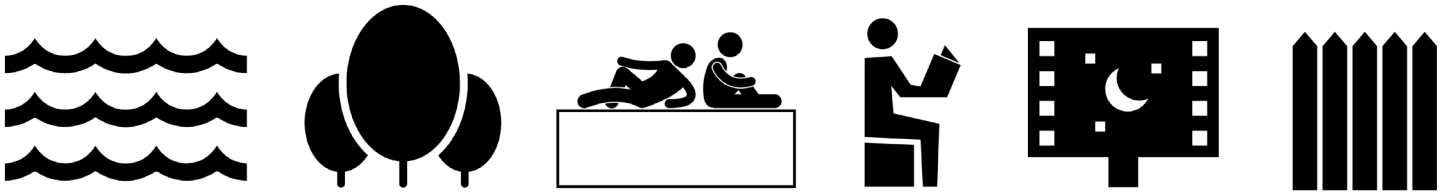
Site A - References

Scaniabadet - Malmö

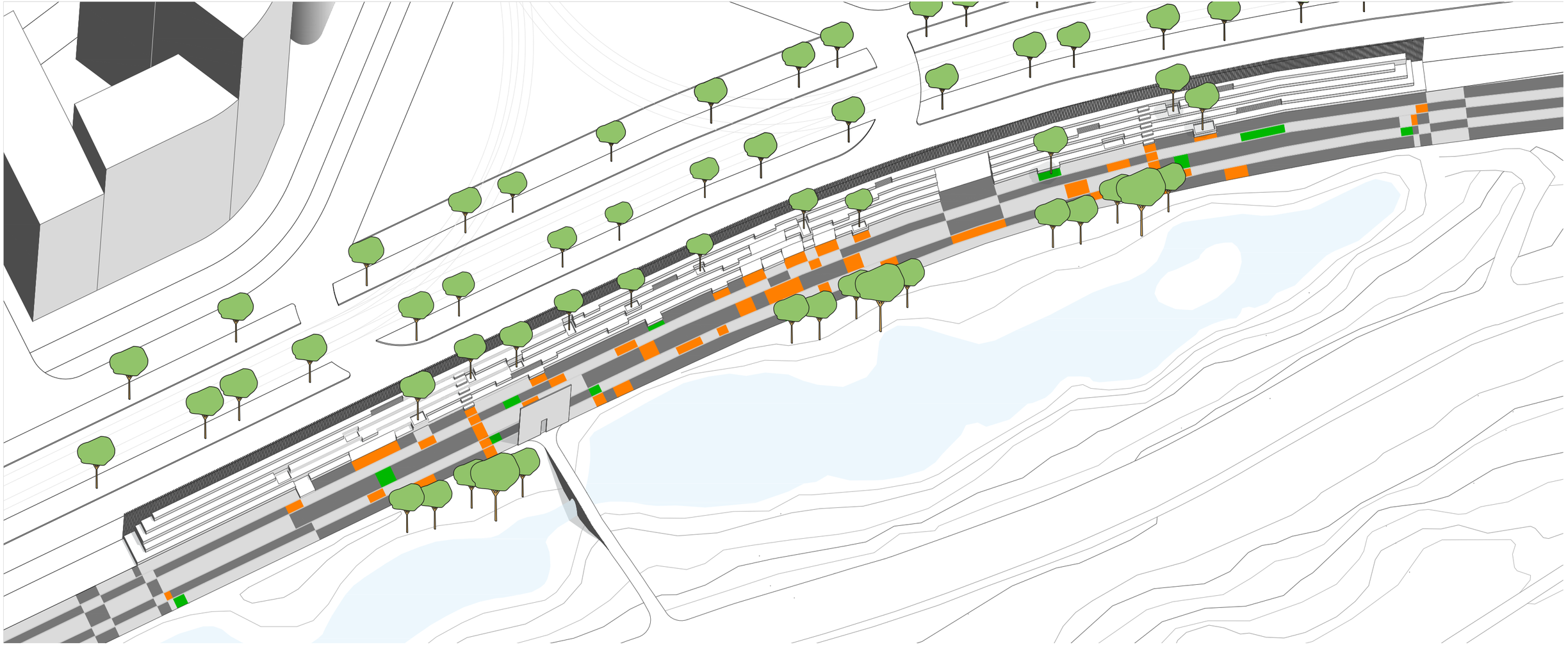
Highline Park - New York



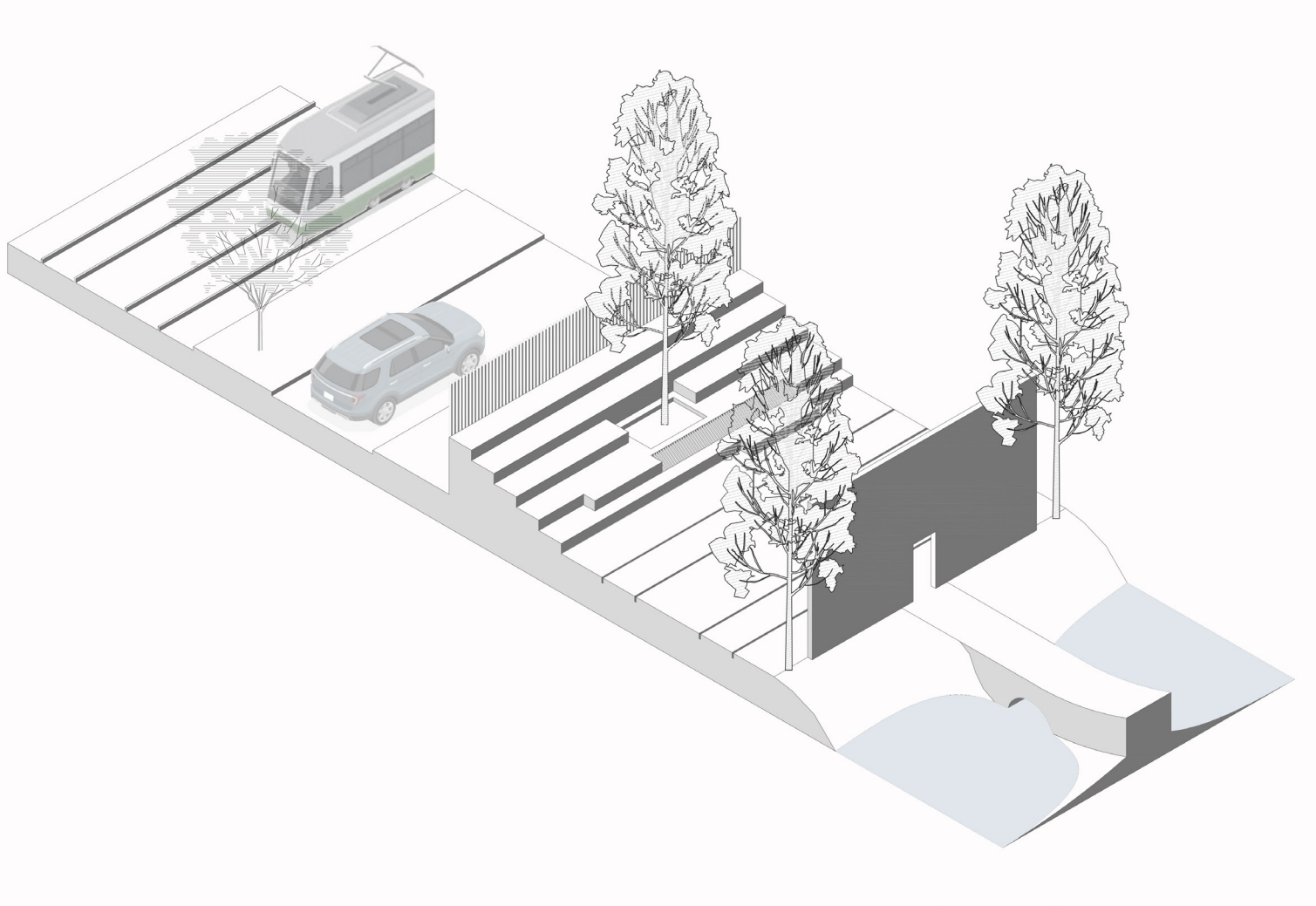
Promenada - Velenje



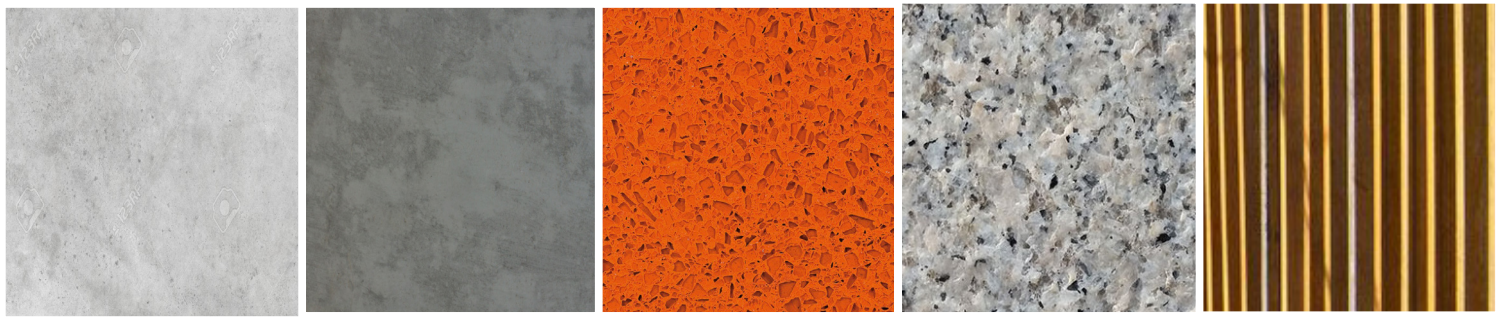
Isometric Perspective - Site A



ISO Cross section



Site A - Materials



SITE A:

The first site is characterised by its close location to water and trees that creates a natural traffic barrier and therefore makes this an ideal spot for relaxation and tranquil activities such as reading a book. Since this place is a bit more isolated than the other two sites, an outdoor cinema would fit well and could turn this site into a multifunctional space.

Site B - Overview

Site B - Close up

A hilly terrain with existing elemets, such as banks that offers possibilities in constructing platforms in different levels. Suitable for bank, hip, stair, wall and hill skating. The bridge provides a natural protection from rain.

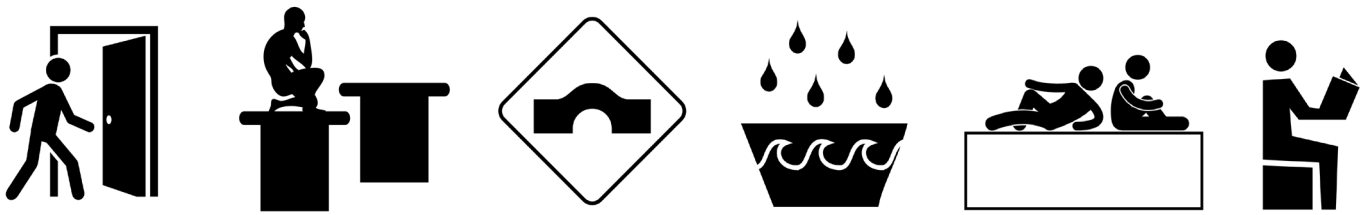
Site B - References

Molins De Rei - Barcelona

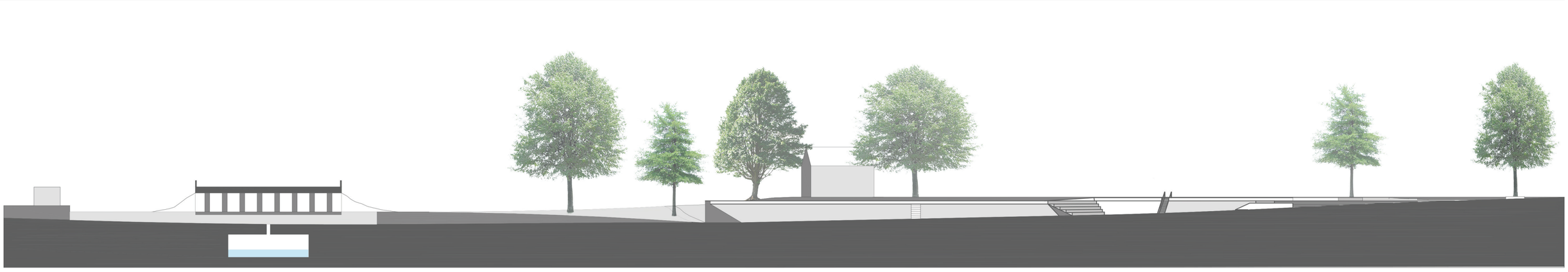
Colblanc - Barcelona

Brooklyn Banks - New York

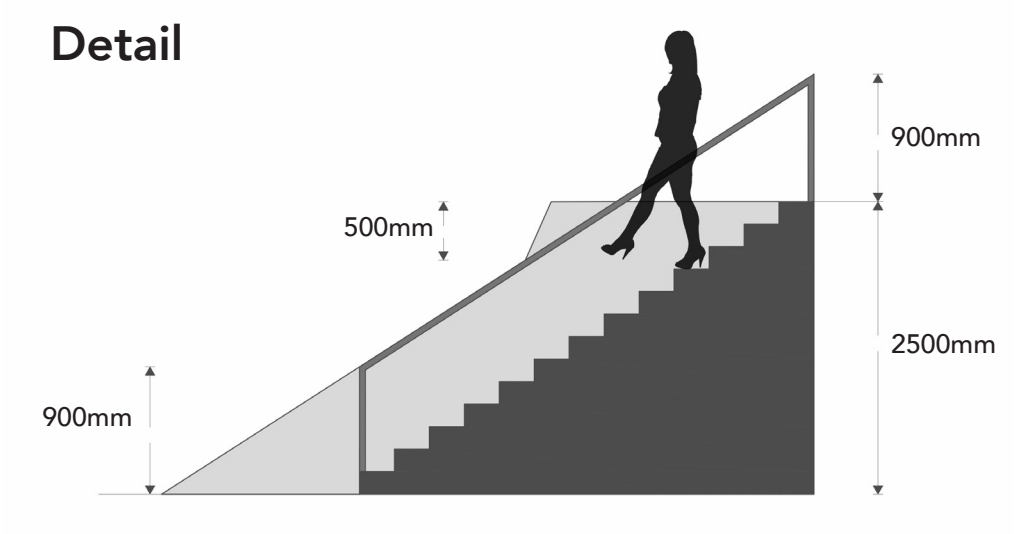
SEB - Copenhagen



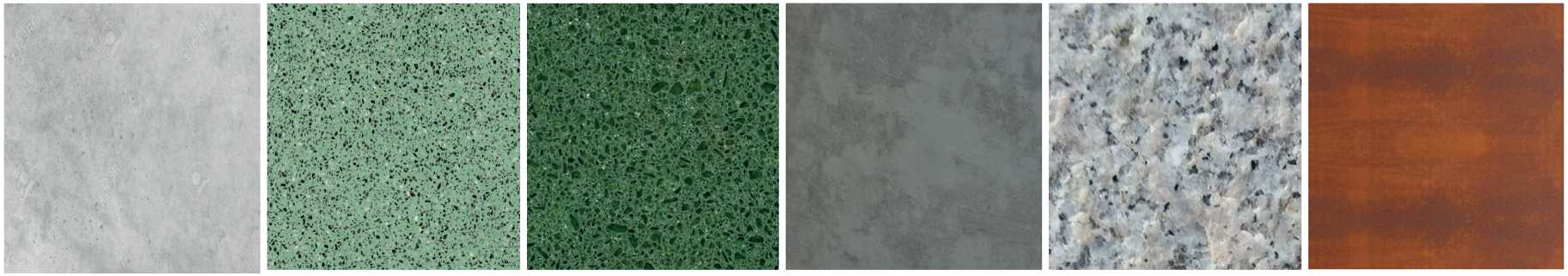
Isometric Perspective - Site B



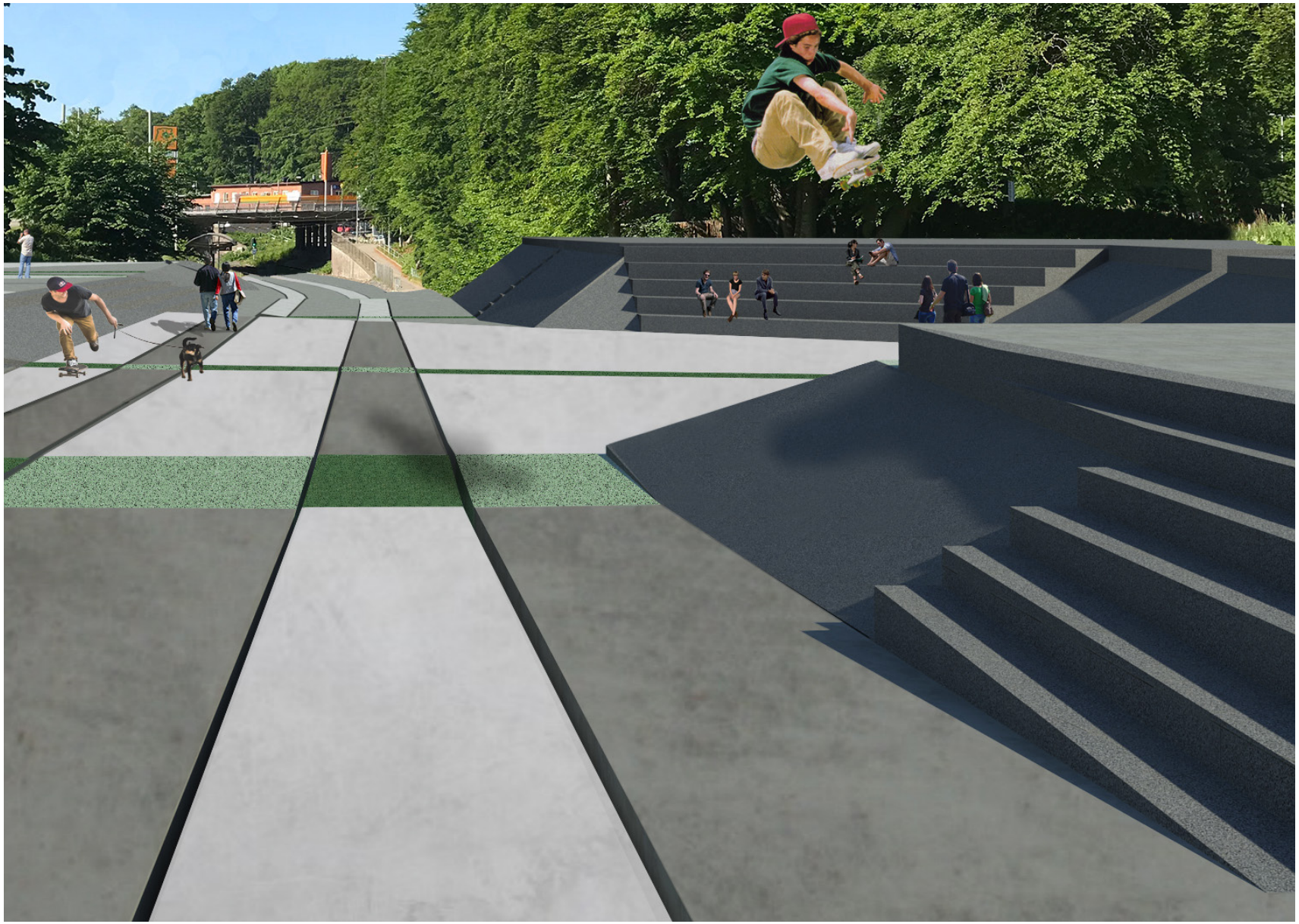
Section A - A


Detail
900mm
500mm
2500mm
900mm

Site B - Materials



Ledge Gap Bank Stairs Hip Wall Hill



SITE B:

The second site will function both as an entrance from Änggården and a transition between site A and C. The slopes and hilly terrain in this part of the path has been transformed into skateble banks, stairs and hills. The entrance will have a café and sculptures.

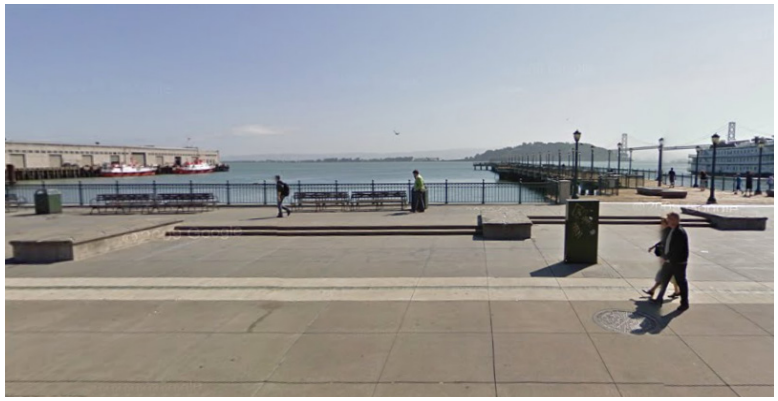
Site C - Overview

Triangle form with the size of a public square. Flat surface.
Close interaction with other sports.
No close residential buildings affected by the noise level.
Good light conditions, offers sun all day. There is already an existing boule café that can can be used. The square could be a future entrance to Slottsskogsvallen.

Site C - Close up

Site C - References

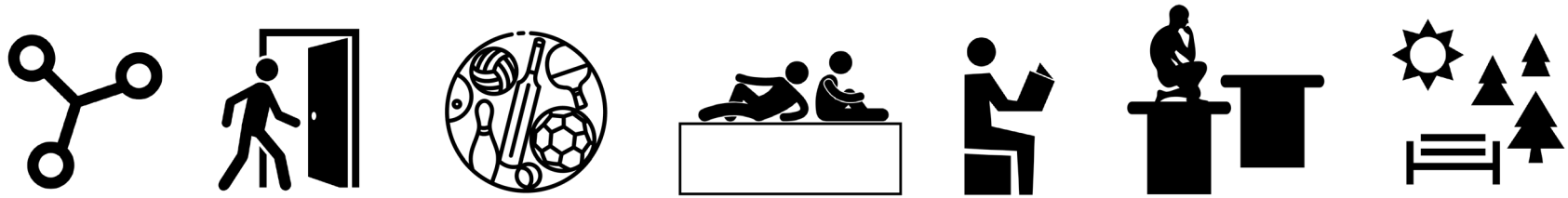
Teikyo Campus - Tokyo



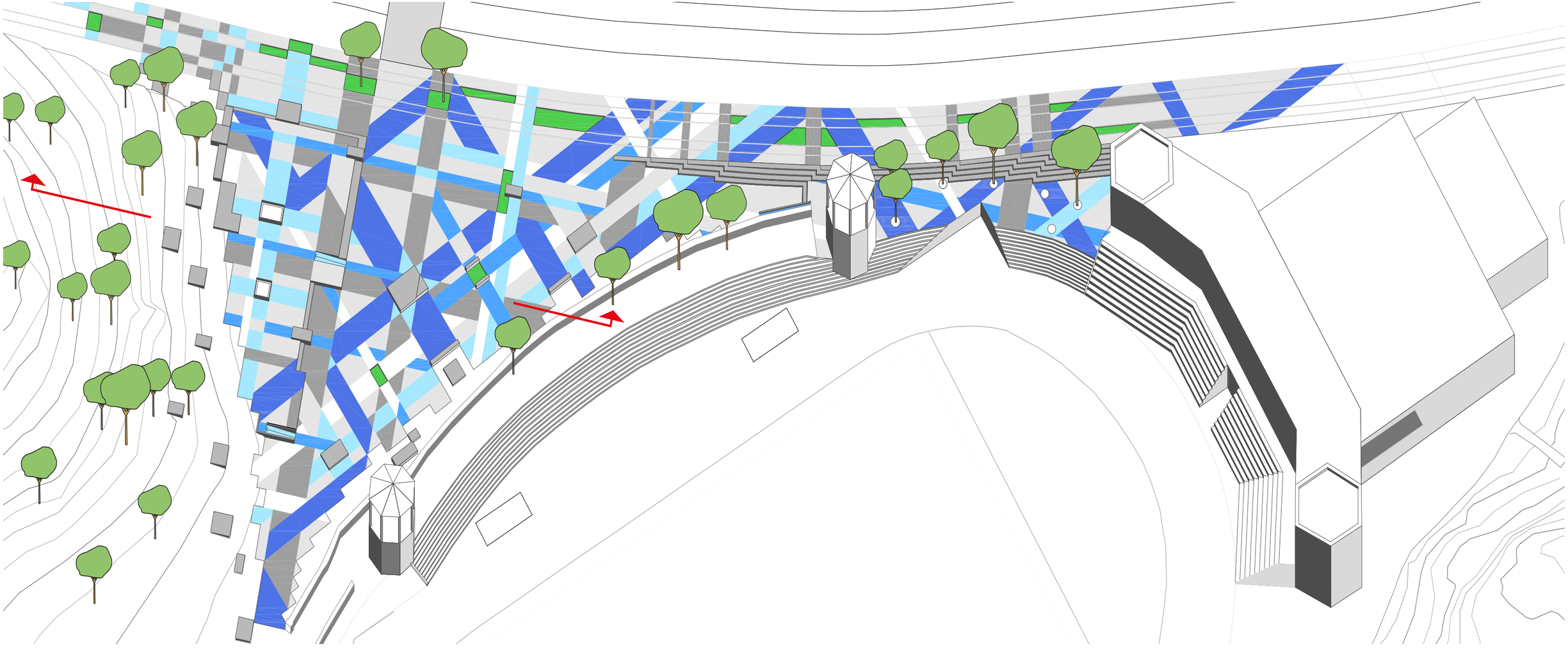
Pier 7 - San Fransisco

Train Station - Malaga

Urban elements which are well adapted for flat surface.
The design of this elements functions great for flat, ledge, rail and manual, but also small stair and gap skating.

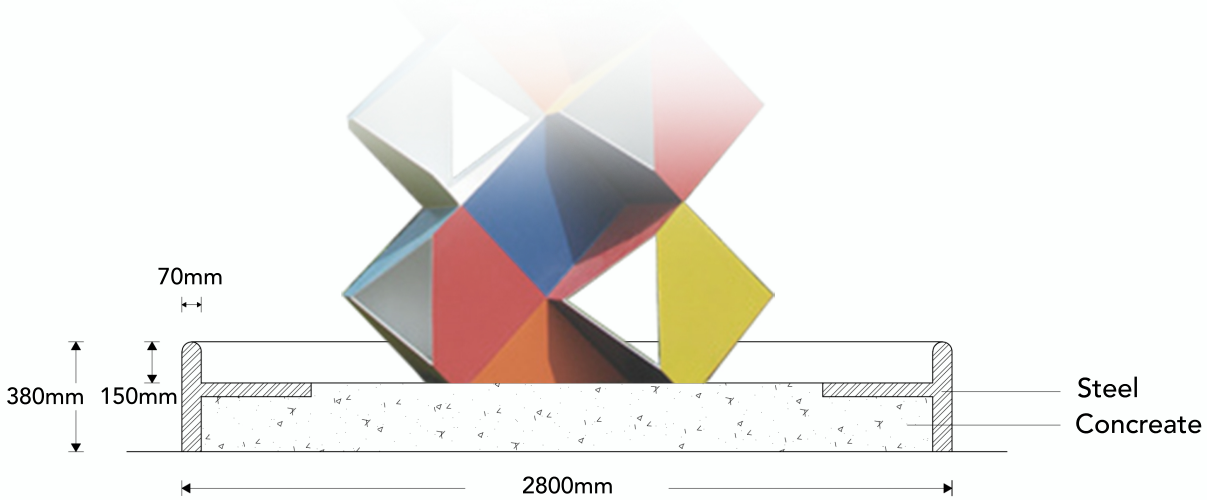


Isometric Perspective - Site C

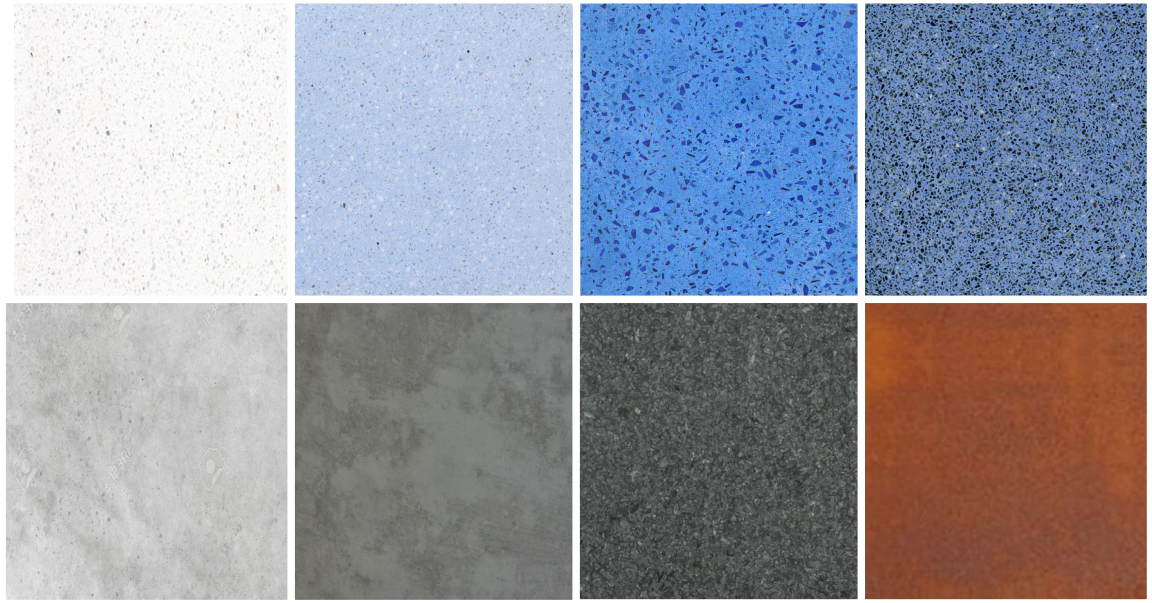


Section B - B

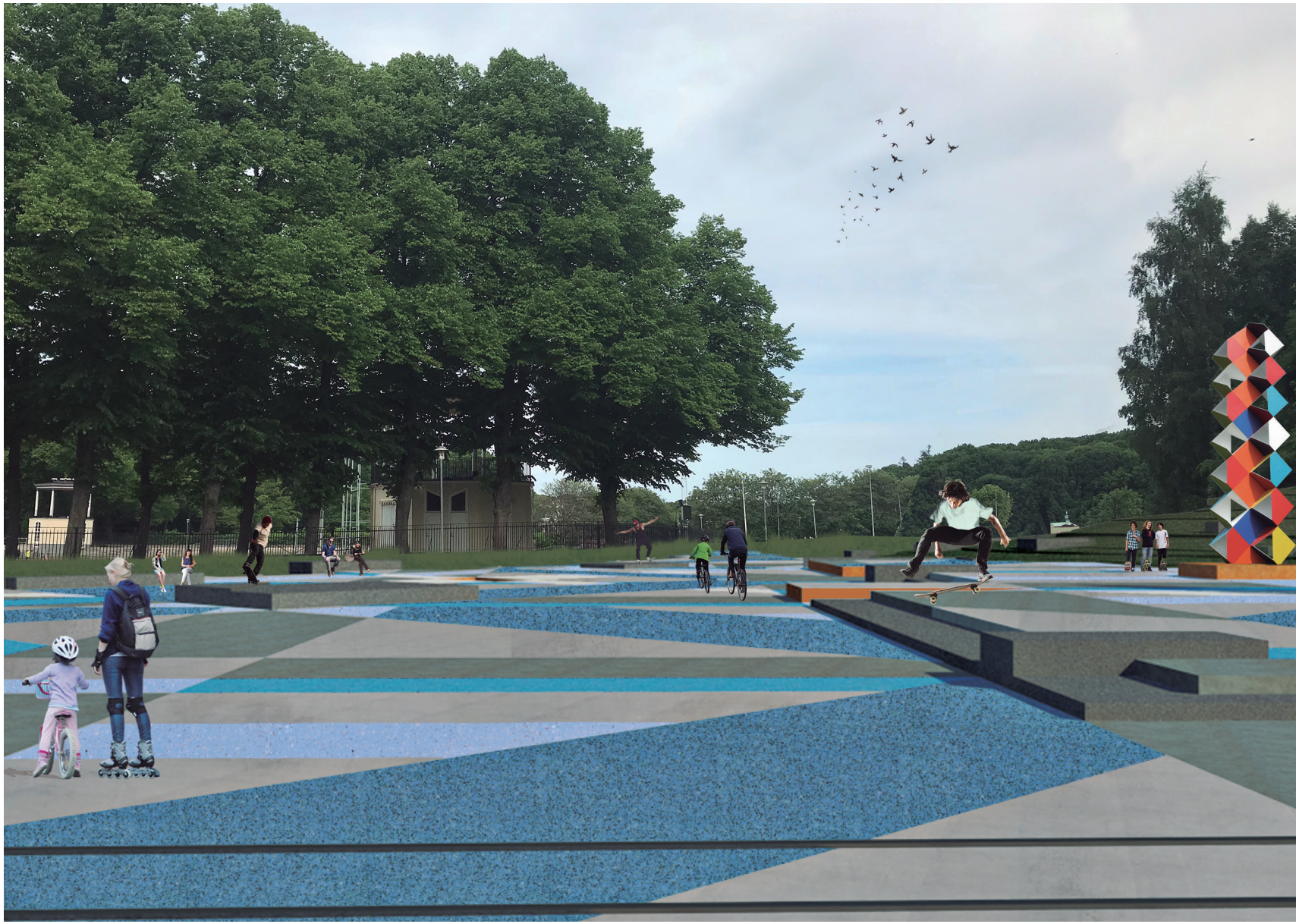
Detail



Site C - Materials



Manual Rail Ledge Gap Stairs



SITE C:

The last site could function as an active entrance to Slottskogsvallen, the part of Slottskogen with many different sports facilities. Of the three sites, this one is the biggest and would work well with flat skating and smaller ledges ans stairs. The idea is to create an open space and a lively square that welcomes different activities.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to widen the knowledge on how skateboarding relates to urban spaces. By analysing how skateboarding is executed in the urban environment the aim has been to find design strategies that uses skateboarding as a resource in public spaces. The starting point has been that skateboarding brings health beneficial, creative and social capital to these spaces. But, to make these things happen the place must be designed so that skaters want to use it and be able to be creative, and also, in a lively social square there must be room for different people and other activities too. Of course, it´s hard to plan exactly how a public square is suppost to be used since it´s an organic entity. However, buy proceeding from skateboarding from the core and how it works in practice, chances are better that our expectations will be met.

In the process of designing the three skateboarding sites, the analysis and the skate matrix has been useful tools. A skate spot that offers multiple uses and on all kinds of difficulty levels will also probably be more sustainable. By having the skate matrix as a reference it has been easier to determine if the three sites covers and includes different skateboarding objects and styles.

There are a variety of ways to build skate friendly public spaces. The ambition with this work has been to find design strategies that takes the skateboarders point of view in consideration in all levels of the process. This is not by any means an easy task since there are many different points of views in skateboarding. However, as stated by the skate matrix, in skateboarding there are certain fixed objects and combinations that are set and this work aspires to establish that knowledge in the context of architectural studies.

This is one step in that direction, and I hope that the tools from this work can be of use when planning for skateboarding in the city. The next level in these studies would be to more thoroughly examine how skateboarding relates to and can be combined with other activities for even more multifunctional and busy spaces in the future.

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IMAGES:

Image 1-2. Dag Hammarskjöldsleden from above. Göteborg. (2017) Göteborg Stad. Al Studio.
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Image 3-4. Highline Park, New York. (2011) Iwan Baan

Image 5. Section Bouleward Lane. Göteborg. (2017) Göteborg Stad. Al Studio. Redone by author.
http://www5.goteborg.se/prod/fastighetskontoret/etjanst/planobygg.nsf/vyFiler/6B0374C8000BC614C-1257F57002EE9DE/$File/F%C3%B6rstudie%20Dag%20Hammarskj%C3%B6lds%20Boulevard%20170512.pdf?OpenElement

Image 7. Wallride. Natas Kaupas. (1987) San Fransisco
http://the-vandals.co/post/39023865851/pugwizard-natas-in-sf

Image 8. Flat kickflip, Honza Malý. stalin plaza Prague, Czech Republic (2013) Michal Jirak

Image 10. Ollie, Street gap, Remy Taveira. London (2015) Henry Kingsford

Image 26. Promenada. Velenje. Slovenia. (2014) Miran Kambič

Image 50-52. Teikyo Heisei University Nakano Campus. (2014) Studio on Site: Katsuhisa-Kida/FOTOTECA

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