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Decoding the International: Theorizing and Applying an Urban Lens to the Study of Oslo

Nora Ulrikke Sukken Andersen

International Relations

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noraandersen@live.no

Noragric
Department of International Environment and Development Studies
The Faculty of Landscape and Society
P.O. Box 5003
N-1432 Ås Norway
Tel.: +47 67 23 00 00
Internet: https://www.nmbu.no/fakultet/landsam/institutt/noragric

Declaration

I, Nora Ulrikke Sukken Andersen, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

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In this thesis, I have had the opportunity to delve into topics that are of personal importance to me. Using a bottom-up approach, I have explored the complexities of emotions, human interactions and IR. This approach has allowed me to shed light on aspects of cities that often go unnoticed, and to emphasize the importance of human relationships and emotional experiences for our understanding of Oslo's place in the world. Therefore, I am proud of this thesis. As this paper reflects my journey, I am indebted to numerous individuals.

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Any errors remain solely my own.

Nora Ulrikke Sukken Andersen
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Abstract

Since the 1990s, Oslo has undergone transformation, and in the last years, there have been concerns about who is accountable for these changes. Usually, local actors are held responsible for this. By interpreting the international in Oslo as ingrained in the urban system, this thesis challenges the notion that external influences ought to be taken into account as well. The aim of this study is to examine Oslo from an International Relations perspective, combining theoretical frameworks, autoethnographic method, popular culture, and empirical research. Using International Relations theory as a guide, an urban lens is created. This urban lens enables readers to shift from a macro to micro perspective. An interpretive approach that incorporates hermeneutics and draws the reader into personal experiences is used to operationalize this thesis. The analysis employs three narratives reflecting on Oslo's development: the movie "Death at Oslo Central", personal experiences with the snowboarding and skateboarding subculture, and "The City of Disorder" (Den Skitne Byen), a collaborative project. Despite being primarily local, these narratives also contain international elements. The thesis concludes that there is a need for a comprehensive understanding that considers both local experiences and international influences due to the ontology of the city and the epistemology of urban knowledge are intricately linked with global dynamics, thus, local actors should be aware of the prevailing ideologies contributing to shaping the urban development.

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1. Introduction

When cities expand and change, this raises questions about how architecture, social structures, and daily life are affected. Since the 1990s, Oslo has undergone major change, and in recent years, there has been an increasing debate about how the city is designed and experienced (Rygh, 2023). Much attention is also on security in Oslo, as the perception of increase in crime and violence, both organized as gang activity and random, is regularly debated in the media (Grindem, 2024). Such discussions concerning urban development often attribute responsibility primarily to local actors such as architects, property developers, bureaucrats, and politicians. While these stakeholders undoubtedly play a role and share responsibility, it raises the question of whether there may be additional perspectives that warrant consideration. The thesis examines experiences of everyday life in Oslo with the objective of decoding the international as embedded in the urban system.

In the academic field of International Relations (IR), states have traditionally been the main actors, but in recent years, cities have received more attention (Curtis, 2008, p. 16). This thesis argues it is important to pay more attention to cities in the field of International Relations, and that International Relations has something to offer the study of cities. Cities are complex, with many different social, political, and economic aspects. It may come more natural from an International Relations perspective to see urban growth via a macro lens and overlook the experiences of individuals. Yet, Löwenheim argues that people are the basis of the state and the interstate system, or at least this is how it should be (Löwenheim, 2010, p. 1027). Therefore, it's important to consider individual experiences in the study of cities and International Relations.

I ask in this thesis: How does theorization of the city in International Relations provide perspective on developments in Oslo? The objective of the thesis is to review and reflect on the city within International Relations. I integrate theorization of the city with an empirical investigation of Oslo. Using an interpretive approach, I employ autoethnography as a method to systematically investigate the research question by examining three distinct narratives.

The approach is step-by-step, with a focus on creating an urban lens through International Relations theory. Together, four theoretical angles contribute to the development of an urban lens. Curtis's explanation on the international system and global cities, is the first angle

(Curtis, 2016). The second angle is Lefebvre's concept of scale (Golubchikov, 2016), which illustrates the connection between the local and the global. The third angle is bridging abstract concepts with individual experiences through feminist International Relations theory, particularly regarding security (Nyman, 2021). The last angle is looking into emotions in International Relations (Åhall, 2018). By creating an urban lens, the theoretical framework allows readers to move from a macro to a micro perspective. The urban lens is operationalized using an interpretive approach (Reshetnikov & Kurowska, 2017), grounded in experience-based autoethnography and hermeneutic (Löwenheim, 2010), as well as insights from popular culture (Kiersey, 2016).

Empirically the analysis encompasses three different narratives to reflect on Oslo's development. The narratives are "Death at Oslo Central", snowboarding and skateboarding as subcultures, and "The City of Disorder" (Den Skitne Byen). These narratives are local in nature, but at the same time they may contain international elements. The 1990 film "Death at Oslo Central" provides a glimpse into an Oslo that was different from the city we know today. With theater productions, musicals, and movie theater screenings in recent years, the movie has regained attention (Nystøy, 2023). Many people have found nostalgic sentiment in the movie, which takes viewers back to the 1990's. In the second narrative, I use my own experience of the subculture. Since I was little, I've been into snowboarding and skateboarding, and I'm still part of this culture today. It's a big community in Oslo. This subculture is in some ways comparable to what is depicted in the movie "Death at Oslo Central". The last narrative is "The City of Disorder" (Den Skitne Byen), which is a project created with Sweco (engineering and architecture consultancy company) and Aspelin Ramm (property developer) in an internship in 2023 with six students, me included. The task here was to look at how "gritty" qualities can be good for the city. By that, we mean, metaphorically, gritty qualities, such as skateboard, bricks, and industry buildings. «Disorder» is not meant to be associated with violence, crime, or political vacuum, but rather with the organic in the city, which can be perceived as a positive attribute. This project is a comparative analysis and shows the contrast between the rougher areas and how newer urban development projects in Oslo have taken shape since the 1990's. In essence, this thesis delves into urban development by examining the transformation of Oslo through both global and personal perspectives, informed by International Relations theory.

1.1 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis starts by reviewing the theoretical framework. It argues that urban local changes must also be seen in the context of larger global trends. The theory chapter, chapter two, introduce four different angles; how the international system and global cities can be used as a framework for understanding today's cities (2.1), scale that shows how the local is linked to the global (2.2) and finally, feminism that connect the abstract notions to individuals, through two different means both security (2.3) and emotions (2.4). Chapter three explain the methodology and the method chosen, which is mainly based on autoethnography. This is followed by the analysis in chapter four. Here I have chosen to use Oslo as a case study, and three different narratives: "Death at Oslo Central" (4.1), exploring the subculture of skateboarding and snowboarding (4.2), and "The City of Disorder" (4.3). Since the thesis argues that we should take note of history to understand the international system, and that this system is intuitive, the last part of the analysis is a reflection on city development and the international system (4.4). From an epistemological perspective, this thesis argues that we cannot predict the future, but that we can try to understand what is happening and what might happen based on the information we have. In the last chapter I will conclude.

2. International Relations and the City

The goal of this chapter is to lay out the main concepts of the thesis and develop a theoretical framework that examines how living in a city can be decoded as expression of the international system. The importance of cities in IR is emphasized throughout the literature review. Important concepts are global cities, international system, scale, security and emotions. The causes, effects, and implications of global cities and the international system are relevant questions. I will start with explaining the international system and global cities with the framework provided by Curtis and The English School (2.1). This theoretical framework aims to highlight the importance of cities and their effects on all scales – local and global. To provide an example of this scale, I refer to the theoretical framework proposed by Lefebvre, demonstrating the complex relationships that exist between the immediate and global environments (2.2). Lastly, the sections explore security (2.3) and emotional (2.4) impact through the lens of critical feminist theory, emphasizing an interpretive and experiential approach rooted in the "personal". This theoretical framework aims to act as an urban lens to use International Relations theories to provide perspective on Oslo's development.

2.1 Theory of the Global City and the International System

Up until recently, the science of International Relations gave cities - including studies on global cities - little attention. Historically, however, International Relations has concentrated on a global scene in which cities were viewed as essential components of national urban systems. As the main players on the international scene, states have long possessed unique legitimacy (Curtis, 2008, p. 16). According to Curtis (Curtis, 2008, p. 15), there has been a notable loss of analytical understanding as a result of this disregard for cities. He contends that cities serve as conceptual instruments as well as physical things, influencing how we perceive urban environments and social interactions. The urban growth surrounding us is impacted by this idea (Curtis, 2016, p. 31). Curtis contends that a theoretical framework centered on how cities change can be applied to global cities. But it's crucial to understand that, within international networks, global cities represent only one aspect of a larger historical pattern of urban growth (Curtis, 2008, p. 15). This strategy is in line with the growing emphasis on the historical sociology of International Relations as well as strategies meant to contextualize and contest the state's hegemonic status in the field. By historicizing and de-essentializing, the framework achieves this (Curtis, 2008, p. 15). Even while studies have been done in disciplines like political geography, urban studies, and urban sociology, it is not enough to explain how transnational urban phenomena are transformational (Curtis, 2016, s. x). Global cities will serve as the foundation for my analysis in this case, employing global city as a concept to frame the discussion. Therefore, I will not delve into the debate of whether Oslo qualifies as a global city or not in the analysis later on, as it is ultimately inconsequential to the study.

Curtis' (2016) theoretical framework of global cities builds upon The English School. According to Barry Buzan, The English School offers more than just another theory in International Relations. It presents an opportunity to transcend conventional paradigms and embrace a holistic approach. This approach diverges from the narrow focus on rational choice methodology and debates over absolute versus relative gains in understanding international cooperation (Buzan, 2001, p. 471). Similarly, this thesis takes a holistic approach by integrating different perspectives and theoretical frameworks to understand developments in Oslo. The English School distinguishes between three key concepts: international system, international society, and world society. These are often associated with Hobbes/Machiavelli, Grotius, and Kant, respectively. These three concepts coexist and interact within the English School framework (Buzan, 2001, p. 475-476). Bull argues that these are analytic tools, not

something that you can see, but an idea to make sense of contemporary International Relations (Linklater & Suganami, 2006, p. 103). The English School perspective underscores the essential role of shared norms and values in shaping the dynamics of the global order (Curtis, 2016, p. 28). This framework provides valuable insights into how global cities and historical urban development intersect within the broader framework of international systems, illustrating their reciprocal influence throughout history (Curtis, 2008, p. 15). For instance, the early English School of thought, led by scholars like Hedley Bull in the late 1960s, states "history does not enable us to predict the future, but it is indispensable in our speculations about our future options; still, our speculations may be misguided precisely because they are historically based" (Linklater & Suganami, 2006, p. 92). As the analysis in this thesis progresses, readers will observe the significance of history, values, and norms as fundamental concepts, elucidating the conceptual dimensions of global cities.

Bull contended that striving for a scientific theory in International Relations is neither feasible nor preferable. Instead, he advocated for an intuitive understanding of the international system (Curtis, 2008, p. 44). Bull's assertion that the international system is intuitive is elaborated upon in this thesis, emphasizing the potential for understanding it through historical analysis. For instance, the analysis will examine the fall of the Soviet Union to try to comprehend changes following "Death at Oslo Central," as both occurred in the early 1990s. The English School is clear that attempts to create scientific laws and apply them to predict or explain world events are unlikely to be successful. They are also reluctant to draw broad generalizations from the study of history. However, they acknowledge that history can reveal some general trends in international politics, and they view these patterns as imprecise empirical generalizations, unlike the laws formulated by natural scientists (Linklater & Suganami, 2006, p. 97-98). The English School's examination of International Relations encompasses historical, sociological, and normative aspects (Linklater & Suganami, 2006, p. 114). Furthermore, scholars consciously following the legacy of earlier English School thinkers are now addressing previously neglected areas such as European integration, international political economy, and global environmental politics in their research agendas (Linklater & Suganami, 2006, p. 2). In this thesis, international political economy will be a part of the analysis, as it contributes to understanding the complex relationships between economic factors and political decisions at a global level.

Justice and order are closely related in English School writing (Hurrell, 2020). The English School places emphasis on evaluating the overall nature of institutionalization in global politics, the normative obligations entailed in various forms of global governance, and the suitability of historical and current interstate institutions for addressing practical and normative issues. The pluralist wing of English School writing on order and justice revolves around four main topics. Power and the prerequisites of order are the subject of the first. While variety and value conflict are the subject of the second theme. In the meanwhile, the notion that moral principles need to be excluded from international life and specific international organizations as much as possible gives rise to a third topic. The idea that international society has the capacity to foster the emergence of a more respectable and ethically aspirational political community, in addition to aiding in the management of international activity in a controlled manner, concludes the fourth topic (Hurrell, 2020). In particular, justice and order are related to the final part of the analysis, where I reflect on city development and the international system.

The central idea in bridging the study of cities with states and bringing cities into the realm of IR is the foundational concept of IR: the international system (Curtis, 2008, p. 32). The international system is therefore central in this thesis. According to Curtis, historical arrangements like empires, city-states, and multinational companies are included in the definition of the international system, which goes beyond the conventional bounds of the contemporary nation-state framework. This more expansive viewpoint departs from the traditional emphasis of IR, which focuses primarily on the contemporary state structure. Considering various comparative configurations of historical international systems provides context for introducing the historically specific phenomenon of global cities (Curtis, 2008, p. 15). This is in alignment with The English School, where history emerges as a fundamental element for achieving comprehensive understanding. However, even though the phrase "global city" is frequently used, it conceals a complex range of changes in international politics. Thus, it's critical to recognize that there are issues with this word, including contradictions and inconsistencies (Curtis, 2016, p. 34).

Defining the international system comes down to ontology. Over the past few years, International Relations has been more and more involved in philosophical investigations, with ontological issues playing a major role in disciplinary debates (Curtis, 2008, p. 33). Relational ontology approach suggests that it's better to view the state or the city as outcomes of

complex processes rather than as fixed entities systems (Curtis, 2008, p. 13). Theories that only consider the actions of states are often the result of analysts confusing the idea of the international system with the system of states. This is known as the "states systemic project" by Alexander Wendt (Curtis, 2016, p. 83), which marginalizes other important players and aspects of international politics. Curtis claims that this method restricts our comprehension of the current state of International Relations and leads analysts down a preset path. States can change or evolve into new forms, just as they have done while arising from particular processes. This ontology, which connects form and process, allows us to consider cities and states equally and enables us to theorize them together within international systems (Curtis, 2008, p. 13). Rather than seeing cities and states as static entities in international systems, I adopt this perspective and examine them as dynamic outcomes of complex processes. It allows me to consider cities as participants in the international system and to analyze their influence, based on an intuitive understanding of history, values and norms. This approach allows me to avoid limiting my understanding of international politics to only state actors, which is an important perspective throughout this thesis.

Wendt highlights the state's significance due to its exclusive right to use force under the modern system. He contends that nations are ultimately responsible for major developments in global politics, despite the presence of other prominent entities. Curtis, on the other hand, contends that leading states, influenced by market ideology and digital technologies since the 1970s, have started to implement measures that are changing the international system (Curtis, 2016, p. 87). I will revisit this perspective in the analysis, where I introduce neoliberalism. In "International Systems in World History", Barry Buzan and Richard Little provide a comprehensive framework for understanding international systems throughout human history. Considering the important conceptual role history plays in international relations, they find a startling lack of conceptual progress among mainstream interpretations. They want to show off how diverse previous international systems have been (Curtis, 2016, p. 83). This thesis demonstrates, through the analysis of the historical artifact "Death at Oslo Central" (1990) in Narrative 1, how human history, particularly the post-Cold War era, may have shaped these conceptual frameworks influencing the contemporary international system, and how this, in turn, influences cities like Oslo.

Because a worldwide market economy has been established, global cities have changed from what they were to what they are today. Curtis argues that, in this perspective, the global cities

should be understood primarily as a political phenomenon. Owing to their evolution and importance in the modern world, they are entwined with the global political economy (Curtis, 2016, p. 4). These cities have become influential not just economically but also politically, as they play central roles in shaping international norms, governance structures, and power dynamics. Essentially, Curtis contends that comprehending global cities necessitates understanding their political importance within the framework of a worldwide economy in which they have a major impact (Curtis, 2016).

The ability of global cities to transcend national borders and regulations sets them apart from other types of cities that operated in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. Curtis (2016) argues that global cities provide as a window into how globalization operates, with corporations expanding globally but their core operations remaining in these cities (p. vii). Global cities' concentration of wealth and power has an impact on social and economic disparities both within and outside of these cities. As a result, it is important to view urban development in the perspective of a larger global shift (Curtis, 2016, p. x). We need to see the growth of global cities as part of a larger change in how countries work together on the world stage and how international society is evolving. As people and societies change over time, the cities they build will also change to reflect their ideas and ways of living (Curtis, 2016, p. xv). For example, economists from the Chicago School, such as Becker and Coase in the 1950's, thought that competition would encourage enterprising people and companies to constantly plan for their own gain, thus advancing economic advancement (Gazeres, 2022). In Narrative 2 of the analysis, I will delve into how the way of life and the impact of global cities are reflected in activities such as skateboarding and snowboarding.

Global cities are frequently overlooked as byproducts of the previous world order. The origins and context of global cities can be better understood by highlighting this geopolitical dimension (Curtis, 2019, p. 2). The decision to focus primarily on Curtis's work, rather than other prominent scholars like Saskia Sassen (1991), stemmed from the theoretical perspectives offered by Curtis. After examining the research of the various researchers' contributions on global cities, I would argue that Curtis' work is closest to the objectives of this thesis. Curtis highlights the relationship between global cities and the global order, arguing that the two should be studied in combination. Curtis' theory, rooted in the English School framework, underscores the significance of historical analysis and the exploration of norms and values in understanding the international system (Linklater & Suganami, 2006).

This alignment naturally leads to the incorporation of the English School perspective into this study. Curtis challenges conventional International Relations thinking by arguing that global cities will play a significant role in the future of the global order. Magnusson adds that cities exist everywhere in the world as well as in particular regions, with each having a distinct form and personality. They also help to establish a type of order that extends globally (Magnusson, 2011, p. 5). Magnusson states: "a different ontology of the political is always already implicit in the concept of the city, understood as a local phenomenon and a global way of life" (Magnusson, 2014, p. 1561). Curtis highlights that while cities have historically played important roles in shaping global history, the notion of the "global city'" represents a relatively recent urban development, emerging within the last four decades (Curtis, 2016, p. 2).

This thesis argues global cities and the international system is a normative framework for understanding urban transformation. A normative viewpoint for understanding the dynamics of urban development in the context of larger global forces can be obtained by looking at urban transformation through the prism of Curtis's (2016) work on global cities and global order. The application of Curtis' conceptual framework as a heuristic concept lends a normative dimension to the analysis of urban transformation. Curtis's framework offers a normative viewpoint by outlining specific ideals, objectives, and/or norms for how cities ought to evolve in the context of the world. By using this lens, the thesis seeks to analyze if global cities represent an idealized or desirable type of urban development inside the framework of the international system. According to this normative perspective, Curtis's conceptualization of global cities' characteristics and purposes represent certain desirable qualities or goals that cities work toward in order to thrive in the modern, globally interconnected world (Curtis, 2016). In the last narrative in the analysis, "The City of Disorder", I try to use this lens, to see if Oslo has idealized one form of urban development in recent years.

Curtis discusses the idea of "global city agency," emphasizing how important cities are becoming to world politics and governance. According to Curtis (2016), there is a contention that global cities have the ability to impact multiple aspects of global politics, such as transnational networks and security. Curtis's theory does not, however, precisely define this agency's nature. I'm left wondering about the unique roles that global cities play in influencing international dynamics, as well as the processes by which they exert their effect.

Another critique of Curtis's theory is that, despite delving deeply into the geopolitical significance and historical development of global cities, he does not include empirical research on particular locations or the real-life experiences of those who reside in these cities. Curtis could miss the daily reality and viewpoints of urban dwellers by concentrating mainly on historical studies. A knowledge of the lived experiences of persons who live in cities is necessary for a more nuanced understanding of the social dynamics and repercussions of these places. Curtis argues that we should consider cities as thinking tools rather than just as fixed concepts, although further research is needed for more understanding. This opens up the question of whether human experience can contribute to a deeper understanding of IR, and whether a bottom-up approach can provide new insights into global politics. I argue that this approach is possible and necessary, especially in this thesis, where the goal is to understand the human experience aspects of International Relations. Although it has traditionally been marginal in the study of International Relations, the bottom-up research tradition still exists and has the potential to provide valuable perspectives. I will go into more detail on how the feminism theoretical framework might act as a link between global cities and the international system in the latter sections of the theory chapter, ultimately relating these more general ideas to Oslo and individuals. I plan to use this approach in the analytical chapter that follows to look at how citizens are affected by hidden global trends. I will first examine Lefebvre's theory of scale, which helps to make linkages between the local and global dynamics of cities, in order to aid in this understanding.

2.2 Thinking about Scale when Linking the International and the City

Lefebvre's theory is integrated in this section to enable a more in-depth examination of the complex interrelationship between localized experiences and global perspectives inside a framework of scale. "It seems to be well established that physical space has no reality without the energy that is deployed within it," Lefebvre wrote in "The Production of Space" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 13). Lefebvre proposes using the phrase to refer to the division that keeps various spaces - physical, mental, and social - from merging together. Actually, every kind of space affects and upholds the others (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 14). Lefebvre addresses several aspects of space, such as our perception of it, which he terms "spatial practice," our imagination of it, which he terms "representations of space," and the real spaces we live in, which he terms "representational spaces." His major argument is that all social space has social value that transcends geographical boundaries and that all social space is derived from the body (Kuhlmann, 2013, p. 4-5). The way we as individuals understand the world around

us affects not only our personal experiences, but also how we interact with others and how our societies are organized and developed over time. This perspective enables this thesis to examine urban spaces within the context of global interconnectedness and societal development.

The interests in Lefebvre's work has grown recently, and can be seen by his contributions to critical geography and urban political economy. Lefevbre's theory is connecting the link between physical space and power. His main goal was to critique political economy within Marxism, highlighting the fact that capitalist space includes the state in all its historical forms, and isn't only limited to marketplaces or places of production (Curtis, 2016, p. 21). Marxist theory maintained that the urban was primarily a superstructure-related phenomenon and did not represent a distinct social field. Reforming Marxist theory was one of Lefebvre's many goals (Curtis, 2016). Lefebvre (1991) highlighted that civilizations naturally give rise to distinct spatial arrangements, suggesting more general shifts in the dynamics of society. He conducted extensive research on the ontology of space, examining how it has been a topic of political conflict throughout history. His goal was to conceive how new social spaces are emerging in today's society and how they interact with the political ideologies that are now in power (Curtis, 2016, p. 21). By clarifying how more general socio-political dynamics appear locally, this theory can serve as a link between the local context and theory according to the international system and global cities as explained in the section above. This connection is particularly relevant to understanding the development of global cities. In all narratives in the analysis, I draw a connection to neoliberalism as one such prevailing ideology that might contribute to shaping urban environment.

Lefebvre argued spatial patterns in modern era had an immediate effect on the growth of capitalism (Curtis, 2016, p. 21). Different societies not only produce space, but they also produce scale according to Lefebvre. Perhaps the most fundamental way that geographic space is differentiated is through the manufacture of scale, which is a social process in and of itself (Smith, 1992, p. 73). The conventional distinctions between the local and the household, the urban and the regional, the national and the global scales are not ontologically justified. The spatial structure of social interactions is established by the difference of geographical scales. In Lefebvre's perspective, scale is not merely a question of geographical extent or size, but also one of power relations and social structures (Smith, 1992, p. 73). For example, when we consider global cities (explained in the chapter above), their influence and significance

extend beyond their physical boundaries. Especially in narrative three, “The City of Disorder”, where I discuss newly built areas in central Oslo, this perspective is important. Lefebvre argues that different levels of scale, ranging from the local to the global, involve various forms of political organization and control. Lefebvre has characterized the city as “a space of differences”. He highlights the key distinction between an abstract space created by government initiatives and economic systems, and a social environment modified by everyday activities. At this scale, which encompasses everything from the local to the global, there are numerous factors that influence the design of cities, as Lefebvre points out (Smith, 1992, p. 72). He shows that the ontological basis of places is complex and involves many different aspects. Investments, governance arrangements and urban planning policies all help to construct the scale and spatial configuration of cities. Therefore, we can understand the scale and spatial configuration of cities as the result of a complex mix of political, economic and social forces operating at different levels, from the local to the global. This scale is of importance to my thesis, as it provides an urban perspective that enables an analysis of how cities are shaped and developed in relation to complex societal dynamics at both local and global levels. The scale is an important step in connecting the theoretical framework that makes up the urban lens to better understand the development of Oslo.

The Lefebvrian idea of totality can be used to understand the scale. Lefebvre discusses three levels of social reality: the macro-level, the mixed/urban level, and the micro/private level. The broadest and, hence, abstract relations - such as the politics of space and the capital market - are included in the macro-level of social activity. The next definition of the mixed/urban level is that it is a crucial level of social practice that maintains the urban population’s mobilization as a creative force in capitalist society by acting as a mediator between the immediate and distant orders of social reality (Golubchikov, 2016, p. 611). The practice of daily living, such as housing and habiting, is referred to as the micro-level. While it is often considered to be slightly more insignificant, it actually represents the ideology itself, if not the entire goal of society, according to Golubchikov (2016, p. 611).

Lefebvre emphasizes the importance of understanding the micro level because it reflects the everyday practices and experiences of individuals in society. He believes that these seemingly mundane activities, such as housing and living space, are not only crucial to the wellbeing of individuals, but also reflect broader societal ideologies and goals (Lefebvre & Levich, 1987).

By examining the micro level, Lefebvre believes we can gain insight into the underlying structures and power dynamics that shape social reality (Lefebvre & Levich, 1987). According to Lefebvre, the locations where resistance is most likely to happen are streets and open public spaces because these areas are a part of people's everyday lives (Christophersen, 2005, p. 51). In my analysis I aim to explore how these micro-level dynamics can serve as reflections of larger global forces, and how local actions can influence these broader dynamics. In narrative two, focusing on the subculture of skateboarding and snowboarding, I aim to explore how these micro-level dynamics can serve as reflections of larger global forces, and how local actions can influence these broader dynamics. This narrative exemplifies the concept by examining how skateboarders demonstrate resilience despite facing legal restrictions and urban obstacles to skating in various locations. However, before delving into the analysis, I will provide an explanation of feminist theory, which represents a bottom-up approach that brings the urban lens down to the individual level.

2.3 Security and Everyday Life in Feminist IR Theory

Understanding developments in Oslo within the context of International Relations theory is made easier by the bottom-up approach feminism provides for analyzing social realities at the local and micro levels. Some view the feminist golden age as a persistent post-war phenomenon that began to take shape about 1970, aligning with the debate over positivism or the disapproval of academic fields. Feminists realized how crucial it was to stress that there is no neutral stance in the creation of knowledge (Gilchrist, 1999, p. 18-19). There are multiple sources from which the feminist approach to international relations emerged. Initially, some argue it originated from the global feminist movement during the early 1970s, which was prominently demonstrated at the United Nations Conference on Women in 1975. Second, the end of the Cold War caused a shift in global priorities that allowed for the exploration of new topics outside of those pertaining to politics and the military. This movement also brought attention to the ways in which gendered power dynamics interact with international political and economic processes (Thorburn, 2000, p. 2-3). Feminist International Relations theory can help to clarify these complex connections, between power dynamics and more general political and economic processes. Ferguson argues that transnational thinking can be distinguished as a tool within feminist theory as it deconstructs the often comprehensive "global" and instead examines specific connection that shapes the world (Ferguson, 2017, p. 271).

Feminism's impact on International Relations alters our comprehension not only of what global politics is but also of how it functions and evolves (Ferguson, 2017). This perspective is important in this thesis as feminism argues for an in-depth analysis of the complex connections between power structures and general political and economic processes, including urban development. By including feminist views in the analysis of both international relations and cities, we not only improve our understanding of regional and global complexities, but also encourage the challenge of preconceived notions. Challenging these preconceptions is crucial for this thesis, as each narrative in the analysis seeks to demonstrate the value of the raw, gritty, and authentic, underscoring the importance of avoiding biases towards such concepts.

In feminist epistemology, while there are variations, there are few fundamental principles that are widely shared. Firstly, feminism is suspicious to dualistic thinking. Any attempt to divide the complex world we inhabit into two conflicting variables will oversimplify our understanding of reality and limit our comprehension of what actually occurs within and around us. Examples of dualistic thinking include reason and emotion, mind and body, and man and woman (Ferguson, 2017, p. 269). Feminist views encourage a critical analysis of ingrained assumptions while providing insight into regional and global complexities. For example, Åhall criticizes the local/global dichotomy (2018, p. 37), which is an important point in this thesis as it challenges traditional perceptions and allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of global cities. For instance, while this thesis acknowledges the role of local actors in the transformation of Oslo, this thesis contends that global perspectives also wield considerable influence, thus challenging dichotomies. This epistemological perspective, challenging dichotomies, enables a nuanced understanding within International Relations theory, contributing to shaping an urban lens that can help explain Oslo's development.

Mohanty highlights feminism is characterized as a profoundly collective endeavor, embodying a shared politics of engagement. She argues the debates among feminist scholars' stem from a commitment to comprehending and enhancing the well-being of not only women but also men, children, all living beings, and the planet (Mohanty, 2003, p. 122; Ferguson, 2017, p. 270). Sjoberg argues that the term "gender" encompasses more than apparent sex, delving into distinctions drawn between individuals perceived as men and women and their

functioning in social and political contexts (Sjoberg, 2018). Ferguson argues it's about "engaging through critical intersectional perspectives" (Ferguson, 2017, p. 270). According to Ferguson (2017), feminist theorists excel when they adopt an intersectional and interdisciplinary approach to understanding the world. By using diverse perspectives and disciplines, they can provide more comprehensive analyses of social issues. Moreover, maintaining a continuous dialogue between theory and practice allows feminist theorists to actively engage with political movements and struggles, contributing to ongoing efforts to advance social justice, equality, and security (Ferguson, 2017, p. 271).

Feminist security studies builds upon the foundation laid by early feminist International Relations scholars such as Enloe and Cohn. Here the framework, security is reconceptualized across various levels and dimensions, encompassing for example the absence of violence in military, economic, sexual, and environmental realms. Sjoberg characterizes security in feminism as the collective narrative emerging from scholars' arguments, disagreements, and compromises (Krulišová & O'Sullivan, 2022, p. 35). Feminists have been exploring aspects of everyday security and militarization for an extended period. Their focus extends to identity, trauma, memory, embodiment, and affect (Krulišová & O'Sullivan, 2022, p. 39). These studies engage in self-reflection, promotes inclusivity, conducts ethical research, and fearlessly speaks truth to power (Krulišová & O'Sullivan, 2022, p. 43-44). Despite the primary focus of feminist security studies on broader global issues, its nuanced explorations of identity, trauma, memory, embodiment, and affect can also offer valuable insights into discussions about urban security. While my thesis may not directly engage with militarization or traditional security concerns, the foundational principles of feminist security studies inform my exploration of the origins of security theory within feminism in International Relations. Recent research, such as Nyman (2021), suggests that security within feminism encompasses a broad spectrum of topics, underscoring the relevance of feminist perspectives to diverse fields of inquiry, including discussions about cities and security.

Although feminist security in International Relations studies often have been associated with military issues, war, and violence, Nyman argues global politics impact everyone's daily lives, and, in turn, our everyday routines shape global politics (Nyman, 2021, p. 314). Like Nyman, many feminists are concerned with everyday life (Beebeejaun, 2017). Instead of isolating global issues from daily life, they are affected by each other. Nyman makes an argument in feminism for an all-encompassing framework that views affect, practice, and

space as interrelated aspects of security in day-to-day living (Nyman, 2021, p. 313). Security is a part of our daily lives, shaping routine practices and feelings in ordinary spaces, Nyman argues. However, security is not universally defined; rather, it is socially situated, varying in how people experience it across different locations and time periods. Furthermore, it is influenced by historical context, cultural factors, and language (Nyman, 2021, p. 324).

In the realm of social theories concerning everyday life, the security encompasses temporal nuances, including routines, rhythms, and other day-to-day practices. Ordinary aspects can extend to commonplace practices, locations, individuals, or spaces that may appear unremarkable or even non-political (Nyman, 2021, p. 324). Our understanding of security can vary depending on different factors such as place, time and context. For example, how we view security in a global city may differ from how we view security in a rural village. Similarly, time can also play a role in how security is perceived. Both temporal factors such as time of day, as well as broader temporal shifts between the modern and prehistoric periods. In addition to place and time, other contextual factors can also influence our understanding of security, including cultural, social and political factors that vary from society to society (Nyman, 2021). For example, in narrative two of the analysis, I explain how an all-girls skateboard community might create a sense of security for women and girls interested in starting skateboarding in a predominantly male-dominated arena.

In essence, Nyman argues "security shapes everyday life" (Nyman, 2021, p. 314). Security is present in everyday spaces that surround you; "it exists everywhere in life" (Nyman, 2021, p. 325). Regarding Nyman's theory, security is more than just physical safety; it encompasses social interactions, economic prospects, and the built environment. In context of this thesis, understanding security extends from the external to the internal, as it is an integral part of our everyday experience. It requires not only an observation from the outside, but also an exploration of how individuals experience security on a personal level. Therefore, feminist security studies can offer a holistic framework to explore how security in cities affect the individual both physically and emotionally. The theories of emotions in International Relations will be explained as the last element of the urban lens, exploring the domain of the self, in the following section. This thesis relies on emotions since they are intimately related to concepts of security and represent personal experiences, which I'll come back to in the analysis through autoethnographic method.

2.4 A Turn to Emotions in International Relations

Enloe's statement, "the personal is international, and the international is personal," shows a key concept within feminist International Relations discourse (Enloe, 2014, p. 343). The well-known feminist sentence implies that feminist research often focusses on narratives and experiences of individuals rather than just those of political elites or state. It also suggests that the personal and subjective is theoretical, and should be given consideration (Åhall, 2018, p. 41). The relationship between emotions and International Relations is explained in this section. Highlighting the importance of emotions in comprehending the complexity of cities, and how theorizing emotions can contribute to explaining Oslo's development. Emotions should be viewed contextually and dynamically in International Relations, since this perspective can provide important insights into a range of behavioral patterns (Sasley, 2013).

Over time, the interest in emotions has persisted, and early writers on international relations, such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Niebuhr, and Morgenthau, have all incorporated considerations about emotions in their analyses in various ways (Sasley, 2013; Smith, 1962). Later, the mainstream International Relations theories have all, in some manner, integrated emotional states: realists highlight fear, institutionalists focus on trust, Marxists emphasize greed, and constructivists consider affect (Sasley, 2013). However, Åhall argues that any exploration of affect, bodies, emotions and embodiment in the analysis of global politics in International Relations, without incorporating feminist theory, feminist knowledge, and/or feminist methodologies, inherently carries political implications (Åhall, 2018, p. 38).

Within International Relations, emotion research has increased over the decade; previously, the rational actor paradigm predominated (Koschut, 2020, p. 71). With the use of emotions as an analytical tool to examine actual events within particular historical and sociocultural contexts, a new wave of social constructivism and feminist methodology has broadened the field's boundaries. The relationships between emotions and power, marginalization, boundary-making, and the politics of difference are the main topics of this critical emotion research (Koschut, 2020, p. 71). The emotions in International Relations emphasize the connection between emotions and reason in decision-making, challenging the notion that they are separate concepts. Additionally, it asserts that emotions are socially constructed and transcend individual experiences. Finally, critical emotion research explores how societies create emotional norms and frameworks to support prevailing cultural values (Koschut, 2020,

p. 71).

Here, I will focus on the feminist perspective on emotions, which is particularly relevant as I will employ autoethnographic method in my analysis, delving into my own feelings associated with urban transformation. Thus, the exploration of emotions can elucidate how the theorization of cities in international relations provides insights into Oslo's urban development. However, the misunderstanding that feminism is solely about identity and/or women's issues may lead some non-feminist academics to believe that feminist knowledge is unimportant to them (Åhall, 2018, p. 37). Nevertheless, emotions in urban spaces are pertinent to everyone, regardless of gender or identity. Feminist knowledge offers valuable insights into power dynamics, social structures, and the construction of norms and values that impact people across various identities (Mohanty, 2003). Feminist theory is important to understanding how power dynamics shape emotions in urban areas, such as Oslo. It can help reveal how changes in power structures affect people's experiences of the city, which can be important in analyzing Oslo's development in relation to increasing market orientation and the impact of neoliberalism. In the analysis, I explore my own emotions related to this, especially in narrative two about snowboarding and skateboarding and in narrative three discussing democratic urban spaces in "The City of Disorder".

Mills argues that personal experiences and emotions are entwined with the larger social, structural, and historical factors (Kelly, 2022). Feminism encourages an awareness that we are not personally responsible for these wrongs (Åhall, 2018). In feminism, perspective-shifting, finding common ground, and identifying structural patterns are ongoing processes. This path isn't easy, though, it could include facing up to unpleasant realities (Ahmad, 2017). Therefore, understanding the complexities of societal and physical structures requires a closer examination of emotions. Although a wide range of emotions are abundant in cities and influence urban experiences, there hasn't been much historical research on emotions as historical phenomena until recently (Kenny, 2014). Emotions are essential to human existence because they shape identities, values, beliefs, and social interactions. They also contribute significantly to how individuals perceive themselves and their sense of belonging in different environments (Kenny, 2014, p. 5). By looking into the role of emotions in urban experiences, we may gain deeper insights into how communities' function, and how individuals feel within their environment. In all the narratives in the analysis, I delve into the concept of community and its particular significance in relation to the global city.

Matt argues language and culture "shape, repress, and express" the biological and chemical occurrences that generate emotions on a physiological level. Historians prioritize context over all else, and in addition to asking "what emotions are," they also need to answer, "what they do," or "how they function as social practices in constantly changing circumstances" (Kenny, 2014, p. 5). According to Kenny (2014, p. 5) it is necessary to historicize emotions because they are experienced and interpreted differently throughout time and cultures. Examples of these emotions include joy, fear, love, and anger. Historically, Åhall states, the word "emotion" has been connected to the physical, intimate, and feminine. "Emotion," which has long been seen as the constitutive opposite of "reason" in Western binary thinking, has been used politically to marginalize women and the feminine in general political discourse (Åhall, 2018, p. 37). Feminist scholarship challenges these binary divisions, including those between emotion and reason, mind and body, and domestic and international spheres (Åhall, 2018, p. 37). Taking these historical perspectives into account, we can reconsider our comprehension of emotions within the context of the global city. By acknowledging the cultural constructions and historical biases surrounding emotions, new perspectives on urban life can emerge. Therefore, examining emotions within the framework of the global city and the international system offers opportunities for reevaluating urban spaces and enhancing the well-being and social cohesion of urban populations.

A feminist perspective offers a critical lens that recognizes the impact of emotions and cultural constructs on our understanding of reality and knowledge creation. It involves examining individuals, society, and our roles within it. Feminist scholars use diverse research methods, departing from traditional positivism and questioning established knowledge (Jones, 1996). In feminism, empowering marginalized voices often involves storytelling and narratives (Ferguson, 2017, p. 276). In this thesis, I use autoethnography as a storytelling tool to delve into urban experiences from a feminist standpoint and use my own experiences. This approach bridges the gap between feminist theoretical framework and the methodology, providing insights into the relationship between emotions, urban life, and the international system. Here, feminist theory is the basis for the choice to use autoethnography, and I will return to feminism and autoethnography section on the interpretivist approach. In the next chapter, the methodology and research design will be explained.

3. Methodology and Research Design

Feminism has long stressed the value of individual viewpoints and a bottom-up strategy, as was mentioned in the theoretical chapter above (Ferguson, 2017, p. 276). According to Linklater and Suganami (2006, p. 119), there are others who contend that The English School fosters methodological pluralism by highlighting the significance of considering multiple aspects of global politics. Since the selected theory might be viewed as holistic approaches, a qualitative and interpretivist approach make sense. Here, feminist theory and The English School offer lenses that align with the holistic approach needed to address how theorization of the city in International Relations can provide perspective on developments in Oslo, integrating individual experiences with macro-structural forces in International Relations. The theory's focus on the inclusion of diverse voices and methodologies makes a link to the chosen interpretivist approach as well.

For conceptual clarity, ontology explores the essence of a phenomenon, while epistemology addresses how we acquire knowledge about that phenomenon (Karlsson et al., 2021). Our conception of what constitutes reality is shaped by ontology, which is the study of existence and the structure of reality. On the other hand, epistemology addresses how reality is known by examining the methods that allow people to comprehend and justify knowledge (Akilatan, 2020). In philosophy, ontology is understood as a theory of existence that drives epistemology, a theory of knowledge, and methodology, a process of producing science. On the other hand, the understanding of ontology in the field of International Relations, in which ontology, although it is borrowed from philosophy, refers to the content of political reality in the field, such as identities, humans, social communities, states, regimes, systems, or some combination of the mentioned (Samra, 2021). Throughout this thesis, I have had to reflect on epistemological questions: how can we gain knowledge about cities, the international system, security, individuals and similar topics? The idea of how we can acquire knowledge about Oslo's development from the chosen narratives has been a recurring concern. At the same time, the thesis has been rooted in ontological questions that have shaped my approach to the study of International Relations. Alternative methods could have been chosen, such as a more thorough review of other researchers' work. Nevertheless, my personal experience has been the basis in shaping this thesis. Therefore, I have found it necessary to reflect on how my individual experiences have shaped my understanding of cities and International Relations. Thus, both epistemological and ontological issues have been present throughout the design

process of this thesis. Further, I will explain interpretivist approach, ethics, trustworthiness and generating data.

3.1 An Interpretive Approach: A World of Narratives

In International Relations, there are traditionally two main categories of research methods: qualitative and quantitative. In qualitative research we find the interpretivist method (Bryman, Clark, Foster & Sloan, 2021). According to Reshetnikov & Kurowska (2017), the focus of interpretivist education should be on contextual comprehension rather than universal correctness or mathematical accuracy. An interpretivist project should strive to demonstrate reflexivity and hermeneutic sensibility rather than objectivity, replicability, and falsifiability. It is common practice to use discourse analysis, narrative analysis, ethnography, genealogy, and archival research when utilizing an interpretivist approach in qualitative methods (Reshetnikov & Kurowska, 2017, p. 1). Here, I've chosen an interpretivist method through autoethnography and popular culture, since it allows me to use this method to explain how theorization of the city in International Relations can provide perspective on developments in Oslo, through my own experiences and a specific artifact which is the movie "Death at Oslo Central" (1990).

Autoethnography is a research method within ethnography where a researcher links their personal experiences to broader cultural, political, and social contexts and interpretations. The primary objective of autoethnography is to craft diverse expressions that captivate the reader, listener, or viewer intellectually and emotionally, evoking a sense of recognition and resonance with the content being expressed. It often looks into what is "taken for granted" to provide deeper meaning (Karlsson et al., 2021, p. 10). "Auto" refers to the self and experiences, "ethno" involves placing this self within cultural, political, and social contexts, and "graphy" encompasses the various forms of expression used to convey this, including text, images, and film (Karlsson et al., 2021, p. 10-11). It's an interdisciplinary (both practical and theoretical) method that emphasizes qualitative research, drawing on the subjective experiences of individuals as valuable sources of knowledge across various academic disciplines and research traditions (Karlsson et al., 2021, p. 9). However, it's not a common method for International Relations. Yet, several scholars have highlighted the absence of the author's self in International Relations theory and have advocated for a change (Löwenheim, 2010, p. 1023).

Mykhalovskiy contends that documenting individual experiences inherently encompasses social experiences, as each unique personal encounter is shaped by broader social constructs and organizational dynamics. He puts it this way: “to write individual experience is, at the same time, to write social experience” (Löwenheim, 2010, p. 1025). Still, the predominant methods in political science and IR have traditionally sought to separate the self from the subject matter (Brigg & Bleiker, 2010, p. 780. However, the actual process involves more complexities than what is sometimes acknowledged or documented (Biecker & Schlichte, 2022, p. 23). Even though positivist assumptions have waned in relevance, approaches still often overlook the inherent connection between the researcher and the world (Brigg & Bleiker, 2010, p. 780). Numerous scholars in the field of International Relations often rely on positivist assumptions regarding the nature of the self and knowledge acquisition. They typically presume the self to be an independent cognitive and emotional entity, distinct from others and the surrounding natural and social environment. Defenders of positivism persist in seeking research outcomes devoid of personal assumptions or biases (Brigg & Bleiker, 2010, p. 783). The opposite is the goal of this study. In contrast to that method, I use autoethnography to adopt a post-positivist perspective. The rigorous division between the researcher and the research process is purposefully rejected in feminist theory. The author’s position and experience being disclosed is seen by many feminists as advantageous rather than problematic (Brigg & Bleiker, 2010, p. 785). One of the main ideas of this thesis is that this method promotes research outcomes that put transparency above the positivist goal of removing the author’s influence from the research findings. The theoretical choice of feminism as a bottom-up approach thus aligns with the autoethnographic method.

Here, feminism lays the groundwork for the autoethnographic approach, allowing me to incorporate my own experiences related to emotions and security into the analysis. This might enable International Relations theory to contribute to the explanation of urban development. Lowenheim contends that an autoethnographic account’s importance stems mainly from its ability to elicit an emotional and reflective response from readers by extending beyond the language boundaries of a text. It captures their attention and makes them reflect on their own situations and viewpoints (Löwenheim, 2010, p. 1029). Understanding power dynamics in gender relations is crucial, according to feminist scholars, and it involves the researcher’s interactions with the subject, context, and academic community. In a comparable manner, autoethnographers draw attention to the political relationships that exist between people and

their surroundings (Brigg & Bleiker, 2010, p. 791). In order to encourage others to consider their own perspectives and experiences, feminism and autoethnography frequently highlight the self's perspective (Löwenheim, 2010, p. 1026). In the theory chapter, I delve into how cultural contexts and knowledge may influence the self, drawing on the insights of intellectuals like Curtis and Lefebvre to comprehend the mechanisms of power reproduction. In feminism, I examine the micro-level dynamics of our ability to challenge this. I will revisit these themes in the analysis.

Löwenheim writes "I want to remind readers that the state (and the interstate system as well) is made of people, and exists for the people (or at least, this is how it should be)" (Löwenheim, 2010, p. 1027). The acceptance of individuals is necessary for the very existence or legitimacy of organizations like states and corporations. Therefore, given their essential position in political reality, it is fascinating to investigate how people perceive the authority given the state or other state-influenced phenomena. Studying and documenting the emotions of individuals feelings in global politics via autoethnography provides a distinctive viewpoint that modifies our comprehension of the international system (Löwenheim, 2010, p. 1027). Edwards writes "autoethnography is a widely applied qualitative research method to examine self-experience in relation to life events, and also situated experiences in cultural and institutional contexts" (Edwards, 2021). Moreover, Penttinen argues everyone experiences emotions, and while they may not be as private as we would like to think, they are nonetheless shaped by culture (Penttinen, 2019, p. 8).

The fact that autoethnography challenges our preconceived notions about knowledge and knowledge development and places itself somewhat outside of the mainstream may be one of its strongest points, according to Karlsson et al (2021, p. 9-10). Instead of following norms, autoethnography aims to provide a different viewpoint on the creation and sharing of knowledge (Karlsson et al., 2021, p. 10). One of the purposes of autoethnography is to provide the reader with insight into the researcher's own experiences (Karlsson et al., 2021, p. 11). Here, I draw upon my own experiences rooted in three different narratives: the movie "Death at Oslo Central" (1990), my involvement in the subculture and the "The City of Disorder". Autoethnography provides a personal lens through which to examine these examples. The examples provide useful data about how different social dynamics impact urban environments and how I experience them personally. These narratives are utilized to

explore how theorization of cities in International Relations theory can provide perspectives on Oslo's development.

"Death at Oslo Central" provides a snapshot of Oslo in the early 1990s and serves as an important historical film that captures a specific point in time before the cityscape underwent significant transformations (Strøm, 2020). I use this example as a representative artifact of popular culture to explore and analyze Oslo's changes over time. This approach involves the use of hermeneutics, where I delve into the film as a piece of Norwegian film history to uncover underlying meanings and interpretations of the social, cultural and political context of Oslo at the time (Thompson, Pollio & Locander, 1994). Although autoethnography is also part of my methodological approach since I have watched the film multiple times, the analysis of "Death at Oslo Central" differs significantly from the other two narratives, which are based on my personal experiences and participation. "Death at Oslo Central" is a piece of popular culture. The movie "Death at Oslo Central" (1990) is a feature film that has left a significant mark on Norwegian film history. It's directed by Eva Isaksen and written by Axel Hellstenius, and based on Ingvar Ambjørnsen's popular youth novel from 1988. The film was honored with the Amanda Award for Best Children and Youth Film in 1991 (Emilsen, 2018).

The importance of cultural "artifacts" in International Relations is being studied by an increasing number of scholars. These artifacts are thought to be essential to comprehending the fundamental dynamics of the field. For a variety of reasons, popular culture has drawn the attention of International Relations theorist, and different methods of studying it have emerged. Some argue movies, TV series, and other similar media as useful resources for demystifying and making understandable complex aspects of our world (Kiersey, 2016). According to Shapiro, the artifact itself is a worthy subject of study because it is an outcome of the social (Kiersey, 2016). Therefore, studying a popular cultural artifact in this context is already considered to be studying a part of our own reality. Since both the world shown in the artifact and the world we live in are a part of the same general material, there is no need to distinguish between them (Kiersey, 2016). The narrative analysis of "Death at Oslo Central" is informed by both popular culture sources and the autoethnographic method. This analysis attempts to make sense of decoding the international by tying the theoretical literature on the global city, international system, scale, and feminism as an urban lens to use on Oslo as a case. As a result, the movie acts as a snapshot of how Oslo is portrayed in the 1990s, while the method used here aims to explain how changes in Oslo can be given perspective through

the lens of international theory. The next autoethnographic narratives that follow are contextualized by this method.

In the two next narratives autoethnography is the chosen method. Narrative two, subculture of skateboarding and snowboarding exemplifies how alternative communities navigate and respond to the changing urban environment shaped by urban transformation. I've been a part of this culture since I was eight years old, when I first started wakeboarding. At the age of ten, I started snowboarding and skateboarding. This narrative is based on my own experiences. Finally, "The City of Disorder" is a collaborative project I've been involved in with other students as an internship Sweco and Aspelin Ramm. We documented the transformation of the city landscape in recent years as a comparative study, looking into how "gritty" qualities can be good for Oslo. Gritty qualities are meant as metaphorically qualities, such as for example skateboarding. Given my involvement in "The City of Disorder" project and my belonging to the skateboarding and snowboarding subculture, using an autoethnographic approach, I can provide insights that others might not be able to. In all the narratives, explored further in the analysis (chapter four), the theorization of cities in International Relations is discussed regarding developments in Oslo.

3.2 Ethical Dilemmas in Research

The claim that values influence all research, underscores the importance of being transparent about the principles that shape the work. Especially for knowledge advancement, that enables others to draw conclusions by understanding the thought process behind them (Löwenheim, 2010, p. 1023-1024). Researchers can navigate ethical considerations and improve the validity of their studies by recognizing and interacting with these elements. By being transparent about the guiding principles, values, and viewpoints that have influenced their work, researchers enable readers and other researchers to comprehend the context and logic of the study. This encourages confidence and makes it possible for others to evaluate the research's validity in greater detail. Transparency also fosters honesty and contemplation regarding the researcher's positionality and any biases. The researcher can more effectively manage potential biases and make sure that the study reflects a wider range of perspectives by making clear how one's own experiences and social identities can influence the research process (Löwenheim, 2010). In this study, the goal is to be transparent and invite the reader to understand the logic behind this thesis. One example of being transparent in this study is

clarifying how my own experiences as part of the skateboarding and snowboarding subculture have influenced my approach to the research.

Bochner underscores the relational nature of human beings, asserting that "every story of the self is a story of relations with others" (Edwards, 2021). Therefore, writing autoethnographic accounts of self-experience inherently involves interactions with others (Edwards, 2021). I am aware of how difficult it can be to navigate the social influences on my experiences - experiences that entail interacting with different people. Although these exchanges have certainly influenced my viewpoints, it's crucial to remember that the insights I offer in this thesis are entirely my own, and no particular third parties are referenced. According to Löwenheim (2010, p. 1030), autoethnography places an emphasis on protecting people's reputations, privacy, and trust. This aligns with my methodology for this project and my utilization of the three narratives I introduced above.

In the last narrative of the three I introduced in the chapter above, I draw upon a previous project from my internship, titled "The City of Disorder". Because the project "The City of Disorder" is based on multiple people's perspectives, this narrative may be among the most challenging ethically. I want to make it clear that in this project, I collaborated with five other students under the guidance of several office leaders and experts. While the assignment stems from collective effort, my reflections in this paper represent my individual understanding of the concept. It's also important to note, the focus in this thesis is on the conceptual framework we developed rather than the specific details of the office environment and the people involved. Much of the information about this project is also available on a website, accessible to everyone. In comparison, as Edwards (2021) points out, I recognize the weight of accountability that accompanies writing from a personal perspective. This includes the emotional strain of revisiting past experiences as well as the uncertainty of how others may interpret the narratives (Edwards, 2021). Although these factors are significant when conducting autoethnographic research, it is important to stress that this thesis does not explore highly private topics. Rather, the emphasis is on offering genuine insights while accepting the limits of individual and social experiences.

This thesis does not seek to investigate highly personal issues; rather, it employs autoethnography as a means of understanding urban changes and investigating the theoretical stances of cities in International Relations with reference to Oslo's developments. Amidst the

complexities of understanding global challenges in International Relations, where analytical skills, compassion, and understanding are essential, subjectivity may have a role to play in theoretical considerations. The way in which International Relations writers view themselves has important political implications, according to Löwenheim. Especially in terms of our understanding of the nature and goal of International Relations (Löwenheim, 2010, p. 1025-1026). He contends that via creating autoethnographies, International Relations writers may cultivate a genuine sense of self and become more receptive to the subjectivity and experiences of others. This encourages a shift towards viewing international politics in more humane terms. Additionally, sharing the process of self-understanding through autoethnography can prompt other International Relations scholars to adopt a similar perspective, and highlight a new purpose of International Relations (Löwenheim, 2010, p. 1026).

My intention in choosing autoethnography is to initiate a discussion about the significance of emotions in cities, rather than to make the assertion that one person's feelings are superior to another. Instead of portraying my own emotions as the only source of insight, this thesis seeks to demonstrate the significance of emotions in shaping perceptions and experiences, and how these change over time in urban settings. It promotes a more thorough comprehension of International Relations and an increased consciousness of emotions in the processes of urban development, thereby addressing the overarching question of how theorization of the city in international relations provides perspective on developments in Oslo. By recognizing the significant influence of emotions on social dynamics and personal effects, this approach may contribute to a deeper understanding of Oslo's development within the broader framework of International Relations theory.

3.3 How to Assess the Trustworthiness of Research

Despite my contention that autoethnography is appropriate in this situation, this approach has drawn criticism because it depends too heavily on the researcher's personal experiences (Karlsson et al., 2021, p. 10). At least in some circles of social sciences, autoethnography is still seen as a controversial, even "self-indulgent" genre, more fitting for "navel-gazing" autobiography than for thorough social scientific investigation. Others see it as a creative take on ethnography, in which the researcher's own experiences as a member of a social group are examined and the roles of participant and researcher merge (Allen-Collinson & Hockey,

2008, p. 211). However, the growing interest in autoethnography around the world suggests that knowledge development strategies should be developed outside of the conventional academic and evidence-based framework. The university and college sector are also affected by this trend (Karlsson et al., 2021, p. 11).

The question of authorship and subjectivity in autoethnography of International Relations has recently gained attention in the field (Löwenheim, 2010). It raises important considerations about the role of the researcher's subjectivity in scholarly work, including how it influences interpretation and writing. Some may view this as potentially compromising for the reliability of research. Yet, others argue it can enrich scholarship by revealing underlying assumptions and perspectives. Through reflection on knowledge production, and the implicit biases present in academic discourse, autoethnography helps readers develop a deeper understanding of the concepts of credibility and doubt in these texts (Biecker & Schlichte, 2022, p. 22). However, expressing oneself in such a personalized way calls into question the traditional view of the researcher as impartial, objective, and lacking in textual evidence. This leaves the autoethnographer open to accusations of being unreasonable, private, particularistic, and subjective as opposed to universal, public, objective and rational (Allen-Collinson & Hockey, 2008, p. 214). However, Lincoln & Guba states it is not very sensible to evaluate autoethnographic research using standards from positivistic or post-positivistic social research because it has its own distinct epistemological and methodological foundation. Some suggest adopting new standards like confirmability, credibility, transferability, and reliability for evaluating autoethnographic accounts (Allen-Collinson & Hockey, 2008, p. 215). These standards can be useful in all research as all research will be affected by bias to varying degrees (Löwenheim, 2010, p. 1023-1024).

Nevertheless, English School theorist Bull stated "The student whose study of international politics consists solely of an introduction to the techniques of systems theory, game theory, simulation, or content analysis is simply to shut off from contact with the subject, and is unable to develop any feeling either for the play of international politics or for the moral dilemma to which it gives rise" (Linklater & Suganami, 2006, p. 100). Expanding upon Bull's assertion, one can argue that traditional approaches by themselves are inadequate for providing a comprehensive understanding of global politics. Rather, it necessitates a comprehension of the intricacies of power dynamics, moral questions, and the human element

in International Relations. Therefore, combining English School theory with autoethnography can be a useful strategy. While English School theory provides a framework for analysis of politics and International Relations, autoethnography allows one to examine subjective experiences and viewpoints within this framework.

3.4 Generating Data and Producing Narratives

Rather than adopting a traditional academic stance, International Relations academics employ autoethnography to highlight storytelling and approachable language in order to demonstrate how their experiences and background in the "international" have influenced and actively participated in their work. Most of International Relations researchers have only used autoethnography once or twice in their writing, usually to make the connection between their personal and professional goals (Montsion, 2018, p. 13). This approach is new to me, and in many ways, it represents the intersection of my academic goals and personal selves.

I have applied a type of method known as retrospective autoethnography. Instead of doing fieldwork to look into anything specific, I shaped this assignment based on my prior experiences. I've seen "Death at Oslo Central" multiple times over the years, and it changed the way I saw about Oslo when I was younger. The movie functions as a historical snapshot and popular culture of Oslo in the 1990s. Even though I had seen the movie several times over the years, I rewatched it more than once while writing my thesis. In addition, I went to a movie screening in Oslo and watched a panel discussion about the movie and Oslo today. I made notes throughout this event. This narrative is the least familiar to me among the three, as it is more about observation rather than direct participation, unlike the other two, which are based on my personal activities and experiences. Nonetheless, I employ the film in an artistic capacity to comprehend changes and as an artifact from popular culture.

The second narrative, which discusses skateboarding and snowboarding as subcultures, is still relevant in my life today. This environment affects me and continuously shapes who I am. Here, I've combined current and earlier experiences. Since I was eight years old, I've been part of the board sport culture, and this has also shaped my educational path. Therefore, this culture is one of the narratives I use in this thesis, specifically my experiences from the skateboarding and snowboarding culture in Oslo from when I first moved to the city in 2017.

The last narrative is “The City of Disorder,” which I worked on last summer (2023) with five other students. Over the course of last summer, we collected data for the project, which we have since been presenting, and still are. There have also been panel discussions following a few of these presentations. In this project, we use comparative analysis to compare different locations. The project was a comparative analysis of Kirseberg in Malmø (Sweden), Kødbyen in Copenhagen (Denmark), and Grønland, Nydalen, Bjørvika and Tjuvholmen in Oslo (Norway). I’ve taken notes during our presentations, and our conclusions are posted online (Sweco & Aspelin Ramm, 2023). The analysis chapter that follows provides more details on these narratives. In the following chapter, I will analyze the three different narratives, before I reflect on city development and the international system and finally conclude.

Being a part of the subculture and “The City of Disorder,” I might be able to provide perspectives that outsiders are unable to. However, I have often questioned who am I to speak on this matter - are my experiences valuable for research? My opinions on this are not constant, and there are days when I wonder more than others. During the master seminars, someone told me that this assignment was “very brave”. This is something I’ve thought about afterward. How can I transition from the grand, invisible global trends and connect them to the city on a personal and emotional level? Who am I to try to do this? Nevertheless, the ambition of this thesis is not to claim that I have the right answer or an absolute truth. Here, I try use my voice as a resident of the city and as an International Relations-student, influenced by personal experiences, to contribute to the understanding of urban transformation as something complex and intersected with the international system. It’s important to remember that the term “global city” and the international system, as used in this thesis, serve as conceptual tools.

4. An Interpretive Approach to the Study of Oslo

In this chapter the three narratives used for the autoethnographic study is presented, “The Death at Oslo Central” (1990), skateboarding and snowboarding as subcultures and “The City of Disorder”. The narratives are presented in this order, which is a logical progression through the narratives over time. These three narratives give the readers a different perspective on how Oslo has changed since 1990, how it might be related to more general global trends and how it might impact the Oslo’s residents. As previously noted, the city is changing quickly, which influences several factors, such as architecture and residents. However, cities and people are

complex, and this thesis elaborates some causes of change and do not exclude other interacting or independent causes.

Although each narrative has its own unique approach and perspective, there is a consistent sense of the raw, gritty and the natural that they have in common. This commonality sets the stage for further analysis to explore the connections between these narratives and how they intersect with the broader theorization of the city in International Relations. Further analysis will explore these connections, delving into whether International Relations theory can provide insight into Oslo's development.

4.1 Narrative 1: "Death at Oslo Central": Reflecting on Change in Oslo through a Movie Classic

Over the past thirty years, Oslo has undergone transformation (Sweco & Aspelin Ramm, 2023). In contrast to today's city, the 1990 film "Death at Oslo Central" provides a glimpse into a different era. The film follows the main characters Pelle and Proffen, two teenagers who become a part of the grim underworld of the capital city. Pelle and Proffen takes us into a world characterized by drugs, prostitution, and crime. Through their encounters with characters like Filla and Stein, who reside in a boys' home run by a superintendent involved in criminal activities, Pelle and Proffen are confronted with the harsh realities of Oslo. The story of the movie revolves around Pelle's girlfriend Lena, who disappears without a trace. This sets off a chain of events that challenges the loyalty of the friends and leads them into a threatening world. However, the movie explores not only criminal actions and suspense, but also themes like friendship, love, and youth's quest for identity and meaning portrayed in a chaotic world (Emilsen, 2018). The cityscape of Oslo is continually a side narrative in the film.

The film has become a modern classic due to its authentic exploration of Oslo's urban environment in 1990. It has made a lasting impression on Norwegian audiences and remains relevant today as a window into a bygone era and as an in-depth portrait of the people who lived in it (Emilsen, 2018). As Lefebvere argues, space and society together shape individual identities, and individual identities shape the surrounding space (Kuhlmann, 2013, p. 4-5). I get the feeling that my generation as a young adult is affected by our surroundings in a different way than Pelle and Proffen were in the 1990 movie. With the rise of globalization

and the pervasive influence of the internet, contemporary urban landscapes have witnessed shifts in social norms and values (Curtis, 2016). These changes have, to some extent, fostered a trend towards individualization, altering the dynamics of community and social interactions. Consequently, there appears to be a decreasing emphasis on material wealth among certain segments of society (Gazeres, 2022). Unlike the characters in "Death at Oslo Central," who had to rely on antiquated means of communication to get by, modern people are connected and communicate through a variety of digital platforms, which influences how they interact with each other and how they view urban life.

Given these changes in society, it's relevant to look at how the idea of global cities is developing and their defining characteristics. According to Curtis (2016, p. 31), cities have an impact on our perception of social interactions and urban environments because they are both physical and conceptual entities. This thesis builds on Curtis' theoretical framework of the global city as a conceptual entity, and it is therefore not relevant to assess whether Oslo is a global city or not. However, it is relevant to look at what characterizes a global city as a physical place. As a physical entity, "global city" has no universally accepted definition. Yet, there are recurring traits that often spring to mind when discussing them. Global cities are often associated with terms like cosmopolitan, strong financial centers, powerful business communities, global power centers, famous architecture, large airports, outstanding museums, and a steady stream of tourists. These qualities include not just the tangible and aesthetic but also political and economic stability, as well as cultural life (Simon, 2006, p. 207). Global cities, according to Curtis, are like central hubs in a worldwide network of cities. He also highlights that global cities serve as points where global flows converge - flows of money, people, goods, information, and even diseases and ideas (Curtis, 2016, p. 2). This description of global cities contrasts with the portrayal of Oslo in "Death at Oslo Central".

Oslo in the 1990s does not fit the typical image of a global city. In the film, there is no indication of tourists visiting Oslo, nor are there any major private offices shown. Instead, the film gives the impression that moving to Oslo could lead one into a life of drug-addiction or crime. There is no money, only dirt and a sense of despair. The film paints a gritty and bleak picture of Oslo, far from the bustling and cosmopolitan image associated with global cities. Instead of being a place of opportunity and prosperity, Oslo is depicted as a city riddled with crime, poverty, and social decay. It portrays a darker side of urban life, where individuals struggle to survive amidst the harsh realities of addiction and violence. Why do so many

people long for this? When I write this, it could seem like this film is just sad, but it also shows Oslo as a charming and warm city. I'm not entirely sure where this feeling comes from; perhaps it's because there's something genuine about it, devoid of commercialization. Maybe it's because the film shows that you can hang out in the city without spending money.

Pelle and Proffen are out everywhere, even though the characters still hang out at Burger King as we do today - it feels like the city is more liberated, with fewer rules, surveillance cameras, or security guards. Yet, it could also be a hint of nostalgia or a tendency to idealize the past. Perhaps it can seem like a time when things were simpler in a different way than today. It shows how the city is meant to be used and how the cityscape is filled with grim destinies, but also hope and love. You can relate to the characters. Alleyways are dirty, and all apartments are of poor quality, yet they carry some form of charm. Torshov in Oslo, where the main character Pelle lives with his family, was indeed quite shabby in the 90s, to the extent that you could easily buy a three-bedroom apartment for under 400,000 kroner (Strøm, 2020). This was not limited to Torshov, but applied to many other places in Oslo. Today, this three-bedroom apartment would probably have cost several million kroner. In other words, Torshov was something different than what it is now. The trend of fewer individuals owning an increasing share of wealth is a global phenomenon, particularly pronounced in the Nordic countries, according to Thomas Piketty (Møgster, 2022). This concentration of ownership is so significant that Piketty suggests we are transitioning into a proprietary society (Piketty, 2020).

Curtis (2016, p. x) commonly reference New York, London, and Hong Kong ("Ny-Long-Kong") in his works on global cities. These cities are often cited as examples of global cities due to their significant roles in the global economy, their interconnectedness with international financial and business networks, and their influence on global economic processes (Curtis, 2016, p. x). Curtis use these cities to illustrate the characteristics and dynamics of global cities and how they impact the broader international system. Curtis argues that the concept of "Ny-Lon-Kong" highlights significant challenges to the foundations of the international system and social structures. These changes reveal growing contradictions within the global system. Understanding this transformation requires to see urban changes in the context of global shifts (Curtis, 2016, p. x).

While Oslo may not fit the traditional mold of a global city in the same league as New York, London, or Hong Kong, there are compelling arguments that Oslo also is heading in the same direction. Regardless, it's not essential whether Oslo is considered a global city; the goal is to use Curtis' theoretical framework on global cities to understand how cities undergo transformation. Oslo is one of the cities in Europe that is expanding the quickest and have over 650,000 residents today. The city has a global transportation network, and functions as a national and international center. The change is evident in many aspects of the city, including an increasing number of Michelin restaurants, nightlife, headquarters, festivals, and iconic architecture like the National Opera House on Oslo's waterfront (Oslo commune, n.d.). These changes can be seen at newly built areas in Oslo like Bjørvika and Tjuvholmen. Given Oslo's changing location in the world economy, Oslo fits into a larger pattern in which cities are playing bigger roles as global actors. However, it seems like these transformations not only modifies Oslo's position of power but might also transforms the cityscape. Thus, one can get the sense that newly built areas in Oslo are more "international", completely in contrast to what we see in the movie "Death at Oslo Central". Furthermore, it can be argued that the increased degree of interconnectedness is also due to the deeper and broader integration of global cities into the international system today compared to the 1990s (Curtis, 2016). This phenomenon is not limited to Oslo alone but applies to many other cities around the world.

The English School of International Relations acknowledges that history can uncover certain trends in global politics. The international system has been shaped by history, but thinkers of the English School argue that other possible historical outcomes can also be possible (Linklater & Suganami, 2006, p. 97-98). However, Curtis (2016) stresses the value of recognizing cities in the framework of the international system's historical development. According to him, global cities are created and safeguarded on an international level, reflecting the ideals of a society focused on the market. They represent the emergence of neoliberal values, especially those connected to the hegemony of powerful liberal countries in the latter half of the 20th century (Curtis, 2016, p. xv). Therefore, using Curtis's framework, external factors as well as local ones may have contributed to Oslo's change since the 1990s. As the English School of International Relations recognizes the impact of history on world politics, so too we might see how Oslo's urban environment mirrors historical tendencies and ideological changes. For example, since the 1970s, there has been an open drug scene in Oslo.

Slottsparken (park outside the Norwegian castle) was home to the first open drug scene in Oslo. Later, drugs were purchased and sold at "Plata" outside Oslo Central Station up until 2004. The authorities tried to put an end to "Plata" in 2004. In Oslo, the drug communities have been chased from place to place for fifty years (Olsen, 2020). In "Death at Oslo Central," the drug scene is portrayed in a way that highlights how prevalent it is throughout Oslo. But instead of just being drug addicts, the people in this environment are shown to be people who, like everyone else, need help and support. One character in the movie talks about their six-year battle with addiction and how it took him six years to overcome it, highlighting the struggles these people face and the challenging nature of recovery. This story highlights the complexity of dealing with drug-related problems in urban environments and the need for all-encompassing, compassionate strategies to assist those impacted. However, as "Plata" disappeared and the drug community was displaced from one location to another, Oslo has in recent years shown tendencies of becoming a more global city, where constructing tall buildings with glass facades and market prospects seems to have been prioritized over caring for the people on the ground. While it's difficult to assert a causal relationship, these developments have occurred in a parallel timeline.

Curtis (2016) argues the role of the liberal international order, predominantly under U.S. leadership, has been and still are important for shaping the global order. The values and norms that came with this system contributed to the emergence of global cities. Influenced by factors such as the United States' hegemonic position, its role in consolidating the liberal capitalist world during the Cold War, and its victory over the Soviet Union. It resulted in an era of unipolarity. In the 1970s, as the capitalist global economy was restructured, these geopolitical forces collided, leading to a change from Keynesian embedded liberalism to the rise of neoliberalism. Decentralization, a concept long supported by neoliberal theorists, is being pushed in replace of social structure, as demonstrated by the fall of the Soviet Union at the start of the 1990s (Curtis, 2016, p. 111). The "Death at Oslo Central" presents a snapshot of Oslo roughly at the same time as the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and before the rise of neoliberal thought may have influenced the city.

The Barcode area in Bjørvika (Oslo), with its tall buildings and modern architecture, represents a significant transformation of the cityscape since the 1990's. Barcode is also close to Oslo Central Station, where "Plata" was once a gathering place for the drug scene (Olsen, 2020). This shows a clear contrast between the previous use of the area and the current

development, and can point to how the city has moved towards a more globalized and modern identity with clean and polished architecture and cityscape, where people struggling with addiction may seem unwanted. Although there are many factors shaping cities since the 1990's, this historical factor could have been one of them contributing to Oslo's transformation the past 30 years. According to Harvey, after the fall of the Soviet Union, various states, including both newly formed nations and established social democracies like New Zealand and Norway, have adopted aspects of neoliberal thinking. This adoption has occurred either voluntarily or under external pressures, leading to adjustments in their policies and practices (Harvey, 2007, p. 23).

Neoliberal ideology posits that market competition and mechanisms are the most efficient means of distributing welfare benefits and services, leading to increased collaboration between public institutions and market forces. This collaboration comes in form through processes such as privatization, deregulation, and the expansion of market opportunities (Sager, 2011). Moreover, Curtis argues neoliberalism emphasizes free markets, minimal state intervention, capital mobility, and market-driven competition (Curtis, 2019, p. 6). In essence, neoliberalism may have led to prioritizing profit and market interests over the welfare of individuals in the past years.

Photo: The main characters Pelle and Proffen in the movie "Death at Oslo Central" (1990). Photo: National Library in Norway from article in Budstikka (Hvaal, 2013)

In the image above, which is from one of the scenes in "Death at Oslo Central", you can see some of the rough parts of the 1990's film, such as concrete, old furniture and a dilapidated apartment building that forms a side narrative, that would be harder to find today. The director behind the "Death at Oslo Central", Isaksen, stated that she aimed to show a capital city in transition, by for example highlighting contrasts. The goal was to create a juxtaposition between the old and the new, darkness and light, concrete and children (Strøm, 2020). The contrasts between concrete and children are captured in the picture above. I believe she succeeded in creating a representation of Oslo as rugged and brutal. Perhaps it was the perfect time to do so before Oslo underwent drastic changes in the coming years. After all, this was the time before new areas like Bjørvika and Tjuvholmen in Oslo transformed with tall buildings and modern architecture. In the movie you see many alleys, dilapidated backyards, broken furniture, concrete, drugs, and prostitution. The film's constant grayness and absence of sunshine act as a visual metaphor for the characters' difficult and depressing circumstances. Also, it produces a visual contrast to the idea of cities being vibrant, lively

places. A backyard like the one in the image above will most likely be challenging to find in Oslo today.

Since I was born in the latter half of the 1990s, it's difficult for me to envision how Oslo was during that time. I also wonder if I could miss something I've never seen and if Oslo really was that different in the 1990's. However, having moved to Oslo in 2017, I've come to realize that the city still retains many of those rough and authentic characteristics. Consider Grønland as an example, a neighborhood in central Oslo. Today, the streets are full of color, alleyways, and outdoor seating, and are not just passageways. Grønland gets its rugged character from the markets that line the sidewalks, from the variety of buildings to the historic streets in the areas. It's not like these characteristics have completely vanished during the last 30 years. However, there is a noticeable shift in how Oslo is portrayed in the movie compared to its present-day reality. Perhaps it's because Oslo is gradually evolving in line with the framework as a global city.

As time goes by, cities like Oslo undergo various transformations that are influenced by factors such as urban development, economic, cultural and societal changes. These changes can lead to alterations in the city's identity, landscape and overall atmosphere (Curtis, 2016). For example, the film may depict Oslo with a certain grittiness or urban decay, reflecting the challenges the city faced at the time, such as drug problems or social disparities. Today, however, urban renewal projects, economic growth and changes in social attitudes may have altered the cityscape and led to changes in the city's appearance, infrastructure and social dynamics. These changes can take the form of gentrification, urban revitalization or shifts in the demographic composition of neighborhoods. This does not mean that issues like drugs are not a problem today, but that they appear in a different form than before (Olsen, 2020). Drug activity and other social challenges are often hidden, removed or rebuilt through urban renewal projects, especially in central areas of the city. The police systematically implement measures to reduce the visibility of these issues, with a more reserved approach where they are deemed acceptable, but a more intensive effort where they are not wanted (Hågensen, 2016). It can seem like drug addicts are not compatible with the global city. For example, Paris has been accused of carrying out a form of "social cleansing" by removing drug addicts from the city before the Olympics (Le Monde, 2024).

Lefebvre's theoretical framework offers a lens through which we can view "Death at Oslo Central" representation of Oslo in relation to urban political economy. Lefebvre highlights that capitalist space encompasses more than just economic transactions and includes broader societal and political dimensions, such as the role of the state. This critique is based on a Marxist analysis of political economy (Curtis, 2016, p. 21). The movie's portrayal of Oslo captures the atmosphere of a 1990s city on the verge of more capitalist changes. The unpleasant and desolate setting of "Death at Oslo Central" highlights the overlooked and marginalized factors of urban life, where problems like poverty, crime, and social decay are widespread. These themes are consistent with Lefebvre's focus on the complex relationship between politics and space, showing how larger socio-political forces influence the urban environment (Lefebvre, 1991). We can try to understand the underlying power dynamics and structural injustices that shape urban spaces and how they change over time by placing the movie within Lefebvre's theoretical framework. As such the movie makes viewers painfully aware of how social power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a privileged few, even as inequality keeps getting worse. In addition, the film's depiction implies that everyone who lived in Oslo during this time faced difficulties; the city was impoverished materially but was nevertheless strengthened by ties to friends, family, and love.

Not long ago, I overheard a conversation where someone argued that the "Norwegian Central Bank creates value because they are printing money". The person sharing this was quite dismayed, as "true value creation involves fostering art, culture, and interpersonal relationships. Creating money, on the other hand, simply amounts to creating money", he argued. Similarly, it's as if the newly built parts of Oslo are designed to promote a certain image of value and success, where the tall, polished buildings with glass facades are highlighted - completely contrasting the values emphasized in "Death at Oslo Central" from the 1990s. Today, these buildings often function as headquarters, giving the impression that the people going in and out of them are successful. It's evident that these individuals often have extensive education and likely work in prestigious professions such as law and economics. It seems like hope in today's Oslo is tied to money, international business, and being high up in a building, far above the streets where people walk. In contrast, hope in "Death at Oslo Central" represents community, seeing the best in other people, and helping those in need. I don't mean to imply that those who live or work in the newly built parts of Oslo are doing anything wrong, but these newly built areas send a different signal. When

analyzing the film in the context of Oslo today, notable differences between the portrayed urban environment and the current reality are revealed. These differences can be linked to the developments Curtis (2016) described in his theory about the global city. Curtis highlights the rise of global cities as centers of neoliberal values, which showcase the predominance of strong liberal nations and the significance of market-oriented principles (Curtis, 2016, p. 111). This framework underscores the transformation of urban environments, where economic imperatives may take precedence over social welfare and community well-being. In the next chapter, community will be further addressed through skateboarding and snowboarding.

4.2 Narrative 2: Exploring Subculture: Experiences with Skateboarding and Snowboarding as Communities

Skateboarding and snowboarding have a big community in Oslo today. Since I was eight years old, I've been wakeboarding, which can be explained by being snowboarding on water. At the age of ten, I picked up snowboarding, since I could only wakeboard during the summer, and Norwegian winters are long, snowboarding became my winter alternative. At the same time, I began to skateboard. Snowboarding, wakeboarding and skateboarding became my obsession, using every spare moment outside of school on these activities. I started to become more conscious of my surroundings and started to wonder why things were the way they were. Around the age of 14, I started traveling to compete around the world in both snowboarding and wakeboarding. In wakeboarding, we often traveled to challenged places like the Philippines, Thailand, Mexico, and Argentina. In contrast, we often traveled to richer areas for snowboarding, like the Alps in Switzerland or Aspen in Colorado. The contrasts were big. My experiences from wakeboarding, snowboarding and skateboarding directed me towards social sciences and humanities and has ultimately contributed to shaping this thesis. Traveling, witnessing social inequality, being one of the few girls in a male-dominated sport, seeing glaciers melt – all had an impact on me. It sparked my interest in understanding various perspectives, including through political theory.

After a while, I became aware of the subculture within this community. Being part of the snowboarding and skateboarding culture felt like finding another family. We spent a lot of time together, supporting each other along the way. However, it wasn't without its difficulties. I often felt that other sports were taken more seriously than ours. In high school, I found it unfair that it seemed easier to get away with absences to compete if you were involved in

cross-country skiing, for example. I felt I was prohibited to travel with my sport, while it seemed easier for the cross-country athletes to do the same. It was as if cross-country skiing was considered a more legitimate sport than snowboarding. This led me to switch high schools.

Perhaps the culture still bears the mark of its history. Skateboarding was illegal in Norway for a long time; from 1978 to 1989, it was considered a criminal activity. Norway aimed to protect its citizens from what was perceived as a dangerous product (Jørgensen, 2023). Snowboarding was also prohibited in Norwegian ski resorts until 1985 (Bryhn, Olsen, & Sæle, 2022). When the word "skateboard" first appeared in a Norwegian newspaper in 1965, it was described as a new and unfamiliar activity. Dagbladet's USA correspondent reported on local youth exploring the streets on small boards with roller skate wheels attached. This practice, referred to as "this madness", had spread like a pandemic from California's beaches to the entire USA. The journalist painted a picture of skateboarding as a "hangover sport", often done after parties and in the early morning hours through improvised slalom courses made of empty beer cans, the journalist argued (Helgerud, 2022).

When I told someone in my family about this article and how the perception of skateboarding was back then, they ironically asked me, "Isn't that still the case?" Even though the question was asked in jest, it still reflects a widespread perception of skateboarding and its culture today - which to some extent may also be true. I'll come back to the question of whether I'm romanticizing this. However, perhaps this is some of the reason as a skateboarder and snowboarder you don't always feel you can occupy space in the city. The legislation and cultural perceptions surrounding skateboarding may play a role in shaping the urban landscape, leading to exclusionary practices that limit the presence of skateboarders and other groups, like drug addicts, in public spaces. According to our findings in "The City of Disorder" (I'll come back to this project in the next chapter), Oslo is one of the cities in Europe with the highest density of skate stoppers, which are urban skate obstacles to stop you from skateboarding. Does the contemporary city not desire skateboarders in urban spaces? Why does it still seem like there are factors that are unwelcoming towards skateboarding in the urban landscape?

According to Ahmad, feminism has a profound impact, reaching beyond the intellectual realm. The gut has its own intelligence and is frequently seen as a separate source of intuition.

Within the same setting, the gut may pick up on a hint of discomfort or something not quite right. Examining feelings more closely is necessary to explore this intuition, although feelings can be difficult to put into words (Ahmad, 2017, p. 26-27). Some people might relate to the gut feeling, such as a bad feeling when you don't feel welcome. I can relate to this feeling, particularly in subcultures, where going against the norm can be unpopular among outsiders. Noticing a sense of unease or something feeling off, even if it's hard to explain, can be frustrating. It's important to explore these feelings, even if they can be hard to put into words, to create a more inclusive society. Even if I can't entirely comprehend what others have gone through, it's crucial to have this in mind. Perhaps these emotions might also result from feeling alienated from social systems that put profit ahead of the welfare of the society, which can be affected by the current global order (Klein, 2007). For example, places for skateboarding can become commodified and regulated in a neoliberal capitalist society, where commercial value frequently supersedes social and cultural values. Skateboarders may feel excluded as a result of this, particularly those who defy social standards or cannot afford to engage in marketed parts of the sport (Gazeres, 2022). The combination of social, cultural and economic variables is complex, and so are the emotions that arise from it. Experiencing emotions in urban environments can be hard to comprehend.

Emotions' role in International Relations challenges the idea that emotions and reason are two distinct ideas by highlighting the relationship between the two in decision-making (Koschut, 2020, p. 71). Through my experience with board sports since the age of eight, I have become increasingly aware of the role emotions play in the choices we make. For me, this becomes clear in snowboarding, standing on top of challenging runs with jumps and rails, and felt my heart pounding so hard it feels like it's going to jump out of my chest, and still chose to follow through. Other times I've chosen to withdraw. Another feeling that has affected me is doubt. My snowboard coach always used to say that if I expected to fall, I most likely would. I gradually learned not to rely on doubt, as performing tricks half-heartedly could be dangerous. As the only girl in a male-dominated sport, this has also influenced my choices and mindset. Feminist research has consistently questioned the traditional Western binary thinking that views emotions as the constitutive opposite of "reason" (Åhall, 2018, p. 37). "Emotion/reason, mind/body, and local/global" are included here (Åhall, 2018, p. 37). In snowboarding and skateboarding, the emotional and reasonable are not opposites, but are aspects that continuously interact. If the head doesn't follow the body, and vice versa, when standing on a board, you may injure yourself. The consequences of the choices you make in

snowboarding and skateboarding can be significant, especially due to the extreme nature of these sports. I use this example to underscore my belief in the significance of integrating and understanding emotions in decision-making.

Snowboarding, wakeboarding and skateboarding have taught me to handle emotions and to become more aware of my decisions. As a child, I could be challenging, and sometimes I had a hard time fitting in. I was even withdrawn from both kindergarten and speech therapy because of this. I was constantly looking for something to challenge myself with, and when I started wakeboarding, I finally found a way to channel this urge. Towards the end of elementary school, I switched grade because I didn't feel at home in class, but the change turned out to be positive for me. I had already found my place in the boarding community. Snowboarding and wakeboarding in particular gave me an outlet for my emotions. I've had many conversations with friends in snowboarding about how important it is to have a way to deal with emotions. Without these boarding activities, my life might have taken a different direction. This also emphasizes how valuable skateboarding and snowboarding are in the urban environment, as they may give people a way to find their place and deal with their emotions. As Kenny states we must comprehend how emotions serve as social norms in situations that are always changing (Kenny, 2014, p. 5). While I can only speak to my experiences with wakeboarding, skateboarding and snowboarding, I believe they illustrate the broader potential for individuals to find belonging and emotional fulfillment in various communities.

Public space is defined under "Straffeloven § 10" of Norwegian law. According to legal definitions, a public space is any location meant for broad public passage or where such passage is permitted. This section makes clear that, even in cases where private property is owned and the owner objects to passage, the area in question may still be deemed public if passage does in fact take place there (Elden, 2022). Semi-public spaces are designated areas that bridge the gap between private spaces, such as buildings, and fully public spaces (Orhan, 2022). Aker Brygge in Oslo is one example of a semi-public area. Originally, a space reserved for skateboarders was created by architects. Nevertheless, according to Christophersen (2005, p. 24) locals acted and outlawed skateboarding. Conflicts between various groups can complicate urban governance, as demonstrated by the situation at Aker Brygge. It also emphasizes the fact that a location may not always be open to everyone, even if it is deemed public space by law. The locals' decision to outlaw skateboarding serves as an example of

how property rights in these areas can affect who is allowed to use the semi-public areas and how. In the last narrative (The City of Disorder) I return to issues related to property rights in Oslo.

Lefebvre argues that streets and open public spaces, which are a part of people's daily lives, are the places where resistance is most likely to occur (Christophersen, 2005, p. 51). According to Lefebvre, different scales, from the local to the global, entail various forms of political organization and control (Smith, 1992, p. 72-73). Local, regional, national, and global levels each have their own systems of governance and power dynamics. The political control that Lefebvre refers to is about how different levels of governance and the exercise of power are organized and played out at different geographical scales. Local authorities can have different forms of control over urban spaces and public areas through laws, regulations and physical measures. Global structures and institutions can also have an indirect influence through international agreements, economic relations and cultural influence (Baumgartner & Burns, 1975). Street skateboarding and street snowboarding can be viewed as forms of resistance in the city streets, even if it is not necessarily the intention of the skateboarder or snowboarder themselves.

The finding that Oslo is one of the cities in Europe with the highest occurrence of skate stoppers, urban obstacles designed to stop skateboarders, may signal that skateboarders are not welcome in Oslo. This finding is drawn from an article and discussions with skateboarders in Oslo, as well as confirmation from a representative of the Norwegian Skateboarding Federation, that we did during "The City of Disorder"-project. I also know that on asphalt that is good for skating, one often finds skateboard stoppers, but on asphalt that is so poor that it is not possible to skate on, they are seldom present. This makes it difficult to find good places to skate, but skateboarders do not stop skating for that reason. My impression is that many are driven to continue, as evidenced by the history of skateboarding, where skateboarders are often also kicked out of locations.

I can relate to the feeling of resistance. It makes me feel bad when you're not allowed to be in certain places and when you hear about friends being kicked out of places that is seemingly public, when all we want is to have fun. However, this initial bad feeling often changes in to motivating me to keep going. As Lefebvre suggests, global change can be achieved at local level through social interactions (Smith, 1992, p. 72-73). His notion aligns with the

persistence of skateboarders in the face of urban obstacles. When faced with obstacles like skate stoppers, skateboarders frequently figure out how to adjust and carry on with their practice. This resilience reflects a form of grassroots activism, where individuals reclaim urban spaces for recreational and self-expression purposes. At the same time, the presence of skateboard stoppers can be interpreted as a manifestation of broader power dynamics within the city, where certain groups or activities are not wanted. In this sense, street skateboarding can be seen as not only recreational activities but also acts of resistance against urban hegemony and spatial control due to their ability to challenge and subvert the established norms and regulations imposed upon them.

According to Curtis, comprehending global cities necessitates appreciating their political significance within the framework of an international economy in which they have an impact (Curtis, 2016). As global cities become centers of economic and political power, urban culture, including the snowboard and skateboard community, is affected. Earlier this winter, Schmidt and I made an article named “Snowboarding as a counterculture in the city streets” (2024) (translated from Norwegian) about how street snowboarding, like skateboarding, represents a form of resistance to neoliberalism in the city streets. Snowboarders from all over the world traveled to Oslo this winter to explore the city. They come here to film snowboarding in the streets. Railings and other urban elements are used for tricks, and this activity creates a new dynamic that blends snowboarding, architecture, and city life. Simultaneously, the urban environment witnesses heightened attention from both public authorities and private entities towards augmented surveillance. Moreover, there is a trend towards stricter regulation and control over development and activities within the city (Andersen & Schmidt, 2024).

Photo: Street-snowboarding in Oslo from an article made by Karen Marie Suppras Schmidt and Nora Ulrikke Andersen (Andersen & Schmidt, 2024). Photo: Karen Marie Suppras Schmidt, Oslo. Snowboarder: Simon Houlind

The two images above show an example of street snowboarding and how it interacts with the city environment in Oslo. Left picture there is a fence that is used as a rail. A small jump is built at the start of this rail, so the snowboarder picks up speed and jump onto it. There's often a bit of a mess around the street snowboarding area, as you need to bring equipment such as a spade, snowboards, and snow shovel, as you can see in the right picture. Even if it's not obvious from the pictures, there's often a whole team involved in making this happen. Different people are responsible for snowboarding, filming, photographing, and building the setup. Every year in the fall, various snowboard crews show their street snowboard films with premieres at various venues in Oslo that were filmed the winter before.

Many will associate regulation and control with neoliberalism. Breheny (2017) writes that neoliberalism shapes our surroundings. Neoliberalism, an economic and ideological concept, shapes how modern society functions. While it doesn't refer to a specific group of people, it

embodies a set of influential and often misleading beliefs, Breheny argues (2017, p. 4). These ideas have subtly influenced how we view and address societal problems, often presenting themselves as common sense (Breheny, 2017, p. 4). Its few that identify themselves with the term, but we are all influenced by the core: how the market economy shapes us. Neoliberalism, with its focus on widespread market logic, and shaping of how people see themselves and the world, according to Breheny, doesn't bring positive change. Instead, it benefits a privileged few and maintains social inequality (Breheny, 2017, p. 5).

Snowboarding and skateboarding can serve as forms of resistance to neoliberalism in urban environments in its alternative uses of public space and thereby challenge dominant norms and regulations. By using urban elements like railings and ledges for tricks and maneuvers, participants in these activities subvert traditional notions of how urban spaces should be used. In doing so, they assert their presence and assert their right to the city, despite increased surveillance and regulation by public authorities and private actors (Andersen & Schmidt, 2024). These activities are so popular that snowboarders travel from all over the world to cities like Oslo to participate in them, demonstrating their transnational appeal as a cultural phenomenon. So, in addition to offering opportunities for personal expression and leisure, snowboarding and skateboarding also function as platforms for group resistance against the dominance of urban planning and neoliberal ideas that put private property rights ahead of public use of space.

Street skateboarding and snowboarding allows people of all ages to express themselves athletically in an informal way. Recently, more women have been getting involved, leading to a bigger community of female skateboarder and snowboarders in Oslo. A female snowboarding, skateboarding, and surfing community called "Grlshred". We host combined events for girls of all ages. There weren't many girls who stood on boards when I was younger; most of the time, it was just the boys and me. Over time, as I grew older, I had the chance to hang out with a few girls from different parts of Norway on the weekends. These girls are my closest friends today. It was crucial for me to have these girls by my side so that we could support and encourage one another on the boards.

We hope to achieve a sense of security with Grlshred. Every time the events take place, up to 100 girls register. There are skateboarding events in the summer and snowboarding events in the winter. It appears that girls and women seek like-minded individuals and a sense of

belonging, which I can relate to. You are surrounded by ordinary spaces that provide security; as Nyman (2021) puts it, "security exists everywhere in life" (p. 325). According to Nyman's feminist statement, security also exist in the skate park and on the snowboard hill. "Grlshred" aims to create a safe space where girls and women feel welcomed and empowered to pursue these passions. By trying to create a supportive community, we might help overcome challenges in male-dominated spaces, and therefore creating a more secure place. At least, that's what we hope. For me, other women make me feel safe, especially when I'm skateboarding in urban spaces, which is often male-dominated. I am more dependent on the presence of other women to feel safe than when I am snowboarding. I think this is because I am better at snowboarding than skateboarding. When I'm snowboarding, I often want to ride with the guys because they push me to get better. I also feel confident when friends who are better than me can show me tricks before I do it myself. But when I'm skateboarding, I feel more vulnerable to losing my group or getting distracted. This dependency on others to feel secure is explained by the fact that I have less experience with skateboarding than snowboarding. On a skateboard, I rely more on support and encouragement from others. Grlshred gives me security in a completely different way on a skateboard. All in all, I think confidence in any activity comes from self-assurance and intuition. When you're at a lower skill level, I think a sense of security around you becomes even more important, and that security also can be a feeling. I find this feeling of needing security changing and varying based on experiences.

The fact that Oslo experiences cold weather and a great deal of snow during the winter is obviously contributing to the city's strong snowboarding culture, not to mention that a ski resort is just a short subway ride away. This ski resort is called Tryvann, and is a place I spend a lot of my time. Having spent countless hours in ski resorts over the years, the notion of snowboarding and skiing becoming increasingly exclusive has been on my mind. As a child, I remember buying a hot chocolate for ten kroner at the ski café. However, the offerings at today's café in Tryvann, which include sushi and Italian pizza, are far from inexpensive. I'm concerned that the ski and snowboard cultures are absorbing the global trends that we observe in the city center. While having a wide range of food and facilities is great, I think part of the interest of spending time on the slopes is lost when it gets too upscale and exclusive. In sense, snowboarding and skiing becomes less reachable for everyone. However, it would be naive to argue skateboarding and snowboarding are not driven by capitalist forces too.

Foucault explains that early neoliberals supported markets primarily due to their competitive nature. Foucault further explores the concept, delving into the examination of liberal and neoliberal modes of governance. He particularly emphasizes two variants of neoliberalism: the post-war liberalism as explained by Curtis, and the Chicago School's liberalism (Foucault, 2008; Gazeres, 2022). According to the Chicago School, competition would encourage enterprising people and companies to constantly plan for their own gain (Gazeres, 2022). Consequently, rather than the market meeting individual needs, human actions are judged according to how well they align with the interests of the market (Gazeres, 2022). According to Lowe, modern sports have developed into a multibillion-dollar sector. In addition to bringing in a sizable amount of money, this sector shapes cultural norms and values around competition and identity. This is accomplished by marketing and disseminating brands, icons, and celebrities that represent the appeal of sports and the potential for success for those willing to put in a great deal of work and sacrifice in their pursuit for victory (Gazeres, 2022).

Both skateboarding and snowboarding are now included in the Olympics. As they gain mainstream acceptance and become part of commercialized events like the Olympics, skateboard and snowboard culture undergo transformations influenced by market dynamics as well. Skateboarding and snowboarding may retain their core values as self-expression and community. However, the athletes must negotiate the challenges of corporate interests, media attention, and commercial sponsorship in order to be integrated into such international sporting platforms. It's important to be transparent about the fact that many of my friends within snowboard and skateboard also have different sponsorships, and I am sponsored by a commercial brand myself. And as I said in the introduction, I have also traveled and competed in the past. Although there was never any money to be made from this for me, I can't argue that I am not contributing to these global trends myself.

Despite individual involvement in these global trends, it's essential to engage critically with the broader implications of neoliberalism in contemporary sports culture. At the same time, neoliberalism affects many different aspects. According to Golubchikov (2016, p. 615), neoliberalism also affects consciousness and ways of life. It influences not only economic and political structures but also societal attitudes and individual behaviors. However, Fraser argues that although feminism is being influenced by neoliberalism, and at times also have promoted neoliberal agendas, we cannot cease to be feminists for that reason. Rather we must work to reconcile feminism with the struggle for social and economic justice (Fraser, 2013).

Similarly with skateboarding and snowboarding, although they are affected by neoliberalism, we must still value their core values and work to maintain the culture.

It's also important to discuss the romanticizing of skateboarding and snowboarding. Earlier I mentioned how a newspaper article viewed skateboarding as a "hangover sport" (Helgerud, 2022). This is still an image some people have today, and some may associate both alcohol and drugs with skateboarding and snowboarding. It would be dishonest of me to claim that I am unaware of the potential presence of alcohol and drugs within this community. Still, I don't know if this is more prevalent here than elsewhere in society. I am also aware that some people feel that snowboarders and skaters are not always as inclusive to outsiders, as several people have said that this community can be intimidating, and you feel that you need to have a certain image or style of clothing. I acknowledge this, and it's important to always work to create a safer and more inclusive atmosphere for everyone.

However, I still believe when people get together to skate and snowboard, regardless of age, gender, or background, there's a sense of equality because we all just want to be on a board. As a result, an atmosphere of encouragement and support is often coming to life. Because of its inclusivity, people feel like they belong and are free to be who they are. Or at least that's what I feel. I think the sentiment carries over into urban settings outside of skate parks. The collective identity opposes the individualism that market-driven ideology promotes. Skateboarding might be less influenced by market forces due to its low entry barrier, as all you need to start is a skateboard. With snowboarding, you need to invest in expensive equipment and buy a ski pass. Yet, for many people, snowboarding and skateboarding are lifestyle choices rather than just sports.

When I want to skateboard, I know I can go to the skatepark at Torshov or Lakkegata in Oslo, and I'll often meet other people I know there. There's no need to contact them in advance, because that's usually where people from the community hang out. And it can perhaps be compared to the time before cell phones, when you couldn't actually contact people in advance and had to show up at certain places to connect and interact with others. This promotes a community that is different from the individualism-focused neoliberal principles. I see social cohesiveness and teamwork at the skatepark, which contrasts with the individualistic thinking that is frequently connected to neoliberal ideology (Gazeres, 2022). This local community dynamic is also different from global cities, where there is a constant

flow of people and tourists (Curtis, 2016, p. 2). In such global cities, there is perhaps less chance of meeting your neighbor on the street and creating deeper ties to the local community. Therefore, the skatepark represents an important space for maintaining and strengthening the local community when the city is becoming more "international". It shows how some activities and settings might balance out some of the individualistic impulses that are common in global cities.

In sense, skateboarding, snowboarding intersects with urban space, emphasizing how these sports serve as forms of community building and resistance in Oslo. It explores the historical background of these activities' prohibition and subsequent acceptance, as well as the difficulties they face today in neoliberal urban settings. In addition, grassroots projects like "Grlshred" are emerging to provide inclusive and secure environments for female skateboarders and snowboarders. Snowboarding and skateboarding might provide a platform for personal expression, group identity, and defiance of prevailing laws and conventions in the city.

4.3 Narrative 3: "The City of Disorder": Working for Urban Developers and Reflecting on Power Relations

By examining the transformation of urban spaces in Oslo through the lens of International Relations, I use "The City of Disorder" (Den Skitne Byen) to explore how theorization of the city can provide perspective on the developments in newly developed areas in Oslo since the 1990s. Tjuvholmen, Bjørvika, and Nydalen are three areas in Oslo that have undergone transformation since 1990. These locations were examined as part of a project known as "The City of Disorder" (or "Den Skitne Byen" in Norwegian) (Sweco & Aspelin Ramm, 2023). This project, conducted during the summer, aims to challenge established norms in urban development debates, and involved six students, including me. Each summer Sweco (engineering and architecture consultancy company) and Aspelin Ramm (property developer) hire students to address various issues. As a social scientist, I initially had uncertainties about what to expect and how I could contribute. However, the diversity of our educational backgrounds proved to be a good match for the task. Our team consisted of an architect, a landscape architect, a property developer, an urban planner, a human geographer, and me, representing International Relations. Our task was to create a presentation on how urban grit can positively impact the city, scheduled to be presented in September 2023 during Oslo Urban Week to various stakeholders in the city. The project was a comparative analysis of

Kirseberg in Malmø (Sweden), Kødbyen in Copenhagen (Denmark), and Grønland, Nydalen, Bjørvika and Tjuvholmen in Oslo (Norway). In this narrative the focus is on newly transformed areas in Oslo (Nydalen, Bjørvika and Tjuvholmen), and how they have changed since 1990's.

It is important to point out that both of these companies that employed us and that own "The City of Disorder" are private companies. As private (and also public) companies, they may have their own objectives and interests. However, we as interns have been given both freedom and trust. For the companies, the project may have a complex motivation. It might be a bit naive to think that they don't have a vested interest in this. The companies have taken social responsibility by raising this issue, and perhaps they have done so to show that they are forward-looking etc. In any case, I think it's difficult not to have conflicting interests in today's society. I notice that I myself have conflicts of values quite often, just look at the narrative in the chapter above, where I write about skateboarding, snowboarding and corporate business. I am also contributing to the market economy that I criticize in this thesis. That being said, I've been criticized for having a double standard for working at private companies. However, I believe if you can't work in the private sector and care about sustainability and inclusion at the same time today, that might be problematic as around 2 out of 3 works in the private sector and publicly controlled companies (Berge, 2023).

Photo: From Bjørvika in Oslo, used in the presentation The City of Disorder as one of the newly develop areas (Sweco & Aspelin Ramm, 2023). Photo: Peder Blümlein

In "The City of Disorder" presentation, we challenged the idea of the "clean" city. In the image above, you can see an example of what we mean by a "clean" area. The image is from Barcode in Bjørvika and shows tall, polished buildings with glass facades. We show this image in our presentation "The City of Disorder" where we criticize newly built areas in Oslo. We argue that in this area the focus is on the buildings, not the people. In this setting, Marc Augé's term "non-place" used for generic locations that lack a sense of place can be relevant (Oxford Reference, n.d.). The term is used to describe the increasing homogeneity of global cities. Identity, history, and human relations are not available in "non-places". In the past, "non-places" were confined to shopping centers or retail parks on the outskirts of cities. However, they have proliferated. "Everywhere looks like everywhere else and, as a result, anywhere feels like nowhere in particular" according to Anderson (2020). He argues that in many cities around the world, local architecture is replaced with glass-and-steel buildings, as you can see in the picture above (Anderson, 2020). The criticism of cleaner cities with buildings with polished glass facades is not specific to Oslo alone but seems to apply to many cities around the world.

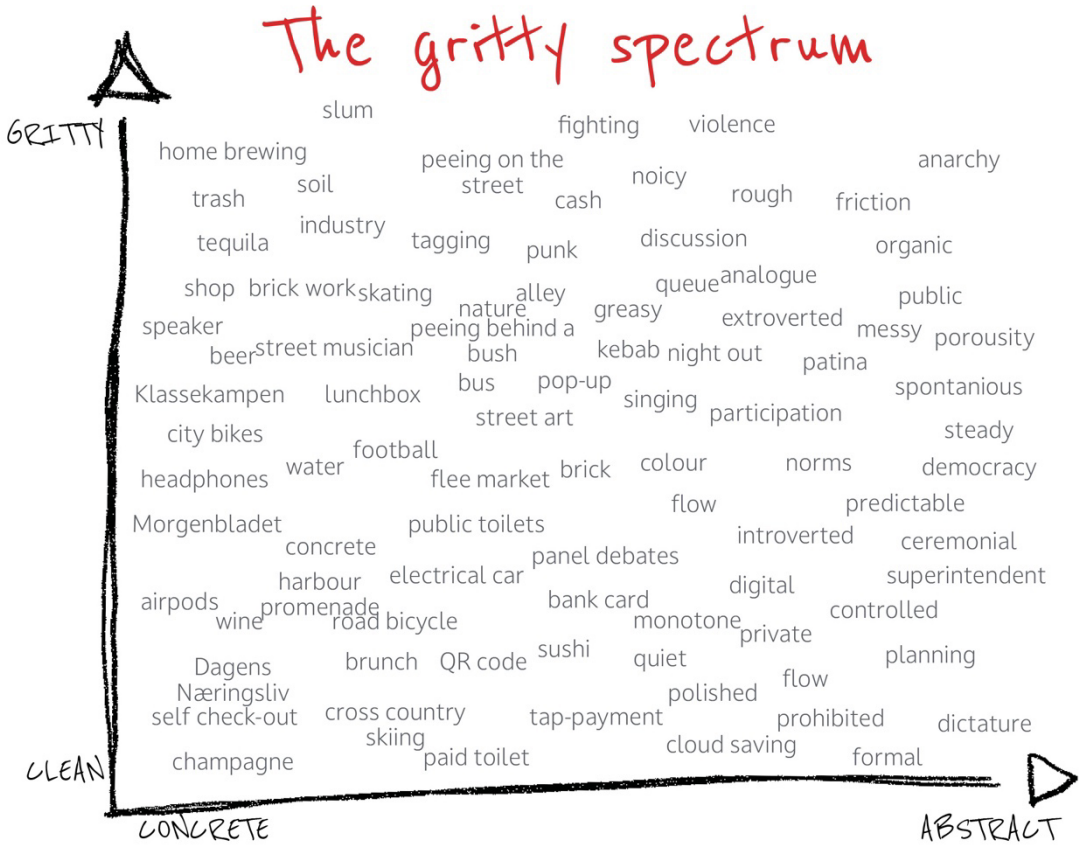
Our aim in “The City of Disorder” was to initiate a debate that elevates this perspective about the “clean” and the “gritty”. We argued that the gritty, earthy qualities are necessary to create a genuine and inspirational city to live in, and that these qualities are missing in the area. The debate about architecture has heated up in recent years, motivating a dispute in the city and the rest of Norway. This debate revolves around claims that the architecture is moving toward modernism, which is something that many find unwanted. A movement called “Arkitekturopprøret” has sparked a conversation and advocates for a return to more traditional architecture (Rygh, 2023). However, in “The City of Disorder,” our point of view wanders from their arguments. We aimed to promote the gritty aspects at both street level and in architectural planning, extending beyond just buildings. We wanted to start a conversation that was comprehensive and make an effort to explain the nuances of the cityscape. We also contend that a city needs to strike a balance between the grittier and the clean. Nonetheless, Oslo has been moving more and more in the direction of the “clean” over the past few years. Here, the terms are employed metaphorically to highlight the cultural and social dimensions of cleanliness and dirtiness in addition to their physical aspects. When translating “Den Skitne Byen” in Norwegian to present to an English audience, we chose “The City of Disorder” because we didn’t feel a direct translation to “The Dirty City” captured the essence. However, it’s important to note that by “disorder,” we don’t mean violence and crime. Our goal with “The City of Disorder” was to promote areas that evoke a sense of belonging in urban spaces. Findings showed that some people feel less belonging when buildings become smooth, polished, and sterile. Personally, I feel alienated in these places. However, there are a lot of people in the Oslo, and our study may not resonate with everyone.

In academia, the clean city can be compared to neoliberal principles (neoliberalism is already explained in narrative one). Scholars interesting in neoliberalism are often engaged in historical origins and conceptual foundations, to understand its economic, moral, and philosophical underpinnings (Hanley, 2015, p. 106). The theories of early intellectuals like Adam Smith, whose writings focus on the significance of economic exchange and its emotional dimensions within capitalist societies, are important to understand neoliberalism. Smith explains how free-market competition promotes social harmony and shapes economic discourse in his 1776 work “The Wealth of Nations.” The Chicago School of economics’ Friedman, among other economists, has found resonance in his emphasis on market mechanisms and economic self-interest. This school supports the fundamental ideas of neoliberalism, which include minimal government involvement and the unrestricted

application of free-market principles (Hanley, 2015, p. 107-108).

Since Curtis argues it is important to try to understand historical lines in order to understand the international system, these thinkers are relevant in this case (Curtis, 2016, p. 87). The perspective of the English School also emphasizes how important shared norms and values are in shaping the dynamics of the global order (Curtis, 2016, p. 28). Neoliberal values can be seen as part of these norms and values that influence how international system develop. This is because neoliberal principles are often promoted as guiding political and economic decisions at both national and international levels. Despite its influence, neoliberalism comes with challenges due to its adaptive and multifaceted nature. Neoliberalism is often characterized as a "parasitic" ideology, continually adapting to diverse cultural contexts and opportunities. As a result, critics would argue scholars have a hard time defining neoliberalism within precise conceptual or geographical boundaries (Hanley, 2015, p. 107). The influence of global economic trends guided by institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) may also contributed to the evolution of Oslo's cityscape (Harvey, 2007, p. 23). Neoliberalism's impact extends beyond physical structures, influencing societal attitudes, behaviors, and mental states, according to Golubchikov (2016, p. 615). In addition, Lico (2001, p. 31) argue about the political and ideological significance of architecture, which emphasizes the nuanced intersection of ideology and urban design in Oslo's transformation. Like the designers behind Oslo's newly constructed areas undoubtedly didn't anticipate the issues these locations confront now, I suppose the early thinkers of neoliberalism saw it as a beneficial force for society as well.

As neoliberalism poses challenges, we found it difficult during the internship to define what we meant by a "clean" city. In an effort to address this, we developed "The Spectrum of Grit." (Sweco & Aspelin Ramm, 2023). The spectrum illustrates that the "clean" and the "gritty" are not a simple black and white picture, but are fluid and dynamic. It's important to note that this spectrum is based on our group's own reflections on what belongs where, and has not undergone any kind of quality control, but it nevertheless conveys our point of view, which is pertinent in this narrative. You can see the image of the spectrum below.



Spectrum: From the English version of The City of Disorder presentation, made during summer internship 2023 (Sweco & Aspelin Ramm, 2023).

On the spectrum (Sweco & Aspelin Ramm, 2023), we have put in words and things we associate with the clean and gritty to varying degrees, and divided it according to our understanding of what are concrete objects and what are more abstract approaches. As an International Relations student, I think it was very interesting to be involved in creating an understanding of how the concrete and abstract can be seen in a context. I think it was particularly interesting that we tried to reconcile this with different forms of government: anarchy, democracy, and dictatorship. Our view of governance is put bluntly, and must be interpreted with a pinch of salt, but is nevertheless an attempt to explain how the physical is connected to the abstract, such as emotions, norms and political tendencies. The perspective of the English school emphasizes how important shared norms and values are in shaping the dynamics of the global order (Curtis, 2016, p. 28). As explained in the theory chapter, Lefebvre discusses three levels of social reality: the macro-level, the mixed/urban level, and the micro/private level (Golubchikov, 2016, p. 611). According to Lefebvre, scale encompasses not only physical size or extent but also social structures and power dynamics,

from local to global (Smith, 1992, p. 72). For example, the spectrum shows how peeing on the street is on the same level as anarchy, and paid toilet is associated with dictature.

For numerous political economists, including Theodor Adorno, Georg Lukács and Max Horkheimer, democratic societies were inherently more totalitarian than those that were openly labeled as such. This is because the methods and means of totalitarianism in the former are usually more covert and less overtly political (Golubchikov, 2016, p. 611). I get the impression that newly constructed parts of Oslo, like Tjuvholmen, Bjørvika, and Nydalen, are less democratic than other places in Oslo when I walk through their streets. It doesn't feel like I can occupy space here, or for example skateboard.

Photo: From a sign in Tjuvholmen in Oslo used in the presentation "The City of Disorder" (Sweco & Aspelin Ramm, 2023). Photo: Peder Blümlein

We discovered a sign in Tjuvholmen during our fieldwork in The City of Disorder, warning that noncompliant behavior could result in expulsion. You can see the picture of the sign above that says, "kindly keep your voice down, conduct contrary to the above regulations may

lead to expulsion from the area". Not only were these guidelines unclear, but it felt weird that Tjuvholmen's residents has posted signs restricting behavior on what seemingly is a public space. This sign did not give me a sense of security; on the contrary, I experienced it more as a threat. What is perceived as a security for some is not necessarily the same for others. As Nyman argues, Security is a part of our daily lives, shaping routine practices and feelings in ordinary spaces. However, security is not universally defined; rather, it is socially situated, varying in how people experience it across different locations and time periods (Nyman, 2021, p. 324). While this sign may create a sense of security for those who live in the area, it may evoke a sense of insecurity for those of us who are visiting. At least it did for me - I simply got a bad feeling about it. Someone also told me that it was the residents themselves who had put up this sign.

In the previous chapter, I touched on semi-public areas and how the residents of Aker Brygge took the initiative to ban a skate park in the area (Christophersen, 2005, p. 25). This case can be compared to Tjuvholmen, where the residents have taken such strong ownership of the area that they themselves decide what is allowed and what is not in what is supposed to be a public space. Tjuvholmen is also a harbor promenade and a popular place for many Oslo residents to enjoy the sea and swim. In many ways, those who live in the area regulate access to a semi-public area by the sea. Municipalities in Norway have historically held a greater portion of the land, and they have maintained that public access in these places should be protected. However, there have been several instances in recent years where developers have owned these common places, such as Tjuvholmen or Aker Brygge in Oslo, turning them into semi-public spaces.

Legally speaking, in Norwegian law, public access is guaranteed in these situations by means other than local government ownership of the property. Comprehensive regulations, a contract with the municipality, or the registration of a declaration on the land are how access is protected (Skar, & Taubøll, 2021). According to Skar & Taubøll (2021), the developer may continue to own the common areas in this fashion, and the municipality can rest easy knowing that the public will always have access to these places. However, I am still left wondering whether the population really has full access and whether these semi-public places are equally democratic. I am aware of numerous friends who have been expelled from Tjuvholmen due to their skateboarding. I was expelled from Bjørvika myself for swimming after 10 pm one

summer evening last year. When I asked the guard why it was not allowed to swim, he replied, “It’s because no one is looking after you”. I couldn’t help but laugh at the irony. Even though I’m 26 years old, Bjørvika seemed to be concerned about my well-being.

During the internship we didn’t explicit look into democratic spaces, but in one of the panel discussions related to “The City of Disorder”, Gro Sandkjær Hanssen brought it up. In her writing about the privatization of urban space, Hanssen provides multiple instances of how private landowners control public gathering places (Hanssen, 2021). Gullhaug torg in Nydalen in Oslo is one instance. The proprietor of that location is enthusiastic about activities that benefits both them and the locals. Cultural events are one example of this. They also state that they do not want any potentially offensive activity. Demonstrations against Norway law, such as the legalization of drugs, or opinions contrary to Palestine and Israel are two examples of what they don’t want (Hanssen, 2021; Andersen, 2022). These rules have not been easy to learn about, and the reason I know about them is because of Hanssen’s studies. I don’t know if the owners of the properties intend to keep these rules secret. Nor is it certain that the owners would have reacted if there had been demonstrations at this location. But it’s still scary to learn about semi-public places restrict freedom of expression in Oslo.

For me, as a young adult in a changing world with pressing challenges, it also affects my sense of where I where I can stand up for myself and others. Thus, where I feel wanted. Friction is essential for progress. According to Curtis, cities are stepping up to offer substitute solutions to regional and global problems as states drift away from their people. Curtis argues states risk developing a democratic deficit. However, it’s crucial to remember that cities neither undermine nor replace state authority (Curtis, 2016, p. 118). While cities get an increasing amount of people and gain power in different ways, it’s important the cities fight for democracy as well as the states. This also applies in form of creating democratic urban spaces (Hanssen, 2021).

Flyvbjerg states: “democracy is not something a society “gets”; democracy must be fought for each and every day in concrete instances, even long after democracy is first constituted in a society” (Kurti, 1998). In the wake of “The City of Disorder”, it has become even clearer to me that democracy cannot be taken for granted. Even though freedom of expression is protected in both the Norwegian constitution and in human rights (Larsen, 2023), it’s not a given that this right carries the most weight when it conflicts with property rights. Property

rights as a special form of prerogative can potentially limit freedom of action and expression in urban spaces. Neoliberalism as capitalism is “inconceivable” without a legal framework, depending on public power, to “guarantee property rights” (Fraser, 2022, p. 12). Fraser regards property rights an intrinsic part of capitalism and off limits to politics: “In capitalism, therefore, the economic is nonpolitical, and the political is non-economic” and “declares … [vast aspects of social life] off limits to democratic decision making, collective action and public control” (Fraser, 2022, p. 121-122). If freedom is regarded as essential to a democracy, property right and freedom must be balanced and be subject to democratic decision making.

Political science has highlighted the complex relationship between urban challenges and local governance (Magnusson, 2014, pp. 1564–1565), which makes it clear that cities are not isolated entities but rather essential parts of broader political systems. In addition to influencing state systems, urbanism, according to Magnusson (2014, pp. 1564–1571), also creates complex environments where various authorities, interests, and activities come together. Furthermore, Magnusson (2015, pp. 91–92) argues that urban living creates political practices by enlisting residents in regular political actions that influence the political climate of the city. Given this knowledge, it is important that participatory processes be included into Oslo’s urban development. These kinds of initiatives, which give citizens the opportunity to actively participate in decision-making processes, have the power to mold communities and promote an inclusive and flexible urban environment. Also, one could consider “The City of Disorder” to be a participatory project itself. Our project, which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods and multiple rounds of interviews, captures citizen involvement.

We presented our project, “The City of Disorder”, at Oslo Urban Week, and subsequently at several other venues. Over the past year, we have shared our findings and ideas with audiences across Norway, reaching over 1000 individuals in various offices and universities. Our presentations have sparked some debate, and we believe the project has struck a chord with the spirit of the age. For me, it might seem to be no coincidence that “The City of Disorder” has garnered significant attention at the same time as “Death at Oslo Central” has returned to the spotlight. This film portrays gritty perspectives, perhaps even excessively at times. Last spring, “Death at Oslo Central” had a theater production at the National Theater. The theaters were packed, and there was extensive media coverage around the production (Nystøy, 2023).

These concepts, which can relate to the authentic and imperfect, appear to be in line with the current cultural zeitgeist. Both “The City of Disorder” and “Death at Oslo Central” focus on the raw and organic aspects of urban life, challenging conventional narratives and provoking discussions about the genuineness of urban experiences. However, it is important to reflect on the possibility of romanticizing disorder in urban environments, especially when presenting projects such as “The City of Disorder” and discussing films as “Death at Oslo Central”. While they can provide valuable insights into the authentic aspects of urban life, it is also important to be aware of the danger of idealizing or aestheticizing what may be experienced as painful or challenging realities for many people. In “The City of Disorder” we want to be careful not to glamorize certain aspects of the “grit”, such as alcohol or drug use, crime, or poverty. We need to be aware that behind the gritty aesthetic there can be complex social and economic challenges that affect people. Therefore, it’s necessary to balance our interest in the “disorder” with an understanding of the realities behind it, and to work towards a more holistic and nuanced representation of the urban experience. In essence, we in “The City of Disorder” believe it’s important to strike a balance between the clean and the gritty. It’s also important to note that there are many people with diverse viewpoints in the cities, and that those who miss these gritty aspects are probably also the ones who look for them and want to learn more about “The City of Disorder” and “Death at Oslo Central”.

In the ongoing dialogue about “The City of Disorder”, there seems to be a general consensus that the increasing “cleanliness” of the city is a concern. When we refer to the “clean,” we mean a city designed down to the smallest detail, resulting in a polished and smooth environment where there’s little room for authenticity and imperfection. On the other hand, the “gritty” does not include actual dirt, such as road dust and litter. It has to do with the essence of the city, its everyday chaos, the natural, and the artistic components that give the city its distinct personality (Andersen, Blümlein, Hansen, Haga, Noren, & Lie, 2023). While most people agree on the importance of keeping the city clean as in free of litter, there’s also an aspect of disorder or “messiness” that resonates with many individuals.

One of the participants in one of the panel discussions we hosted last year gave a good viewpoint: “Hanging a picture on a wall that appears untouched feels somewhat unnatural. However, when there are visible signs of previous use, such as holes or remnants from previous decor, it feels more inviting to personalize the space”. I believe this analogy extends to our urban environment. When everything becomes so “clean” and orderly, I feel

disconnected from using the urban space. It's as if I'm alienated from my own city, and I don't feel like I can take up space. When individuals feel they cannot take up space or express themselves freely in the urban space, it can have negative consequences for democracy in the city. Urban spaces should be inclusive and allow for diverse voices and perspectives, and tolerate contradiction and friction. In "The City of Disorder"-presentation, we mention that in newly developed areas in Oslo, "it's so clean that the dirt has nothing to cling to," and there's something about that statement. It simply doesn't feel entirely human. As humans, we're not perfect - nobody is polished and fresh all the time. Now, I shouldn't speak for everyone, but personally, I don't feel that way. And I understand if the readers of thesis are thinking, "well, of course, you come from a subculture," but I also have a sense that this goes beyond just me. Ironically, I begin the entire presentation in "The City of Disorder" by saying, "I represent the grit in the city." And to be completely honest, I'd rather represent the dirt and gritty than the clean, neoliberal, and capitalist aspects.

Following the several presentations of "The City of Disorder," I started to consider what factors that have influenced this urban change in Oslo. There seems to be a pattern where various stakeholders blame one another, with architects, property developers, and bureaucrats frequently receiving most of the criticism. This industry-wide blame game, in which architects accuse property developers, and so forth, seems rather common. Although there seems to be a widespread belief that Oslo's newly built streets have become overly polished and sterile, there can be disagreements over who is to blame. An architect once said, "Everyone blames the architects, but it's the property developers' fault." At the same time, a property developer asks, "What can we do when we're bound by politics and economics?" I have seen that there are numerous factors that contribute to urban development, and therefore numerous people have played a part. However, blame-game tactics don't seem to work when looking for answers. There is a complex web of shared responsibilities involved in urban development. It's a complicated issue that involves more than just placing blame. Still, in this thesis, I argue international system also matter. I use the English School's perspective, which recognizes the multiple features involved in producing the international system (Curtis, 2016). The international system's leads to shared norms and values (Curtis, 2016, p. 28), such as global political economy, which in turn impact cities. However, all actors involved have responsibility, also local ones.

4.4 Reflecting on City Development and the International System

During economic crises, new political orders can arise (Sharma, 2023). After immersing myself in discussions about how the international system has affected today's Oslo over the past 30 years, I'm left wondering what the future holds for Oslo and other cities and how they'll continue to be impacted by the international system. Curtis (2008) argues that the notion of the international system goes beyond the traditional framework of the current nation-state framework to include historical arrangements like empires, city-states, and multinational companies (p. 15). The English school's viewpoint highlights how crucial common norms and values are in determining how the dynamics of the world order are shaped (Curtis, 2016, p. 28). There are numerous of signs that the world order is about to change. The liberal world order, according to Curtis, is based on the United States' hegemony following the fall of the Soviet Union (Curtis, 2016, p. 111), but with war raging in Ukraine, China emerging as the country's antithesis, and power struggles raging in the Middle East, one can only speculate about what the future holds and how it will once again impact the rapidly expanding cities. How might a new global order manifest itself, and could it usher in a fresh set of standards and beliefs? Is the neoliberal era coming to an end?

In the 1970s, neoliberal concepts were nothing new. Neoliberal thinking goes back to Adam Smith in the late 1700s (Hanley, 2015, p. 107-108). Neoliberalism erred in assuming that politics and markets could be kept fully apart. However, Gerstele highlights neoliberalism as economic policies have an impact on society and politics, even if they promoted the freest markets (Sharma, 2023). He argues in the future there's a need for government intervention in the market to address issues of opportunity, welfare, and economic security is becoming increasingly apparent. It refers to a strategic globalization, one in which countries are able to control the flow of resources, commodities, capital, and supply chains under difficult situations. This is more in line with managed commerce and finance for the benefit of public interest than it is with free trade and financial flows, which was the model of globalization under a neoliberal world (Sharma, 2023). After the economic crisis of 2008, many people had unrealistic hopes that neoliberalism would come to an end, and a new Keynesian system would be put in place. However, it turned out that these expectations were premature. Golubchikov claims this makes the peculiar non-death of neoliberalism not so strange after all (2016). He argues there are simply no longer an alternative vision to an alternative future, or even a future that is different from the never-ending cycle of the present at this point (or side) of history (Golubchikov, 2016, p. 612).

Curtis looks into the future of capitalism, highlighting how the relationship between space and time is affected by the ever-changing impact of communication and information technology within what he calls "the deterritorializing tendencies of a capitalist economic system" (Curtis, 2016, p. 2). It is in urban areas that global networks most clearly demonstrate their strength, resilience and expansion (Curtis, 2016). The next big globalization wave may not be controlled by cities like New York, London, or Oslo, for that matter. On the other hand, non-Western cities may grow in significance. It is difficult to make firm predictions regarding the future international system, and this thesis does not attempt to do so in accordance with The English School theory. However, The English School would argue one can identify new shifts in the conception of global justice. As Hurrell (2020) points out, power is gradually shifting away from Western countries and the international system's resistance to liberal demands is becoming more evident. This development indicates a changing dynamic in the international community, where traditional Western powers may lose their former dominance and other regions or actors take a more central role. At the same time, growing opposition to liberal values and principles shows a developing challenge to the ideas of global justice that have previously been promoted by the West. Lefebvre (1991) states that societies naturally produce distinct spatial places, that again signals larger shifts in societal and power dynamics. Curtis says that what's striking about this, is that the characteristics of global cities, characterized by networks, decentralization, and transnational connections, appear to be at odds with the established spatial arrangements that have long defined the modern world. These include the territorial boundaries of sovereign states and the overarching state system they collectively make (Curtis, 2016, p. 20). This can lead to changes in how we understand and organize societies and power structures on a global level.

Curtis' examination of capitalism's future underscores the profound influence of economic systems on urban landscapes. As he discusses the deterritorializing tendencies of capitalism, it becomes apparent that the traditional notions of space and time are evolving within urban environments (Curtis, 2016, p. 2). However, amidst the global networks and transnational connections characteristic of global cities, there emerges a tension between standardized urbanization and the preservation of local identity and authenticity. This tension is exemplified by "The City of Disorder," which seek to reclaim the gritty, raw essence of urban life in increasing homogenization of "clean cities". Likewise, culture artifact such as "Death at Oslo Central" and subcultures of skateboarding and snowboarding remind us of the

multifaceted nature of urban spaces, in some ways resisting the uniformity imposed by capitalist forces. As global power dynamics shift and non-Western cities rise in prominence, it becomes imperative to recognize the various voices and expressions that contribute to the diversity of urban environments. While these alternatives, like the renaissance of "Death on Oslo Central", lifestyles such as subcultures, and urban planning projects such as "The City of Disorder", may appear insignificant on their own, a multitude of tiny forces may have the ability to partially offset some of capitalism's hegemony. According to Lefebvre, micro-resistance at the local level can have an impact of change at a global level (Smith, 1992, p. 72-73). These movements can also grow into larger, more organized resistance over time. This also demonstrates the importance of keeping people at the center of urban development. For example, today's urban planning may seem to exclude people struggling with addiction, who may be seen as unwanted in the global city. Yet, providing support and space for marginalized individuals, such as those dealing with addiction, is essential for fostering a humane and comprehensive urban environment.

Breheny acknowledges that achieving the end of neoliberalism is not primarily within the domain of architecture. He highlights the specific challenges architecture faces in addressing the socio-economic framework in which architects operates. However, Breheny raises the question of whether architects are passive tools manipulated by neoliberalized private capital, lacking the opportunity to challenge the established order. He argues that if architecture is viewed as having a social purpose and its definition is inclusively framed, it can serve as an integral academic and practical profession with the potential to subvert the current hegemonic order (Breheny, 2017, p. 6). Breheney asks if architecture, when defined with a social purpose, could act as a transformative force (Breheny, 2017, p. 6). His discussion prompts a shift in focus from the macro-level influence of neoliberalism and global cities to the micro-level, showing the potential social role of architecture.

5. Conclusion

This thesis has explored how the international system provides perspectives to describe the development of a city. To investigate this, the thesis has focused on one city, Oslo, and on one individual in this city - me. By applying an urban lens, from Curtis (2016) theory on international system and the conceptual global city to the scale theorized by Lefebvre (Golubchikov, 2016), and two feminist perspectives on security (Nyman, 2021) and emotions

(Åhall, 2018), the thesis has attempted to explore the connection between the city and the personal experience of place. The link between Oslo and myself has been realized using an interpretivist approach.

The study has applied theoretical frameworks to understand what the city is (ontology) and how we can gain knowledge about it (epistemology). The argumentation shows that the international system is reflected in today's Oslo through the city's planning and representation. Neoliberalism characterizes the city through architectural design and infrastructure, leading to an increasingly homogenized urban landscape, that increasingly resemble other cities. The application of the theories shows that Curtis (2016), the English School (Linklater & Suganami, 2006), Lefebvre (Golubchikov, 2016) and feminist (Nyman, 2021; Åhall, 2018) theoretical framework from International Relations can be applied to Oslo. However, it is important to understand that the conceptual global city by Curtis (2016) represents only one aspect of a larger historical urban growth. Lefebvre's theory links the connection between physical space and power, and his idea of totality can be used to understand different levels of social reality (Golubchikov, 2016). Both these frameworks, and the English School provide insight into how the international system affects urban development. However, it is an assumption that lacks documentation that similar findings would apply to other capitalist countries with significant transformation over the past 30 years.

Living in a city affects us in many ways. The study shows that the city's new areas that are characterized by neoliberalism - in addition to ordinary legal regulation in the form of bans on alcohol use in public places - also have an additional dimension in the form of semi-private regulation of what is permitted or undesirable behavior and physical obstacles such as skateboard stoppers and signs that says what is not allowed. Such regulation can be perceived as an extension of private property rights, and is in tension with freedom of action and expression.

A bottom-up perspective, offered by feminism in International Relations, can be used to illuminate the role of the individual in the city, particularly when it comes to security and emotions (Nyman, 2021; Åhall, 2018). The sense of security and belonging was explored through the activities of skateboarding and snowboarding. These activities, although valued by the practitioners, often face resistance, especially in new urban areas. Although

commercial interests can influence the availability of such activities, skateboarders seem to have been resilient to these market forces. Despite the pressures of neoliberal tendencies, the sense of community maintains its importance. I personally experience a sense of security in being part of a community of people who share similar values, thoughts and desires. This can emphasize the need for belonging and security, even in a time of increasing individualization and competition.

The English School demonstrates that changes in values and norms are not solely about power relations but also encompass numerous smaller narratives (Curtis, 2016, p. 28). While international norms and values permeate Oslo, individuals within the city are part of the interstate system (Löwenheim, 2010, p. 1027) and have the capacity to shape societal norms and values. This perspective invites deeper reflection. Lefebvre underscores the potential of local actions to effect change on a global level (Smith, 1992, p. 72-73). For instance, the numerous demonstrations against Israel in Oslo over the past six months concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict exemplify how local political dissent can both mirror and may impact global issues.

The city has changed since the 1990s, and perhaps we have changed with it. Magnusson believes that the ontology of the city, its fundamental essence and existence, is rooted locally but influenced by a global lifestyle (Magnusson, 2014, p. 1561). It may be that our perception of what a city is no longer corresponds to previous perceptions, and that this change reflects the dynamic development of the urban environment. Going forward, a more thorough exploration of the epistemology of cities should perhaps consider multiple dimensions, both local and international. Integrating approaches and theoretical frameworks from disciplines such as International Relations can help provide a more comprehensive perspective on how cities are understood and shaped in today's globalized society.

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Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet
Noregs miljø- og biovitskapelege universitet
Norwegian University of Life Sciences

Postboks 5003
NO-1432 Ås
Norway