Accessing Outdoor Public Space on Campus

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Accessing Outdoor, Public Space on Campus

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Considerable academic work, specifically within the humanities, has sought to explore the role of place and place-making in the construction of individual and group meaning. Some of geography's key contemporary contributions to the study of place have emphasized its processual, open, material, power-laden, and relational qualities. While the degree to which individuals control their movement, connection to, and position within the network of power in place remains contested across the field of place-theory, it has become consensus that human interactional processes are principal contributors to the creation of meaning and affect in place. Opening up understandings of place to include this material existence of bodies, and the lived/affective experiences that accompany them, allow for a more grounded interpretation of place.

For the purpose of this study, I want to draw attention to the impact of *accessibility* and its role in the use of outdoor space; a seminal and foundational site through which opportunities for sense of place can be realized, and as influential in enabling place-making processes. Though notions of access to both space and place are readily explored in text, accounts often emphasize access, or lack there of, in relation to the ableness of bodies; to social, racial, and class mobility. I hope to extend some of these discussions of power relations while emphasizing access in the context of student-institutional relations, and the influence of access in mediating relationships *between* these bodies. Consequently, this study is primarily concerned with the ways in which various student-led groups/organizations at the University of British Columbia (UBC) access, experience, and thus negotiate outdoor, public space on the Vancouver campus. A complimentary aim of the study is to explore how varying group practices reveal the impact of accessibility on the promotion of place-making and the construction of student community and wellbeing. These considerations and nuanced intersections between place, access, and community are particularly significant because, "to feel connected to place is to experience a sense of belonging in place that itself generates resources of immense value in the promotion of health and wellbeing" (Duff, 2010, p. 893). This suggests a direct stake for universities (in general) to invest in understandings of place and place-making, particularly from the students' perspective.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Quality of Place

What is 'place'? In it's simplest form, place can be defined as a material space made meaningful by the lived and felt experiences of people. 'Materiality'

refers to the physicality of the setting, or the concrete, a concept synonymous with what geographer John Agnew (1987) refers to as *locale*. He has developed a three-part matrix that underscores the dynamic nature of place by outlining the intersection between *locale*; *location*, a particular geography; and *sense of place*, which denotes the subjective attachment and meaning that people associate with places (Agnew, 1987). 'Sense of place' is thus congruent with the fluid process by which "undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (Tuan, 1977, p. 6). On the one hand, the ways in which we acquaint ourselves with space, by which we experience, contribute, and attribute value and affect to the spaces around us, reveal our human capacity to *produce* meaning (Cresswell, 2004, p. 7). On the other hand, the affect and meaning generated in place is also involved in the (re)production of place itself. This is to say that place plays a unique role in evoking affective response, revealing our supplementary capacity to also *consume* meaning: "just as bodies affect one another *in place*, bodies are inevitably affected *by place*" (Duff, 2010, p. 881). The act of place-making is thus constuitive of this mutually reinforcing duality between the production and consumption of meaning in space.

Place-making, the active role of bodies in the production and consumption of place, is a fluid and interactive process (Bennett, 2014). Meaning is not fixed or bounded, but constantly in production. After all, we never leave a place in the exact way we found it. For Doreen Massey (2006), space - and place - are "always in process; it is never finished; never a completed holism" (p. 90). The processes she speaks of are often those negotiated on a daily basis through our everyday reiterative practices (Godkin, 1980, p. 38). To many, the rhythm of the everyday goes unnoticed; embodying what David Seamon deems the natural attitude, or the "unquestioned acceptance of things and experience of daily living" (Godkin, 1980, p. 149). However, as mundane as they may seem, routine performances are symbolic of "idiosyncratic experiences of place" (Duff, 2010, p. 883). Walking to and from class, an example of a student's routine practice, indeed represents the transitory quality of place, a coming or going (Kenney and Dumont, 2005, p. 74). While walking is characteristic of place, the act also informs place: "the chorus of idle footsteps…their swarming mass an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together" (Michel de Certeau in Duff, 2010).

Lets look at a few other common examples from a university students' perspective. Student A commutes to campus to walk 1 of 3 pre-established routes to the same building every Monday, Wednesday, Friday for her 10am class. Student B saves up what disposable income he has left to treat himself to lunch at

his favorite cafe at the end of every week. Student C swims in the mornings before her shift supervising at the campus pool, etc. etc. These specific spatial practices and routines render certain spaces --and in this case campus spaces-- familiar and navigable to each individual student. Space provides an axis for knowing and ordering the world, an epistemology. However, such experiences are also indicative of an ontology, a way of being in the world. The latter interpretation of place is what Tim Cresswell has broadly characterized as the phenomenological approach to analyzing place (see below). This ontological perspective is "to unbury and describe this given-ness, of which people usually lose sight of because of the mundaneness and taken-for-grantedness of their everyday life situation" (Godkin, 1980, p. 149).

1.2. Approaches to Studying 'Place'

The concept of 'place' has been widely explored (and contested) within the discipline of geography. Throughout the scholarship, place is represented as having both objective and subjective meanings. In *Place: A short introduction*, Tim Cresswell (2004) unpacks these meanings by classifying 3 distinct and historically emergent approaches to understanding the nature and scale/scope of place. Following a brief introduction, each approach will be applied to a common example of UBC in order to illustrate its relevance.

Of its earliest and applied interpretations, 'place' was at first concerned with particularity and "qualitative specifities" of distinct regions (Castree, 2004, p. 185). This has since been referred to as the **ideographic approach** to understanding place, which gained credence with the study of regional geography. If we are to analyze the UBC Vancouver campus as 'place' from an ideographic perspective, we would be most interested in describing what makes it unique. Perhaps we might consider the hybrid outdoor-urban campus experience that is afforded by the neighboring city of Vancouver and peninsula which bounds the campus on three sides by water and the fourth by a large regional park. Additionally, we might ask how the presence of a substantial commuting population, sustainability values and regulations, and indigenous history differentiate UBC's campus from other academic institutions.

In contrast, the **phenomenological approach** to studying place, mobilized largely by the humanist school of thought (see Yi-Fu Tuan, Anne Buttimer, David Seamon, and Edward Relph) acknowledges place as something much more subjective and experiential, and as "part of the human condition" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 20). From this perspective, and in contrast to the previous, place is more intimately tied to a way of being in, seeing, knowing, and understanding the world (Cresswell, 2004, p. 11). The humanist perspective

grounds the notion of place in the human experience, highlighting the relationship and "affective bond" that forms between people and place (Cresswell, 2004, p. 20). Milligan (1998) further articulates this emotional bonding and "direct relationship with a specific piece of the built environment" as 'place attachment' (p. 6). Our affective attachment to place reconfirms its role as a platform for the development of an individual and group's sense of belonging, identity, and community (Godkin, 1980, p. 38-74). This affective tone is what underwrites much of students' attachment to their place of study, to their campus. If we return to the example, UBC would not necessarily be observed as unique because of it's material or demographic characteristics, but as home to a mosaic of places in which different people have formed deep and primal connections to their surroundings.

Furthermore, the third approach departs from the former two by analyzing place as it relates to the construction of social/economic/political conditions. The **social constructivist approach** to studying place is inherently more political in nature and tone, and has been undertaken/explored by many Marxist, feminist and post-structuralist geographers (see Nigel Thrift, David Harvey, Doreen Massey, Judith Butler, Neil Smith) (Cresswell, 2004, p. 51). To Butler (2011), for example, place is socially produced and performed through language, metaphor, and assembly. These powerful agents play a key role in the social construction and animation of place, "[reconfiguring] the materiality of public space, [to] produce, or reproduce, the public character of that material environment" (p. 1). To Neil Smith, the production of place reflects the processes that establish boundaries and "partitioned" geographies "between location and sites of experience" (Bird, 1993, p. 99-101). At a modern corporate institution like UBC, the social constructivist would question the powerful decision-making bodies that regulate, determine, reconfigure, and maintain the assembly and literal and figurative architecture of place.

It is important to note that while these three conceptualizations of place diverge in approach, each is not necessarily exclusive of one another, or even yet, circumscribed by disciplinary boundaries. In addition to human geography, the concept of place as outlined above, borrows from theoretical writings in philosophy, sociology, anthropology, urban design/planning, architecture and the like. For example, the study of place is a fundamental component in the design of spaces, particularly urban centers and university campuses, as explored in *Mission and Place* (2005). In their book, Kenney and Dumont (2005) highlight a variety of design characteristics and principles that have influenced the construction of college campuses across America. Notions of density, mixed-use facilities, and other architectural components and influencers that impact spaces for interaction, have not only been informed by considerations of place and place-making but continue

to inform the subject in turn. However, if the design of college campuses is any indication, we must remain critical of the architect/designer's tendency to privilege the built environment and the physicality of spaces (buildings, landscape, paths, parking lots, fountains). Surely, the functionality and aesthetic of space is important, but place is certainly not made meaningful by appealing architecture alone as we have seen, and as we will further see, it is made meaningful by people.

1.3. From Theory Towards Practice

For the purpose of this study, which is interested in accessibility but also in grounded connection, let us reconcile some of the key components and areas of overlap in the varying interpretations of place. At the risk of narrowing the focus to purely subjective experiences of place, as phenomenological approaches have been criticized, it would be useful to operationalize the subjective and ontological as a *foundation* for understanding larger social constructions and politics of place. Space and sense of place are telling of one's overall wellbeing, but also very revealing of structures of power. It is precisely "because place is so primal to human existence that it becomes such a powerful political force in its socially constructed forms" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 50). If we can begin to understand the deep connection that students have to their place of study, to their unique campus, and particularly how these relationships encourage a sense of belonging, identity, community and wellbeing, then we can begin to understand what happens when they are no longer available or accessible, "when the fundamental values associated with any of these levels of experience are threatened" (Godkin, 1980, p. 167).

Within the pan discussion of campus community, UBC's school newspaper the Ubyssey has made efforts to highlight discontented relationships between the institutional body and the student body. The Ubyssey recently published a 5-part spread in the October 2015 issue titled *Whose Campus?* which detailed mounting tuition increases, "barriers to campus fun,"
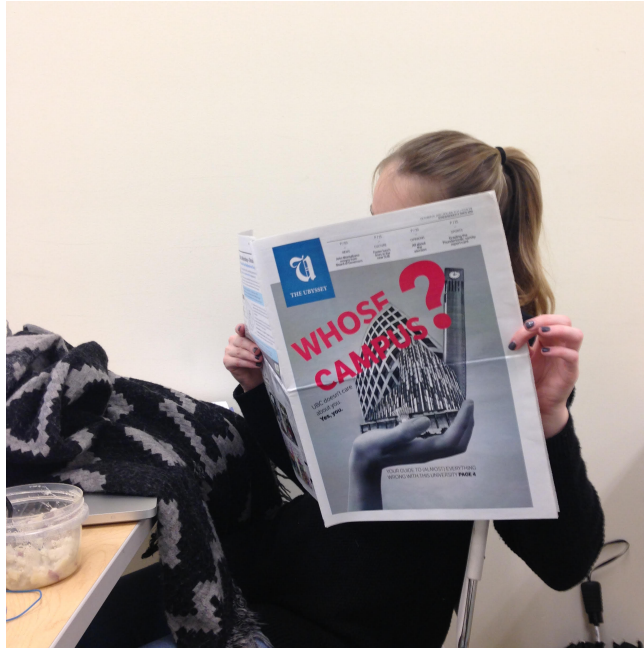
Figure 1: A student reading the Ubyssey's "Whose Campus?" series (2015)

corporatization and commercialization of university life, and Administrative pressures, all from the students' point of view. In response to the backlash, one student turned to Facebook: "the tuition increases, housing hikes, and continuous suppression of creative student space all point to a university of privilege, not opportunity…" (Dee, 2015). While the newspaper issue might have been released over the timely course of this research project, frustrated student sentiment has been growing over the past few semesters. Last year, the IAmAStudent movement swept campus as students protested the rising costs of tuition. Growing construction on campus, another perceived barrier (albeit a physical one) was also met with discontent from many students (Kautz, 2012) This was particularly the case when new development plans threatened the survival of the annual outdoor Welcome Back BBQ in 2014, a physical manifestation of UBC community which is focused on bringing people together (Vranic, 2014). In the 'Whose Campus?' (2015) series, Robert Morton, co-founder of a social collective on campus theCalendar, writes: "you don't need to be a student at UBC Vancouver for very long to feel the lack of community engagement on campus." Many others, as expressed in articles following, agree that such conditions are connected to a lack of access to Administrative approval, funding, resources, and ultimately support from their University. Thus, the social constructivist view/approach to place ultimately reminds us of our stake in protecting, but also challenging spaces that we deem meaningful (Massey, 1993). By beginning to uncover the geometries of power, and ultimately "by taking space and place seriously [,] we can provide

another tool to demystify and understand the forces that effect and manipulate our everyday lives" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 27).

2. Methodology

2.1. Introduction

The study was conducted at the University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus. The project seeks to outline the implications of access to outdoor, public spaces on campus for student groups/organizations. The "public realm" (UBC Campus and Community Planning's term for outdoor, public space) may geographically bind outdoor space to a set of points on a campus map, the experiences that take place within its boundaries are not to be reduced to such an expression. These student experiences extend far beyond a physical geography of fixed coordinates, conjuring up a lived, affected, and "relational experience of a feeling body/subject" (Duff, 2010, p. 885).

Student participants were selected based on their direct involvement with a student-led group or organization on campus, specifically because these groups actively contribute to place and facilitate place-making processes within the wider UBC community. The study adopted a mixed method approach, utilizing both an online survey component, followed by a series of smaller focus groups. While the survey questionnaire ensured that a larger data set could be analyzed quantitatively (by providing structure through closed-ended questions), the guided, yet open-ended focus group discussions offered a more thorough and qualitative examination of experiences, feelings, and opinions related to student access to public space (Kitchin and Tate, 2000, p. 213). The focus group interviews were used to verify, compliment, and broaden the coverage of the survey. In order to analyze the data from both the survey and focus group responses, surveys were completed on an online survey-platform tool to enable comparative analysis, and focus groups were audio-recorded and supplemented with written notes.

2.2. Participants

The sampling strategy involved targeting the portion of the UBC undergraduate student population who were not only involved with a student- led group/organization, but also specifically those members who held an executive function within the group as to ensure an overarching knowledge of group use and access to outdoor space. The sampling criteria further included targeting those groups/organizations whose central activities are: primarily run by students; based out of the Vancouver campus; and those that utilize public, outdoor spaces to conduct/host activities and events in order to create opportunity for student

participation. A total of 16 unique groups participated in the study, including: Undergraduate constituencies, varying student-run clubs, miscellaneous student groups/organizations, and University supported programming (see Figure 1). The sample population represented students across all Faculties, however, 71% of participants were in their 4th year or beyond, while the remaining 29% was representative of 2nd and 3rd year students.

Name and Type of Student Group	Number of Participants Represented in Survey	Student Group Represented in Focus Group
Undergraduate Student Government		
Arts Undergraduate Society (AUS)	2	
Land and Food Systems Undergraduate Society (LFSUS)	2	
Engineering Undergraduate Society (EUS)	1	✓
Alma Mater Society (AMS)	1	
Clubs		
Ski and Board Club	2	✓
Common Energy	2	✓
Slackline UBC	1	
University Supported Programming		
UBC Recreational Intramurals (REC)	3	
UBC Student Leadership Conference (SLC)	6	✓
UBC Orientations	1	
UBC Intercultural Alliance	9	
Miscellaneous		
theCalendar	1	✓
Generocksity	1	
BikeRave	1	✓
UBC Faculty Cup	1	
Gamma Phi Beta Sorority	1	

Figure 1- Participant details

The study was interested in the unique experiences of student groups/organizations in particular because their perception of, and encounter with access is qualitatively different than that of staff, faculty, and individual students. Additionally, while a variety of different University-affiliated student groups and organizations took part in the study, an effort was made to prioritize the participation of those groups who actively use outdoor, public spaces for animation activities as opposed to those who primarily use the space for promotional purposes (only to conduct activity/event *outside* of the public realm).

Overall, 35 students participated in the study, representing a total of 16 unique student-run groups/organizations. All 35 individuals completed an online survey, and 5 participants, each representative of a different student group, were additionally enrolled in 1 of 2 follow-up focus groups (see Figure 1). The low enrollment in the focus groups was primarily due to the busy nature of student schedules, but despite this, many of the focus group responses were corresponsive with the questions from the survey. The study was formally incentivized through an offering of $5 compensation.

2.3. Procedure and Measures
A) Survey Questionnaire

Each online survey was completed on an electronic device via. the UBC-administered surveying tool. While I administered some surveys in-person, most were completed in my absence on the participants' own time. The survey was an appropriate way to effectively engage participants at the lowest time commitment possible due to the busy class schedules of many students. Each survey averaged a completion time of 5-10 minutes. The data collection period for the survey spanned from October 16- November 10, 2015.

The survey questions were two-fold, combining 13 structured multiple-choice questions, and 3 loosely structured open-ended questions where participants were free to voice their opinions, concerns, or responses to the topic. The introductory questions gathered basic information about each participant, including; date of survey completion, Faculty, year level, name of group/organization, number of years involved in group/organization, and specific role within that group/organization. This preliminary stage was followed by a set of multiple choice and short answer behavior-based questions aimed at detecting the student group/organization's particular use of outdoor, public space. The survey concluded with 3 open-ended questions aimed at surveying participants' attitudes towards both the access and experience of these spaces, and whether or not the available outdoor spaces on campus contributed, if at all, to the group/organization's overall sense of belonging, wellbeing, and community.

B) Focus Group

Focus groups were the preferred method to compliment the survey because of their ability to engage multiple people in conversation. As opposed to single interviews, the focus groups enabled student participants to discuss their mutual and shared experiences of access and use of the same spaces. The discussion-

based method provided a unique chance for participants to discuss issues in which they agree on.

Students who indicated a preference for participation in the study (via the survey) were then contacted through email to enroll in a small focus group. Each focus group participant represented a different student group/organization in order to increase the potential for a varied representation of experience. The 5 participants spoke on behalf of their experiences with Common Energy, theCalendar, UBC Engineering Undergraduate Society, the Ski and Board Club, and one student who spoke on behalf of both the Bike Rave and the UBC Student Leadership Conference (see again Figure 1). Participants were informed that the 1-hour focus group would involve approximately 3-5 participants engaging deeper with some of the questions posed on the survey. The focus groups provided an opportunity for in-person discussion centered on opinions, experiences, and attitudes regarding student access to public space. I began both focus group sessions by reiterating research objectives, outlining the structure of the session, and having participants complete the consent forms. I then guided the conversation based on a rough outline, but primarily let individual participants dictate its direction in order to maximize the flow of response. Discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed using interpretative analysis (Kitchin and Tate, 2000, p. 229-252).

What proceeded was a series of responses that sketched out participants' personal interaction with the processes and experiences of accessing outdoor, public spaces; the extent to which they felt like this level of access promoted belonging and community within their group; some of the tangible factors and processes informing these considerations; and finally, a list of recommendations (relating to communications, transparency, physical access, and support) that they felt like would address and enhance access. The discussion was ended with a map exercise that prompted participants to demarcate, on a print out version of the UBC Vancouver campus, the spaces utilized by their particular group (see Figure 4 below). In addition to measuring which spaces were popular/used in general, the public realm boundaries, as defined by Campus and Community Planning, were intentionally left off of the map in order to also gage how participants viewed and interpreted the meaning of "outdoor, public space." The map exercise was inspired by Dillabough and Kennelly's (2010) "spatial ethnography" methodology, as deployed in their *Lost in Youth* study, which attempted to highlight the spatial experience of marginalized youth living in urban centers by using maps to signal personal accounts of specific urban spaces.

3. Findings

The results from both the survey and focus group indicate important patterns relating to the perceived access and experience of outdoor spaces on campus. What follows is a discussion of the main findings from the survey and focus groups. In order to minimize a misinterpretation of the following findings, it is important to note that the analysis of survey responses is concerned with the distribution of responses amongst the 16 unique groups, as opposed to responses from the total 35 individuals who represent those groups. Many of the emergent themes in the focus group discussions illuminated opinions shared in the open-ended survey responses. The results have been thematically categorized based on participants': (1) use of space, (2) perception of group access, (3) perceived group reputation, and (4) experience of space as related to the construction of student community and wellbeing.
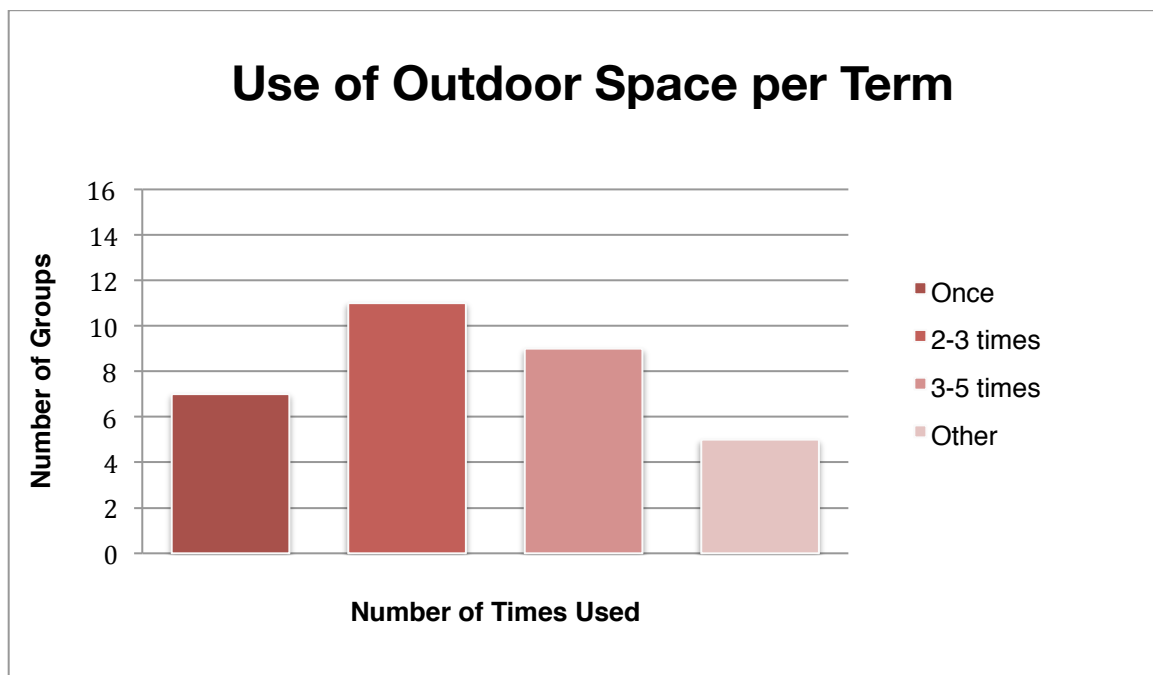
3.1. General Use of Space

Figure 2- The graph details the responses to the question: "describe how often your group uses outdoor spaces for group-related activity"

Outdoor campus space not only embodies the choreography and simultaneity of individual students and of individual significances, but also the distinguishable presence of student *groups,* whose use of space is based on a variety of different types of activities. Thus, a starting point for examining the role of group access to outdoor space, in addition to the affective measures of place,

community and wellbeing, begins first with an examination of how groups are utilizing space more generally. While nearly all groups indicated use of outdoor spaces for group-related activity in the survey, the majority of this use involves **hosting group activities and events** and **promoting future events.** For student group theCalendar, outdoor space is considered crucial for promoting their events, but also as a "platform for engaging the campus." The specific types of activities hosted by groups proved primarily **large-scale**, **pop-up/spontaneous**, and those related to **sports** (see Figure 2). The nature of EUS's pop-up events, for instance, are often outdoor BBQ's: "it just makes peoples days better, when they can walk along Main Mall and see the BBQ, and pick up some food as opposed to going anywhere else on campus…" (Respondent 3 in focus group 1).
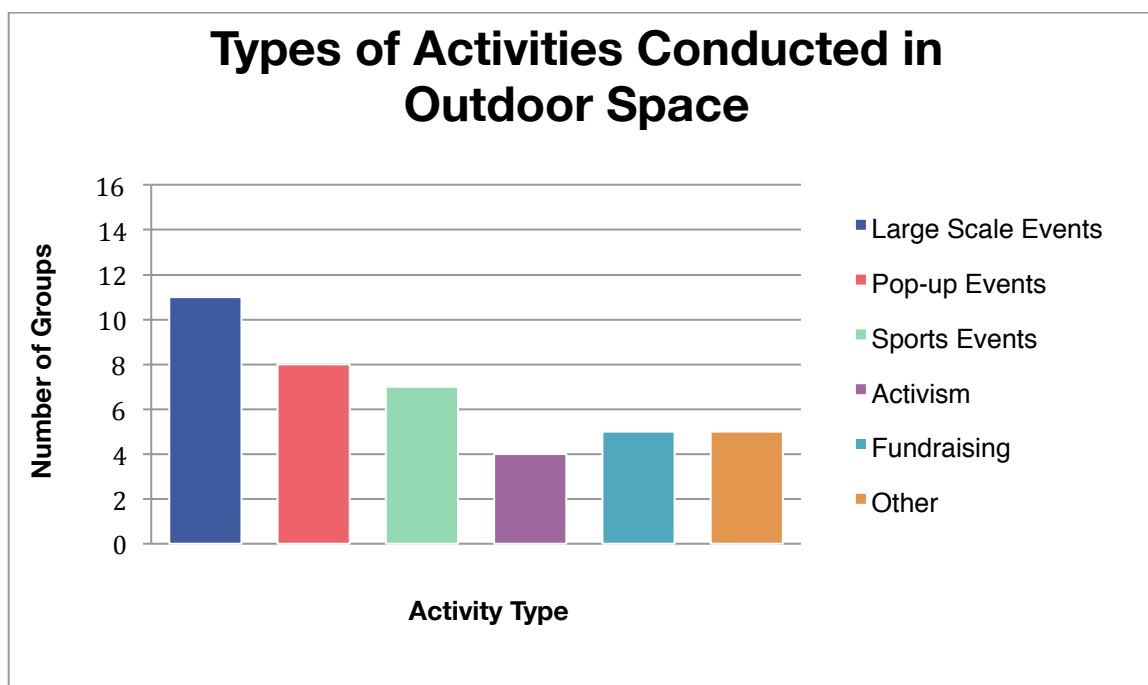

Figure 3- Distribution of survey responses to the question: "what types of activities are you using public space? Check all that apply"

These themes further encapsulate other notorious outdoor campus events and programming at UBC, including: the UBC Ski and Board Rail Jam, theCalendar's Polar Bear swim and pop-up Main Mall snowball fight, UBC Slackline members slack-lining outside of the old Student Union Building, UBC REC's triathlon event Storm the Wall, seasonal Faculty constituency outdoor games, and Common Energy's Waste Audit, to name a few.

In order to visually represent this use of outdoor, public space each participant in the focus group was asked to mark the spaces his or her group

utilized for group activity. Based on each participant's markings, almost all of the public space was denoted in some way. This indicates that each of the 5 student groups represented in the focus group use this space, but also have an understanding of its boundaries. When cross-referencing the overhead map produced from the map exercise (see Figure 1) with the original Campus and Community Planning map (demarcated with public realm boundaries), it is clear that outdoor, public space is extensively used. As indicated by the map, groups utilize outdoor spaces spanning from the southern tip of Main Mall at Thunderbird Crescent, along its main artery to the Rose Garden. Although not specifically referenced on the single consolidated map, popular spaces among the groups included: Koerner Plaza outside the Walter C. Koerner Library, the stretch of Main Mall between University Boulevard and Memorial Road, and the space outside of the UBC Bookstore.
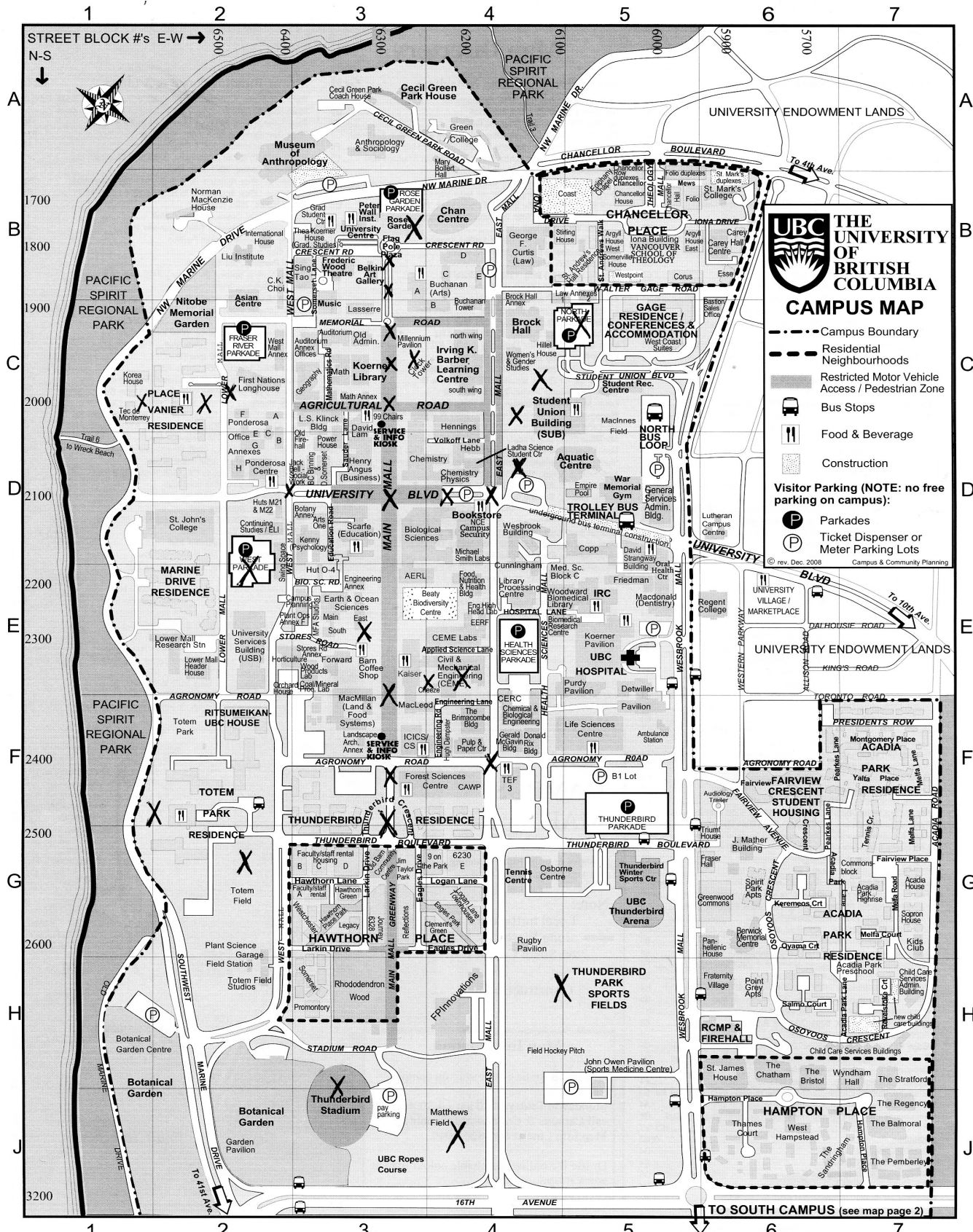
Figure 4- Consolidated map from focus group map exercise, each "x" representing an area of outdoor campus space used by the 5 participating student groups/organizations.

3.2. Group Access

Out of 16 groups, at least 1 member from 5 unique groups indicated that the process of obtaining access to outdoor, public space was "simple" or "relatively simple." The majority of these students individually attributed this apparent ease to having **established a rapport with Staff members**, who were either directly connected to Campus and Community Planning, or because of their standing within the University, had ready access to other staff members on campus. 2 focus group respondents that had formal Staff support were also aware of this trend: "if we're not getting anywhere quick enough, if we get a UBC staff member to send a message to whoever they need to send to, response times are all of a sudden really fast." This kind of access is certainly privileged, representing the power of some groups' ability to use space over others. Opinions on level of group access were divided for the remaining survey responses. An additional 5 groups felt that the process of accessing space was "intermediate," and another 7 groups cited that it was either "relatively difficult," or "frustrating."

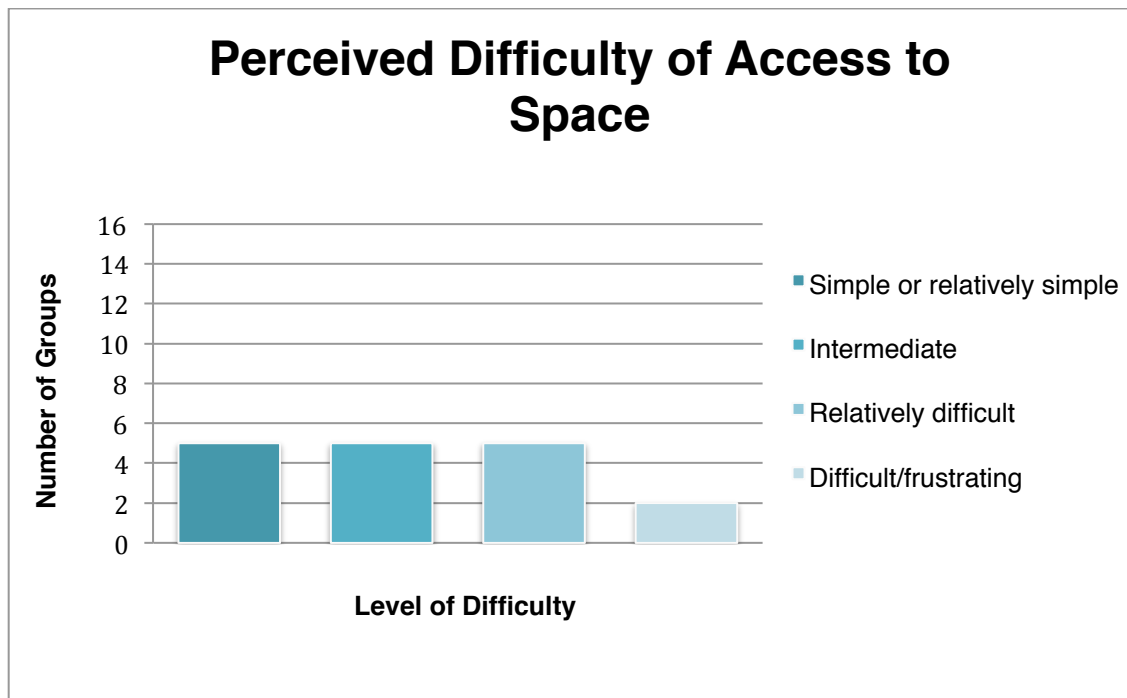**Perceived Difficulty of Access to Space**

Figure 5- Distribution of survey responses when asked to "describe what the process has been like for your student group/organization to access outdoor spaces on campus"

However, these perceived difficulties were not necessarily attributed to a *lack* of Staff connection, but rather **procedural** and/or **communications** related factors, such as: (1) the lengthily and uncoordinated booking process required to obtain access to space, (2) a lack of accessible contact information, and (3) the

ambiguous guidelines surrounding permission and use of space more generally. Each will be discussed below.

(1) Booking Process

Both survey and focus group respondents most frequently referenced the "timely" booking process as impeding their group's access to space. Long-response times associated with booking outdoor space was seen as incompatible with the timing and organization of student-led events. "The problem has always been timing" and "the forms can take quite a long time to fill out, and the response time has always been very slow" said one respondent in the focus group. Respondent 1 in the first focus group also claimed that in her experience, defaulting to a "don't ask for permission, ask for forgiveness" mentality, in the absence of a perceived lack of support from staff, ensured the operation of her group's outdoor events:

> We've always kind of gone with the theory […] we've always just been afraid because of our other experiences booking things around campus. If we ask for permission, are we going to get shut down? Let's just do it and hope that we'll be ok.

Students view slow scheduling and response-times as impacting both the promotion and in some cases, occurrence of the student-led event itself. The lack of assurance when booking an outdoor space has subsequent impacts on the Ski and Board Club' relations with sponsors, for instance. One executive member claimed that their image was damaged because they were unable to know with certainty if they could proceed with their plans. Respondent 4 from the focus group similarly felt that poor coordination and timing on behalf of the booking process impeded his group's ability to promote their group event: "I didn't feel like [Campus and Community Planning] understood the urgency on our part to get the event organized so that we could promote it." If you cannot secure spaces in time as a group, the ability for that group to promote an event is also limited. And promotion is key; especially when many of these events are aimed at increasing student participation. Furthermore, the timeline and "regulations" associated with the application process were perceived as inhibiting smaller, and more spontaneous pop-up like events. Participants from the first focus group discussed how the success of pop-up events, which were fast moving and spontaneous in nature, relied on the ability to host them the next day or within the same week. Respondent 1 cited the long wait-time for approval of space as "cutting group creativity" and "group morale."

Another component of the booking process procedure as referenced on multiple occasions was the lack of any kind of indication if other campus groups had requested to book the same space for the same time. A member from the AUS was frustrated with there being no calendar indicating which spaces were being used, forcing her to have to go into the process with a "blind eye." Along the same line, LFSUS member and UBC REC coordinator claimed that not knowing if things were happening on the same day, or if the space was booked already, coupled with long response times, made the overall process difficult.

(2) Contact Information

Another recurrent theme surrounds contact information. Many people cited not being able to find proper contact information as inhibiting their ability to navigate the process for accessing space. Students appear to be confused about *who* they need to speak to in order to begin the booking process: "I definitely had to put in a number of calls before I even spoke to someone that could help me" (Respondent 4 from focus group 2), followed by "that's the hard part…getting everyone to o.k. it. Who knows how many people you have to ask before you can do it. It's super time consuming" (Respondent 5 from focus group 2). The discussion continued with: "If you were to ask someone where to go if you wanted to host an event on Main Mall who do you go to? I bet almost nobody could tell you." When asked further about his specific routine for finding contact information for their large-scale event, Respondent 5 from the focus group was confident in his response when he replied: "UBC Security is obvious in a way, like that's someone you should talk to." Considering the fact that Campus Security *does not* have any jurisdiction over outdoor, public spaces, the respondent's comment exemplifies the disconnect between the accessibility and awareness of appropriate contact information.

(3) Ambiguous Guidelines for Use

Similarly to how contact information was difficult to access, student participants also felt like general information regarding outdoor spaces were hard to find. The majority of the factors contributing to the "intermediate," "difficult" or "frustrating" process of accessing space, as cited by survey respondents, related to ambiguities surrounding which spaces were appropriate for specific uses. Respondent 5 from the focus group contended that "there is no clear process" and that you end up having to learn "through trial and error." A member from UBC REC said that there was "poor communication" on which spaces were available/part of the public realm. An executive member from the AUS similarly felt that there was no clear expectation about the use of space. She goes on to stress

her frustration: "I wouldn't book certain areas of Main Mall if I knew we weren't allowed to play loud music or have a big event….you are not told until after you apply."

Both practical and conceptual notions of access to outdoor spaces bring important considerations of power to the foreground. How students negotiate access to outdoor, public space on campus reveals the resistances of group practice and activity, the "tactical, and makeshift procedures" in which groups make sense of space (Duff, 2010, p. 883). How groups are using outdoor, public space in their active production of place is equally as important as each instance of "making do" and resistance to the perceived inhibitors of group access. While some student groups remain resentful against perceived inaccessibility, others have found alternative methods for coping with the circumstances, as mentioned.

3.3. Reputation of Student-led Groups

Other factors impeding access to outdoor, public spaces as cited, included perceived barriers based on overall group reputation. Each focus group respondent made reference to group reputability, associating their group's ability or in some cases, perceived inability to effectively access outdoor space as contingent on their group's reputation. Some participants shared the assumption that Staff had a negative impression of student-run groups and that their denied access to outdoor space resulted from this. Respondent 1 from the first focus group felt like being a *student*-led group came with a label: "I always found it interesting that the University sees you as this like: 'you're going to mess something up.' […] there's are a lot of assumptions made." In a similar tone, Respondent 4 from the second focus group claimed, "other people have preconceived notions about the Ski and Board club…" The overall consensus among participants was that reputation played a role. While 3 out of the 5 members felt that their group had garnered a negative perception among UBC Staff, the remaining 2 participants felt like their groups had good standing. Interestingly enough, these 2 participants referenced their group's positive regard as related to their established relationships with official UBC affiliated community members. For example, Respondent 5 said: "it's inherently easier for the SLC to do anything because we're already within UBC." The second participant of the 2 (Respondent 2), whose group had a long-standing relationship with Staff in the UBC Sustainability Department, argued that upholding their reputable status was important for future access to space: "if we wanted to continue our connection [with the University] it was really important that [Common Energy] played by the rules."

Respondent 3 compared the trajectory of his group's reputation both prior to and after having established a formal connection with a UBC Staff member: "I've been approached by some Administrators who assume that we always have to have beers in our hands […] which has made some events really hard logistically to book." Because of this assumption or perception, "events get denied on instinct" he said. The respondent later went on to explain, "once I had a personal connection with the people viewing the [booking] forms [….] once we got over that stigma, it was easier." Each of the 5 focus group members considered building formal rapport with Staff, if the group wasn't already well connected, as a necessary step to gain approval and *"legitimacy"* as a student-run group. The positive reputation in turn, was viewed in relation to overall group access to outdoor, public space on campus. Despite this recognition however, there was little sense of if students wanted to keep or change the status quo. Only one respondent formally expressed his concern by noting the disadvantage between reputable and seemingly 'non-reputable' groups on campus: "UBC is one campus and there shouldn't be one campus or organization competing with others to have access to that outdoor space."

3.4. Group Culture and Community

An analysis of both group access and group reputation remain significant because of how they inform and even allow, certain experiences to take place in outdoor, public space. The ability to actually use these spaces affords opportunity for the production and consumption of place, both of which contribute to a group's overall sense of connectedness to campus. In response to the question: "do available outdoor spaces on campus contribute to your group's ability to promote a sense of belonging, wellbeing, and community for both group members and other students? Why or Why not?" the overwhelming majority of survey participants selected "Yes." The 3 survey responses that indicated that outdoor space was *unimportant* for their group attributed their response to either a lack of necessity for outdoor events, or due to feelings of discouragement, which consequently forced them indoors and away from outdoor spaces. Contrastingly, the rest of respondents indicated that the availability and access to outdoor spaces (as opposed to indoor ones) enable greater group visibility and exposure, inclusivity, engagement, more room for congregation, and the ability to host larger scale events. Every member in the focus group also attributed the ability to host outdoors events in public spaces as absolutely *critical* for promoting a sense of campus community. The physicality of space, including: size, greenery, vibe, and "look and feel" as unique to the outdoors, were also cited in the surveys as increasing overall

group wellbeing. However, they key words that came out of each conversation, as supporting the above findings, were related to: "visibility," "access," "engagement," and "campus culture."

The visibility of people coming together for a student-led event outside is seen as promoting campus, but specifically collective "student [as opposed to institutional] pride." Outdoor events are "incredibly effective" for "fostering community." As Respondent 1 further summed:

> I think that when you're walking around campus and you see a student group handing out free lemonade to promote an event going on, or you see a group, Common Energy say, doing a food tour….it makes you more [willing] to check [it] out….it's more 'student' […] it makes it feel more like a home and less like an institution.

Similarly, another respondent said: "I think there is inherent value in all social events that happen on campus, but especially those that are outside, because it's so *visible* to other students and it's a lot less exclusive." Visibility "on the ground" enables increased traffic and exposure to group events/activities, which for one member of the UBCIA, was considered particularly important for sustaining dialogue about their group's advocacy, especially when targeting students who would not regularly see, or take the initiative to come to a pre-scheduled indoor event was difficult.

Inherently related to visibility is also accessibility and inclusivity, which invites different forms of participation (both direct involvement *and* speculation are considered participatory in nature). In reference to the Ski and Board Club's infamous annual, one-day Rail Jam, discussion in the focus group revealed that it really was an event of spectacle:

> It benefits so many people. Not only the people that get to ski in the middle of October, but also the people that get to come out and watch and get a break from midterms or studying […] and come out to be social and have a good time with friends, and meet new people as well.

In addition to the club member's own interpretation of his group's event, the other focus group participant, who had no affiliation with the club, added that "if you've been on this campus while [the Rail Jam has] been going on, you've seen it, or you've at least heard about it […] if you say ["ski and board club"] to me, the *only* thing I can think of is the Rail Jam, cause it's the most visible part of that club." Both forms of engagement, whether it involves direct participation, witnessing, or even recalling upon a memory of an event, are indicative of affective resonance. Student group activity is as much a function of doing and making, of routine practice, as it is a function of "affective modulation" (Duff, 2010, p. 884). That is to

say that these group led experiences, especially when visible and accessible, facilitate affective connections between students and the rest of the campus. The myriad of events and practices that take place outdoors in public space (as listed above) provide student groups with various means of co-producing place, and these practices are important for how they contribute to the regeneration of student community and wellbeing (Duff, 2010).

The analysis of student access to outdoor public space at the University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus illustrates the significance of place and place-making processes in aiding the construction of student community and campus culture. Participants' rhythmic and 'everyday' practices in addition to spontaneous group practices, play a large part in promoting and expressing community on campus. Whether it involves a student-driven food event, a campus-wide march to the main stadium before a sports game, a pop-up snowball fight, or commuting light show, *place*-- a dynamic and interactive site for meaning-making, a locus which weaves together the material existence of bodies-- is *central* to the equation. Thus, ensuring that student groups/organizations have equitable access to outdoor, public space, the very symbol of UBC student groups' ability to promote a sense of place and belonging, needs to be prioritized. And what better way to prioritize these needs than to listen to the student voice. Based on the completion of this study, which did take the time to ask how UBC could facilitate and enhance future access and use of outdoor space for student groups/organizations, 5 main recommendations emerged from popular opinion (all of which broadly corresponded with the previous findings). Students suggested that UBC Campus and Community Planning:

1. Provide more **support** for groups
2. Raise awareness about **use-potential of spaces**: advertise public realm boundaries, provide a toolkit/guide on suitable use of different locations
3. Improve clarity of **contact information**: ensure information is both readily available and accessible
4. Formalize **collaboration** with the student body: improve consultation and direct communication with student groups during community planning processes
5. Streamline the outdoor space **booking-process**: decrease response times during the approval process, provide a clear timeline/active calendar to indicate space bookings, create a more user-friendly booking interface with info-graphics

The above recommendations suggest that students are yearning for a greater sense of support, but also encouragement from Campus and Community Planning: "[it's] not so much about always being denied, but I never felt like I've been supported…it would be more comforting, and I [would] feel less like a 'hooligan' IF I felt like it was O.K. to [run an event] responsibly" (Focus Group Respondent). In addition to moral support, providing resources to better communicate the possibility of use while including students in the conversation, would also contribute to an improved overall experience for a) those groups who are already active in outdoor space, but also b) smaller and newly-initiated student groups who have yet to go through the process. Finding ways to facilitate increased dialogue, to bridge the gap between the institutional body and the student body, and promote the cultivation of place-making opportunities on campus through outdoor space, should figure among the priorities informing the regulation and development of use for outdoor campus spaces, and public space more generally.

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