

## Competition

Every time there is a discussion concerning competition, the same questions encounter the same answers, and the debate stagnates at the same extremely low level, and everything needs to be started over again at the next discussion. It now seems necessary to establish the basis for the debate, in order to attain the really important questions, which still remain without answer, and finally progress. It is also clear that writing allows to be more synthetic and thoughtful than oral expression, and with internet can be published/diffused beyond a simple discussion group. This text does not claim to give all the answers, but at least wants to clarify once and for all the points that endlessly come back, and are fairly evident once the different points of view are confronted. I hope to bring my experience as a participant in many debates and discussions concerning competition, and the fruit of my many interaction with practitioners (competitors or not) of parkour, but of other sports too, and my general knowledge about the subject.

Let's begin by noting 3 elements, once and for all:

- 1) We do not fear for our own personal practice. We know quite well that nobody is going to force us into competition. We know that, *a priori*, an alternative practice is possible, even under a dominant model (isn't that already what parkour is, compared to "federal" sports?).
- 2) We aren't here to impose our model by force. Nobody reasonable enough speaks about prohibiting competition. But we consider the non-competitive model as the best model, and therefore want to favor it, by exposing discursively the disadvantages of the competitive model, but mostly by avoiding the promotion of competitive values in our own personal practice (we're thinking here of our interactions with beginners or with the public, be it friends, or in an association, in the medias, etc.). We consider that competition is a social phenomenon, and that the simple fact of giving a non-competitive environment will diminish its importance at a personal and interpersonal level.
- 3) We are perfectly conscious that most of the actual competitors don't have a competitive spirit. We could say, for example, that these practitioners come from the mostly non-competitive environment that is parkour actually (which could change), and conserve their previous vision of the discipline when competing. We find ourselves in a situation where the participation of the competitors is made on a far different selection mode than that of the traditional model (local competitions → regional → national → international), which permits to establish in a (relatively) objective way the "best", the "champion". Indeed, it is most often the well-known traceurs, already mediatized, and in general those who already know each other, who participate, and the competitions happen then essentially between friends, in short this form of competition (at the moment) only has the name and exterior aspect of it (in that case, why absolutely stick to the competitive form?), but that is an open secret. But in spite of all this and what people tell us repeatedly, there already are people who participate with the intention of winning, with the "competitive spirit", and this will not go by diminishing. It is nevertheless not what we fear, the personal motives being not within our jurisdiction, and not all that interesting. To think that we fear for the spirit that reigns during the competitions, is in my opinion to not understand the issue. What we fear, mainly, is: from now on, the image of the discipline that mediatized competition presents to an unsuspecting public (who is not aware that it is a friendly meeting and not a competition, and only knows what parkour is from what we show him), and in the future, the effects of the development of competition (which will not stay forever at it is today). These aspects will be developed further.

### Competition is not a necessity for progression:

Let's move away from parkour, and consider the competitive phenomenon on a larger scale. Contrary to what a lot of people believe, competition is not the unique motor of evolution<sup>1</sup> and progression, and isn't even the best one. To base oneself on a climate of mastery (privileging "learning, personal progress and the valorization of work and effort") instead of a climate of competition (valorizing "social

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<sup>1</sup> Darwin, or rather his successors having misread him, have something to do with it. *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, by Peter Kropotkin, is illuminating in this regard.

comparison, interpersonal competition and final result”) seems to give more positive results (in terms of motivation, persistence in the practice, and therefore general progress of a group, on the long term), and less negative elements (anxiety, giving up, cheating...).<sup>2</sup> In our association (Parkour Lausanne), like in other places, we function based on mutual aid and the need for competition doesn’t appear. Everybody progresses, but most important, everybody seems happy about his progression. I think that the performances often held as superhuman that the traceurs (and among them, the competitors, who, I repeat, are at the moment mainly come from the non-competitive environment that parkour is) since the beginning of the discipline prove that competition isn’t necessary. Furthermore, parkour doesn’t need competition in order to diversify. Concurrence doesn’t always generate originality and diversity, but often uniformity between practitioners via, as Pierre Bourdieu notes, “the borrowing of the supposed instruments of success”<sup>3</sup>. On the other side, the diversity of architecture in the world, the different local trends, the diverse morphology of practitioners, among other factors, have made that there are a lot of ways of practicing parkour, and YouTube continually presents surprises once you move from the mass of uniform videos<sup>4</sup>.

### Competition is not a necessary motivational element.

Who desires competition? Not the population, it would seem, because according to the last OFSPO<sup>5</sup> statistic, only 16% of the Swiss population count competition as their reasons for practicing sport (against 98% for health, 91% to think of something else, and 70% for conviviality...). Medias profit from it, big corporations profit, and the actors who have a merchant interest profit (among them, the rare athletes than make a living from it<sup>6</sup>, and the far greater number who hope to earn a living from it). As Jean-Marie Brohm puts it: “the atheists or disbelievers of sport are finally in greater numbers than the believers”<sup>7</sup>. The alternative model is therefore not only viable (for anybody who doesn’t consider it as a merchandisable objet...), but is what the population in its majority seeks today. We will note in passing that if mediatization give them a certain importance, competitors actually represent a small minority of the community. The French Parkour Federation started a poll, the results of which are suggestive: 90% of traceurs wouldn’t participate in a competition, and 71% declare themselves absolutely against competition<sup>8</sup>.

### Competition has significant internal problems:

Let’s quickly cite a few of classic competition-sport problems: violence (physical or verbal, but especially in terms of exclusions<sup>9</sup>), corruption, overtraining, cheating, and doping (which are fare more than deviations: they are hyper-conformities to the competitive logic<sup>10</sup>). These problems are sufficiently documented today that we can’t negate them, and affect every discipline. Maybe there are ways to diminish or counterbalance the negative effects of the competitive world, but to declare it exempt of these problems is now bad faith. Furthermore, don’t believe that only professional sport is confronted

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<sup>2</sup> Philippe Sarrazin, Damien Tessier et David Trouilloud, « Climat motivationnel instauré par l’enseignant et implication des élèves en classe : l’état des recherches », *Revue française de pédagogie* [<http://rfp.revues.org/463>]. Evidently, there may be certain individuals to whom a competitive climate is suitable. It is possible that the competitive climate allows some to rise to a high level while most crash down. Far from wanting to level everyone down, our goal is elevation, but for the *whole group*, not just individuals.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Sur la télévision*, Raisons d’Agir, 2008 (1996).

<sup>4</sup> The biggest surprises I have had were not caused by competitors or sponsored traceurs, but by people who do not compete on the same level, do not compete in terms of distance, number of rotations, or by showing themselves on a well-known spot adding a small detail “I made the jump the best have done, but I did it with my wrong foot”, but practise simply in their own way. They have something *different* instead of doing the *same thing with a twist*.

<sup>5</sup><http://www.baspo.admin.ch/internet/baspo/fr/home/dokumentation.parsys.000106.downloadList.11029.DownloadadFile.tmp/sportsuisse2014.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> According to Jesse Peveril, no one makes a living from parkour competition, at the moment.

<sup>7</sup> <http://libertaire.free.fr/Brohm05.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.fedeparkour.fr/news/les-resultats-du-sondage-sur-la-competition>

<sup>9</sup> <http://libertaire.free.fr/Brohm05.html>

<sup>10</sup> Bourg Jean-François, « Le sportif et le marché : le cas du dopage », *Revue internationale de Psychosociologie*, 2003/20 Vol. IX, p. 73-90

to these problems: even doping is a phenomenon which gains amplitude in the amateur world<sup>11,12</sup>, which can be quite astonishing. There is absolutely no reason that would lead us to think that competition in parkour will follow a different path once its institutionalization is effective<sup>13</sup>.

### Meeting between traceurs happens easily without competition:

There has always been and always will be meeting of practitioners. Be it at a local level between friends or members of a group or association, or at a larger scale via different events like parkour days, workshops, or simply by the different trips that practitioners do (be it specifically for parkour or for personal reasons), not to mention discussions on the net, the exchanges in the community are uncountable. Competitions have nothing more to bring us. To find financing to organize events, if necessary, is possible. Depending on the type of event, being subsidized by sociocultural politics rather than the sport/competition world would make much more sense. Anyways, the competition only helps a small fraction of the community. Has a competition ever united 400 practitioners<sup>14</sup>? I don't think so.

### Competition permits a few athletes to live from it, but at what price?

I don't know the number of traceurs who regularly earn money from competition, but without doubt, this number is ridiculously small compared to the international community. Among them, none could actually make a living exclusively from competition. How many could live without it, by concentrating their work on demonstrations, workshops, lessons, cinematography, etc.? It is not competition which will make people live from their art (not mentioning the fact that competition is alienating for most, or even for all, and that is not living from our art but transforming it -and the competitor- to a simple tool). To be economically independent from your art (which does not mean that you can't absolutely have economic benefits from it) seems a much better way.

Furthermore, the argument can seem egoistical. What is the utility of an elite athlete for society or the community<sup>15</sup>? Apart from being a publicity post for multinationals, the answer is quite vague. We could as well consider that the athlete doesn't deserve his salary (but, evidently, it is the multinational that postulates his utility, he obviously has a private value). It seems wrong to think that the commodification of our discipline gets money back to the community. I would say that, on the contrary, mercantilisation pushes traceurs to pay (clothing, events, etc.) much more than they would need, for an activity that costs nothing but the cost of a pair of runners (and still...), all this so a few people can live off it.

### Parkour doesn't need competition for its mediatization:

The volume of research on Google for the word "parkour" has been increasing continually for years, to exceed that of skate, and nearing surf in terms of popularity on the net<sup>16</sup>. The number of actual practitioners is hard to estimate, but it counts in the millions around the world. No country is spared by the presence of traceurs. Popularized by films and via internet, I never heard of somebody wanting to try parkour after seeing a competition. Competition is elitist by essence, and that is one of the reasons why it seems to me that it can't be a good motor for the development of parkour. People who want to

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<sup>11</sup> «Le dopage amateur est assez, voire très important», *Le Temps*, 07.08.09  
[http://www.letemps.ch/Page/Uuid/3a29433c-82c9-11de-b862-1da59cea4061/Le\\_dopage\\_amateur\\_est\\_assez\\_voire\\_tr%C3%A8s\\_important](http://www.letemps.ch/Page/Uuid/3a29433c-82c9-11de-b862-1da59cea4061/Le_dopage_amateur_est_assez_voire_tr%C3%A8s_important)

<sup>12</sup> In fact, the Commission of inquiry on the fight against doping's report (<http://www.senat.fr/rap/r12-782-1/r12-782-14.html>) reported 5% positive controls among amateur cyclists, even though the test was done on a limited number of substances, and was voluntary. As an indication (for various reasons, explained in this report, these values are difficult to compare and statistics do not reflect reality) the rate of positive tests among professional cyclists would be 13.7%.

<sup>13</sup> At worst, let's apply the precautionary principle.

<sup>14</sup> Unlike the FPK 2014 meeting, for example.

<sup>15</sup> There are areas related to parkour which are, it seems, still relatively unexplored. The development of progressions for the different movements of parkour, teaching methods, approaches for kids or older people, research on performance, biomechanics or training... not mentioning the domains that are already explored today. Obviously, not everyone will live from his practice, but it is the case with or without competition. Yet much work having utility for the parkour community or society in general remains to be done !

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.apexmovement.com/blog/is-parkour-a-fad/>

start parkour are numerous since they realize that the discipline is accessible to all, not just to a highly trained and daredevil elite. Nevertheless, this image of daredevils still hangs to our skin. If we absolutely need to mediatize and democratize parkour (which is not a necessity in absolute, and should at least not be done at the price of the meaning of the practice, in my opinion), then what still has to be done is to show it's accessibility and the aspects of training, the community, or its philosophy. To present it as just another xtreme sport has no use. On the contrary, it brings prejudice to the discipline and above all to the long work that some traceurs have done during years in order to explain parkour, to show in what sense it is exceptional, to give it a good image. I will cite once again Pierre Bourdieu: "What seems to me difficult to justify, is that we authorize ourselves from the extension of the audience to bring down the right of entry to the field"<sup>17</sup>. What we need to do is to allow the public to rise to access parkour, not bring down parkour to put it at the public's level... The mediatization cannot be done in whatever way, and in my opinion it is better if there is no mediatization rather than a mediatization in the wrong conditions. It would be time to choose quality over quantity.

What we do need are heroes of parkour, to make observers dream, to make them want to have a try at parkour. But we don't need competition for that: action movies, the practitioner's videos, documentaries, random encounters, and the increasing presence of traceurs in the streets are having their effect. Parkour is interesting, intriguing enough that we don't need to sell it in a misleading way. Moreover, if we do need heroes, it would be, in my opinion, far different models from those shown by the sportive elite<sup>18</sup>. Examples of moral integrity, helpfulness, or adventurous lives seem (for example and still in my opinion) to be privileged. We just need to give them the visibility that they don't have.

Furthermore, that for which a lot of us fight for, is the advent of an alternative, and not for its integration in the rest of the sportive system. If we all have the intuition that parkour is something unique, that deserves to be shared, it is because it sits on the fringe of the already existing framework. And if parkour wants to stay as it's always been until now, something subversive and therefore capable of bringing great changes in practitioners, it must stay an alternative (even if a minor one), and not integrate the dominant values of competitive sport.

## Competition cannot show who has merit or has trained the best

High level competitors dedicate their body and soul to their discipline. But that doesn't mean that they are the only ones to do so. Those who are at the top of the ladder probably benefited from a climate (social, economic, geographic, etc. situation) that permitted them to train more and in conditions more favourable to performance. Maybe they started young, pushed by their parents (or their government, or any other authoritative body). They evolved in an environment that led them to objective, ephemeral and competitive performance, while others practiced in a different way, focusing on their pleasure, personal progress, and well-being. They specialized while others fluttered. They are genetically, morphologically, physiologically made<sup>19</sup> (and especially selected<sup>20</sup>) to support high training loads, recover quickly, progress faster, perform at levels impossible to us mortals, so that some studies<sup>21</sup> show that the high level athlete status can be predominantly (here, by 66%) attributed to innate characteristics. Doping then adds to the list, to end a myth. I'm not saying that elite athletes are not following an

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<sup>17</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> George Carlin said "People say athletes should be role models. I never looked up to an athlete, did you? I liked them. I didn't copy them. Did you ever listen to one of those guys talk? Would you want your kid to turn out like that? Willing to completely subordinate his ego and individuality for the sake of a group whose sole purpose is to compete with other groups? Can't have a mustache? Gotta wear a suit jacket? Shit! If your kid needs a role model and you ain't it, you're both fucked." George Carlin, *3x Carlin: an Orgy of George*, New York: Hyperion, 2006. 66-73

<sup>19</sup> We could quote the example of Donald Thomas, who, out of the basketball world and after only 8 months of training, won the high jump World Championship in 2007. This performance was largely explained by the abnormal length of his Achilles tendon, which allowed him an incredible performance despite its obvious lack of technique.

<sup>20</sup> We research the relative level of fast and slow twitch muscle fibres in young athletes to determine the sport in which they have the best potential. We could soon start doing genetic testing in order to find the athletes who have genes known to be useful for performance. And of course, selection is done indirectly through competitive results or training.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18179392>

extremely difficult, demanding and deserving path. But we can see the role of individual differences in parkour, where some manage to overcome veterans after only a few months of (not necessarily serious or regular) training. To think that desert or seriousness of training is measured by the length of a jump, the speed in an obstacle course or any other quantitative performance at a given time, is absurd. The only thing that competition can do, is show which practitioner makes the best objective, quantified performance, in a precise domain or for a given technique, at a certain time and in a given context.

## Competition isn't a parkour real-life situation

Some people imagine that competition is a way of testing your parkour outside of training situation. Firstly, let's say that if competition gives a dose of stress that could come close to that of an idealized real-life situation, utilisation of parkour in real situations isn't necessarily made under stress. The probability to find yourself under a high stress situations requiring the use of parkour is close to none<sup>22</sup>. Secondly, to compare a situation where you are willing to do a performance, with a proper warm-up beforehand, an obstacle terrain that you know in advance, a pressure that comes only from the chronometer, the public and the jury, with a real situation which would force you to enter in parkour mode in one instant without flinching, with no warmup, in an unknown environment, and in adverse conditions (night, mist, cold, rain...), under a pressure that could be a matter of life or death, this comparison, then, seems quite laughable. We give ourselves enough obstacles and challenges in our training for it to be necessary or beneficial to add that of the competition. However, if your intention is actually to prepare for an emergency, I'll let you read Amos Rendao's article, *Parkour Randori*<sup>23</sup>.

## Parkour Competition is extremely dangerous

I will quote the *Manifeste contre l'organisation de competitions dans le parkour*<sup>24</sup>, from which it is one of the main arguments: "Parkour and freerunning competitions, in so far as they push the athlete to 1-do as many things as they can in a short and limited span of time and 2-do difficult and dangerous things to impress the public and judges, instead of using simple and safe techniques, place the athlete in a situation of great danger, and this no matter his skill level". The heights, distances and forces at play in parkour don't do not forgive mistakes. If the number of injured is still low, it is because there are few external factors that come into play (unlike sports were the environment is made unpredictable, particularly from the presence of adversaries or partners). But the criteria of competition, the social pressure (from peers, opponents, jury, public...), the time (if the competition is timed), but also the economic pressure (in order to earn your life from parkour, you have to win, you have to do impressive stuff to gain notoriety, etc.) are external factors that lead (consciously or not) the practitioner to focus on certain elements of his practice and thus abandon others. Among them, the substantive point yet often forgotten in parkour: security<sup>25</sup>. For example, the criterion of a speedrun is speed (duh!); but in a real life situation is not limited to this, and slowing down to look around, check the obstacles, take the time to calculate distances, focus, prefer a safe path to a fast one, etc. are not only possible, but recommended, and after all, quite logical. Getting to point B fast is good, but not if you arrive dismembered. Should we then adapt the terrain and obstacles to diminish the risk of injuries? Put synthetic material on the running tracks, mattresses under and behind the obstacles, safety nets? At that moment, we will have completely forgotten what parkour is.

## Competition is not compatible with the principles of parkour

Parkour is defined as a training method<sup>26</sup>, aiming to reinforce oneself physically and mentally for and by the overcoming of obstacles. You can't make a competition out of a training method, but only on the

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<sup>22</sup> This obviously depends on your profession, place of residence, etc.

<sup>23</sup> <https://amosrendao.squarespace.com/written-work/2014/2/5/parkour-randori-putting-it-to-the-test-in-real-life-emergency-situations>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.parkour-literally.com/manifeste-contre-lorganisation-de-competitions-de-parkour/>

<sup>25</sup> We tend to define parkour as "moving with efficiency" or "getting from point A to B as quickly as possible". Let's not forget that to ensure physical integrity on the way to point B is worth sacrificing some efficiency or speed.

<sup>26</sup> Notably by David Belle : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEbhFs3HjEs>

results of that method. Parkour is not the most efficient method to obtain objective, quantifiable and specific results, so other methods will be used in order to obtain results in competition<sup>27</sup>. So you can't make a parkour competition, that is impossible in principle. Another question might be asked: will we see flunked athletes from athletics, for example, participate at parkour competitions (speedrun, long cat-leaping...) to win what is impossible in their own domain<sup>28</sup> (the pool of highly trained athletes being too large to have a high chance of victory), when the stakes of parkour competition will be high enough? How will the traceur fare against these specialized athletes?

Parkour demands to adapt to the environment and its obstacles and is always opposed to specialization, especially because of its origin in the hébertist tradition, from which parkour is one of the last representative not dying... for now. Parkour, utilitarian by essence, as a martial art, asks to be ready no matter the time ("Traceur, always ready!", "Be strong to be useful", "To be and to last"). So it does not accord with the periodization of training, which aims to achieve maximum performance at a certain moment in the year, that of the competition. Parkour aims to increase the potential, not in order to achieve three competitions and then retire, but as a "weapon you sharpen, you train and if one day there's a problem, you know you can use it"<sup>29</sup>. Competition is therefore fundamentally opposed to parkour, operating by universal standards, specialization of athletes and ephemeral quantitative performances.

Standardization begins with that of the obstacle fields: it is clear that the obstacle terrains for the competition will be designed, like parkour-parks, to a number of specific movements (here a *passemuraille*, there a cat leap, it adapts the environment to parkour and not the other way round). There is a high probability that a specific way to overcome each obstacle will be defined<sup>30</sup> (that is what is done in every competition, you can't throw a javelin with two hands, you can't high jump from two feet, you can't long jump with a front somersault...). Furthermore, will we see identical terrains in every competitions? After all, it is the case in all other competitive sports, the universality of the norm being there to "ensure that future competitions are what everyone expects"<sup>31</sup>. The standardization will also be based on the criteria of judgement of the competition: scoring system<sup>32</sup> as in gymnastics that will lead to abandon certain form or type of movement; or metric/chronometric system that will lead to privilege certain ways to trace (better that I give energy saving for speed, better jump as high as possible than do everything to protect my physical integrity...). Competition needs objective criteria (and the more accurate the higher the economic, political and personal stakes are) to break ties between the participants. So we will progressively obtain specialists of certain movements, or reduced movement sets, and if we imagine a long term evolution, something that could end very similar to athletics (or gymnastics for freerunning). Let's quote Brohm again: "the worldwide sportivisation has laminated everything that was specific and original; what remains is only the Adidas model"<sup>33</sup> as well as Pascal Chantelat: "The balance of power has shifted in favour of the owners of the entertainment industry, which has forced various sports organisations to align their values and management methods"<sup>34</sup>.

Having practiced judo for many years, I know that forms that are prohibited or ineffective in competition are less likely to be taught. We can fear that for the future of parkour. If Jigoro Kano (the founder of judo) wanted to use competition to allow his art to spread, he surely didn't want it to amount to that. It seems clear to me that this was a strategic mistake: even if I hope that there are still alternative ways to practice judo, it is not what the majority of people have access to. Maybe what is good with parkour is

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<sup>27</sup> This logic applies to any sport. A similar example to parkour can be found in CrossFit. We notice that athletes who win competitions in CrossFit (a training method) actually use other methods to train. See <http://blog.moncoach.com/les-avantages-les-inconvenients-du-crossfit/> and <http://www.t-nation.com/training/crossfit-the-good-bad-and-the-ugly>

<sup>28</sup> Just like gymnastics (and tricking) already mixes with freerunning or street-workout.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEbhFs3HjEs>

<sup>30</sup> If I'm not mistaken, it was the case for the speedruns of Xtrem Gravity.

<sup>31</sup> Jacques Defrance, *Sociologie du sport*, La Découverte, 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Wanting to judge an art or the aesthetics of movement, something inherently qualitative and subjective, is absurd. The only way is to attempt to quantify the qualitative performance, which amounts to limiting yourself to some criteria, therefore getting away from the qualitative performance. This is one reason why Tim Shieff, for example, no longer participates in the Red Bull Art of Motion or other "freestyle" competitions.

<sup>33</sup> <http://libertaire.free.fr/Brohm05.html>

<sup>34</sup> Pascal Chantelat, *La Professionnalisation des organisations sportives. Nouveaux enjeux, nouveaux débats*, 2001 in *Sociologie du sport*, Jacques Defrance.

that people have no choice to opt for a competitive or non-competitive club, but willingly or not tracers are immediately immersed in a non-competitive environment where there is mutual support, lack of formal rules, etc. which not only constitutes an alternative practise to the rest of the sports world, but also allows acculturation which can be hoped to lead to social changes on a more or less large scale and changes in the modalities of practices outside of parkour<sup>35</sup>. Over time, we may fear the loss of what makes parkour a discipline, loss of depth to the benefit of superficiality and the spectacular, but a loss of meaning too, forgetting what makes parkour a subversive discipline. If you do not follow the “principles” of parkour, you may at least ask yourself what made you choose parkour (and, most likely, makes you practice it in a way different to the sports you practised earlier). There is a good chance that it is precisely because its internal logic differs from the rest of the sporting and competitive world.

### Conclusion: yes, but...

Let’s be pragmatic: we can’t prevent competition. There already are some, and there always will be. But this doesn’t prevent us from continuing to show our disapproval while explaining our reasoning, continue to practice in our own way and to promote our own values. We tend to forget that because of their extensive media coverage, but the competitors are only a small minority in the community. If the traceurs keep doing projects their own way, and do not let themselves be led by the minority (that is stronger economically and mediatically), we have the possibility to choose what we want to do with the discipline we cherish. If competition seems important to you, nothing prevents you from organizing competition between you and your friends. But the institutionalisation of competition is another thing, in particular if it is made under the influence of more than questionable sponsors<sup>36</sup>.

A few paths to discuss and explore

- Promote non-competitive values
- Propagate arguments against competition (those I mentioned in this article, or any other)
- Find sponsors with which you can have a mutualistic relationship (and not simply a one way relationship “I give you my body, you give me money”<sup>37</sup>). There are people who share goals with traceurs, let’s support them.
- Find a way to be economically independent from your discipline. This doesn’t mean you can’t earn money with parkour. But being independent will let you, to a certain extent, avoid damaging concessions for yourself (prevents the discipline and your own body from becoming mere work tools), and for the discipline (being able to choose what you want to show the public).
- If merchandisable shows are essential or unavoidable, find some forms of entertainment that are less damaging. Parkour is something sufficiently beautiful, amazing and spectacular to watch so that we don’t need to orchestrate clashes over the market. Demonstrative (demonstrating expertise rather than performance) or artistic forms, or even forms presenting a cooperative aspect rather than a competitive one are worth considering. Some people suggest something in the order of Ninja Warrior, this model is to study/discuss.
- Move closer to sociocultural policies rather than sporting institutions.

There certainly are other solutions: the important thing now is to try to go beyond the simple issue “for or against the competition”.

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<sup>35</sup> Because parkour is often considered a philosophy of life. To cite a documented example, we note that the practitioners of Aikido (non-competitive) are for example more permissive on moral issues than judokas (competitive discipline) notably “towards homosexuality, sentencing death, use of soft drugs”. The practitioners of Aikido are more likely to want to “avoid the radicalization of conflict” and “a critical distance towards institutions”. Jacques Defrance, *Sociologie du sport*. Difficult to say which is the cause and which is the effect, but it is probably a bit of both.

<sup>36</sup> Be responsible: if you are used as a window display, make sure that you at least don’t have a negative impact, and that you do not support a product or a company at the exact opposite of your values. Many underestimate the influence they have, both on parkour, traceurs and the general public.

<sup>37</sup> This somehow allows to avoid hypocrisy and counter-productivity. To promote physical activity AND fast-food (not to name any particular organization) appears indeed aberrant.

This debate is more relevant than ever, as the Mouvement International pour le Parkour, Freerunning et Art du Déplacement (MIPFA) has recently emerged. Mention is made of competition in its statutes. Acting as an international federation, the MIPFA will aim to institutionalize, organize, codify and protect competitions in the three disciplines. If the manner in which these objectives will be achieved is not yet clear, it is clear that under the aegis of a single institution, the development of the competition will change shape. Let's hope we can influence its development constructively.

Yann Daout