



**Street Art &
Urban Creativity
Scientific Journal**

Center Periphery: Theory

Vol. 2 / N° 2

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 **Associação para a
Participação Pública**

 **Street Art & Urban Creativity**
International Research Topic

Center, Periphery: Theory

Editorial Notes

Pedro Soares Neves 4

Articles

Ricardo Klein, Center for the Study of Culture, Politics and Society, Barcelona. Faculty of Social Sciences, Uruguay 6
Creativity and territory: The construction of centers and peripheries from graffiti and street art

Hely Costa Júnior, Universidade Estácio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 16
Anonymous Inscriptions in Rio de Janeiro Resistance and informal urban communication on the streets

Marcus Willcocks and Gamze Toylan, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts, London 22
In search of a commons of centers - reviewing values and methods designed to assert benefit, harm or opportunity among uncommissioned visual urban practices

Erik Hannerz, Department of Sociology, Lund University, Sweden 37
Scrolling down the line – a few notes on using Instagram as point of access for graffiti research

Essays

Hela Zahar, Jonathan Roberge, Centre Urbanisation Culture Société (UCS), Québec 42
Street Art: Visual scenes and the digital circulation of images

Jonas Rehm and Christos Voutichtis, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt 45
No Place for Urban Art

Invited authors

Lachlan MacDowall, Centre for Cultural Partnerships, University of Melbourne, Australia 48
A Boneyard of Data: Graffiti and Street Art's Temporalities

Javier Abarca, Independent researcher, Spain 60
From street art to murals: what have we lost?

Pedro Soares Neves, HERITAS-CIEBA/ CIDEHUS - UNESCO Chair on Intangible Heritage, Lisbon 68
Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art - Book Review

Editor

Pedro Soares Neves,
HERITAS-CIEBA/ CIDEHUS - UNESCO Chair on Intangible Heritage, Lisbon

After the Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity International Conference and book publishing in 2014, Seminar and Volume 1 (numbers 1 and 2) of the Street Art & Urban Creativity Scientific Journal (in 2015), the quality, quantity and originality of contributions from distinctive disciplinary fields, confirm the pertinence and relevance of our collective ongoing work.

For the 2016 open call we invited contributions from all disciplines to discuss the tensions and complementarities of Center, Periphery, Theory and Practice, as concepts and as concrete characteristics of the Street Art & Urban Creativity research topic.

What makes it distinct to be in the center or in the periphery of the urban context, of the practice or theory? How the approach from the practitioners, the art critics, the bloggers, the followers, contact the academic research and scientific approach? This are examples of the kind of issues that we were looking for to be addressed.

The 2016 edition, volume 2, is composed by 2 numbers, number 1 “Center, Periphery: Practice” and number 2 “Center, Periphery: Theory”.

The number 1, addresses Center and Periphery issues of practical nature, texts directly related with authors and pieces, including distinct cities, and supports of creation such as photo and video, and also about research ethics.

The number 2, is devoted to Theoretical approaches to Center, Periphery. Addressing world geographies like Uruguay and Brazil, methodological geographies centered in values, also about digital geographies, including also for philosophical and reflection essays and one book review.

Contributions for this issue were selected from the received full papers blind peer review process developed by the Scientific Committee. The full papers were submitted in one of three formats:

- scientific articles;
- essays/working papers;
- book or exhibition reviews.

At a time when Graffiti and Street Art are closer than ever of art market and institutions, many questions arise. These were considered during the Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity International Conference organized by Urbancreativity, research topic associated with the research unit of Fine Art Faculty of Lisbon University and ISCTE-IUL, with the support of FCT (Science Foundation of Portuguese Government).

We had been working on the Urbancreativity research topic since 2014, organizing conferences, editing books, the Street Art & Urban Creativity Scientific Journal, and delivering services of consultancy and production.

In the 2016 edition of the Conference and the second volume of the Journal, we addressed 2 main aspects: - sharing approaches between the academic and non-academic knowledge production of Graffiti and Street Art; - how to intensify the relation of Design, Architecture and Urbanism with Graffiti and Street Art.

The Conference occurred on June 2016, the 16th and 17th in Fine Art Faculty of Lisbon University main Auditorium, and 18th in ISCTE-IUL Architecture and Urbanism department.

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Creativity and territory: The construction of centers and peripheries from graffiti and street art

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the meaning of the dynamics of artwork production that graffiti and street art artists currently do from its conception of territorial centers and peripheries. The city is seen as a place of conflict and the territory as the local space where it manifests itself. For graffiti writers and street art artists the city stands symbolically as the largest street of all, as a large canvas production. These are visions that respond to processes that the members of graffiti and street art respect and legitimate. The city is the great goal to win (its places, its physiognomy, but also its symbolic spaces), it is a space of resistance and construction of citizenship, a place of belonging to be marked and delineated as a symbolic space of territorial appropriation.

The present document takes the PhD research developed by the author under the PhD in Cultural Management and Heritage at the University of Barcelona. It seeks to approach the creative processes of analysis, legitimacy and valorization in graffiti and street art and, as a case of analysis, the researcher has chosen the cities of Barcelona (Spain) and Montevideo (Uruguay). It was established, as empirical domain of analysis, discourses from 44 graffiti writers and street art artists of the mentioned cities, taking into account some relevant dimensions of their practices: valorization, legitimacy, recognition, professionalization and technical specialization, among others.

Keywords: Graffiti/street art, creativity, city, territory, centers/peripheries, Barcelona/Montevideo

1. Introduction

The city is presented as a space of conflict, crisis and permanent construction, of social interactions with competing interests and, in many cases, contradictory. It appeals to a conception of a city that must be conquered, “as an initiatory adventure that everyone has the right to live” (Borja, 2003: 32), which tends to a progressive privatization of the public space (Delgado & Malet, 2007), closely linked to consumption and to social issues such as exclusion and insecurity. In this context, where there are fewer areas for socialization and coexistence, they appear processes that restrict the emergence of an active citizenship or collective projects. From these interruptions, it is in the local territory

where real possibilities of exchanges with the community open towards generating spaces of coexistence and sociability. The territory is understood as an expressive space of everyday life of those who live in it, it prints the socio-historical traces of the individuals who live there, determining their essential characteristics within a specific habitat (Borja, 2003; Rocco, 2005; Rocha Furtado & Vieira Zanella, 2009; VV.AA, 2015). Thus, it translates the daily lives of its inhabitants, building a heterogeneous symbolic space from the conflicts created by the diversity of its population. Tensions generated by individuals who live there build a material space shaping the social coexistence. As a result, it gives a differential appropriation of physical space and social inequalities are strengthened (Filardo et al., 2008; Méndez,

2007; Pradilla Cobos, 1997; VV.AA, 2015). In this sense, it is not only recognized as a specific geographical area, but it involves objective and subjective components of its people regarding their participation in local spaces.¹ The exploration of their characteristics will mean the recognition of the needs and demands arising from that territory, allowing us to understand the complex social network that emerges from there (social, cultural and economic processes). The choice of graffiti and street art (through the territory and the public space that delimits it) is defined, among other reasons, by seeking to impact on and involve the city inhabitant, and to “break” with its everyday space (Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974). In the territory, the power struggle appears between those who live the city as a collective creation and those who want to control their dynamics, as an appropriation of a “geographical and symbolic (space) and as a territory of social practices” (López, 1998:188).

The main objectives set out in this article, from the above mentioned, are to discuss the conception that graffiti writers and street art artists make about the production of artwork, from the delimitation of the territorial centers and peripheries. It is understood that this production does not respond merely from a geographical cut, but is driven by binding decisions on how they imagine and live the city from their artistic practices. For such purposes, the development will focus on two contexts, Barcelona and Montevideo, although the analysis can be extended to other cities that produce street art. Also, it will seek to explain how they structure and determine a geographical map of street art, taking into account the creativity processes they develop and the decisions they take to give continuity to their practices.

2. Methodological Issues

To develop the present research, a qualitative methodological approach was taken (Taylor & Bogdan, 1994) and, for the gathering of information, interviews were used (Blanchet & Masonnart, 1989) of a focused type (Colognese, S., Bica de Mélo, 1998). Visual documents (Valles, 1999) and observation technique (Blanchet & Masonnart, 1989; Guber, 2005) were added as secondary sources.

¹ Whether through public or private institutions or organized civil society.

In total, 70 interviews were conducted, of which 44 correspond to graffiti writers and street artists from Barcelona and Montevideo. The rest were conducted with art gallery owners who sell this type of work, stakeholders specialized in the study of these urban expressions, public administration agents focused on public spaces and urban planning, and private project agents of urban creativity and murs lliures. Also, Photographic and audiovisual records of graffiti and street art in those cities were taken. There were approximately 17000 Photographs, of which 4000 belong to different private funds (donated) and 13000 were taken directly. Similarly, the researcher undertook some tasks as a participant observer such as territorial routes, and day and night tours, looking for graffiti and street art. Finally, the researcher joined some graffiti writers and street art artists collectives in their street outputs.

For the selection of the interviewed artists, it was taken into account, as a starting point, those graffiti writers and street artists that were closer to the public space of the city and further from the art market; those with intermediate relations with the public space of the city and the art market; and those working away from the public space of the city and close to the art market. Likewise, it took into consideration their place in the actual moment of the graffiti and street art scenes in Montevideo and Barcelona; the legitimacy and valorization they receive from the members of these groups; the legitimacy and valorization they have from galleries that sell works of graffiti or street art and how they are recognized by private projects working in the area of urban creativity. Moreover, the researcher considered, as a third block of criteria, the level of professionalism, creating three criteria: 1 (professional), 2 (on the road to professionalism) and 3 (not professional). Finally, the references cited are: B (Barcelona) and M (Montevideo). The accompanying number corresponds to each particular interview.

Graffiti and street art: concepts under construction

There is no unanimously accepted theoretical definition of what is graffiti or street art. Conceptually, there may exist certain approaches, such as street art (Gabbay, 2013; Herrera & Olaya, 2011) or urban art (Abarca, 2010; Canales Hidalgo, 2008). From other perspectives, these urban expressions could be approached as a type of art or as an artistic line, such as contextual art (Ardenne, 2006) or relational art (Bourriaud,

2008). There are no agreements in this regard, nor from the most formal art market positions, nor from those that arise from the world of graffiti and street art (Klein, 2012). Indeed, many members of these groups are not recognized as artists, even if they are considered as professionals (Menger, 1999, 2009). Also, some authors understand these practices as ways of making art illegally in public space (Calogirou, 2010; Schacter, 2013) from the changes experienced in the public space of the cities, but not all graffiti or street art is done illegally (Klein, 2014). In fact, nowadays, they develop creative strategies to legitimize their practices despite being them illegal actions. For example, some graffiti and street art artists avoid complaints from neighbors or police reports by building and generating convincing speeches to prevent conflicts. For instance, they pose as students from the Faculty of Fine Arts and they simulate they are doing their practical courses, and so they legitimize and institutionalize their practices.

Moreover, the durability of the work was central on the origin of the expression, becoming a major element in defining graffiti and street art as ephemeral urban expressions; but the permanence of time became relative to new technologies, the internet and digital cameras. What “before” looked passing and transitory, it is now perennial and eternal. For example, the legitimacy games among the graffiti artists that raided the subway art (Castleman, 2002; Cooper & Chalfant, 1984), in 1970s in New York, took the durability of the work as one of its most important components. This item was part of that getting up (Castleman, 2002), so necessary to achieve appreciation, respect and legitimacy as a member of a subculture or counterculture group of the prevailing hegemony (Becker, 2009; Moreau & Alderman, 2011).

3. The street and the construction of regional centers and peripheries

For graffiti and street art artists, the city stands symbolically as a large canvas production, a monumental work that is never finished. These visions respond to the dynamics that members of graffiti and street art communities respect and legitimate. From the respect for these internal codes of coexistence, their experience as graffiti writers and street artists will have presence in the large canvas mentioned. “There are always codes, the street has its codes. Like life, street painting has codes.” [artists\M25]. Making new

walls, sharing or covering them are three of the dynamics of intervention being carried out by members of street art. It is a city that constantly mutates, that is conquered (Borja, 2003) because it is understood as a space of resistance and construction of citizenship, as a place to belong, to be marked and delimited as a symbolic appropriation of territorial space: “Montevideo, I was born here and I live here. And it is my city” (artists/M19).

On a second level, the city gives space to the street as the material destiny of intervention. It is the most direct and primitive contact that the graffiti writer or the street artist understands that he or she owns to express and to represent their view of the world through their work, then the social networks will circulate their instances of legitimacy. Part of the collective of graffiti writers and street artists performs artwork in public space because it is based on the idea that the city/street belongs to everyone. “That’s normal, it is the street, the street is free” (artists/B2). Under this slogan, they build their internal rules between chance, the codes that arise from the very genesis of the expression and the watchful eye of contemporaneity. The confrontation over the use and appropriation of the territory approaches different borders: the place of private advertising in public space, the role of historic buildings and monuments, the construction of the concept of heritage and its role in the current urban context, the impact of architecture in the management of public administration and their view over the city and the place that is given to other forms of art in public space, among others.

“(…) the street is everybody’s, people use it as they want. I do not know, it’s a little difficult, isn’t it?, to defend one thing. For me is art, for me is on the street and it is a language and a way to express themselves.” [artists\B5]

“For me, the street belongs to everyone, is neither of who makes tag, nor who does urban art, nor who does nothing. The street belongs to everyone. It is a shared space. (...) I find it amazing. I love that there is this contradiction and we must live with this issue.” [artists\M2]

In general, part of the collective of graffiti writers and street artists understands that the street acquires more color and life by the existence of these artistic practices; they feel they give a “battle” - through practice - against the city’s agony and



Fig. 1 Granada, Photo by Ricardo Klein

frustration. In short, against the “gray” that symbolically permeates the city. That is, there is an aesthetic contribution but they also seek the joy of the people when they see their works, they link street art with that emotion and the feeling of happiness. So this expression in the city is to communicate something and “basically, to give gifts to people who are sad every day, getting up at 5 am to go to work.” [artists\M10]. These visions do not respond to a specific type of society or a particular contextual model. From this place, the contribution is always positive and fulfills a social role with the inhabitant. They understand that there is a drop in the public space and through these practices they provide new morphologies to the city. Through their actions, they reconfigure materially and emotionally the urban gaps emerging in the city. These processes do not occur only with the street art of Barcelona and Montevideo, we can find them in cities such as Buenos Aires, Lima, Berlin, Porto, Granada, Bristol or Paris.²

² Perhaps right now the most important European city at graffiti and street art level.

Also, from their perspective, the city is dynamic and changing, fragmenting however many times they need it. This territorial redistribution is explained from their interventions and how the public administration, and the local districts, apply the rules of social coexistence in the public space. Because in Barcelona there are “much more rigid regulations in the district of Ciutat Vella than in the Nou Barris district. Gràcia is very complicated also, by the issue of urbanization” [artists\B2]. In these logics of artistic production, the building of territorial areas of the city disappears according to the binomial centers or peripheries. These spaces engage and resignify from intentions and interests that graffiti writers and street artists have as a target for intervention. From their point of view, the illegality of intervening in the public space in the city center is transformed symbolically in a legal aspect in territorial peripheries, although formally it continues to be an illegal practice. One of the few exceptions where centers and territorial peripheries remain per se is when they take



Fig. 2 Berlin, Photo by Ricardo Klein

the risk of doing artwork with a high police control in the public space. In this way, the graffiti writers and street artists consider that there are necessary costs in order to obtain (and appropriate) empirically a territory with symbolic and material disputes.

These fights for the appropriation of place are not only generated in the tension between graffiti writers and street artists and the public administration (police); part of the group of graffiti writers and street artists also promotes these practices:

“in Barcelona, the artistic level is impressive, in terms of styles. Because here only paints the people who are really passionate about; because people who painted for fashion, now it is not possible, that is, it is nearly impossible to paint in Barcelona, the passionate one is the only who paints, the old and the new that have guts, or the new ones who still they have fines of 3,000 and 4,000 euros and they are ok. The day

something happens to them, it will come up. “Should I keep doing this?”, “Is it worth?” And surely they will say “no, it is not worth”, “it’s been fun”. [artists\B13]

What they always aim for, beyond near or territorial distances between centers and peripheries of the city, is the searching, the gathering and the production of walls with high visibility of the work. The centers always attract. An action that decentralizes these territorial productions are the conventions of graffiti, usually performed in the peripheries of the city. These coordinated activities mobilize and activate the territory for the artwork production and a recognition of other territorial areas that are not part of the nerve centers of the city. To be part of a crew also contributes to the division of the territory, the number of members allows them to multiply the number and the breadth of obtained spaces, especially in cities with characteristics like Barcelona, where it becomes extremely difficult to paint without being found by the police. An alternative possibility is to paint on the



Fig. 3 Buenos Aires, Photo by Ricardo Klein

framework of private projects that manage “free walls”, but part of the collective disagree on making work in areas with such characteristics: legal walls, managed by a private project, giving personal data, etc.

“I do not have to ask anyone’s permission to paint. I mean, I prefer to ask permission from a man on his blind and to be able to paint it, than to go to a legal wall, paint it and the next day someone has deleted it. Because it will come another person that will paint it, so it is cyclical, those are the legal walls. I am not convinced about that. I paint on the street and what I paint on the street are mostly blinds, abandoned places, to rent or whatever, and then I go and I paint them, namely, I paint them illegally. But I go there during the day and I wear my clothes like I was doing a good job and there it is.” [artists\B5]

In any case, the search is to go to the peripheries of the city or even out of it, finding vacant building lots, tunnels, bridges



Fig. 4 Montevideo, Photo by Ricardo Klein

or abandoned factories are a constant in this regard. The street becomes an open air auction where its buyers are the graffiti writers and street artists who do not pay money for obtaining each place.

These starting points and daily walks build and display a



Fig. 5 Lima, Photo by Ricardo Klein

geographical (and familiar) map for future works in the public space. The repetitiveness of their local tours produces observations that help to find possible areas to act. These territorial markings become their menu of options to intervene. They conceive the walls as an extension of their eyes, which is why not all the city walls are equal, only those who can convey a certain sense will be taken into account. For instance, those places that achieve high visibility in public space (for example, because of the high number of



Fig. 6 Lima, Photo by Ricardo Klein

people and transport that can pass through there) are the most looked to be painted. These tours translate a map of urban geography that each graffiti writer or street artist is outlining with their work through the city. The different tours, at least the initial ones, leave footprints around the artists' everyday places: their home, their workplace, their neighborhood, among others. "If I had a map and I put together all the drawings, I will make a good tour of all the places I was." [artists\M10).

There is no necessary coordination between the chosen wall and the sketch that will be stamped on it. Nor is there a creative correlation in this regard. The priority is the wall to select, the hardware where to paint the artwork. Likewise, other relevant factors will be taken into account as part of the creative process: the light (natural and artificial) that converges on that wall, the materials and colors that the artist has at that time and, ultimately, the number of people who pass by.

Even if it is a common place to walk, the number of people walking on that area is one of the key variables to choose

the final place. While there is an idealization that street art is generated in all neighborhoods, the fact is that these expressions are done in targeted areas of the city. Beyond the circumstances at the time, graffiti writers and street artists see the territory as having a wide range of possibilities for the creative impulse, they live the city as the natural center of operations for the creation of artwork.

In their movements, there is always the intention to win the territory, to discover and somehow to make it their own, which ultimately stands as a space power. Even, sometimes, to avoid losing it to other colleagues, they generate initiatives more related to street craftiness than creative activity. For instance, they write on the chosen walls the word "reserved" or they make a very simple work (a bomb in two colors, for example) to indicate, symbolically, territoriality and ownership. The walls they select stay marked as an advance for future and more complex artistic interventions, although in some cases they eventually decide not to touch them. For some artists the walls speak, they feel that public space invites them to intervene, creating, somehow, metaphoric relations based on the need to mediate with their practice



Fig. 7 Barcelona, Photo by Ricardo Klein

in the city. While being an owner is an abstract concept of territory, it becomes empirical when it comes to walls located in more local territories, containing neighborhood identity. The neighborhood where they live is the home outdoors.

“Of course, when you decorate your home, you put a picture here because it is good or you put a plant there because it is good, it is the same. Your neighborhood wants a good look...” [artists\M1)

Many times the dialogue with neighbors enables them to achieve that “owning” of the physical space of the city. The basic prerogatives are two as the conquest of territory: i) because he or she is the first to arrive and ii) because he or she made a work on “conditions”, i.e. considered with certain value for the group and for the expression itself. From these views, for a high exposure level wall it will be difficult to be maintained in the public space with only two tags, or a little worked bomb. In brief, it is everything about unwritten codes of respect, which hovers between members of graffiti and street art communities but is never told orally, among other reasons, because it is not necessary. Those who feel part of these groups know this primordial rule of expression: one must respect to be respected. Afterwards, will come, or not, legitimacy, recovery and prestige.

4. Conclusions

The practices of graffiti and street art have been feeding back processes related to the most local experience of expression, with dynamics that link with the global movements of creation. Part of the transitions generated by those members who seek and pass through the path of professionalization is precisely to go out of those closest limits to their first experiences of street intervention.

This global movement, that transcends the local scene, sometimes results in collaborative projects between artists from different countries. In some cases, the relationship among international artists is greater than with their colleagues in the local scene. They join a common search to consolidate and share aesthetics, to keep doing projects to strengthen transnational dialogues, identifying logics of every local town and moving them to an imaginary global city, adapting to each one the project itself, a singular work dialoguing with multiple cities at once. Because Barcelona, Buenos Aires or Bristol are not the same.

The discoveries and territorial conquests by graffiti writers and street artists build an understanding of the possibility that a member of one group paints in a territory that already has an owner. It is for this reason that contradictions or tensions over shared territories can be generated. The collective will begin to question the legitimacy of an artist that always paints in the same areas and new views of valorization will be built about their place as a street artist. Because stagnate is synonymous with immobility, and who stands still loses visibility. In some cases, the greater the areas of presence, the greatest respect is achieved among their peers. These power and ownership games are constant. In old school graffiti writers, this view is more evident and there is no discussion of this rule. Perhaps for the street artists, especially the muralists, this visibility is obscured by other interests, for example, the concern to accomplish work of higher quality than previously realized. In this consists a desire to keep evolving, as the internal jargon of the group says. The expansion of the artwork in the city results in the spread of the work of each graffiti and street artist. In summary, as previously mentioned, this is the reproduction and growth of the personal ego.



Fig. 8 Montevideo, Photo by Ricardo Klein

Moreover, to access and work in conquered territories they must request permission, or they have to be invited by some of the graffiti writers or street artists that “own” them. But these dynamics are circular, that is, on the one hand they make the invitation; on the other, the whole group does not travel throughout the entire city. As large movements in the territory are not always generated, no tensions are created in relation to the uses and occupations of the spaces. From the view of the members of the group, sharing a wall is more than to paint together for a Photo. It is a time of community, to feel comfortable while you paint for a common purpose. And this is achieved only by working on other things that do not strictly relate to the mural intervention. That is why many artists highlight the friendship that unites them, in many cases, prior to the start of the graffiti or street art adventure. An example of this is the “train” experience. It

is practically impossible to carry out an intervention in this regard without full confidence among its members. They are extreme situations because they know that if the police arrest them, it will be a negative point for their positioning, legitimacy, appreciation and respect in the internal dynamics of the expanded group. Being arrested by the police is not synonymous with more prestige; on the contrary, it is a symptom of not having prepared well enough the intervention strategy, and therefore they go down few steps with reference to their peers.

Finally, it is understood that the graffiti writer and street artist is a global artist. While there are territorial references that are direct to the production of work of each of them, they do not belong exclusively to the local sphere. It is an art that can be performed in one’s place of residence and

elsewhere in the world. These processes brought new dynamics to the professional field for urban artists, work no longer accumulates or focuses exclusively on the local level. For many, it is a global art form, where the production of work can occur anywhere – even the search for new areas of creativity can emphasize the need for movement.

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Anonymous Inscriptions in Rio de Janeiro Resistance and informal urban communication on the streets

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Abstract

Parallel to the moment graffiti becomes an integrated component, legal and regular part of the city walls of Rio de Janeiro (mainly owing to the laws and actions that legalize and legitimize a once transgressive practice) a new kind of artistic intervention in the city emerged. Phrases written with spray, stencil or even pasted on the walls have the power to surprise, to question and challenge the townspeople. Interventions that can be comprehended as what Certeau (1994) defines as strange practices in the geometric space of the big cities. Actions that refer to specific forms of operations, which provide new visibility in urban areas. If the space is a practiced place, as the author affirms, the written phrases on the walls transform not only the backing, but also the space in which they are written.

Keywords: Transgression, urban intervention, Rio de Janeiro

Ironic and provocative poetic phrases take the walls in a new kind of action that has intensified in the last years and has become more and more common on the walls of the city. Usually located in places of great movement of people, these phrases evoke thoughts about the daily lives of the individuals in the city. The walls, before covered only by colorful graffiti murals, begin to provide new experiences.

These are mostly anonymous inscriptions in which their authors also prefer to remain anonymous, away from the spotlight, the galleries and the media. A mean of resistance and informal and urban communication that presents specific characteristics and imperatives, which make their intervention a marginal practice that is highly relativized with the place and the moment of their inscription in a territorial correlation (Canclini, 2008). An experience that has the power to change the perception of used spaces as support to amplify its meanings. The space of the flow and the constant transformation becomes a space of renewal of the perceptual experiment.

These are interventions that contribute to defining the urban space of the city, creating new plots between wall and frontages, besides emphasizing new aspects, which until then were not enrolled in those places. The inscriptions contribute to rethinking the meaning of everyday actions, as well as its relations with the city, the architecture and the urban environment. This is a practice that redefines the specificity of these same supports and provides a new kind of esthetic, political, poetic or even ironic experience in the midst of daily life.

These are little actions that generate a kind of dislocation, a light modification in the urban landscape that can become a vector of an even bigger intervention through the reaction of the individuals who experiment with them. Modifications of a static support that facilitates an important dynamic. According to Maffesoli (2005), the post modern rhythm is made of the encounter of these fragments of non temporality, in which the ludic and the imaginary punctuate the daily life.



Fig. 1 Oraculo Project, Photo by Hely Costa Júnior,

“Stop here, appreciate life for a minute and smile”. The phrase of *#oraculo* project, painted inside a square in the ground, through stencil, invites a pause in daily life, a relief in the middle of the city chaos, one minute of leisure in the middle of the way. Oraculo, as the author prefers to be identified, remains anonymous and preserves their freedom of speech. They point out that it is a representation that fits into any citizen:

The stencil “stop here appreciate LIFE for a minute and smile,” represents gratitude for the opportunity to live all this ... In the rush of everyday life, with the amount of information we are bombarded with, we often forget to stop, enjoy LIFE (enjoy what you want ... without moderation, the air, the sea, the people around, etc.) and give thanks with a smile (Oraculo, in interview with the author on November 20, 2015).

Six years later, many are the interventions that were created and spread through the city, usually with versions in Portuguese and English, and using, most of the time, stencils as the vehicle for communication. These interventions open a way to the appreciation of the ephemeral and spontaneous in everyday life, and make it possible to understand the

sense that Holderlin gives the dwelling when they propose that, “the man poetically inhabits the world” (*Apud* Carlos, 2001, p. 216). Unlike contemporary graffiti seeking fame and recognition, it is about a kind of appropriation of the urban space, which implies acting, feeling and understanding the city in a different manner. These are inscriptions that contribute to the formation of identity and visibility in the city, modifying it while humanizing it.

In the same series, there is the “stop here, make a wish, leave and make it happen.” Symbolizing the dreams and the ability to fulfill them, it does not depend on Santa Claus or the tooth fairy, but you, and only you. Serves as motivation, like a push ... Whatever your desire ... Make it happen! (Oraculo, in interview with the author on November 20, 2015).

Among the other interventions cited by Oraculo, can be listed: a star with the phrase “you are a star”, that has the objective to work as a cuddle in the middle of pedestrians, a way to show how each person is unique and special; an “x” with the saying “right place right time”, meaning that all places are right places to be and move forward; the phrase put in the cycle ways “run and never look back”, that at first refers to an incentive to healthy living, but also to forget the

grudges of the past without regrets; the “Déjà-vu” painted in public places like crosswalks reinforces the sensation that that moment had been experimented with previously and also the paint, with red ink over tree trunks that have been cut, as if it was blood from the tree, they seek to alert us to the destruction of nature.

In the middle of the hectic and chaotic Rio de Janeiro, the *oraculo* project seems to show that man is more than a productive being and that our relations go beyond our insertion in the flexible modes of production imposed by capitalism. For the author, it is a transgressive poetry project, which uses the art as so-called urban vehicle and so differs from graphite and graffiti, although using the same space and tools.

I believe that the oraculo project is located in an art niche where art extends up where you can not measure or imagine. I'm not sure who will go through there, what will this citizen think, if he will be touched or not, if it will make a difference in his life ... or even if he will realize that this is art (Oraculo, Apud Menezes; Mazzacaro, 2016, s/p).

A political action that can be understood as an instance, in its strongest sense, that defines the social life, limiting it, and constraining it while allowing its existence (Maffesoli, 2015). Interventions that provoke ruptures in the mechanical order of the city and that introduce a kind of discontinuity. A small, often fleeting transformation that has the power to change the surroundings and take the question to the irregular rhythm of daily life. These inscriptions are produced from the appropriation of public spaces, involving them with irony, poetry, politics, and so transforming them. An act that moves away from repetitive gestures, standard behavior and reproduction, lifting off the homogeneity imposed by daily life and allowing us to think about the limits imposed by the city space time. As phrases such as “Have you loved today?” spread through streets and avenues, it can be said, as stated by Le Breton (2006), a new emotional culture, averse to the rhythm and values imposed by capitalist society, is under social construction in the city.

In the white walls and forgotten spaces as low walls of gardens, as well as the same walls where authorized graffiti

are carried out and legitimized by society, emerge these phrases that act as a form of resistance, escape possibilities and gateway. Inscriptions that establish themselves from the multiplicity and the social fabric networks as a form of resistance appear in multiple spots, prone to transgress, disobey, resist and rebel. Where there is a relationship of power, there is also a perspective of resistance and opposition (Foucault, 1985).

These are forces that converge to the defense of freedom. Strategic games between freedom and anonymity of who paints them and the alienation of graffiti artists, in which the market and the laws attempt to control their behavior while other people fight to not be dominated. Phrases that can be noticed as a transversal struggle, immediate and questioning of subjectivity that is opposed to the forms of individualization consolidated by economic reason, ideological or administrative, which overlaps the graphite, as well as its privileges.

Thus, these inscriptions are, at the same time, a “subjectivation experience” and a “freedom experimentation” (Proust, 2000 p.21). A proof of an act of vitality, an individual impulse, within the current context of urban art. An urban subconscious, in which a cultural marginality emerges again. As free, ethical, sensitive, and rational beings, in the context of political struggles, the anonymous authors of these sentences, in their daily confrontations, become subjects of their practices, or, contrariwise, of their renounce to practices that are set by the market and, therefore, can reconstruct and retake their place and role. It can be said that the main objective of these phrases is not to attack individuals or institutions. It is a form of resistance that is practiced against the apparatus, methods and artifices developed to meet, classify, regulate and control society.

In short, the sentences are located within a relationship of struggle, a symbolic territory of cultural expression and contrast, generating a non-hegemonic opposition force. They exercise a resistance force, a force that is like power: inventive, mobile and productive, a potency that comes from below and is spread tactically. They have violated the order and can thus reveal the domination and the existing counterdomination in the street art world. They subvert the aesthetics of ordered graffiti, legitimized and often under curatorship,



Fig. 1 “não fui eu”, Photo by Hely Costa Júnior,

and replace the ethics of visibility, nonconformity and resistance. A symbolic and at the same time material way to demark spaces in the city that are used by the most diverse subjects, and an appropriation of the urban environment through marks of cultural expression and resistance to power.

According to Mondardo and Goettert (2008), the city is before everything a form of speech, in which the patronization would reveal a supposed harmonic among the individuals: the pattern is present in order that it should not and can not be stained, dirty, scribbled. Thus, the phrases have a game character, a ritual, or even a vehicle of information that disobey a prohibition, be it for the execution of an transgressive inscription or its contents (Leandri, 1982).

Thus, such interventions can be comprehended as political and symbolical marks, a way of popular expression that criticizes the order imposed by the State and the dominant classes (Canclini, 2008, p. 339.) In this sense, the political

can be thought of as a series of inevitable needs that generate conflicts and negotiations, paradoxes and tensions responsible for relations with others. As defined by Rancière (2006), retaking the Foucault perspective, a set of activities that trouble and shake the legitimating interests of the community order by means of the agency of equality. It is in this sense that the practice of writing questioning, political or ironic phrases over the walls can be understood as a practice of dissent.

The dissent has, as a goal, the indention of the sensible and the separation of public and private spaces as well as the actors who can occupy these environments. A conflict about the sensible organization of the world, in which the phrases throughout the city as “Não Fui Eu”, emerge like instruments of these conflicts. The dissent gives subsidy to the resistance, conflict, discussion and argumentation.

According to the artist author to the phrase, who prefers to be identified as *Não Fui Eu* (always written in big letters and with spray) the work started with an

interest in the street as a vehicle of ideas and also in the *pixação*¹ (graffiti). While the graffiti is a signature that claims authorship, and therefore the field of space, his work is a “signature that denies the very authorship – an antithesis of the very *pixação*” (Não Fui Eu, in interview with the author in January 10, 2015). A poetical potency emerges from this debate and, above all, from the different interpretations and readings that it can have in the urban space.

Given that the politics emerge when the subjects of the dissent, that until a moment have no voice or visibility, break the silence and gain space in the public scene (Rancière, 2004), “Não Fui Eu” is an action that gets clearly political profiles. It assumes an anti-speech in places and moments when it should not do so, and when it does, it is from there a political action and its creator and author, a political subject. In this context, the phrase rises as a weapon of contestation and transgression.

I am aware that the places that I occupy most part are private property, which can lead me into legal problems. I prefer that my work is known, but I do not - what gives me more independence to come and go and enhances the rhetoric of work (Não Fui Eu, in interview with the author on January 10, 2015).

These are actions that are capable of creating fissures in the sensible order, in order to confront social structures and their divisions and create new fields belongingness. Pallamin remembers, “nothing in itself is political, but it can become political as it operates under the dissensual rationality” (Pallami, 2010, p. 8). Thus, the political subject, *Não Fui Eu* becomes himself an agent of manifestation through their phrases spread by the city. The political subject is not the one who just becomes conscious of himself but, above all, the one who becomes an agent of the dissent - a declassification operator capable of undoing the police structure that limits the place and the functions of each body inside society.

The political subjects do not exist as stable entities.

They exist as subjects in act, as punctual and local

1 *Pixação*, graphed with the letter x, according to the phrase’s author is a neologism created by the taggers as something that unifies the graffiti culture.

capacities to build on its virtual universality, those controversial worlds that undo the police order. So they are always precarious, always likely to be confused again with simple plots of the social body that just ask the optimization of you. (Rancière Apud Novaes, 1996, p. 278)

The politics have no determinate place or event predetermined subjects: the dissent breaks the instituted and given as natural organization, in which the domination relations are consolidated and rooted, in order to change the histories and places defined there, in some kind of battle about the sensible. As *Não Fui Eu* affirms, he prefers to remain isolated from the graffiti artists and taggers groups for the sake of the autonomy of his work.

*I do not classify my work, others rank it based on their personal experiences. I’ve heard some say that is graffiti and not *pixação* because they like and they think it is beautiful, I think this is bullshit. For me is *pixação* and / or a work of art that speaks to the media that it is made of: *pixação*... I do not belong to any crew nor paint with graffiti or other taggers, despite knowing the media I prefer to keep my job autonomous, without linking me to any “pot” (Não Fui Eu, in interview with the author on January 10, 2015).*

The policy has an inherent esthetic dimension that emerges in the sensible form, directly related to the sensitive and political, simultaneously.

The system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience (Rancière, 2004, p.13).

Interventions like these fit in what the author calls “share of the sensible”. An action with an ever-controversial character, which affects the ways of being and the ways they divide the occupations of individuals in the ordinary world and its possibilities in a controversial area in which certain presences do not reach the visibility and voices not heard. This share of the sensible constitute an unequal

division among equals, which directly relates to the political dimension present there. It is when “the political denounce is open to poetry and the popular poetry covers itself of political density” (Martin-Barbero, 2009, p.279), the combination and the union of different ways of rebellion configure and register the protest in the urban fabric. Despite *Não Fui Eu* claiming that his work is close to graffiti, it is an action that goes beyond the simple demarcation of space. Thus like the other inscriptions already cited they are different from the graffiti defined by Moura (1990), as language splinters, or even manifestos of those who have nothing to say, because they are strange signs that are installed in the continuum of language from a discontinuity in an ideological and unreadable confrontation. The carioca phrases are interventions that bring to light some kind of conflict. Not a point of view or acknowledgment of conflict, but a shock on the construction of a common world, from the claim of another kind of share from the society, in which affirms a contingency of the social order. Thus, the practice of dissent is an invention that makes you witness both worlds into one, an action that builds litigious and paradoxical worlds, in which they reveal together two cutouts of the sensible world.

From this litigious relation among social groups constitute the political subjects that can be understood as “powers of enunciation and manifestation of the litigation that inscribe themselves as something more, something overlapped, regarding any composition of a social body” (Rancière *Apud* Novaes, 1996, p. 277).

In general, one can say that the writings on the walls of Rio de Janeiro, are what Rancière (2005) calls models for building a pluralistic world. Models that interpellate the dominant esthetic and activate the participation of an emancipated spectator, who has the ability to manage images produced, as well as creating a regime that resists dispersion and neutralization. Unlike the passive spectator that only consumes and applauds an artistic object, such as a graffiti mural, the spectator or reader that perceives, interacts or Photograph the misspelled phrases on the city walls, is able to act, create and build their own maps from their relationship with what they read, poetic, political, social or ironic phrases. Phrases that have no effect, but effect a change of perception, through which individuals can see other realities.

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In search of a commons of centers - reviewing values and methods designed to assert benefit, harm or opportunity among uncommissioned visual urban practices

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Abstract

Photographer Martha Cooper points out that artists and graffitiists define street art as pictures and graffiti as words (Cooper, 2016). Meanwhile, municipal authorities, property and transport managers may tell us that street art is framed by what is legal and graffiti by what is illegal. This is not an article about art versus crime, rather it is about disparate and commonly accessible centers for discussing and understanding value, in ways that look toward easier dialogue across and between long-separated specialisms concerned with unsolicited visual urban practice and efforts to manage those. To Cooper the processes of painting and urban play are at the center, to authorities legal, political and commercial demands lie far closer to the center.

Each of us who variously associate or engage with uncommissioned street art, urban creativity or graffiti, bring new centers and peripheries, be those related to social personal interest, professional occupation, or spatial action. Artists, creative practitioners, urban managers, land owners, cultural consumers, transport providers, academics, activists and self-proclaimed vandals, each reframe what we bring to this terrain through highly disparate values and indicators that we consciously or unconsciously attribute to these informal visual urban practices.

This article draws on findings from a recent major European research project, Graffolution, plus separate socially responsive design-led insights gathered through the Graffiti Dialogues Network via the University of the Arts London, plus interviews with a wide range of individuals, diversely concerned with graffiti and related practices. It sets out to identify and discuss some of the value-sets and indicators which some consider as central and others consider peripheral in experiencing, managing, creating or otherwise intervening in urban contexts through visual practices. The article refers to cases that merge diverse value centers, in varying success, and discloses a number of immediate opportunities for prototyping new common and accessible ways to understand and respond to different centers and peripheries of value.

Keywords: Centers of Value, Equitable representation, Graffiti, Street Art, Urban Creativity, Design

1. Introduction

“For some [...] every incidence of graffiti is an act of vandalism which has a deleterious effect on the urban environment. But for others, every incidence of graffiti is an affirmation of life in the city, like a flower appearing through a crack in the pavement. And of course, there are others who occupy every conceivable position in between these two extremes. Graffiti, then, provokes disagreement. The question becomes: how should we handle this disagreement?” (Kurt Iveson, 2009b: 29)

Kurt Iveson’s insights are inspiring, as a call to action for finding more constructive ways to handle the disagreements he mentions, yet there is still much to do in this arena. Recently completed research within the EU Graffolution project has seen that much work on and through graffiti in Europe and other Western contexts still revolves around two misleadingly oppositional positions. Typically these reflect long-separated approaches of unsolicited visual

urban practice¹ and of efforts to manage or control those unsolicited activities.² In this article we refer to non-absolute frames of ‘pro-social’ and ‘anti-social’ (defined by Graffolution, 2014). These are used as broad fields across which different actions, responses, or interpretations may take root³, but make no assumptions about legal status or absolute value of any intervention. By no means does this paper wish to enter into another exchange about for versus against, pictures versus words, or other such contesting polarity that may come to mind. On the contrary, the text seeks to explore opportunities to recognize and better afford *multiple* centers of value, in terms of debate and strategy but also in terms of voices represented in practice and on street.

To date, efforts to ‘handle’ the disagreements mentioned by Iveson still often result in actions of attrition between extremes of interest, of dissent versus control. Meanwhile, those “who occupy every conceivable position in between” might not get a look in. What is of interest now is to consider how we could hear more from and more about the fuller spectrum of those positions, which Iveson alludes to, each as different centers of value rather than just two. This brings us to explore a more open commons (see for example, Bingham-Hall, 2016, 2-4) of value centers among visual urban practices including graffiti, street art and urban creativity.

This paper is informed, on the one hand, by findings which surfaced through (and affected the focus of) the Graffolution project - including 90 interviews within the UK, Germany, Austria and Spain, plus a ‘state of the art’ review of over 300 key publications in the context of graffiti and street art. On the other hand, the insights here draw upon separate workshops, desk-research, design-led events, pilot actions, and conversations within wider work we have undertaken

1 Including all uncommissioned or unsolicited instances of graffiti, street art and urban creativity.

2 Including policing and criminal justice processes but also municipal graffiti strategies, cleaning services and the actions of professional service industries, which have arisen in this field.

3 This is distinctly different to assuming the actual impacts of graffiti (or of efforts to control or facilitate it) as pro-social or as anti-social.

from Central Saint Martins (University of the Arts London), through the Graffiti Dialogues Network, involving highly diverse contributors concerned with graffiti and street art.⁴ The large network of empirical data represented between Graffolution and the Graffiti Dialogues Network enables this article to (a) identify and discuss samples from a wide palette of values relating to graffiti and street art practices, and (b) consider future tools to better accommodate multiple centers of value and understandings of success.

The engagements mentioned above repeatedly point us to conundrums about voices represented and resources invested in shared (public and private) urban contexts. Time and again we hear that tackling graffiti is an expensive activity, yet there appears little clarity or agreement over who it serves exactly. Whilst city authorities, managers of built environments and transport providers around Europe are under pressure to deliver more for less, most policies around Europe still position graffiti, or uncommissioned (including unsanctioned) visual practices, as indisputably worthy of prevention, removal, punishment, or a combination of these ‘measures’ (responses). Through law, policy or street management such visual practices continue to be framed and responded-to as intrinsically anti-social, irrespective of the context or communities implicated. These blanket understandings of value mean that responses are forced to incur great cost in street management, policing, ‘reparations’, legal cases and more. However, as most Street Art & Urban Creativity readers will know well, these same visual urban practices are also referred to as part of the fastest growing or largest worldwide art movement of our time (e.g. Elias and Ghajar, 2015; Kuttner, 2015; Nastasijevic, n.d.; Kostov, n.d.; Street Art Paris, n.d.), and are taken as a boost to cultural capacities and social opportunities. For example, one UK artist interviewee for the Graffiti Dialogues project suggested, “street art is the only real art movement since at least the 1990s” (GDNUK1, 2016). In parallel, major

4 Graffiti Dialogues is a design-led research and action network; a safe space for diverse actors to come together to exchange, contest and collaborate. Those involved include graffiti writers, policing professionals, creative practitioners, authority and government representatives, activists, urbanists, residents, land and transport managers, academics, street artists, community champions and more - each as experts of their own experience. www.graffitialogues.com

international galleries and dealers promote practices they refer to as street art (e.g. Tate, 2008, Christies, 2016) and graffiti (e.g. Serpentine, March 2016), and since 2014 the Google Street Art project has run as one of its worldwide online initiatives to “make the world’s culture accessible to anyone, anywhere” (Google Cultural Institute, 2015). Such popularizations indicate significant changes in attitudes to graffiti and street art. A far broader spectrum has been emerging, which hosts multiple and diverse centers of value. However, most legal frameworks and strategies for action relating to uncommissioned artworks (permitted or not) still do not acknowledge these shifts. To follow, we identify some of the centers in this widening spectrum, each as part of a commons where different positions are actioned and heard more equitably.

Globally, this article seeks to demonstrate the pressing need for some redesign in the landscapes and systems of sharing value, and ponders how we can bring more diverse voices into open and safe exchange. We look to opportunities that would allow us to be more intentional in exposing ourselves to views different from our own, and that could open up new ways to see, to respond to, and to engage with uncommissioned graffiti, street art and urban creative practices. In order to do this, we will in the next section, 2, discuss the terms of *centers and peripheries of value*, building on theories from design, urban geography, audience studies, literary analysis and social and cultural anthropology, in terms of graffiti related practices. We will explain and explore the frames of ‘anti-social’ and ‘pro-social’ that many actors of urban environments still apply to uncommissioned visual urban practices. We will highlight the problematic nature of these two frames as they work within a hierarchy. The empirical data will illustrate that peers and professional groups working through these frames tend not to engage with many others who support different values.

In section 3, we will discuss the notion of a *commons of value centers*. To illustrate something of the breadth of this commons, we will map out examples from the spectrum of values associated with graffiti-related practices, and chart the indicators for how each might understand ‘success’. This will also highlight opportunities for capturing or embracing multiple and diverse value centers and indicators of ‘better’. We argue that it is useful to experiment and

evolve innovations (as in workable new ideas) to facilitate greater involvement of people with differing views in both the thinking and the hearing of feedback, the strategy forming and the practice of graffiti, street art and urban creativity. Hence, we will look at present examples of ‘merged models’ that incorporate mixed activities with diverse value centers resulting from the wider commons. Finally, we will propose a small number of extant opportunities to prototype new common and accessible ways to discern different centers and peripheries of value. In other words, who is being served, who is not, and what can we do about it?

2. Centers (and Peripheries) of Value

It would be possible to discuss centers of value in terms of physical and geographically located nodes offering multiple benefits for publics⁵ - in the sense that Tuan posits “to attend [spaces or places] even momentarily is to acknowledge their reality and value” (1977: 18), or as Warpole discusses libraries (2013: 55) as centers of individual and family value. In these cases, the place (designed or made construct) acts as the center itself. Equally one could discuss a given ‘piece’ of street art, urban creativity, graffiti, etc. as the physical center around which selected publics may form or ‘attend’ in person, or digitally. However, our focus here is rather on the individuals and interest-linked publics as the hosts of values who in turn ascribe priorities and interpretations to any given context or activity.

Adam Cooper (2014) Creative Industries representative from the Greater London Authority, has asserted that understanding the value of graffiti and street art lies at the heart of understanding the nature of the contribution of graffiti and street art in the city. Cooper reflects a ‘creative cities’ perspective that connects urban culture and creativity, economy and city branding with the notion of a successful city. Coming from the perspective of a regional government representative, Cooper hints at a need now for legal structures to move beyond the notion that legal equals beautiful versus illegal equals degradation assumptions represented through

5 In using the term ‘publics’ we refer to Dewey (1927), who believed the term ‘public’ to be misleading, since it is never a single group but instead reflects a plural form where multiple publics emerge around common issue(s) of concern or interest.

the 'anti-social' associations (see also Young, 2014, 2013 and Shaftoe, 2011)⁶ to more openly discuss and assess the diversity of values linked to graffiti and street art.

In his work within the city of Sydney, urban geographer Cameron McAuliffe (2014) distinguishes some of the regimes of value in the context of street art and graffiti. These include: aesthetic, economic, subcultural, gender, socio-spatial, regulatory, commodification, temporal, advertising and planning. Added to these, others uncovered during the Graffolution research⁷ include frames of law, of 'mainstream culture', local-interest (geographic proximity), environmental, health, wellbeing, social media, mass media, peer status or peer identities, public consent, political drivers, development or transport agendas, and more. If each person who makes, responds to or reacts against an instance of graffiti or street art holds different clusters of these regimes or frames closer to the center and others more peripherally, then we need ways to be able to consider and understand them in comparable ways, or at least on a more level field. Our interview respondents and workshop contributors repeatedly bring us back to the understanding that different centers are also bound to the vehicles or formats used to indicate perceived successes or value. For example at present, local and government-authorities predominantly have the capacity to hear graffiti complaints through specific feedback systems but few are able to capture positive responses, or new ideas in comparable ways. Meanwhile, communities who are active about graffiti on social media, readily share tweets, posts and comments and street art exhibition reports, discuss footfall and audience diversity frequently as indicators of success.

What is clear is that the understanding of value is highly dependent on who is being served (cared for, communicated with, or satisfied) and who is not. A transport company reporting that all their customers and affected publics are being served by maintaining a zero-tolerance approach is not so different to a street artist or vandal openly stating that they are simply not so interested in serving multiple

⁶ Graffolution interviews also revealed that such opposition are still commonly assumed.

⁷ Through literature review, semi-structured interviews and workshops.

publics through their actions and focusing on those included through their particular practice as peers. The measures used to 'serve' in relation to graffiti are of course different but neither truly reflects an ambition to include all publics in their actions. The transport operator may hold the appearance of cleanliness near the heart of their values whilst the graffitiists and even some transport passengers bring other values nearer to the center.

When actors with a duty of responsibility towards graffiti prevention work primarily on the basis that 'graffiti', 'graffiti vandalism' and 'anti-social behavior' are synonyms (Graffolution, 2014), this affects decisions about who should be served (those who lodge complaints or concerns) and how (through reporting devices designed to prioritize those voices). However, as Iveson (2009b) indicates, the assumption that any who perform uncommissioned painting activities are distinctly "unsocial", irrespective of what is painted, while others are somehow more social beings and more deserving to be seen or heard, is problematic. Further, when the service of property ownership as a reigning value center is threatened, paint can be construed as criminal damage, described as the devaluation or defacement of public or private property without the owner's permission (Graffolution, 2014). Henry Shaftoe (2014 and 2010) reminds us that statutory assessments of what constitute this defacement, or devaluation, revolve around property-rights and permissions as the only centers of value which can be heard, legally speaking. Bengtsen and Arvidsson (2014) assert that law affords fixed attributions of space through property rights. However, they make the point that this is different to spatial justice, which can only be achieved where oscillations are permitted over what might be valued or devalued. To them, the processes of "place-taking and withdrawal" between legal rights, involvements and informal actions in space are central to spatial justice (2014: 127).

Appadurai (2013: 15)⁸ and McAuliffe (2014) also concur that understanding value is a process, not intrinsic to an object, such as paint or a wall, but it is understood between particular cultures, as a localized system of meanings. Similarly, Simmel (2011 and originally 1907)⁹ defines value as

⁸ First published in 1986.

⁹ First published in 1907 and first English publication was in 1978.

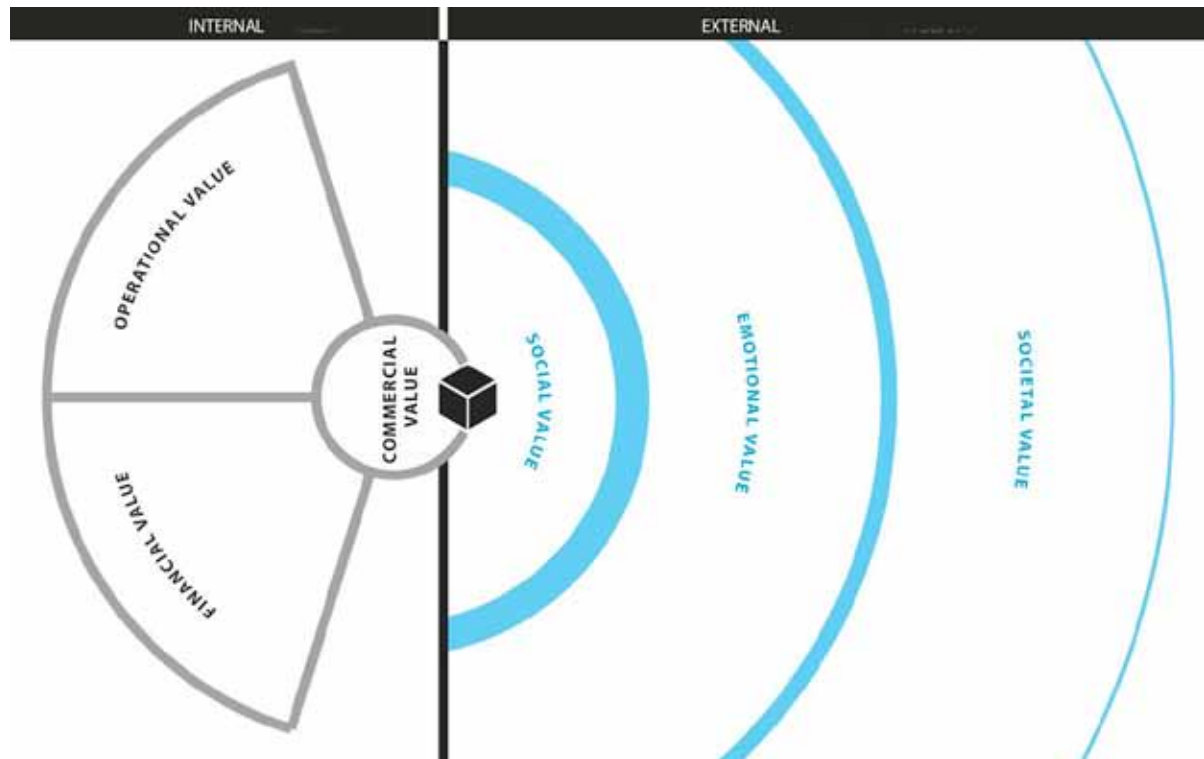


Fig 1. Leurs & Rezaei - Social Innovation Value Canvas

judgments made about objects as subjects (see Appadurai, 2013: 3-4). This means that the value of a mark on a wall or a bridge is located outside its material existence and within the contexts of value such as emotional, social, aesthetic, or cultural characteristics. Such arguments relate to the discussions in audience studies, where a text's meaning (including instances of graffiti and street art) is very much linked to the reader (audience), which cannot be separated from the context. In reporting on the field of texts, Syson (1998) also tells us that "Australian literary culture used to have three vital centers of value: the academy; the literary writers, performers and reviewers; and the publishing industry. They formed a network of relations and tensions that benefited Australian writing. Today we have but one centre: publishing" (270). If Syson's observations in literary culture are mapped to the realms of graffiti and urban creativity, perhaps the value center of law and regulation positions itself to remain as the only vital center around which the rest are edged towards the periphery, and out of consideration. However, Frow (2001: 301) contends, in line with Syson, that every act of reading and every act of ascribing value is specific to the particular regime, or in this case center, that

hosts it. This means each reader may center on those values that s/he feels closest to but must acknowledge and be ready to engage with different experiences of other readers.

Designers have for some time worked to develop diverse methods to understand or capture centers and peripheries of value in both commercial and societal contexts. For example, Leurs and Rezaei (2013) use the Social Innovation Value Canvas (Fig. 1) as a visually useful way to consider a design proposal in relation to values that lay more centrally and which are more marginal. The figure shown gives an interpretation whereby commercial value lies at the center. This is institutionally informed by economic and operational values and uses a hierarchy of frames to understand impact upon others, where social value first, followed by emotional and wider societal value. In other cases however, individual or collective (organizational) readers could bring their own hierarchies of which values to pull closest to them. At the peripheries lie different takes on what is perhaps less-social, or even anti-social for different 'readers'.

Separately, designers working on the Graffiti Dialogues Network, Extending Empathy project and the European

Graffolution project, recently facilitated a Human Graffiti library workshop, which involves an interactive experience that engages two people as 'living books' (that came from a wide range of backgrounds such as public administrators, curators, policy makers, security consultants, as well as those who identified as 'vandals') and 'readers'. Here, living books could be taken out for one-to-one exchanges about personally held experiences and values in relation to graffiti and street art.¹⁰ The organizers were surprised by the level of positive feedback from the event, as a designed 'device' (Ehn, 2008), which sought to enable diverse centers of value to cross paths, as participants compared and heard from others in the terrain of graffiti, street-art and urban creativity.

Whilst attempts to discuss how we frame artistic perspectives in relation to legal, commercial or even citizen views may be unpopular with some¹⁰, we observe that incomparable ways of sharing (i.e. indicating) values between diverse centers are part of what hinder new possibilities for many forms of urban creativity. Those who place The Art of these practices at the center are frequently expert at communicating cultural value among cultural consumers but will show little interest in evidencing the value of what they do to a crime prevention community, to give one example. It is as if many peer- or professional groups still feel compelled to calibrate their relationship to graffiti to either 'pro-social' or 'anti-social' frames, and to open out discussion to other ideas or action is somehow problematic. Ultimately, this restricts opportunities for existing and new publics to benefit, to engage, or even to simply leave space for these practices.

To follow we discuss the anti-social and pro-social frames a little further. These are not just about the activity but also the motivations and priorities of those involved. For example, the interventions facilitated during the 2016 Manchester Cities of Hope¹¹ as collaborations between charities and street artists are pro-socially centered not because of the

10 During Graffiti Dialogues workshops run in London and Barcelona, land managers, artists, crime prevention professionals, academics and designers have all variously expressed some level of disdain at the thought of subjecting their own actions to the perspectives of others.

11 See <http://citiesofhope.global>

impact of the paintings created but because of their focus primarily to promote pro-social ends. In contrast, an anti-graffiti coating painted on an historic building is anti-socially centered, not because of the rights or wrongs of anti-graffiti coatings but because the focus is on intervening in the 'anti-social' rather than in the 'pro-social' frame. One frame is typically about mitigating something that exists and the other is about promoting something new.

2.1 Anti-Social Centers

In discussing anti-social centers of value, we are referring typically to strategy and policy, and action-linked values that presume most instances of uncommissioned visual urban practice to be 'anti-social' by default. In this context, the indicators of success or failure of an action are most normally centered on legal requirements (related to property) and political pressures. The legal context recognizes graffiti having either negative or no value (McAuliffe, 2014; Iveson, 2009b). Unsurprisingly, this stance is mainly seen among national and local municipalities, policing, law enforcement, transport operators and property managers.

The still-debated foundations of the zero tolerance approach go back to Kelling and Wilson's (1982) much contested broken windows theory, which argues that urban disorder and vandalism, if not eradicated instantly, will lead to additional crime and anti-social behavior. Thus, graffiti writing is defined as an anti-social behavior, seen as an activity that may link to further criminal activity and is associated with raising feelings of insecurity (Keizer, Lindenberg and Steg, 2008). From this perspective graffiti is described as an infectious disease that spreads like an outbreak and causes major changes in a society (Gladwell, 2002). Graffiti is also seen as a signal of a careless and indifferent society (Stafford and Petterson, 2000). As Cresswell (1992) suggests, from this zero-tolerance perspective, graffiti does not have a place in the fabric of the city. Through the years these arguments came to influence and define public policy. Within Europe, when local and national laws are examined it becomes clear that graffiti is described as an anti-social activity, as vandalism and criminal damage to property. One Graffolution interviewee (OUK2, 2016) explains:

I speak about graffiti from a very parochial perspective, that is from a transport authority's perspective. For us graffiti is criminal damage. It's unauthorized spraying, painting,

scratching, etching of any surface where that spraying, painting, scratching or etching shouldn't be.

Approaches like the one expressed in the above quote (especially focusing on criminal damage) exemplify value judgments principally based on permission and property ownership (discussed further by Young, 2014; Shaftoe, 2011). Whilst the ambition may be to reduce what people want less of, the zero tolerance and broken windows discourses of anti-social centers may in fact enhance moral panic (social or political). For example, actions such as the restriction or removal of legal walls¹², are justified by, but can also boost fears about the possibility of spillage ('spread') of tags to non-permitted areas (Iveson, 2009b: 32, 2010b; McAuliffe, 2014). However, changes have been surfacing among criminologists, urbanists and some municipalities about public opinion to crimes including graffiti vandalism, and whether and how to deal with them (Weisburd, 2016, Young, 2010; Iveson, 2009a, 2009b; Halsey, 2006; Halsey and Young, 2002). Impact as experienced in-context (rather than in relation to law, for example) has become more important in criminology *and* in designing policy and strategy, in response to criminal and anti-social events (Weisburd, 2016). Yet, the changing approaches and perspectives identified continue to occur predominantly in silos, separated by discipline but also by value centers. For example, the research conducted during the Graffiti Dialogues and the Graffolution projects included conversations with some police officers who were frustrated that the law and the criminal justice system were not keeping up to date with the changing mood of communities and some regional authorities.

2.2 Pro-Social Centers

The discussions in this section refer to the values that center primarily on the promotion or addition of social factors, more than the removal of something which a given actor or group may consider anti-social. It acknowledges graffiti and street art's potential as (a) an environmental, cultural or economic asset, (b) a device for social engagement and material contributions in public spaces and (c) a visual form of voice among many voices expressed in democratic society. Such factors can be linked in part to the political, industry and academic discourses around 'localism' (DCLG, 2011),

12 Legally permitted graffiti and street art walls.

people-centered planning (TCPA, 2015) and 'creative cities' (e.g. Hewison, 2014; DCMS, 2008; Landry and Bianchini, 1995). It is against this context we observe the rising emergence of pro-social art programs, mural projects, self-organized community activities, urban festivals and social projects encapsulating graffiti and street art for a variety of reasons such as education, commerce, rehabilitation, social innovation, community cohesion, and community regeneration (such as the Signal Project in the UK).

Within the arts-led regeneration in urban environments we observe street art's capacity to enhance urban social life and living spaces. Here the indicators of success are street safety, activity support and enhancement of the design or look of urban spaces. For instance, examples from the UK and Australia (Leake Street in London or May Lane Project in Sydney) illustrate how, with the use of street art and collaboration of various actors, dysfunctional spaces can be turned into functional and safe public spaces, where various members of the communities can enjoy spending time in or using them as part of their communal route. These may also refer to emotional value attached to a space as well as socio-spatial value where there is an increase in social interaction (BBC News, 2014; Tooth, 2011; Austin, 2010; Iveson, 2010a).¹³

Some street art and graffiti (legal and illegal in some instances) have been recognized as an economic asset, having a commercial value, being used as part of a city's image and place branding¹⁴, increasing touristic, artistic and everyday appeal. For example, it may increase footfall (bring tourists to these areas as well as becoming hotspots for residences), increase property values and increase business for traders (BBC NEWS, 2014; Young, 2014; Watts and Feeney, 2013; Bristol City Council, 2011; Leach and Baker, 2010). Within the UK London (Leake Street and Shoreditch) as well as Bristol (Stokes Croft) examples reveal that street art and graffiti attract tourists (Watts and Feeney, 2013; Leach and Baker, 2010). In relation to these indicators graffiti or street artists become valuable players in the gentrification of urban spaces (Young, 2014), in the branding of cities,

13 See Graffolution, 2015a

14 Place branding as discussed by Vitiello and Willcocks, 2006

as well as in reducing insecurity and fear of crime in public spaces (Gamman and Willcocks, 2009).¹⁵

There is also a view of street art and graffiti allowing the creation and evolution of democratic spaces where different groups within communities can express themselves, as seen in the Southbank areas in the UK (Stephenson, 2011; Borja and Muxi, 2003). Other indicators of success here include emotional value, aesthetic value and subcultural value attached to a space. Urbanist Borja and designer Muxi (2003) describe how culture and publics are defined through the activities and discourses played out in all kinds of shared urban contexts, be they public, privately managed open areas, or transport contexts. Such spaces, they say, should guarantee (pro-social) equality through forms of appropriation on behalf of different social or cultural collectives. However inclusive this may appear, a pro-social focus in planning, place management, or even wall provision among artists usually comes bound to a hierarchical structure (see also Fig. 2) that fixes some value centers as greater and pushes others to the peripheries of the terrain. For example, Stafford and Pettersson (2003) argue that legal walls and mural projects create the possibility for the spread of graffiti to wider areas, which hosts of anti-social value centers want less of.

3. Towards a Commons of Value Centers

The frames of pro-social and anti-social do not between themselves act as umbrellas over all value centers. There remain many untapped opportunities to more widely acknowledge the multiple and diverse centers at play in relation to visual and informal urban practices. This section explores the notion of a *commons of value centers*, which brings disparate values into more open dialogue around uncommissioned visual urban practices. By this we mean a commons where value centers can exchange, co-exist, or contest as adversaries in open, visual and generative dialogue, rather than as enemies in spatial stalemate. This builds upon Bingham-Hall's (2016) discussion of urban commons, to include social *and* physical space for verbal and practice-led discourses. This can be through art, through management, cleaning, cultural interventions, and more. Figure 2 iterates an exploration of frames of value,

¹⁵ See Graffolution, 2015a

as understandings and responses to graffiti, street art and urban creativity, in both strategy and on-street activity. Through the commons of value centers, we look towards more developed and accessible approaches for sharing, indicating and understanding value, beyond simply the frequent antagonisms that may be assumed. For example, one interviewee from a UK anti-graffiti industry body describes success through rapid removal: “the policy is to clean it, obliterate it, get rid of it as fast as practically possible” (PLEUK2, 2014). On the other hand, an architect interviewee explains that “... many people in Hackney and Tower Hamlets are walking around Photographing it [graffiti] and kind of tour groups are going around looking at different bits of graffiti. You kind of think, well, it's become a... something of like a real cultural value” (EUK4, 2014).

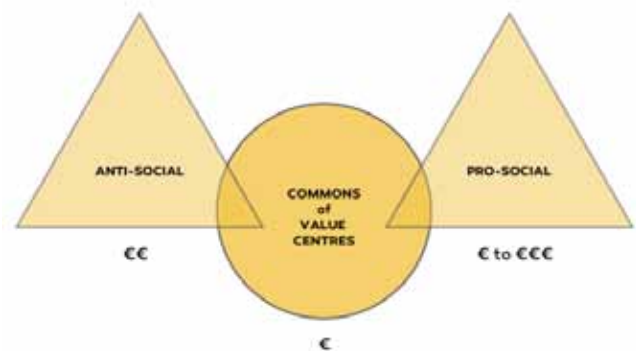


Figure 2. An exploration of frames of value

Part of the sense in moving beyond the broad frames of ‘anti-social’ and ‘pro-social’ is to identify or design opportunities to acknowledge wider ranges of value centers through which people assess activities such as graffiti and street art. Figure 2 is one iteration of our attempts to illustrate some of this variety and acts simply to reflect the recurring tendencies that emerged as we set out to map centers of value and related challenges. Relying exclusively upon anti-social or pro-social frames for attributing value tends to be more hierarchical (illustrated via triangles), more expensive (expressed via € symbol) and less adaptable to context or situation. Firstly, more hierarchical because given value centers trump others by default in these frames. In the anti-social frame understandings of success might be bound tightly to reductions in anti-social activity, by achievement of environmental enforcement targets (e.g. CCTV installed) or by prosecution numbers. In pro-social

3.2 Merged models

CENTERS OF VALUE: GRAFFITI; STREET ART & URBAN CREATIVITY	Indicators of success 1	Indicators of success 2	Indicators of success 3
Regulatory	Decrease in legal costs; Increase in convictions	Decrease in instances of illegal mark making / crime figures	Decrease in cleaning costs
Economic	Commercial value, increase in revenue (shops, markets...)	Increase in touristic image, artistic and everyday appeal	Increase in footfall
Social	Increased community engagement	Increased community involvement; increased accountability and transparency	Increase of communal or social ties
Cultural	City image, place branding	Increased attendance records	
Aesthetic	Development of new styles	Enhancement of the design and look of urban spaces	
Environmental	Local quality indicators	Enhancement of the design and look of urban spaces	Reduced pollutants - from spray paints or cleaning chemicals
Subcultural	Increase in walls/spaces	Increase in painting activity	Increased activity support
Gender	Increase in gender equality and opportunity		
Health	Decrease in GP visits; healthcare costs	Emotional wellbeing	
Well-being	Increase in positive emotions (safety, comfort, happiness, health...)	Increase in 'quality of life'	
Socio-spatial	Increased social interaction		
Commodification	Increase in commercial value; Increased publicity	Increase in the number of commercial by-products	Increased attendance records
Advertising	Uses in commercial advertising	Uses in social campaigns	City image, place branding
Planning	Increased regeneration	Increased renovation	
Arts-led regeneration	Increased street safety	Enhancement of the design and look of urban spaces	Increased activity support
Social media	Increased social media feedback	Increased followers	
Mass media	Increased mass media coverage		
Local-interest (geographic proximity)	Increased community engagement	Increase in communal spaces	Increased street safety
Public consent	Unprompted public or service user satisfaction	Increased attendance records	
Political drivers	Increased public support	Increased private and public investment	
Transport operator agendas	Service user satisfaction	Decrease in cleaning costs; minimize 'outage' time of rolling stock	Decrease in the instances of graffiti
Emotional value	Increase in the emotional connection to a space (positive connotations)		
Societal value	Increased community involvement	Increased social interaction	
Event-organizational value	Increased attendance records	Print and online media coverage	

Table 1: Evolving table of indicators for diverse Centers of Value

frames, understandings of success might be headed by high attendance or participation numbers from an event, or by shares among certain social networks. Secondly, more expensive because less resource sharing is possible between diverse disciplines, departments or communities of interest, so the economic burden of particular actions is not shared. The fact that the triangles do not overlap each other betrays the fact that centers do not naturally cross between anti-social and pro-social frames. By contrast, in a commons of value centers we see a more equitable structure within which value centers exist (illustrated via the circle). This reflects a more open and agile negotiation of what is important for whom exactly and in what context, including dissimilar perspectives (expressed by the two triangles overlapping the circle). Next, we will start to expose opportunities for using a commons of value centers approach.

3.1 A Commons Tabled

This subsection starts to give form to the discussions on the centers of value for graffiti-related practices, and maps out sample indicators for how each might define 'success' or 'better'. Table 1 is an early iteration, which likely showcases the tip of an iceberg. Even in its current prototype form the table in itself already acts as a commons device, like a lens, making visible a number of the multiple value centers relating to value uncommissioned urban practices in a leveled manner. Among the variety of centers¹⁶ each hosts localized systems of meanings. The meaning of a paste-up that appears on the side of a shop is likely very different for the shop-owner who holds commercial value at the center, than for a passer-by who holds their emotional response at the center. Through such meanings, value is ascribed and the indicators of 'success' or 'better' are established. For a train [graffiti] writer, the successes and ways to indicate (share) them will be different than those of a journalist, a community safety professional, or an art dealer, for example. Each value center differentiates itself from the 'others', variously establishing those others as peripheries from the position taken by that center. This does not however preclude the possibility for capturing or embracing multiple value centers and indicators, discussed further below regarding merged models.

16 Which largely emerged from the Graffiti Dialogues and the Graffolution research.

Part of the point of a commons is that it can be resilient to adapt and reorganize as contesting and desirable priorities change. As will be discussed in this subsection, there are several cases where such inclusive steps have been taken and to cross or redress the pro-social and anti-social divide in constructive ways.

Merged models bring together diverse value centers between activities of urban management and graffiti or urban creativity. They represent clusters of mixed, coexisting activities resulting from the wider commons portrayed in Figure 2. For example, combining open-walls with improved lighting, or greening with restorative justice practices, or painting opportunities with maintenance opportunities. They combine disparate values and efforts among specific communities and contexts. Brighton, for example, maintain a hard-stance on what can be demonstrated as problematic among given areas or communities whilst staying far more agile to collaborate with, facilitate or leave space for street artists in other contexts. Such merged positions can involve more efficient, more appropriate public spending. They help mitigate antagonisms in identified contexts, while supporting multiple types of facilitated (organized) or afforded (permitted) activity (see Norman, 2013). A Graffolution interviewee describes the merged outlook in Brighton that both aims to control specific problems in a certain context and to be more open elsewhere:

We're not in a position to have a fortress Brighton. We can't have gates and cameras everywhere. It wouldn't resolve our problems and it would bring a host of other things but it is very difficult still trying to work on that [...] one of the strengths [here] is that the street art community do a lot of work with us and make a lot of the decisions for us and we can work with that and we can help it go in a positive direction. (AUK1, 2014)

In the early 2000's Brighton and Hove City Council started to evolve its graffiti strategy from cleaning off any graffiti and street art to making a distinction between disruptive and innovative works and encouraging high-quality art via designated urban creativity areas and commissioned works (Leach and Baker, 2010). This decision was reached after experiencing degradation and unmanaged spaces during

the preceding decade. Brighton identified an opportunity to involve graffiti writers in a process, which aimed at merging cultural, economic and crime prevention agendas. The Council has since explored ways to work with graffiti artists to revitalize degenerated spaces especially in the center of the city. Artists were given a number of prominent wall surfaces with the understanding that they would help maintain them. This approach makes effort to recognize and adhere to the centers of value represented by the Brighton and Hove City Council (by reducing maintenance costs) but also by those local artists (by giving over more space) and local residents and businesses (by offering the possibility of commissioning work for themselves and of increased footfall in particular areas).

To give another example, speaking at a Graffiti Dialogues workshop in Bristol, Ruth Essex (2011) describes:

Councils are very diverse institutions: I came in as an arts officer without any targets in my job about cleaning or crime reduction. So when I went into council discussions, I initially found that our goals and targets were somewhat opposed to some of the other departments I was working with, who had their work generated by complainants.

She further describes how she came to find herself working between artists, other citizens and diverse city departments and slowly managed to link up different ambitions, budgets and resources and support for actions to “[...] learn from the positive responses, and free up unused creative energy in the city” (2011).

At a municipal level, or that of property management or place creation, with a merged model multiple drivers are accommodated, seeking to serve diverse agendas and encourage more astute and more contextually relevant concepts for response (Graffolution, 2015c). This means where, for example, centers can appear to conflict with multiple desirable outcomes, it is still possible to develop artistic or strategic responses from across these and hear, and account for, multiple voices in a single space. In the next section we will explore a selection of possible future tools (envisaged during the Graffolution project) that have the potential to cater for multiplex ties in the contexts of graffiti, street art and urban creativity.

3.3 Future tools

We posit a small sample of tools and approaches where multiple indicators, measures, centers of value and understanding of success can be accommodated more openly and more equitably¹⁷. Throughout the research carried out in the contexts of the Graffiti Dialogues Network, Graffiti Sessions and Graffolution, our engagements and collaborations have included some self-proclaimed vandals who are very open, as well as some self-proclaimed artists who hold their priorities very close to their chests. We have also encountered individuals in cultural, commercial and governmental organizations who would apparently prefer far greater shifts in legal and urban strategies, and more creative actions than they are able to implement right now. These voices plus other communities and urban scholars consulted (Graffolution, 2015b) have together led us to see a moment of change - and we think, opportunity - at many levels for urban creativity and uncommissioned visual practices. The notion of a commons is about bringing peripheries into clearer view for those who wittingly or unwittingly miss the point being made by some, and it is about allowing others to evolve their own centers of value, ideas and practices by increasing exposure to difference. This can happen through wider verbal debates but importantly also through the inclusion of urban practice as part of the same open discourse. Emergent ideas discussed and encountered during the Graffolution research included:

- Multi-agenda feedback tools: These are resources that question who is being served by what actions or responses, and who defines ‘success’ for example within a given graffiti-related scenario. They also question what would best indicate reduced attrition, reduced antagonisms, or other improvements for each actor (initiator, collaborator, victim or beneficiary). The Graffolution platform is beginning to prototype one version of this through its aggregated ratings system, found here <http://www.graffolution.eu/respond/response-finder> (Accessed 10 March 2016).
- Valuometers: These are live and connected visualizations of issues or actions, shown according to diverse indicators as illustrated in Table 1, or according to wide-ranging actor

¹⁷ See Graffolution, 2015b

group perspectives (e.g. registered users can feedback once they select the actor group which best represents them).

- Intervention mixer: This is a toolkit that helps combine interventions to form unique and context-specific strategies. This toolkit would present mixes unconstrained by value centers. For example, it may combine a street art event with CCTV monitoring where videos/live stream is shared via social media making an event more recognized or form discussions on CCTV monitoring of public space, transparency or civil rights.

- Visual Data Aggregator (McAuliffe, 2014): This is a platform that combines and collects images as visual value indicators of graffiti (positive or negative) from various channels - council cleaning teams, cleaning contractors, residents, tourists, writers and artists. Photographs by different actors across different databases and social networking systems can thereby be brought together. This aggregator acts as a more accurate reflection of the multiple positive and negative impacts of graffiti activity and allows a range of values to be collected through the visual medium rather than just negative values coming in through graffiti hotlines.

These represent a fractional sample from wider and evolving sets of possibilities (including but not limited to those mentioned in Graffolution, 2015b). They are of course yet to be proven in terms of their capacity to open out the commons of value centers discussed. Nonetheless, they can act as prototypes - prototypes towards new innovations in how uncommissioned visual and creative urban practices are contested.

To our knowledge, very few people ask for practices like graffiti to be legalized per-se. Rather the calls we hear are for more publics to have voices that can be heard in more equitable ways, in respect of the richly polyhedral values, responses and actions around graffiti. Small attempts to uncover and innovate in the commons of this terrain might enable the strategies and tactics of policy and urban management to find greater freedom to spend less (they have to) while authentically achieving and serving more.

4. Conclusion

Actions to promote, afford or impair instances of graffiti, street art and urban creativity reflect personal perspectives, collective priorities or professional positions, which each assume particular forms for attributing, hearing and expressing 'value'. As discussed above, those value attributions - centers and peripheries - are closely related to who is being served and who is not. Centering value on a single principle forces other values into periphery, and can hinder new opportunities for open 'successes' (i.e. serving more of the communities that they impact). In response, a commons-approach reveals multiple chances to prototype new alternatives that enable diverse experiences, specialisms, interests or practices to exchange, contest and collaborate - each in different ways but within an accessible common of communication and space. These are chances to:

- 'Hear' more diversely, to increase inclusivity through urban and creative practices (Gamman and Thorpe, July 2014).
- Design space for unusual collaborations to happen.
- Increase appropriateness in resource-allocation.
- Reduce public or societal spending on matters that do not warrant spending on courts, cops and corrections.
- Reduce unnecessary criminalization of uncommissioned visual urban practitioners (Essex, 2011).
- Pool effort and resource investment between diverse stakeholders and agendas.
- Widen the palettes accessible for both the debates *and* the visual practices of urban commons.
- Evolve (mature) our collective lexicon of responses to informal urban practices, such as graffiti.

This article has sought to break down some surface oppositions of center and periphery, and to identify direction for incumbent and emerging opportunities, such as those above. These reflect chances to redesign the ways that we understand what 'better' might look like when we include multiple centers of value in contexts of graffiti, street art

and related practices. In this terrain of activity we can see glimpses of a new *commons*, where value centers can exchange, co-exist, or contest as adversaries in open, visual and generative dialogue, rather than as enemies in spatial stalemate. Through future tools that can expose actors in this context to diverse values and understandings of success, we may increase the chances for people to have a more nuanced view of graffiti and other creative practices in urban public space. All of this of course takes effort to create, to innovate, to hear, to have a go. Importantly also, it takes willingness to fail, willingness to be surprised and willingness to be open about the changes we each want to see.

List of tables

Table 1: Evolving table of indicators for diverse Centers of Value

List of figures

Fig. 1. Leurs & Rezaei - Social Innovation Value Canvas

Fig. 2. An exploration of frames of value.

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Scrolling down the line – a few notes on using Instagram as point of access for graffiti research

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Abstract

This article discusses using social media, here Instagram, as a point of access in studies on subcultural graffiti, so as to provide an established arena for initiating contact with a variety of participants. Drawing from an ongoing ethnography of Swedish graffiti writers, the approach presented here works to mitigate the often so major hurdle within ethnographic work on sub-cultural groups: that of access, not only to the field, but also to the diversities and peripheries of that field. Actively exploring diversities and interactions through social media as part of a larger methodological frame opens up an innovative investigation of plural subcultural scripts of what and how and where the subcultural should be, that can then be assessed and explored through other methodological means. As such it also provides the researcher with the means to ground parts of the analysis in how and where the participants themselves present their subcultural activity.

Keywords: Ethnography, Access, Instagram, Graffiti, Subculture,

It started by coincidence. Of course it did. Most creative ventures do. In late 2013, as I was preparing for an research application on how graffiti writers in Sweden conceive of, and make use of, urban space, I started posting more and more pictures of graffiti on my Instagram account. Initially for the sole reason that it was all I Photographed during that time: I was riding my bike to tunnels and walls along the lines, went to hall of fames, started mapping and analyzing tags in the city center, and spent a lot of time benching at the local train station waiting for newly painted panels to roll by. The direct consequence of this was that the thirty friends who originally followed my personal account for the most part unfollowed me, and close to a thousand graffiti writers started to follow me instead. Still, there was no plan behind it, besides childishly basking in the small amount of attention I got. Plus it was fun to follow writers back, and see their work. Instagram is today an integrated part of the graffiti subculture. In many ways it has surpassed graffiti magazines as the major media for consuming graffiti (Jacobson, 2015:102). More so, graffiti on Instagram is not just a representation of graffiti, as in merely consuming it, it constitutes a vital part of producing graffiti: Writers do graffiti, Photograph it, and even if they themselves do not post it on Instagram, someone else often will (Glaser, 2015). It has come to the point that some writers

openly discourage others from posting pictures of their work without asking them first. In many ways, Instagram is a perfect medium for graffiti, its image-based flow and short comment feeds stimulate discussions between participants who sometimes know each other and at other times do not. It features discussions on style, risk, frequency, visibility, but also encouragements through ‘likes.’ The service itself is sort of a digital equivalent to the subcultural ride-through gallery of trackside graffiti. Only that it is vertical in its flow rather than horizontal: Scrolling down your Instagram flow is in many ways similar to riding the train and keeping track of the pieces, throws, and tags passing by. More so, similar to seeing trackside graffiti from the train, your visual perception is bounded by a framed screen, making close inspections and different angles limited – all in all, blurring the line between the online and offline dimensions of graffiti.

Which brings me back to the coincidence. As usual when doing qualitative research on subcultural groups, things do not exactly work out the way you originally had planned. The aim of my research project is to explore whether there are structured differences among graffiti writers in regard to how the ‘where,’ ‘what,’ ‘how,’ and ‘why’ of graffiti are defined, communicated, and acted upon by writers.

Subcultural heterogeneity within graffiti has been addressed before (cf. Castleman, 1982; MacDonald, 2001; Halsey and Young, 2002; Shannon 2003) but has been done so from either a demographic perspective, or in terms of stages of subcultural development, or as a dichotomy between the legal and art-oriented on the one hand, and the illegal and vandalizing on the other. Less focus has been on whether there are plural structures of meaning providing multiple subcultural authentications and emplacements (Hannerz, 2015). If there are indeed plural subcultural structures of meaning within graffiti then what are the consequences for how writers interpret and act upon these structures? Accordingly, I wanted to follow and interview different kinds of graffiti writers on the basis of spatial differences, as in where they predominantly write, so as to investigate whether they enacted similar perceptions of what and where graffiti should be.

Enter the dilemma. For when I started preparing for interviews I reluctantly had to admit to myself that despite my initial fieldwork I was going to have problems of access to the field – especially so if I wanted to explore plural subcultural notions of authenticity, as that would inevitably require plural access points. Now, even though ethnography is somewhat obsessed with access – most handbooks for example start by discussing it at length – ethnographies on subcultural groups are less so. Access is too often assumed as self-evident due to the researcher already having a relation to the field, most often as a prior participant (cf. Hodkinson, 2005:144; Haenfler, 2004b:788; Force, 2009:294; Hancock and Lorr, 2013:325f, too name but a few). This is a highly problematic stance that I have discussed at length elsewhere (Hannerz, 2015), what will suffice for now is to say that access must not be taken for granted, as it refers to a multi-layered negotiation of proximities and distances, as well as trust between the researcher and the researched. Which brings us back to my initial problem, because graffiti writers are different to the punks I had previously studied. Mainly because what they do is often illegal. It was not that easy that I could go to a new city visit a few shows, identify different kinds of participants on the basis of their hair styles, shoes, and band shirts, and then start from there. Despite the official information provided by Swedish police authorities, transit companies, and local officials on how graffiti writers look (Kimvall 2012), most writers do not fit the stereotype of

the hip-hop clad paint-stained youth. Surprise. Rather most of the time during my fieldwork it has been nearly impossibly to spot who is a writer and who is not. For the most part, I did not even know where to look for participants in the first place (cf. MacDonald, 2001:55). As one of informants later noted in relation to security guards trying to catch writers red-handed along the train tracks:

I mean even if I as a writer would go out along the line to find someone who painted along the line I would never succeed in doing so, even if we tried to make it to a place that we know gets painted a hell of a lot. I mean, and we do have a lot of knowledge and insight. (GAS1-2015)

Seeing this problem of finding participants I could of course focus on the few writers I had already met in relation to my fieldwork and then go from there. For example I frequented different open walls, participated in graffiti workshops, and went to jams and gallery shows. Yet it did little in terms of granting me access to different subcultural settings, especially access that lasted beyond those temporary meetings. And to be honest, even at such events I had problems of spotting who was a writer and who was not. I guess I could have just started writing intensively myself, but still, as I wanted to access different groups of writers even that would have been restricting in terms of access.

The solution struck me as rather evident when one graffiti writer contacted me through Instagram to ask for a Photo I had posted: Would it not be a good idea to simply make use of already established contacts I had with writers on Instagram, and contact writers through it? By then my followers had grown way beyond 800, and I exclusively posted different kinds of graffiti that I had come across during my fieldwork and journeys. More so, writers commented on my pictures and I commented on theirs, so contacting them seemed like a small step to take. Come to think of it, I already had access to multiple settings, yet it was only when I moved my feet that I could see the ground I was already standing on. So I began communicating with writers through Instagram based on my field notes on how writers distinguish and define subcultural categories: At first, on a spatial basis, contacting those who seemed to mainly paint trains, walls along the track, or those who mainly bombed the inner city. I did so through personal direct messages in which I introduced my research

and myself, as well as what I was interested in. In turn, this provided me with richer fieldwork, and as I expanded the different settings that I wanted to investigate I could then use Instagram once again to access these. The fun pastime had suddenly turned into a valuable methodological tool.

Looking back through my field notes, I never thought of my Instagram habits initially as more than simply just a way to pass on some of the graffiti that I encountered when doing fieldwork. Reflecting upon it now however, I realize that it has had numerous advantages. First of all, it has provided me with a subcultural identity. When I meet writers, they almost immediately ask me, or they the person who introduces me, what I write. Lacking a proper tag, I began telling my Instagram-nick and noticed that increasingly writers seemed to already know something about me through my account. In lack of a proper tag, it gave me a subcultural status, not as a writer, but more as a chronicler (Kimvall, 2014:39). Such a position has helped a lot in approaching writers both off- and online providing me with a liminal subcultural position that transgresses the boundary of inside and outside, as well as across multiple subcultural settings. Second, the shift to using Instagram as a way to access different parts of the subculture and initiating a first contact, has transformed this previous role of a chronicler into one of, what Martin Berg (2015) has called, a participant producer. Even though my nick remains, I am now also Erik the researcher, on the one hand documenting graffiti on Instagram, on the other hand researching it. At the same time, this role of participant producer makes it possible for the prospective interviewees to immediately check up on me in relation to both of these roles. Making the ongoing negotiation of access rather obvious. They can either scroll down my flow, judging me on the basis of a chronicler, or they can google my real name as a researcher. Third, Instagram has provided me with a subcultural equivalent to the—to me, all so familiar—punk show: here is an arena in which many writers openly participate, and where I can easily make contact with writers within different contexts. The first message I send to prospective interviewees is short, presenting myself and my research in a few lines and then asking them that if interested they can just simply type an answer. If not they can just ignore it. So far none has. The second step is then providing information of the study, what the data will be used for and how I will treat their anonymity. As part of this, I can quickly

address their questions and concern. After this we can agree to meet somewhere and I can send them a Photo of me so that they can check up on me in person, before approaching me at the meeting point. And they sometimes do, watching me from a distance together with their friends, or so they have told me. Fourth, and in direct relation to the above, this way of using Instagram as a point of access means that most often I only know my informants' nick and their tag, I do not have any phone numbers, addresses, email-addresses, or any idea of who they are. Thus I can avoid having to explain from whom I got their number or email, but also the risk of revealing them to the outside is minimal. It is a simple and rather evident way of making an initial contact, similar to introducing myself to a writer at an open wall. Fifth, given Instagram's image-based flow, as well as the possibility to easily explore what people like and follow, it constitutes an interesting means to explore subcultural spatiality and authenticity. It does not only give an insight into the different wheres and hows of graffiti, the comments and hashtags also provide interesting roads into the many whys and whats.

Having said that, I want to end this essay by pointing out that this approach, similar to seeking out punks at punk shows or writers at an open wall, of course has its disadvantages. As Kathy Charmaz (2006:20) so importantly notes, methods are a tool through which we can see some things yet that makes us blind to others. It is important not to take writers on Instagram as a representation of the graffiti subculture as a whole. Not every writer is on Instagram, nor do those who are post all of their graffiti. Needless to say, I also interview and follow writers who are not on Instagram, and I also do extensive fieldwork beyond the sometimes so restricting screen. My sampling of participants for example, including those who are contacted through Instagram, is based on a combination of all of these ways of exploring subcultural differences. My access to the field is thus always worked: it relies on what I do and say, as much in the field and during interviews, as on what I post on Instagram. Accordingly it is a never-ending methodological project. My point here is rather that as used as part of a larger methodological frame that involves fieldwork and interviews, using Instagram as a point of access does provide an established arena for contact that should at least be further considered and developed in research on subcultural groups. The approach

presented here works to mitigate the often so major hurdle within ethnographic work on subcultural groups: that of access, not only to the field, but also to the diversities and peripheries of that field (Hannerz, 2015). It opens up an innovative investigation of plural subcultural scripts of what and how and where the subcultural should be, that can then be assessed and explored through other methodological means. As such it also provides the researcher with the means to ground parts of the analysis in how and where the participants themselves present their subcultural activity.

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Street Art: Visual scenes and the digital circulation of images

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Abstract

Street art is introduced as a global visual scene that is local, trans-local, and digital, as well as a practice that often expresses various tensions of the visibility regimes in which it exists. This study specifically focuses on Arab-occidental expressions of street art in three locations: Paris (France), Djerba (Tunisia), and Montreal (Canada). The visibility regimes of these visual scenes are physical (Arabic and Occidental), but significantly they are also digital (found on social media, web sites, blogs etc.). The concepts of “visual practices,” and more specifically “image practices” (pratiques de l’image), are used to study the spatio-temporal and digital evolution of street art to ascertain the changing nature of these visual scenes, in their specific stagings, as they reflect Arab-Occidental encounters.

Keywords: Street Art, Visual Scene, Visibility Regime, Digital Images, Arab-Occidental, Visual Practices, Theory-Practice

In this working paper, we address the issue of digital-image circulation in the staging of street art visual scenes. Many conceptualizations have been offered for cultural scenes, but for Kozorov and Stanojevic (2013) they primarily revolve around the idea of “things that matter,” acting as a focus for all those involved in their scene-creation and staging. The concept of visual scenes is derived from the study of musical scenes (Shank, 1994; Straw, 1991; 2004). Characteristic of musical scenes are their spatio-temporal development (genesis, growth, maturity and decay), their effervescence, their “over-productive signifying community” (Shank, 1994: 122), and the *mise en scène* (staging) of their enactment. Moreover, musical scenes are increasingly becoming local, trans-local and digital (Bennett, 2004; Straw, 2001). Zahar and Roberge (2015) find these same characteristics in visual scenes, that is, scenes oriented towards this thing that matters through the production of images in local, trans-local and digital settings. In this regard, street art has now become now a widespread globalized visual scene.

Street art is a visual practice that confronts various different visibility regimes in which it exists. In this regard, visibility “is not merely a free-floating aspect of social interaction. Rather, it is structured as the result of the activities and practices of all the different actors who aim to plan it or, on the contrary, to resist planning. Visibility asymmetries are arranged in structured complexes, which we call regimes. Contemporary society is organized around regimes of visibility that concur in the definition and management of power, representations, public opinion, conflict and social control” (Brighenti, 2010: 125). Unsanctioned practices of street art contest the various visibility regimes that attempt to control them, and a process of spatial justice (Bengtson and Arvidsonn, 2014) has thus emerged, resulting in the constant renegotiation of the visual nature of public space. In sanctioned practices of street art, this contestation of who has the right to define the visual culture of public spaces is reduced, but the “subversive” nature of street art can still appear in the different themes and site-specificity of the pieces put on public walls. Sanctioned and unsanctioned

practices very often mix in specific locales, resulting in visual scenes that reveal the spatio-temporal evolution of multiple forces and tensions that shape the visual culture of public spaces in contemporary cities. Apart from the contestation over the “ownership” of public space engendered by unsanctioned street art, other tensions like environmental and political issues or cultural contestations (Ross, 2012) are expressed in the encounters of street art with urban visibility regimes. Among these tensions, Arab-Occidental encounters as expressed in street art are the focus of this study. These encounters range from Occidental expressions in Arabic settings to Arabic cultural elements in Occidental settings. For instance, a piece from Brusik (a French artist) combined with the dome architecture of households in Djerba (Tunisia) creates an interesting assemblage in an Arabic regime of visibility while an Arabic calligraphic piece by El Seed in the middle of Paris (Tour 13) does the equivalent in an Occidental regime.

While street art visual scenes are grounded in physical localities, their manifestation is now also expressed in an increasing amount of digital images. As discussed by Glaser (2015), the place to be for street art is increasingly on the net. This has significant implications for the evolution of street art in general, and an important question, raised by Glaser, lies in the influence of the digital circulation of street art images on their ability to be subversive. The net has its own visibility regime resulting from its network topology. As Brighenti (2010: 95) writes:

The network should be better conceived of as a territory in which a specific visibility regime is instituted: in any network topology, the visibilisation emphasis is placed not on territorial boundaries but on some selected territorial flows – which of course does not at all mean that boundaries are absent; quite the contrary, boundaries are absolutely necessary to institute networks, at the very moment that attention is drawn away from them. Networks are territories in which certain flows are hypervisibilized while certain others are invisibilized and hampered, or simply made impossible.

Digital images of street art expressing Arab-Occidental encounters in visual scenes are circulated among these

different flows. But what exactly are these flows? What is their visibility? Which digital images do they carry? By whom? And do these flows reflect the cultural encounters of street art pieces on the street? Also, how do these digital flows compare with the physical flows of artists in their trans-locality?

The aim of this research project is to study these questions in three locations: Paris (France), Djerba (Tunisia), and Montreal (Canada). All these scenes contain sanctioned and unsanctioned street art, enacted by a diversity of actors (artists, gallery-owners, promoters, city politicians, as well as a large and diversified audience). To study these scenes, the concept of “visual practices,” and more specifically of “image practices” (*pratiques de l’image*), is developed following the approach proposed by Shove and colleagues (2012) for a dynamic study of performance. A visual practice is here conceived as a block of interrelated elements, whereby when one of these elements change the whole practice changes.

For instance, if a digital image is captured by a digital SLR camera, stored on a computer and published on a web site, this constitutes a different practice than an image captured by a cellular phone and instantly circulated on Instagram. Image practices of a street art scene are then seen as dynamic, physical, and digital. They are in a constant state of evolution, which reflects the changing nature of these visual scenes. These image practices are the center around which gravitate participants, images (both physical and digital) and places (both physical and digital). Physical image practices are those that result in finished street-art pieces; digital image practices include processed recordings and digital images of street art works that circulate in various formats and digital locales.

A methodology of “connective ethnography” of these visual scenes, combining online and offline work in the field (Ardevol and Gomez-Cruz, 2014) will be used to describe past and current image practices. Past practices will be evaluated with Photo-elicitation interviews with participants (Harper, 2012), and an iconographic analysis of physical works (and their digital images) will be conducted to evaluate their content and site-specificity. The analysis and comparison of past and present practices resulting in these digital flows will then attempt to ascertain the changing nature of these

scenes, and their specific staging of street-art pieces with reference to Arab-Occidental encounters. The political and cultural nature of these encounters should be reflected in the characteristics of images, participants, communities, and places that inhabit these flows.

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No Place for Urban Art

Studio URMA - By Artis/Architect Christos Voutichtis and Literary Theorist Jonas Aaron Rehm

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Abstract

The following is an attempt to situate Urban Art within the philosophical tradition with and against Plato's exclusion of the mimetic artist from the well-ordered city-state. It takes into account modern as well as postmodern literature on the concept of art and the city in order to rehabilitate a place for art within the city limits without sacrificing its potential to call into question any clear-cut limit the philosophical tradition has attempted to draw around the concepts of the subject, the work of art and the city itself.

Keywords: Plato, urban art, subject, latency, non-place

1 Introduction

From the outset, philosophy's relation to art is marked by an exclusion. When Plato banned the poets from the philosophically ordered city he reserved for art only a non-place in his philosophical system. Any concept of urban art must by definition renounce Plato's judgment, however, we claim, it must at the same time accept it. It has to accept it insofar as art always eludes philosophy's grasp; insofar as the artistic activity cannot be accounted for in terms of a rational subject. It is justified to reject it nevertheless as the non-place of art harbours the possibility of an opening towards the re-imagination and transformation of the city.

2.

From the beginning any discourse on art finds itself arrested, held up inescapably, by a difficulty. "This difficulty", Maurice Blanchot remarks, "illuminates from the outset, the anomaly which is the essence of literary activity which the writer both must and must not overcome." (Blanchot, 1995: 303) Blanchot's concern of course is with the writer of literature, the implications involved, however, bear heavily on art in general – they pertain to the relation of artist and work as such: "[I]n order to write, he must have the talent to write. But gifts, in themselves, are nothing. As long as he has not

yet set down at his table and written a work, the writer is not a writer and does not know if he has the capacity to become one. He has no talent until he has written, but he needs talent in order to write." (Blanchot, 1995: 303) This is the paradox at the origin of any artwork and memorably the paradox at the beginning of Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art*: "According to the general view, the work arises out of and through the activity of the artist. But through and from what is the artist that which he is? Through the work". (Heidegger, 2002: 1) Blanchot draws this paradox from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "The individual who is going to act seems, therefore, to find himself in a circle in which each moment already presupposes the other, and thus he seems unable to find a beginning, because he only gets to know his original nature, which must be his End, from the deed, while, in order to act, he must have that End beforehand." (Hegel, 1977: 240)

Hegel will move on from this paradox by way of the dialectical method: "Talent, action, and end, being intimately interconnected (*verknüpft*) as his own moments are sublated from the start." (Gasché, 1999: 317) However, we take this moment of the interruption of Hegel in Blanchot as our point of departure as it presents us with the possibility to reject any hasty step of conventional view and lets the artwork

itself come forth in all its contradictory force.

This force of paradox is not only at the origin of the work of art but also at the origin of the discourse on art in the Western tradition. It has informed the trouble- and quarrelsome relation of philosophy and art ever since. When it comes to the paradox, Plato had the clearest idea of this: "The mimeticians are the worst possible breed because they are no one, pure mask or pure hypocrisy, and as such unassignable, unidentifiable, impossible to place in a determined class or to fix in a function that would be proper to them and would find its place in a just distribution of tasks." (Lacou-Labarthe, 1989: 259) This is reason enough for Plato to banish the poets from the well-ordered city. Philosophy has thus, although negatively, established an originary bond between art and the city. A bond which no philosophically informed account of Urban Art may ignore. The artistic activity can therefore not be considered a power but rather a force, which is power's other. It is not reducible to the individual power, talent or natural capacity of the artist-subject but is pre-subjective or beyond subjectivity. – In any case, monstrous. (Menke, 2013). It emanates from a latency period within the artistic activity.

2.1

Latency is defined as "[t]he interval between the reception of a stimulus and the response to that stimulus" (OED). This can pertain to an action, performed unconsciously or precisely planned to the last detail, that has not yet been reflected. Between action and reaction there is a reaction time x , a latency period. Similar to the motion speed of objects in natural physical space, no mathematical precalculation can take full account of this interval without allowing for a tolerance range. External influences such as wind, temperature fluctuation etcetera. are crucial here. All calculation and assertion before the fact can only be speculative. The architect knows this all too well. The same is true for the organic body, say the physical condition of a body giving birth, or being threatened by a disease. In each case, the life expectancy of the host is not guaranteed. Time in our case cannot take account of the wonder of birth, nor the life expectancy of the subject. Just as little as the speed of objects travelling from A to B can determine the moment of impact. It can only function as the summation of events just before the explosion, the liberation

of the visible, which, enclosed in invisibility, constantly multiplies and disseminates its spores ready to interlink. A static emerges which in a given system turns into noise. Like an implicit thought that carries content without describing it, that erupts without warning and will have already secured its *raison d'être*. Latency in this sense, structures from the ground up, underneath its surface any closed system. If art is the force that no closed system of thought can account for, then its condition of possibility can only be situated in the realm of latency, which structures from a non-place any place within the city.

2.2

Urban Art specifically harbours an intimate relationship to the non-place, which, especially in Marc Augé's (1995) conception describes those places within the city that Street Art has always made use of: "transit points", "railway stations", "interchanges". In his terminology the city is structured by a weave of anthropological places and non-places: "As anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality." (Augé, 1995: 94) The non-place is the place of the social contract, it is not the place of natural communion. The classical opposition of nature and culture is translated into that of the center and the periphery: "the housing estate [...], where people do not live together and which is never situated in the centre of anything (big estates characterize the so-called peripheral zones or outskirts)." (Augé, 1995: 107-108) If we care so much for the peripheral, it is because we are of the opinion that the artist always works from a non-place. As Augé puts it, "a person entering a non-place is relieved of all his usual determinants. He becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role of passenger, customer or driver." (Augé, 1995: 103) The non-place becomes the dystopian version of Plato's philosophically ordered city, the dwelling place of the mimetic artist, the actor, the non-subject and the self divided from itself. In fact: "The non-place is the opposite of utopia: it exists, and it does not contain any organic society." (Augé, 1995: 111)

If the anthropological place is identified as a "plac[e] of identity" predicated upon on a whole set of state legislation ("The layout of the house, the rules of residence, the zoning of the village, placement of altars, configuration of public open spaces, land distribution, correspond for every individual to

a system of possibilities, prescriptions and interdicts whose content is both spatial and social.” (Augé, 1995: 52-53)), the non-place marks the impossibility of this legislated city. And, from the spaces of this impossibility, urban art opens unto the possibility of “other cities”. This opening is what Alison Young refers to as the “uncommissioned city”: “In the legislated city [...] the notion of the ‘space-between’ is repeatedly overlooked or taken for granted. [...] For the inhabitants of the uncommissioned city, however, through-passage gives rise to the potential to alter a streetscape in a range of ways.” (Young, 2014: 54) It is here that urban art takes place, in the interstices at the limits of the legislated city in which it has no place, where it is always “out of place”.

3 Conclusion

These preliminary remarks do not lend themselves to a definition of urban art as such other than a reappropriation of the one proposed by Nicholas Alden Riggle concerning street art: “An artwork is [urban art] if, and only if, [urban space] is internal to its meaning.” (Riggle, 2010: 246) To recognize art’s essential relation to the non-places within the city holds major implications for the artistic activity concerning the relationality of artwork and space. Only if it takes into account the latent information (be it physical, ideological, aesthetic etc.) of the place it claims will it be able to deconstruct and transform, from its non-place, the identity of any place in the city it was thought it could claim for itself. If we allow art back into the city, it is under full consciousness of the dangers Plato detected in the artists’ activity. If we accept the contradictions at the origin of the work of art without trying to get rid of them either by banishing art altogether (Plato) or by resolving them dialectically (Hegel) it can only be by allowing the monstrous into the city which is unbearable for any stable concept of the subject, identity and the city itself. Nevertheless, urban art provides the means to always re-imagine the pre-established order of the city and its inhabitants and allows for the possibility of an opening towards “other cities, other citizenships”. (Young, 2014: 48)

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A Boneyard of Data: Graffiti and Street Art's Temporalities

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Abstract

In the era of Instagram, graffiti and street art are increasingly produced as digital objects, shaped by the architecture of digital platforms and the aggregated responses of audiences, transmuted into data. This paper focuses on one aspect of this context: the complex temporal existence of graffiti and street art - their duration, speed and acceleration - across multiple time zones. It asks: how is the consumption of graffiti and street art as digital images affecting its production? Has digital culture accelerated the production of graffiti and street art, driving shorter, faster cycles of repainting, with a greater ephemerality matched by parallel and potentially infinite lives on digital servers and devices? Using data generated over a period of 500 days at a single suburban painting site dubbed 'the Boneyard', this paper attempts to track the accelerating rhythms of graffiti in digital culture. It uses a number of methods to map the duration of pieces on walls and their digital echoes, including Photographic recording, data visualisation and social network analysis. Ultimately, this research seeks to extend existing methods of longitudinal analysis and to make a broader argument about the effects of social media on graffiti's aesthetic features.

Keywords: Instagram, Photography, social media, walls, social network analysis, graffiti, street art, art audiences

1. Introduction

In the era of Instagram, graffiti and street art are increasingly produced as digital objects, shaped by the protocols of digital platforms and the aggregated responses of global audiences converted into data (Avramidis & Drakopoulou 2015; MacDowall 2016). My previous research attempted to use data analytics to trace an expansive global portrait of the major players and institutions in an emerging street art world. It used data generated from the top 100 graffiti and street art accounts to sketch the geographic contours and key players, as well as think critically about how Instagram is shaping creative practices (MacDowall, 2016). This paper acts as a counterpoint to the large scale portrait, instead attempting to see some of the effects of this global institutionalisation on a single site, at street level, based on data collected daily over a two-year period at an anonymous site dubbed "the Boneyard"

There have been many attempts to chart the longitudinal analysis of graffiti at

single sites over long periods: these include books on New York walls or individual Halls of Fame and impressive web sites such as Cassidy Curtis' *Graffiti Archaeology* project, which produced time-lapse interactive maps of key graffiti sites in San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York. This project began with Curtis' own Photographs around 2005 and eventually crowd sourced images via Flickr, building a community of interest around the project (Curtis, 2008). More recently, Susan Hansen and Danny Flynn have proposed a formalised methodology for repeat Photography and longitudinal analysis, in order to show how walls function as a form of "asynchronous, yet sequential, communication" (Hansen & Flynn, 2015). In a similar vein archaeologists Alex G Hale and later, Annie Leigh Campbell, have used Instagram to follow the changes in a wall over a year, with the description and analysis occurring on a weekly basis. (@alexghale; @annie-leighcampbell)

Whether a personal collection memorialising a site, a custom-built interface that allowed users to cycle through ye-

ars of graffiti in a single motion or a weekly practice using a phone app, longitudinal analysis offers a number of benefits. Graffiti and street art are increasingly viewed via screens, and often in ways which abstract them from both spatial and social context. They are also increasingly represented through the logic of the art market (a singular, identifiable author of a discrete object) rather than as a practice with more complicated authorship (MacDowall, 2014). In this context, the method of longitudinal site analysis promises to restore both the contextual and collective dimensions of the practice. As Hansen and Flynn argue, repeat Photography does not make a distinction between “‘artistic’ images and more visually ‘offensive’ tags”, instead highlighting “graffiti and street art’s existence within a field of social interaction” (Hansen & Flynn, 2015). In this piece, I’m also suggesting that longitudinal analysis can also draw attention to the complex temporalities of existence and visibility of graffiti and street art in the digital era.

The architecture of Instagram produces a temporality based on an ever-present now. It’s primary expression is through the platform’s home feed, where images are organised according to the moment they were posted. In the classic version of the platform, (2010-2016), Instagram images were not time- or date-stamped but were described only in relation to the present (e.g. 5 mins ago, 62 weeks ago). From early 2016, the Instagram algorithm now adjusts the temporal feed, inserting trending items at later times, and items displayed in users accounts are now listed by the date on which they were posted.

The complex temporalities of Instagram are also produced by the mixed origins of its content and the production of memory. In its design, the platform was originally conceived as a forum for current, original Photographic content (referred to as OC) and the Instagram rules still refer to this ethos. Some practices have been instituted to encourage the posting of new content rather than old, such as the official #tbt (#throwbackthursday) hash-tag, which attempts to contain the posting of nostalgic material to a single day of the week. However, the platform has plenty of content that diverges from this original intent, such as the production and sharing of memes. Also, the sheer demand for constant posting overwhelms the temporalities of production for most artists and writers, meaning that contemporary content must either

be split into multiple fragments (for example, the posting of a detail of an artwork, followed later by the full image), supplemented by everyday observational content or by older content from one’s archive. Particularly in graffiti culture, Instagram has seen the posting of large amounts of from personal archives from the analogue era, reversing a trend in which personal albums and archives were not shared but existed in a closed economy. In the Instagram era, the practice of secrecy in which images were previously confined to ‘the vault’ has been replaced to some degree with the hive-like, collective sharing characteristic of a broader Internet culture.

This paper explores one aspect of this context: the complex temporal existence of graffiti and street art - their duration, speed and acceleration – across multiple time zones. It asks: how is the consumption of graffiti and street art as digital images affecting its production? Has digital culture accelerated the production of graffiti and street art, driving shorter, faster cycles of repainting, with a greater ephemerality matched by parallel and potentially infinite lives on digital servers and devices? In short, is Instagram driving both an amplification of graffiti and street art (expanding both its global audience and at times, its physical scale) and an acceleration of temporalities and cycles of production?

2. Method

To explore this question, the paper uses data generated over a period of 600 days, from mid-2014 to the present at a single painting site dubbed ‘the Boneyard’. It uses a number of methods to map the duration of pieces on walls and their digital echoes, including Photographic recording, data visualisation and social network analysis. Ultimately, this research seeks to extend existing methods of longitudinal analysis and eventually to make a broader argument about the effects of social media on graffiti’s aesthetic features.

As outlined in my previous research, I have conceived of graffiti and street art as related but distinct categories that overlap in complicated ways (MacDowall 2014; MacDowall, 2016). Attitudes to data and data collection may be one strong point of difference. In general street artists are strongly embedded in social media, in which the collection and use of data has become normalised, despite revelations about its deployment for commercial gain or state surveillance (MacDowall, 2016). While individual street artists have produced

critiques of social media (“Fakebook”, etc) or occasionally opt out of social media, the practice is heavily embedded in post-internet culture and the logic of social media platforms, in which the production of data and quantification is a natural element. In contrast, graffiti culture has a more ambivalent relationship to data, having roots in an analogue era in which data collection was associated with law enforcement and the collection of information. From the mid-1990s, law enforcement in many countries used a database system to record vandalism and calculate the cost of cleaning, down to the physical surface area of graffiti. More recently, data collection has also been the realm of commercial cleaning contractors tasked with graffiti removal, who document the before and after of cleaning. Some commercial anti-graffiti companies also offer to perform data collection and analysis in order to aid in the prosecution of graffiti writers (some deploying remote electronic trip-wires and cameras camouflaged with 3-D printed objects).

This ambivalence towards data collection has shaped the research in a number of ways. Firstly, in this project I have chosen to anonymise the site and the artists involved, in order for the study itself neither to affect the painting at the site nor to provide anything that might identify or be useful evidence against the participants. For simplicity I assigned the artist an alias (in addition to their tag, already an alias) based on the NATO phonetic alphabet.

Secondly, in designing the methods and analysis I’ve also taken care not to use methods that could lead to the identification of the participants. In many circumstances, even carefully anonymised data or meta-data can be used to identify individuals or places (Haugea et. al 2016). As we have seen in the recent controversy over the use of data analytic methods to uncover Banksy’s identity, the use of large data sets and meta-data are often used in the service of control societies. However, many of these methods are already used by law enforcement officers and other agencies and I have taken some of my methods from strategies used by the military strategists in counterinsurgency operations (Everton, 2012). As I’ll discuss, the site I chose was also under electronic surveillance for period of time.

Anonymising the participants protects them and the painting site but it also lends it an abstract quality. So much of what

we know about graffiti culture comes from an immersion in a particular place, a familiarity with the local history or writers, crews, styles and spots. We are also encouraged to take graffiti as it presents itself, as a visual object seeking attention, often dominating our vision. Thinking about walls as the producers of data undermines and cools this immediate visual stimuli and response, allowing us to see the broader patterns at play. We can now think less about this wall being in a particular city or being painted by particular writers and more about

Finally, the abstract quality of the data also creates meta-data, that is, information that is emptied of content but makes visible other qualities: the timing and duration of activities, the existence and contours of networks, extrapolated from the habits of individual relationships. Considering graffiti in relation to data and meta-data, both in a practical sense and for the broader conceptual horizons these ideas represent.

The painting site was chosen for the research because it had an number of unusual features,

- it is suburban, rather than in the inner city where graffiti is intensified;
- the site is fenced but there are a number of access points and it is not regularly policed;
- there are few residential properties nearby and the adjoining businesses are separated by large fences or walls.;
- While located some distance from the inner-city, it was close to a major arterial route;
- It is set back from the main road, so that the graffiti can only be briefly glimpsed from passing cars some 120 metres away. There is very limited passing foot traffic;
- The site is well known amongst the graffiti community in the city concerned.

I was initially drawn to the site by an acceleration of painting: the development of a large- scale piece, quickly defaced or painted over, then two or three pieces in rapid succession. Unlike in previous graffiti eras, the defacement or slashing did not seem to deter intensive painting at the site. Was the acquisition of a Photograph of the piece (rather than a continuing piece) and the digital audience (rather than the very small numbers of actual visitors) sufficient motivation? Was this a case not just of the normal secluded painting in abandoned buildings that had happened for decades but a subtle

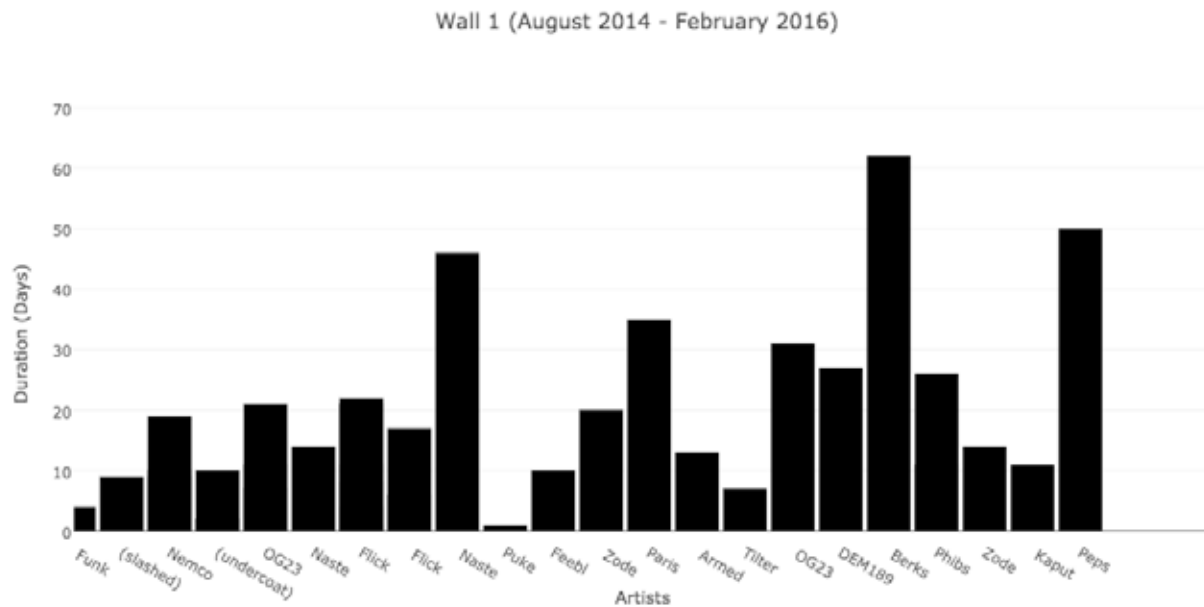


Fig 1. Frequency of painting of Wall 1

shift in which the walls had become a backdrop for the production of digital content. The intensive painting and quick turnover suggested this was the case.

Over the period of analysis the site itself as gone through a number of changes and will likely be subject to intensive development in the near future. I visited the site almost daily from July, 2014 to the present (currently for 600 days). I cross-checked my data against Instagram posts and a graffiti blog. Needless to say, this kind of data collection is very intensive and time-consuming. I made a decision to focus the data collection on the three main walls (usually allowing space for 6 pieces at any one time). As the site gained popularity, new peripheral areas were painted (a low wall, a somewhat scrappy additional wall, etc) but most of the pieces were on the six sites I had chosen.

The site was first termed “the Boneyard” in a social media posting about the site by an international graffiti writer. The term has several resonances, capturing both the physical appearance of the site as a home for scraps (often strewn with piles of dumped rubbish, broken glass and empty spray-cans (Fig 2) , as well as sexual connotations. The Boneyard Project was also a landmark street art project initiated in 2010, where artists painted derelict aeroplanes in in Tucson,

Arizona. By coincidence I’d written previously about a graffiti crew, whose key member had a similar name (MacDowall 2006). The history of the site isn’t covered in detail here, but it has also been used informally as a skate and bike park, with both temporary and permanently constructed areas.

Finally, the notion of a boneyard, and a pile of skeletal components also provided an image of a pile of data, discarded, stripped components and building blocks that accumulate at any site of productive labour. The idea of boneyard of data brings to mind the vast quantities of data produced in this era, often stock-piled, far exceeding the capacity for analysis,

3. Analysis

A total of 186 pieces were painted at the six adjoining walls over 600 days by 73 artists. For example, Fig. 1 shows the pattern of repainting for a single wall. Over this period, 15 of the 22 pieces painted lasted for less than three weeks, with the longest lasting for two months. Only four pieces lasted longer than a month.

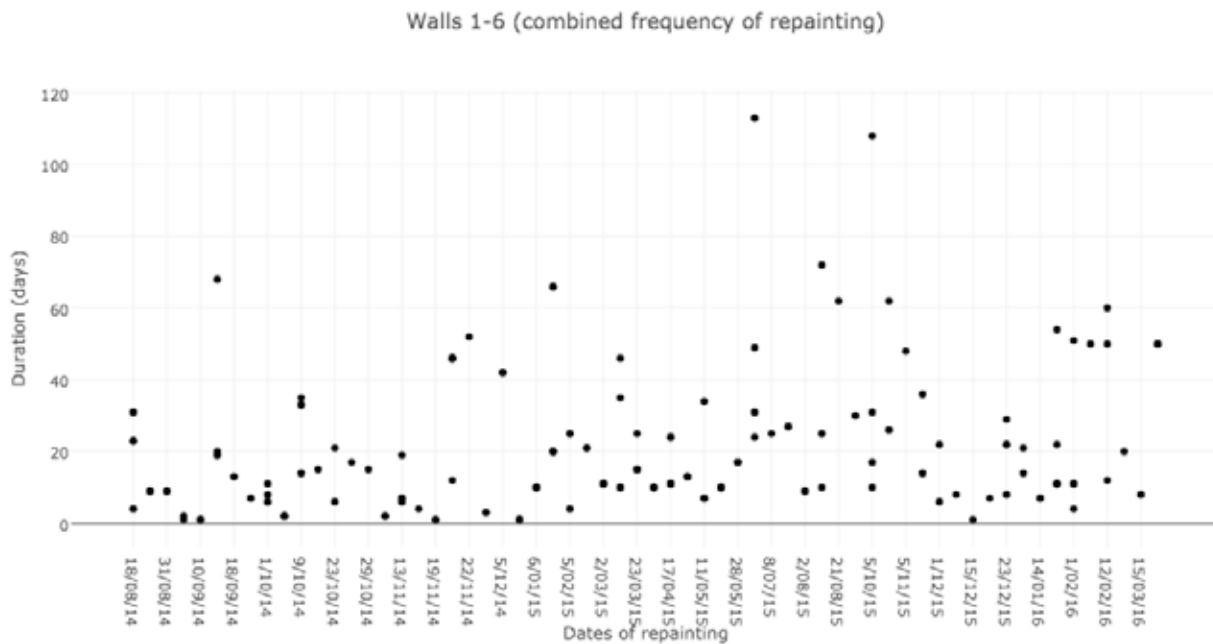


Fig 2. Frequency of repainting (Walls 1-6)

Typically, we might use the term “lifespan” to describe the duration of a piece, however this would not be accurate here. Firstly, the wall has been repainted, rather than cleaned, so though most of the pieces are no longer visible, they still exist under the layers of paint and potentially could be recovered or revealed under certain circumstances. Secondly, the piece’s “lifespans” are dramatically lengthened by their transformation into a digital object.

Given the culture of the site and the frequency of repainting, this is certainly part of the intended nature of the artwork. Artists were meticulous in documenting their work, often asking others to capture additional Photos if the originals were not of a high quality. Four of the six wall faces towards the rising sun and are unshaded, often being in intense sun. Artists also commented on the difficulty of Photographing the work at certain times of day and year.

Of course, simply painting in a remote location does not mean artists are painting for an absent audience. It is clear in the continual crafting and improvising of designs, some artists are painting for the pleasure of the activity itself, or for more personal reasons. Occasionally, the painting had an explicit social function, such as memorial. However, there were often explicit mentions of Instagram in the pieces and

regular Instagram posts of the paintings by the artists themselves, indicating that this was a significant dimension of their practice.

When the data for all six walls is added the pattern looks more pronounced, as often walls were repainted at the same time, in groups of 2-4 artists (Fig 2).

A rough line of fit shows that the average lifespan of the pieces is relatively static across the two years, rising slightly from an average of 13 days in (2014) to 29 days (in 2016) (Fig. 3). While the overall high turnover of the wall is in line with the notion that graffiti production is accelerated in the Instagram era, the slow increase in duration from less than two weeks to almost a month does not support the acceleration thesis.

However, one factor that may be influencing this average, and one that is often invisible in accounts of graffiti, is the effect of the weather. Despite its digital life, graffiti and street art remain material practices that are shaped by the rhythms of climate. The painting site is in a city with a temperate climate, though for 4-5 months of the year it is prone to cold and wet weather. While graffiti is readily produced in extreme

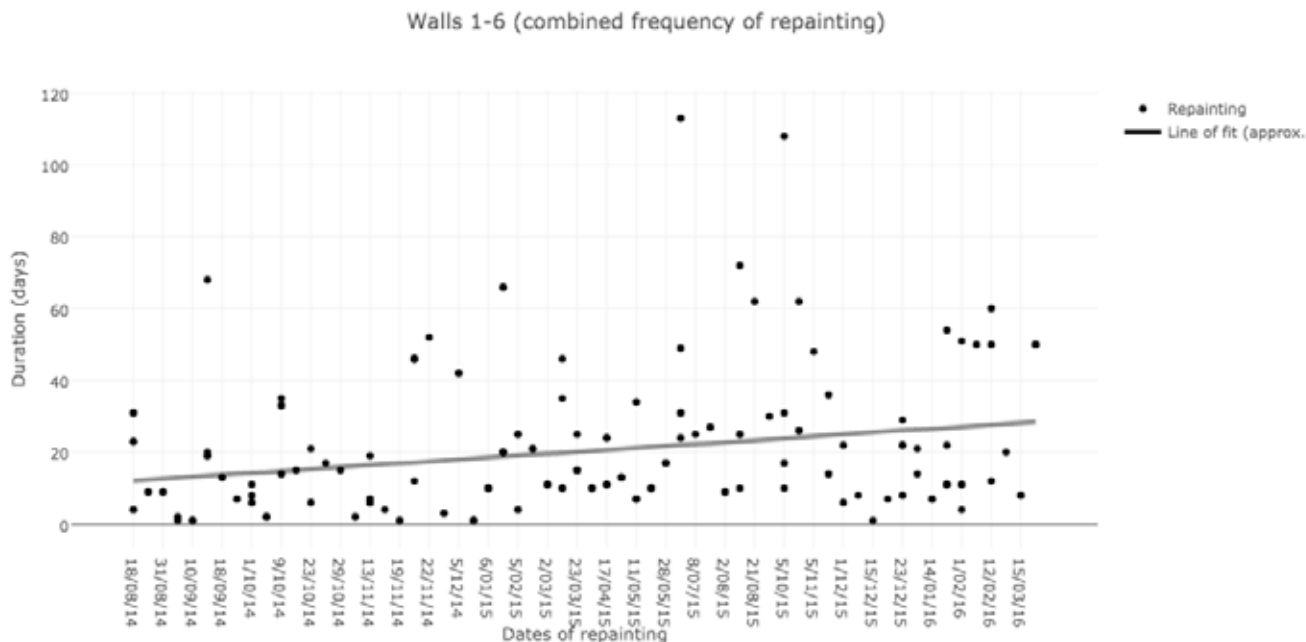


Fig 3. Frequency of repainting (Walls 1-6) with estimated line of fit

conditions, the uses of this site, as a site for leisurely, often communal painting, that is largely designed for the production of content for a digital audience rather than a passing one, means that the weather may have a greater effect.

It is only in a longitudinal analysis lasting over several years that the rhythms of the seasons can be made visible in the data and accounted for. Ideally, given the volatile nature of

contemporary seasons, data from a number of years would be used, so as to expose longer rhythms and patterns. However, overlaying the available data from the three calendar years of this study onto a single one 12 month period does show clusters activities in the warmer months of year, with the two pieces of longest duration roughly bookending the winter months (Fig 4).

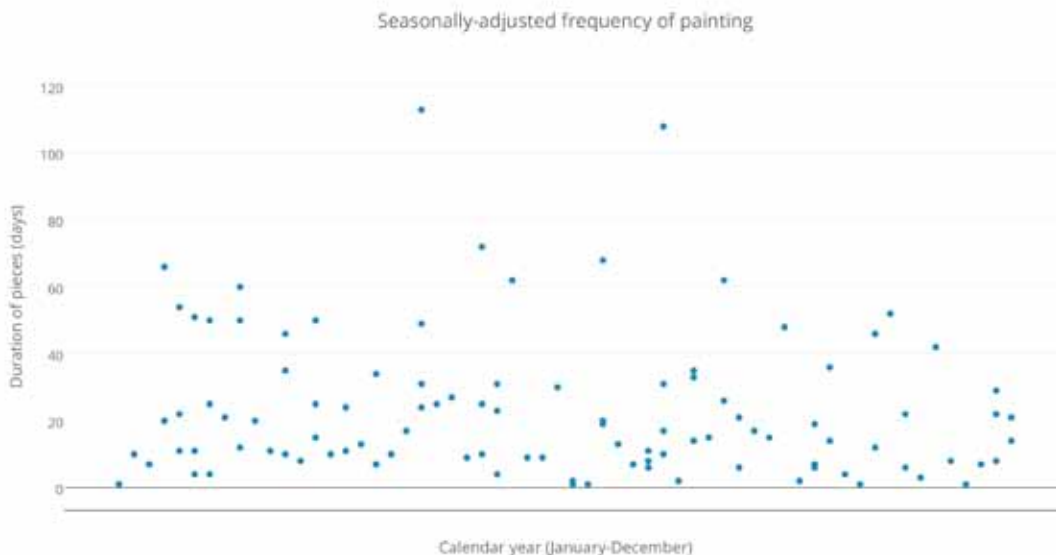


Fig 4. Seasonally adjusted frequency of painting

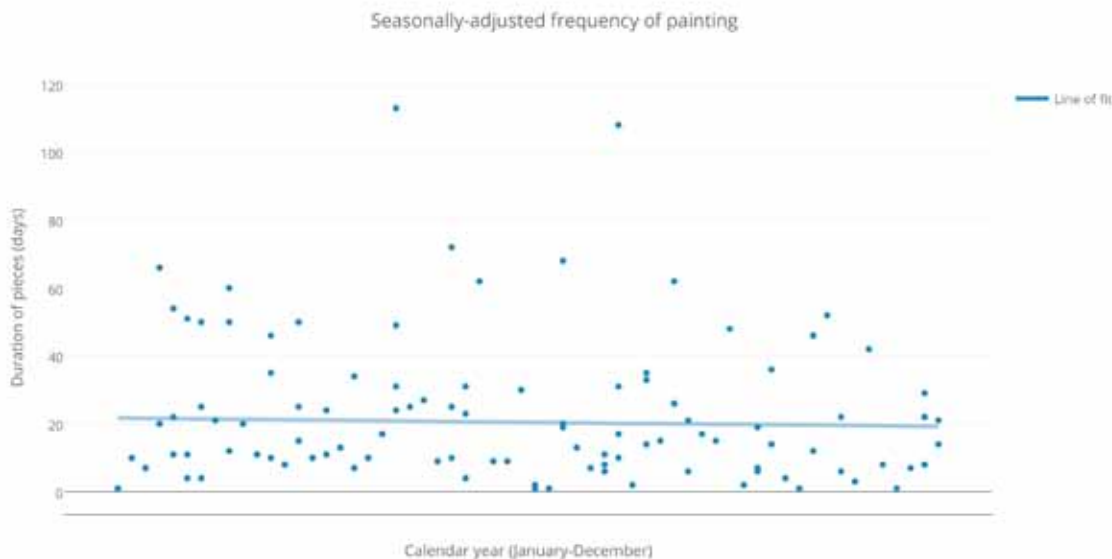


Fig 5. Seasonally-adjusted frequency of painting with line of fit

When a rough line of fit is calculated for the seasonally adjusted figures, a slow acceleration is visible, showing a slight decrease in the average duration of pieces over the 600 days, from around 22 days to 19 days (Fig 5.).

Now for a more detailed analysis of the patterns produced by the durations of individual artists. In total there were 73 artists who painted at the site. Pieces lasted from 1 day to 113 days, but on average the walls were repainted every 20 days. For simplification, in this analysis I've removed artists who painted only once (53 artists, including some interstate and international artists). The remaining 20 artist's names have been made anonymous by assigning them randomly to the NATO phonetic alphabet (coincidentally, many of these are also the tags of well known graffiti writers such as Delta, though none of these writers appear in this study) (Fig. 6)

Alias	No. of pieces
Alpha	2
Bravo	2
Charlie	4
Delta	3
Echo	23
Foxtrot	3
Golf	4
Hotel	8
India	2
Juliet	4
Kilo	5
Lima	11
Mike	7
November	4
Oscar	2
Papa	3
Quebec	33
Romeo	2
Sierra	2
Tango	4

Fig 6. Number of paintings at the site (by artist)

By sorting this data by the number of pieces, it's clear that two artists – Quebec and Echo – were the most consistent painters at the site, both in terms of the numbers of pieces painted and the length of time during which they had pieces on the walls (Fig. 7). Indeed, both Quebec and Echo were so productive that they maintained a nearly constant presence across the six walls (sometimes with multiple pieces)

Alias	No. of pieces	Total days of pieces
Quebec	33	622
Echo	23	618
Lima	11	189
Hotel	8	87
Mike	7	112
Kilo	5	173
Charlie	4	64
Golf	4	32
Juliet	4	94
November	4	90
Tango	4	86
Delta	3	15
Foxtrot	3	55
Papa	3	174
Alpha	2	33
Bravo	2	24
India	2	24
Oscar	2	53
Romeo	2	32
Sierra	2	55

Fig 7. Number of paintings at the site (by artist and total duration)

The data can also be sorted to show the average duration of the pieces of each artist (Fig 8). Excluding the outlying Papa (who had one piece remain untouched throughout winter) the average duration of pieces clusters at 18.5 days.

Alias	No. of pieces	Total days of pieces	Average duration of pieces
Papa	3	174	58
Kilo	5	173	35
Sierra	2	55	28
Echo	23	618	27
Oscar	2	53	27
Juliet	4	94	24
November	4	90	23
Tango	4	86	22
Quebec	33	622	19
Foxtrot	3	55	18
Lima	11	189	17
Alpha	2	33	17
Mike	7	112	16
Charlie	4	64	16
Romeo	2	32	16
Bravo	2	24	12
India	2	24	12
Hotel	8	87	11
Golf	4	32	8
Delta	3	15	5

Fig 8. Number of paintings at the site (by artist, total duration and average duration)

The duration of a piece is measure we might use within a more traditional conception of graffiti culture, where respect was measured in part by the ability to ‘hold down a wall’, that is, within an economy where artists were encouraged to only paint over pieces with one of a higher quality, longevity of a piece was, in general, a sign that the work was respected (for aesthetic or social reasons). However, in the context of this site and the Instagram Era, this measure is less clear, as the pieces’ duration, in physical and virtual spaces, is more complex.

We have already abstracted the data by anonymising it, and removing reference to the actual content, leaving only dates

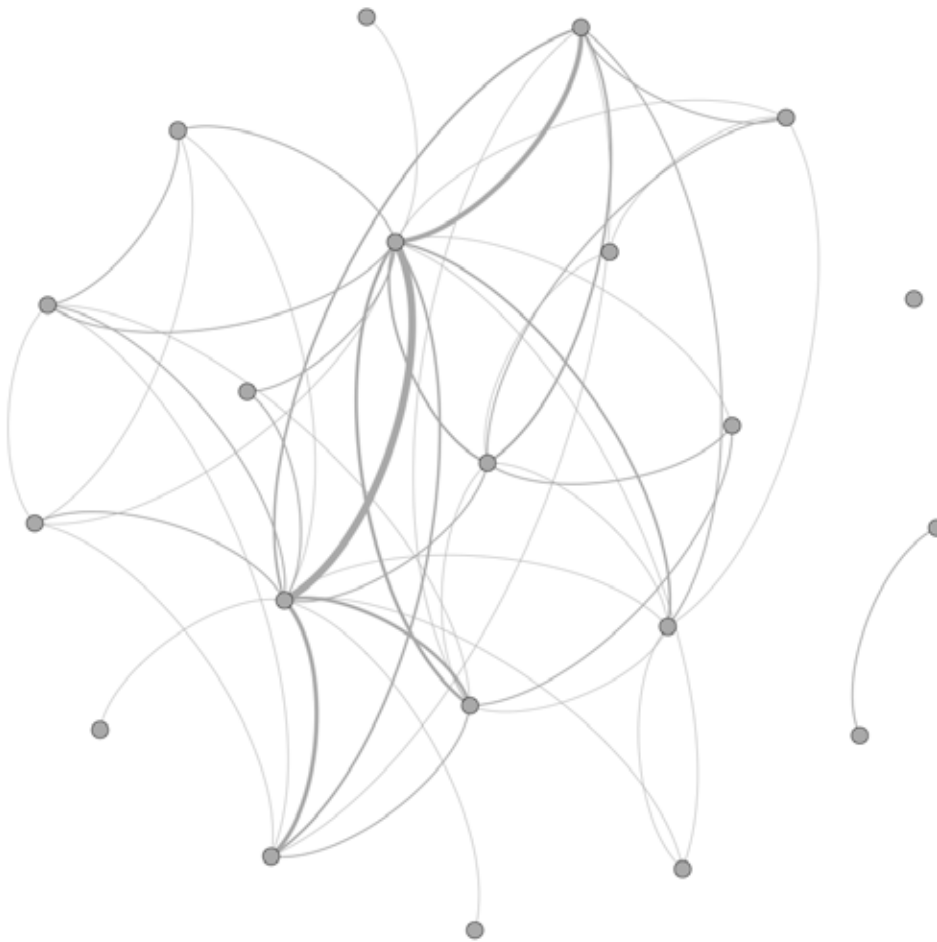


Fig 9. Preliminary social network map of artists

and durations. As many of the walls were painted with more than one piece at a time, the site can also produce a map of social relations, reflecting graffiti's dimension as a social, as well as aesthetic, practice. To produce a map of the social networks at the site, the data was coded to express a series of nodes (in this case, the list of 20 artists who painted more than once at the site) and a series of edges (expressing a relationship between artists who painted together). In the language of social network analysis these relationships are deemed "undirected", that is, expressing a connection between two nodes that doesn't originate at either node (unlike a telephone call or email). The mapping is also skewed because, for reasons of simplicity and scale, it excludes those who painted solo, or who only painted at the site once.

The picture of the social organisation of painters at the site shows a tightly connected community (Fig. 10). Almost

all members are connected to the social group and most members are connected to more than one other member. Social network analysis can quantify the number of direct connections of individual members, as well as features of the overall group, such as its density (actual connections between members, compared to the number of maximum theoretically possible connections, or the average connection or path between members across a number of nodes. (Kardushan 2012, p. 29-32). There are also examples of strong ties - in this case, artists painting together multiple times - compared to weaker ties, where interaction is more limited. (Fig. 10).

The two artists who have similar profiles in the earlier tables and who painted the most - Quebec (33 pieces) and Echo (23 pieces) - appear differently in the social network analysis. Quebec is at the centre of the social mapping, with another

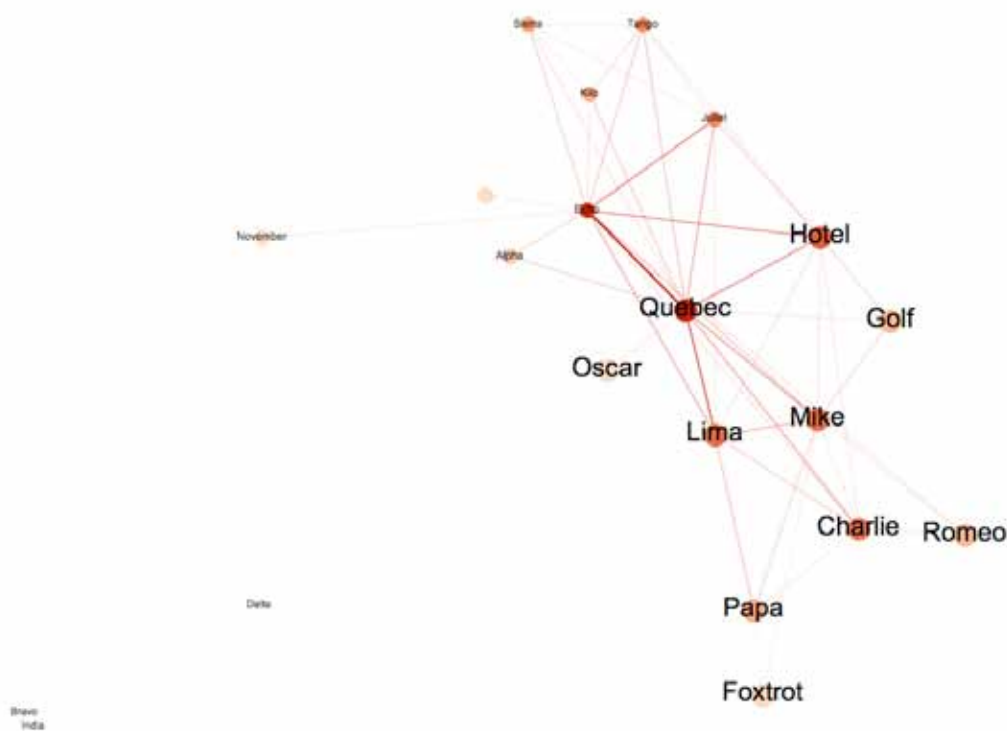


Fig 10. Preliminary social network map of artists, showing degrees and strength of connection

five artists (Hotel, Romeo, Lima, Mike and Charlie) having a high degree of connectivity. In contrast, Echo was on the periphery of the network, having painted with a smaller cohort of painters. According to social network theory, the shape of the network can help identify roles within it, such as brokers, bridges and structural holes (Everton, 2012: 253-285). Unlike the traditional models of criminal mapping that are familiar tropes of film and television, where the Photographs of criminal gangs are pinned to a police noticeboard in a hierarchical arrangement, social network analysis allows for the mapping of many differently shaped networks, from terrorist cells to community organisations. This social network is also a more expanded model of artistic authorship, showing how graffiti is as much the product of the labour of a collective network as of individual artists.

These two forms of data analysis – the mapping of artists and the duration of their pieces and the subsequent mapping of social relations – are an initial step in responding to the overall thesis of Instagram’s amplification and acceleration. The seasonally-adjusted figures for the duration of pieces point to acceleration of the production of graffiti. When social network model is supplemented by data on the artist’s Instagram postings of images from the site, this will provide a model for amplification, showing networks extend the reach of the pieces and how the walls have far greater digital audiences than physical visitors.

However, as an empirical exercise this project has some severe limitations. Due to the many complex factors through which graffiti is produced the results can’t be extrapolated to other sites nor can a causal link be demonstrated. However

this is not the aim of this research, which is rather to draw attention to the longer rhythms of collaboration and aesthetic innovation and to show how, in a data-driven era, walls and paintings can now speak the language of data. That is, I'm approaching this research not as a wholly empirical exercise but rather in the spirit of Fredric Jameson's notion of conceptual maps, drawing attention to the representational system that promise a totality while demarcating the horizon of our social worlds. Increasingly, graffiti and street art are produced in worlds where data exists in huge quantities, both as facts and frameworks, as a pile of bone-like relics and as a kind of cosmology.

4. Other Instagrams

Finally, it is worth mentioning three other, more qualitative, aspects of research at the site that add to this picture, showing other ways in which the graffiti there is being shaped by digital platforms. On one visit I discovered a set of sketches next to a piece, drawings on wax paper of the preliminary outline of the mural. The type of line work and the semi-transparent material suggest these are tracings from the artist's own black book, perhaps so as not to bring a delicate and valuable object into a painting space, either to protect it from material damage or from scrutiny (other writers have discussed rushing home from an illegal painting session to rip the designs that have completed from their black books, to avoid them being used as evidence). So, the tracing functions as its own kind of media system, transmitting a near-exact copy from the black book to the wall, as on to cameras, where it multiplies out in clouds and feeds.

A second example hints at yet another parallel network of images. After a few months of observing and recording at the site I noticed a puzzling inconsistency in some of the images I had collected. Scanning through them on a laptop I noticed that a large square panel had fallen from an upper section of a brick wall (Walls 3 and 4). In early images it was fixed to the wall and in later images it was visible on the ground. However, in later images it reappeared in its original position.

What had happened? At first I thought there has been a problem with the data collection, that my images were out of sequence. Then, in a moment akin to Antonioni's film *Blow-Up*, in which the main protagonist discovers evidence of a

murder in a sequence of photos he has taken of a London park, I felt a similar uneasy thrill. The images were not out of order – the square board had been replaced, after a hidden camera had been installed behind it. Like in *Blow-Up*, the camera was even visible in the images, though unlike Antonioni's movie, I did not have the quality of analogue negatives to enlarge, but fuzzy jpegs.

What was going on? Here was another parallel image network – a literal mirror of the Instagram world that, instead of recording the changing surfaces of the wall, recorded the painters themselves. In this network, the wall appears only in the bottom of the frame, constituting the lower limit of the image. After several more site visits the origin of the camera became clearer – it was likely it had been installed by a local council initiative to gain information about rubbish dumping at the site, but as with many surveillance technologies, it recorded indiscriminately and its data would not be carefully regulated. The camera was soon destroyed but its shadow over the site remained.

Like the tracing paper sketches, this shadow network or surveillance raised many questions? How routine has digital surveillance become, even in marginal spaces, building its own relentless time-stamped recordings as evidence, a real-time recording of artist's labour, without the central image of the crime itself? It was also another parallel record of the site, for a time more efficient and complete than my own daily recordings. As I've previously argued, the relationship between graffiti and technology often includes a set of parallel uses between artists, state actors and corporate interests (MacDowall 2008).

But for the graffiti writers visiting the site wasn't Instagram also a surveillance machine, a self-service documentation and celebration, displaying and sharing the results of their law-breaking and their networks of friends and accomplices. Julian Assange, depicted as himself a practitioner of political graffiti in dramatized accounts of his early years, called the Internet 'the greatest surveillance machine ever invented'. In this vein, NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden argues the scandal of increasing digital surveillance of citizens is not that the law has been broken but what the law allows.

Grffiti writers have been arrested and convicted on the basis of posts to Instagram and it has become a recognised

method of criminal investigation in some jurisdictions, not just by police but by a range of agencies. This risk is exacerbated for crimes such as graffiti that are highly visual, often documented by the perpetrators and their associates and are often require extensive resources to track and prosecute by other means.

5. Conclusion

This research was spurred by an unusual cycle of painting I observed at a single site. In previous eras, the quick repainting of walls in a location of low visibility would likely deteriorate into lower grade pieces, in both terms of both materials and aesthetic complexity. Except for painting trains, what kind of writers would spend time and paint on a surface that would be repainted in a few days or a week? Is it possible that walls are becoming more like trains, fleeting and mobile? I also wondered, as many of those painting at the site were established writers now aged in their 30s and 40s who had come to prominence in the scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s, would their gathering produce new or old work? Instead of ushering in an era of complacency and nostalgia, was Instagram's thirst for content also driving an era of experimentation and stylistic development? Would it be possible to read in the aesthetics of these works and the patterns of production the shadow of the digital realm?

The response trialled in this piece was to consider the site not simply as the material surface of artworks or as a combination of social and spatial context as in much existing scholarship on graffiti and street art. Instead, this article thinks about walls as engines of data and meta-data and, while managing ethical considerations in an era of intensified surveillance, explore how longitudinal analysis combines with basic data visualisation and social network mapping techniques might register the effects acceleration and amplification of digital platforms such as Instagram. Some of the changes wrought by the digital environment, such as the explicit references to Instagram accounts and practices in the murals, are immediate, obvious and visible. Other changes are more complicated and subtle and likely involve longer-term trends, obscured by Instagram's complex temporalities and its insistence on a continuous now.

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From street art to murals: what have we lost?

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Abstract

The mural festivals that have become common all over the world in the last five years are often called street art festivals, and the murals produced in those festivals are often referred to as street art. This use of the term creates confusion, since there are clear and fundamental differences between the smaller, unsanctioned works we used to call street art in the past decade and the huge institutional murals of today. The aim of this text is to try and identify the differences between these two practices.¹

Key words: graffiti, street art, murals, mural festivals, unsanctioned, commissioned

1. Working with the context

The street is not a blank canvas. It is an accumulation of objects, and each of them has a particular potential that stems from its physical qualities and from its relation to the workings of the city and local history. In a properly made street art piece these forms and meanings are not the backdrop, they are the working material.

First of all, the artist needs to choose a location, and this is actually half of the work. Of course, a location may be chosen out of a desire to work with existing textures and colours, and with the history embedded in them. But there are many more nuances at play.

A piece can be placed high or low, close to the viewer or far from him. It can be placed so it is very visible and reaches a large number of people, or in such a way that it is barely visible, in which case the message reaches fewer people, but when it does, it reaches deeper. It can be highly visible, but only from a particular vantage point. All these choices are effective ways to modulate the message, and having a good eye for them makes a good street artist.

Working without permission involves a particular set of problems when choosing a location, because the artist needs to find a balance between visibility, durability and risk: the visibility of the resulting piece, how long it can be expected to stay there, and how risky it is to work at that spot, both in terms of physical danger and the possibility of getting caught. For example, artists may choose to take great risks in order to attain huge visibility, or they may prefer to stay safe and produce works with little visibility but with a longer lifespan.

By making a sensible use of the context, artists can devise ways to get maximum visibility and durability while taking as few risks as possible. They can take advantage of the architecture by finding ways into places and choosing vantage points from which to work. And they can take advantage of the social behaviours surrounding the chosen spot, for example waiting for a particular time of the day, week or year when the spot may be unusually deserted.

In addition to all these physical aspects, working with a particular context also involves playing with the meanings and connotations of the objects that compose it. As is the

1 - In this text I will use the term "street art" to refer to the unsanctioned street pieces characteristic of the work artists such as Eltono, MOMO or Blu produced in the last decade, and the term "murals" to refer to the commissioned, building-sized paintings that have become ubiquitous in the last five years, most often created in the context of the so-called street art festivals.

case of any other form of public art, the final result of a street art piece is always the sum of the meaning put forward by the artist and that of the elements that were already there.

Therefore, many things need to be taken into account when making street art that works successfully with its context. And, in order to achieve this at any significant level, artists need to get to know the context they are working with, a process that necessarily involves time. The most contextually fruitful street art is often produced by an artist in his or her own city, or in a place s/he visits frequently.

With murals there is very little of all this. To begin with, facades tend to be painted white before a mural is produced. Therefore, there is no playing with the textural qualities of the surface or with their embedded history. But even more important is the fact that, for the production of a mural, an artist typically stays in a city for only a few days, just enough time to paint the piece. This affords little time to attain any intimacy with the context. Furthermore, muralists are very rarely afforded the opportunity to personally find the location for their work. They may be able to choose from a few pictures of possible walls, but by looking at an image of a building there is seldom much chance to learn about it or about its environment beyond the size and proportion of the wall.

For a street artist, adapting to the context often involves customising or even designing and building tools for specific needs. A particularly ingenious example would be the bike tool-set built by MOMO for pasting the posters of his series “The MOMO Maker” on elevated surfaces all over the city of New York.¹ In contrast to this, the production of a mural rarely involves the need to come up with any technical solutions. This huge creative potential is therefore lost, along with the aforementioned possibilities of playing with the unique characteristics of the working environment and surface.

The modulation of all these parameters is one of the main venues for a street artist to develop his or her particular voice. And, for the viewers, a good part of their enjoyment derives from appreciating this modulation. But these possibilities, which make street art unique, are largely lost in a mural.

2. The transversal quality of street art

One important aspect about working with contexts is the fact that they can be rearranged. Due to the unregulated nature of their practice, street artists can ignore the boundaries dictated by property that determine where they can or cannot act. A piece of street art can simultaneously cover two or more contiguous surfaces belonging to different properties, thus ignoring the division of matter and space demarcated by money. Street art can therefore make visible how these limits of action and physical demarcations are arbitrary and cultural. It can take space and matter back to its natural state, when everything was for everybody to use, and nobody actually owned anything.

Murals, conversely, confirm the limits demarcated by money. They validate the status quo by arranging themselves obediently where architecture and property dictate. Instead of questioning the logic of money, they reaffirm it, and do so in a very visible way.

Another crucial difference lies in the fact that street art changes the environment only symbolically. While power uses architectural materials to try and make its division of the world into a permanent physical reality, street art typically uses humble, temporary materials such as paint or paper, which transform space merely at a symbolic level. For this reason it can be read as a sort of parody of this allegedly permanent capitalist arrangement of the world, this presumptuous order that inescapably goes back to the amalgam from which it started. Street art can therefore be a sort of foretelling of the future state of a building. This is one of the reasons why it can be disturbing, because it can make visible how a prideful building is in essence just a miserable ruin.

3. The human scale

The physical size of a work is crucial, as is its relative position from the viewer. The manipulation of size and distance opens up a huge field for nuanced expression. A big work can tower over the viewer, or it can gaze across a long distance and still be readable. A small work can slip through the crevices of the landscape and suddenly appear, creating a surprisingly intimate situation.

1 - See Abarca (forthcoming).

But it is paramount here to note that all this playing with size takes place, necessarily, within a human scale. Street art always works within a scale related to the human body. It can only go as big as the body allows. An artist can reach beyond that by using a ladder or a pole, but these portable tools work only as extensions of the body, therefore the scale of the resulting artwork is still visibly human.

In order to reach further than his or her body alone would allow, an artist can also take advantage of the features of the architecture surrounding a chosen spot. S/he can, for example, start producing an image from ground level and complete it by climbing up a ledge or leaning out a window. Taking advantage of this kind of architectural features is also useful to modulate the distance between a piece and its viewer, and is often used to great effect as a way to increase the visibility of a piece. But, again, this takes place within discernibly human limits.

As a consequence of these limits, a street art piece is always a trace of the act of measuring the physical scale of the environment with that of the human body. And this is, of course, something the viewer can perceive. Reading this trace is actually one of the things that can make street art interesting. A street art piece lets the viewer measure the physical dimension of his environment by projecting his own physical dimension on it.

Any street art piece is, therefore, the visible presence of a fellow human being. It becomes part of the environment in a natural way, as one more of the many human traces on it. These would include graffiti or posters, but also many others, maybe less perceptible and often produced in a wholly unconscious way. Things like, for example, small discarded objects, or marks caused by the repeated use of keys, doors or walking surfaces, as in the case of the so-called “desire paths”.² As a consequence of this, street art has a particularly pronounced potential for engaging passers-by in an intimate way.

Murals, conversely, exist in an inhuman, monumental scale, very far from the viewer. Creating any meaningful connection is therefore much more difficult. In murals there is little possibility for the artist to play with scale and distance,

2 - “Desire paths” are the paths across patches of grass produced when pedestrians repeatedly assume natural trajectories that were not accommodated in the design of a particular urban space.

since in most cases only one extreme of all the possible modulations of scale is used. When producing a mural, an artist is not forced to understand the working environment, because s/he does not need to adapt to it. Murals are deployed with superhuman devices such as scaffoldings or cranes, which operate on a scale that allows the artist to ignore the context of the artwork. Instead of coming from below, a mural comes from above.

A piece of street art is necessarily created in a way analogous to the way a path appears on a landscape. A path needs to adapt to the features of the terrain, it is the result of a dialogue between these features and the scale and potential of the human body. A mural, on the other hand, works as a highway or a viaduct, ignoring by its very nature all but the most prominent characteristics that define a place. A similar analogy could be drawn between a piece of street art and a medieval street, which takes form based on the features of the terrain and the decisions of its inhabitants, and between a mural and a Haussmannian avenue, deployed with the help of superhuman machines and blatantly blind to any human or natural characteristic of the place it appears on. A mural is, from this point of view, yet another instrument for exerting control over the environment and its population.

A mural reveals nothing about the possibilities and limitations of the relation between the human body and the built environment. It is no longer a portrait of the relation between a person and his or her surroundings, which is necessarily open to dialogue. It is, instead, a portrait of the way in which power relates to the environment, which is most often a blind, imposed monologue.

An important consequence of this is the fact that viewers can respond to a piece of street art, they can correct it or paint over it. Street art is therefore a call to action – it empowers the viewer. It brings us back to the time when each person was able to rearrange his or her surroundings as far as his or her bodily potential would allow, before the power of a few would start to determine the limits of action of everyone else. It evokes this inherently human reality whose repression has created the alienating scenario we now live in. In light of this, it is only natural that street art, and particularly the neighbouring practice of graffiti, have become more prominent and violent as the control over the environment exerted by architecture and advertising has become stronger.

As opposed to the empowering nature of street art, murals force a passive position on the viewer. Like architecture or advertising, murals are a monologue that the viewer cannot respond to. Murals make clear that the viewer is a passive spectator, and a consumer. Street art can be a dialogue between people, while murals are essentially a one-way communication channel monopolised by power.

4. The geographic dimension: networks and paths

While scrutinising how street art and murals function with their context and with scale we have been considering the single piece of street art as the subject of our analysis. But a piece of street art rarely works in isolation. It is usually part of a series, or what could be called a series. The pieces of a street artist accumulate in space and time, and together they form a network. The network of pieces is, in fact, the natural manifestation of street art, and could be understood as the actual artwork.

This accumulation of actions expresses an artist's determination and work ethic, and defines a particular strategic approach to the propagation of pieces across the landscape and through time. But, even more importantly, it involves an accumulation of decisions that speaks about more or less intelligent, creative, and daring tactics for making use of each context.

In a network, all the modulations in the relation between artist and context I have referred to take place again and again. This allows artists unlimited opportunities to articulate a taste for choosing locations and working with them, thus giving shape to a particular view of the city. By following this accumulation of decisions, the viewer can gradually get to know and appreciate the artist's strategic approach to the propagation of his or her work, and his or her sensibility towards the built environment. It is by virtue of these repeated encounters with an artist's work through space and time that the aesthetic experience of most street art actually takes place. And only a network can provide this kind of experience.

Street art therefore involves a strategic work that could be described as geographic. A network of pieces forms an imaginary drawing on the map of the city that is, again, a trace of the relation between the artist and the environment that the viewer can follow, but in this case the trace works

on a geographic scale. Discovering these networks, and following the paths they form, gets the viewer closer to his or her surroundings. The viewer gets to touch all of it, even if not physically. This opens his or her consciousness to a new stratum of reality and, by extension, to many others, helping build a subjective environment different to the one that is imposed on us by capitalist space.

One valuable aspect of networked pieces is that, in order to accumulate encounters and experience the full artwork, the viewer needs to be attentive, and to search. And, since street art pieces are ephemeral, any hints viewers may have been given are temporary, therefore they have to explore on their own. Appreciating street art is, therefore, a call to action. Murals, on the other hand, are a call to obedience, to passive consumption. They are not something the viewer can actively search for. Rather, murals are forced on the viewer. Their presence is conspicuous, and in many cases they are featured in a printed map, and are part of the itinerary of a guided tour.

Another crucial point here is that, in many cases, street art makes use of the margins of the landscape. In the process of creating and searching for street art pieces, both the artist and the viewer often get to explore parts of the city they would rarely visit otherwise. Places such as alleys or empty lots, dead spaces below or around bridges and other infrastructures, even off-limits terrains such as abandoned tunnels. French theorist Guilles Clement describes how the distinctive value of these places resides in them being the only parts of the city free from the control of money, and how they thus become the only chance for the city dweller to find space for natural and human qualities such as indetermination or imagination.³

For both artist and viewer street art can end up being an excuse to discover and visit these kinds of ignored places, to follow unfrequented paths across the city. Being on the look out for street art consequently widens and enriches the viewers' awareness of their environment. Murals, conversely, tend to appear within the predictable spaces of power. They take the viewer along the official paths, through the alienating urban spaces of production and consumption.

3 - See Clement (2004).

5. Working with time

Due to their ephemeral quality, street art pieces are not static objects. Once a piece is installed it is abandoned to its fate. It can be worn out by the weather, get covered by another piece, or be erased. This can be a slow process, and pieces can offer very different, even unexpected graphic qualities through their lifespan. Some works are suddenly erased, while others gradually disappear into the landscape. A piece can surprisingly reappear after months, or even decades, when the posters or architectural materials that covered it are uninstalled. A work can stand in place for years witnessing huge changes around it, and as the connotations of its environment change so does its own meaning.

Some pieces even change their location before they disappear. This is often the case with pieces produced on construction site sheds or debris containers, which can suddenly move and appear in new, unpredictable locations. Of course, pieces produced on the surface of a train carriage are expected to move through space, and therefore through time.

Consequently, a street art piece functions as any other element in the landscape. It mutates and evolves like everything around it, including its viewers. It naturally intertwines with the evolution of its context and with the life of the people that repeatedly come across it. And this organic, temporal nature gives street art a great potential for engaging viewers in an intimate way. Murals, instead, are generally meant to remain. They exist in a plane different to that of the viewer. They are frozen in the atemporal dimension of the monument, of power, far detached from the real life going on around them.

A particularly important point here is that a street artist can make use of time as a creative device. He or she takes creative decisions in that dimension. There is a modulation of time that can be as decisive as the modulation of space and scale. Pieces can appear from time to time through a long period, or they can suddenly accumulate, or any combination of these. A project sustained in time delivers a very different message than a project that responds to a momentary impulse.

The ability to play with the temporal dimension of the artwork and its context allows countless other creative possibilities. For example, an artist with a good knowledge of his or her

working environment can choose a surface that is relatively difficult to reach, or relatively uncared-for, so the piece will remain in place longer. S/he can surprise his or her audience by colonising an untouched surface, or s/he can choose to locate a piece so it becomes part of a long and distinguished succession of holders of a popular spot. S/he can climb up an upper floor of a building slated for demolition to paint on a wall attached to the contiguous building, knowing that after the demolition the piece will appear, floating in mid-air. S/he can, thanks to street art's lack of bureaucratic filters of his practice, swiftly respond to particular issues related to the immediate context of the piece, or to the world in general.

In murals, this creative potential is largely lost. There are very few possible decisions regarding the temporal dimension of a mural, and even those are taken not by the artist, but by the arts administrators who commission the work.

6. The emotional dimension

When comparing street art and murals, additional differences can be identified in what could be called the emotional dimension of a piece, both in the experience of the artist and of the viewer. The most obvious of these differences has to do with the element of surprise: street art can appear in unexpected places and then unexpectedly disappear at any moment. While murals, instead, tend to appear on much more predictable spaces, and to stay there. But most of the differences in this emotional dimension would have to do with the energy embedded in an artwork during its process of preparation and execution.

The preparation of a piece of street art requires a hands-on approach to its context. The artist may need to find safe ways in and out of the location, and to come out with solutions for bringing the appropriate tools and materials there. In other instances the artist may decide to improvise after briefly surveying the context. The execution of a piece involves, in both cases, a friction with the environment. The situation is often precarious and tense, with the artist needing to work and be alert at the same time. It can be an exhilarating moment, particularly when it is the end of a long and complicated preparation process.

Both preparation and execution need to take place in situ, usually during the night. This can lead to unusual situations and to unpredictable encounters with bizarre but genuine

characters. The whole process often makes the artist delve fully into the environment, and can be experienced as an exciting adventure.

The preparation of a mural is very different. It tends to take place far from the context of the piece, often through email conversations with arts administrators, corporations and institutions with political and business agendas. The execution process rarely leaves much space for improvisation, and artists usually need to conform to tight schedules. It tends to be a predictable kind of process during which artists are perched on huge cranes for several days, largely isolated from the environment around them.

Street artists often work with cumbersome materials, and in many cases they need to come up with solutions for transporting them by foot or on a bicycle. As we have seen, they may need to customise or even design and build specific tools for their needs. In the production of a mural, conversely, there is a kind of blind omnipotence. And, as many artists report, a lack of resources generally spurs creativity, while an excess of resources may stifle it.

Due to all of these differences, street art and murals tend to have contrasting emotional contents. Contrasting processes, situations and values become embedded in the aforementioned emotional dimension of the pieces, something an attentive viewer may be able to perceive. There is little in common between negotiating your way in situ and discussing with arts administrators via email, between working precariously using makeshift tools and working with the powerful machines of architecture. Consequently, the resulting energies may differ greatly.

7. Freedom of content

One last difference, probably much more obvious, would have to do with the freedom of content. Corporations and institutions tend to be the forces behind the production of a mural, and they of course have their own interests, which can translate into censorship. But, more interestingly, artists can also censor their own work simply because they feel that it is their responsibility to do so when working on a prominent, permanent piece, or when working with public money. In contrast, in the conception of a smaller, ephemeral street art piece an artist will usually feel more free to use difficult images or messages.

8. What have we gained?

Of course, not everything is a loss in this transition from street art to murals. In some ways, it can be considered to be an improvement. One apparently clear benefit would be that mural making is a source of employment for street artists. While this can be true, it also means that many artists abandon their street art activity simply because they are too busy with murals. The transition may therefore be good for street artists, but not for street art. This is particularly detrimental in the case of up-and-coming street artists who are swiftly introduced in the mural circuit before being able to spend some years delving into a particular environment without hurries or expectations, which is the foundation of many of the most interesting projects that have come out of street art.⁴

On the other hand, it is not clear that street artists are the ones getting the mural jobs. In fact, a significant proportion of the many new artists that have appeared in recent years to fill the needs of the exploding mural circuit come from the fields of illustration, design and gallery art, and have no background in street art or graffiti.

It has also been said that the mural circuit provides visibility for the work of street artists. And, of course, their work becomes more visible in a way. But the visibility of murals is very different to that of street art. As we have seen, playing with visibility is an important part of the game of street art, and this is lost in the predictable world of murals. Furthermore, while street art is usually smaller and less prominent than murals, it is also closer to the people, therefore its visibility can be understood as being more valuable. The visibility of murals, on the other hand, is that of architecture and advertising – a kind of visibility imposed from power that many have learned to distrust.

One more certain argument in favor of murals is that they make it easier for women and stigmatised groups to work in the street. Practising street art can involve wandering through unfrequented areas and getting exposed to all kind of dangerous situations, and thus it is in fact easier for heterosexual white males to produce work under such conditions than it is for everyone else.

4 - See, for example, the works by American artist MOMO featured in Abarca, J. (forthcoming).

But, while murals have their own inherent virtues, there is a problem when they become so prominent that they take over the very term “street art”, creating a pernicious terminological confusion, and when they become so ubiquitous that they occupy the entire scene, making unsanctioned street works disappear from the media, and even from the street.

9. Exceptions and solutions

It would be fair to say that some particularities of street art are still present in some murals. For example, in some cases facades are not painted white before the piece is produced, and murals are often not actively conserved. But even in those cases we are still missing the most crucial elements of street art. There is still little space for the artist to get to know the context and play with it, there is no network of human-scale pieces encouraging the viewer to explore, and there is no possibility of playing with time.

Very few festival organisers would want to take the trouble to have artists in residence for a month or more so they can immerse themselves in the environment, or to arrange permissions for a network of small locations. That would mean spending more money, and it is clear that the surge of mural festivals can be largely explained with the fact that murals are extremely inexpensive compared to the visibility they afford to governments and corporations. And, most importantly, it would be less profitable in terms of virality and touristic appeal, as we will see in the conclusion to this paper.

Of course, some exceptions to this rule exist. The most valuable would arguably be *Bien Urbain*, a festival held since 2011 in the city of Besançon, France. It includes the production of murals, but it also allows artists to reside in the city for a substantial amount of time, to develop experiments based on the local context, and to produce networks of human-scale pieces scattered across the city.

Some artists have tried to open up space by themselves for this kind of production. The most persistent and successful is Spanish artist Escif, who has recently come up with several tactics that allow him to play with the context in meaningful ways even within the meagre time frame usually allowed for a mural piece.⁵ More importantly, he has lately been able to

produce networks of human-scale, context-based pieces even when working for a mural festival or an institution.⁶

10. Conclusion

Art has always been one of the attractions that make areas undergoing gentrification desirable for the middle class. Street art soon proved to be more effective than galleries because of the gritty “street credibility” it can lend to the areas it appears on. A latest step in this direction is the mural, arguably the most compelling art-related tool for the whitewashing of an area. Murals work as a safer and more efficient alternative to street art. This is because they are more visible, they are more appealing for casual observers whose awareness of the context is only superficial, they are free from any excess of contextualisation that would divert the attention of consumers to the actual environment, and they lack any transversal quality that could call into question the limits demarcated by property.

There is one concluding question that this analysis needs to address: if murals are less interesting than street art in so many ways, how is it possible that they have taken its place? The answer is simple: because murals work better in a photograph. And, for many years now, street art has been experienced mostly through photographs.

The reason that murals work better than street art in a photograph is because they have so much less to lose. As we have seen, most of the work of a street artist takes place in contextual, geographic and temporal dimensions. It has to do with playing with scale, playing with contexts, and with repeated encounters. To actually appreciate good street art viewers need to be physically there, they need to experience the whole context of the piece, and they need to accumulate encounters with the artwork by exploring through space and time.

0), painted in Aalborg, Denmark, in 2014.

6 - See Escif's (2014 - ongoing) *Promenade* series.

5 - See for example Escif's mural work *Free Gaza (slow wall / km*

A photograph captures only a very small fraction of all these dimensions. It records just one particular instant in the life of a piece, it leaves out of the frame most of the visual context, it fails to capture any other sensorial feature of the environment, and it fatally isolates the piece from the network it belongs to. Conversely, the main value in a mural tends to be its scale, and that works perfectly in a photograph.

Due to its ephemerality, street art used to have a very limited audience. By allowing the immediate and widespread sharing of images, photography and the internet vastly widened the potential public of street art pieces, and thus caused a huge rise in the production of street art. But this eventually backfired, because in the realm of photographs – of decontextualised art – a piece of street art is seldom as attractive as a big mural. It has been our reliance on the photograph as the main tool for experiencing street art that has eventually caused the demise of the practice.

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Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art – Book Review

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Abstract

This review is of the Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art, included in the Routledge International Handbooks collection. Published in 2016, this book will be of great interest to Graffiti and Street Art scholars. This publication is of significant importance in a context where there is so much to share and understand about the phenomena of graffiti and street art. The shared common goals of the Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art with the Urbancreativity research network (which promotes associated conferences and the Street Art & Urban Creativity Scientific Journal – where I'm personally dedicated as a member of the Executive Committee and as Editor) made me propose the present review.

The structure of the review mirrors the structure of the book, with forewords, introductions, and four thematic parts. It also includes a prelude where the quantitative facts are presented – the number of chapters, authors, scientific fields represented, nationalities of the authors and case studies, among others. This review regards the book as an element integrated in a culture of research that is being formed. It analyzes the significance that it represents to the Graffiti and Street Art fields of study, but also how it can influence authorial or management practices. There are some omissions to this review regarding the relation of the book within the publishing realm as, for example, I do not analyze how it is related with other titles of the same collection.

As a general review that did not want to be partial, there were some concessions to be made – more emphasis is given to the introduction of the book and for each section, and to the overall considerations, balances, coverage, and generic ingredients than to any specific chapter or contributor, topic or approach, this way avoiding individual exclusions or emphases. The approach was developed in the most analytic way possible, whilst trying to exclude as many personal influences as possible in the review process (as it should be). Some consultations with other researchers were also made as a way of gaining other perspectives and to refresh my individual interpretations. This review also tries to provide the necessary information for researchers that want or need to know more about the content, generic approach and character of this publication.

Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art / Edited by Jeffrey Ian Ross, ISBN: 978-1-138-79293,

Routledge International Handbooks, NY, 2016

1. Personal Remark

Although trying to exclude personal influences, my approach to this review will necessarily reflect my personal profile, so it is relevant to contextualize my personal concerns. I have two strong concerns, or two faces of the same coin, that drive my focused specialized and exclusive contribution since the 1990s to graffiti and street art research.

My first main concern is about the street, the urban fabric, the city, the landscape, open air, the outside, “nature”, the physical “thing” that surrounds us collectively, the space between buildings, including the building’s “skin” as walls, and the floor as stage, and or support for life, objects and visual signs (Gehl, 1987).

What concerns me about space is how do we deal with it so we can address our needs, how did we do this in the past, in the present, and how we will do this in the future. How do planning and usage interact, historically and today? This raises questions of the durability of resources, environmental awareness, the sensitive construction of space, relations of tension between conflictive usages, territorial narratives, organizational social structures, norms, and the absence of rules as policy.

My second concern is about research, methods, consolidation of knowledge, identifying the most concrete and objective facts, gathering knowledge about graffiti and street art at the broader spectrum. Again looking upon planning and usage, considering how they interact, now with reference to research academic tools focused on graffiti, street art and urban creativity in general. Both concerns work in the same direction, generically aiming to help us build a better environment, or in other words, use the available resources in the best way, and both foster top down and bottom up encounters, at distinct and moving scales, origins and objectives.

2. Quantitative Facts of the Book

The first contact with the book, as physical object, reveals that it has a considerable size and weight, specifically 7 x 1.4 x 9.7 inches and 2.2 pounds. The price, £150.00 (from the publisher's website), is also very relevant information at the first contact and determinant for the life of the book, its audiences, and ultimately the capacity for dissemination of its contents. I will get back to the price issue when approaching some of the Editor declared objectives of the book.

The cover image by the Editor, framed by the Routledge International Handbooks' black and red design, is conveniently hybrid, showing in one Photo a very eclectic mix of overlapping languages that generically represent graffiti and street art, a collective composition made by time and by some anonymous interventions, that could be in any place. Reference to the image is made in page V, reproducing again the Photo in black and white, in a bigger frame, where can now be seen the prominence of pasteups, with the legend Photo: Jeffrey Ian Ross, June 3, 2013.

At the first glance of the book's interior it is identified that the initial 39 pages are numbered in Roman numbers (IX to XXXIX) and from the introduction until the end of the book Arabic numerals from 1 to 491, in a total of 530 pages. In these pages are spread the Content listed on page IX. In the initial 39 pages, there are the List of Figures; List of Tables; List of Contributions; Editor's Foreword; Foreword; and Acknowledgments. The following 491 pages are used by the Introduction; four Parts (with collected chapters) and in the last pages the Glossary; Chronology and Index.

Each Part has an introduction and several chapters: Part I - History, types and writers / artists of graffiti and street art, has 10 chapters in 120 pages; Part II - Theoretical explanations of graffiti and street art/ causes of graffiti and street art, has 6 chapters in 72 pages; Part III - Regional/ municipal variations/ differences of graffiti and street art, has 12 chapters in 166 pages; Part IV - Effects of graffiti and street art, has 7 chapters in 86 pages.

With a more analytical approach to the written content we can find other kinds of data. Relevant to mention is the quantity of written work done by the Editor, in 120 pages (of the 530 total), distributed across the Editor's Foreword, Introduction, three chapters (one in Part III, and two in Part IV) and in the introductions of the book's four Parts. There is an impressive amount of work that includes the pages of the glossary, chronology, and index plus the time and work needed for the coordination of the contributors and the organization of the book in general with publisher.

Specifically looking at the contributors that are listed by surname in alphabetic order we can identify in their academic degrees a domination of PhDs, many of them are authors and co-authors of already published books, mainly professors - academics above all. There are 36 contributors identified, two chapters with two contributors, and (excluding the Editor) two contributors with two chapters, with a significant number of authors that are from the USA, or are USA-based (16). If we add to this the authors that are Anglophone (6) we have a great majority of 22 authors that are from, or based in, Anglo-Saxon countries, having 14 authors remaining to represent the rest of the world.

This cultural and or nationality information regarding the authors necessarily influences the chapters, and in the end, the book in general. Looking at the title and the subject of the 35 chapters, 10 have a direct relation with US (example: city or state in the title of the chapter) going up to 14 if we consider case study specificity (example: freight trains, gang graffiti) and New York City – which has three dedicated chapters – necessarily leading us to conclude the prominence of a US perspective. Twenty-one other perspectives demonstrate no regional approach and or other geographies, more specifically ten in Part III (I will expand on this subject when analyzing the Part III – Regional/ municipal variations/ differences of graffiti and street art).

Another factor that significantly influences the book's profile is the authors' scientific background, and more specifically the areas from where they approach the phenomenon of graffiti and street art. Regarding this subject, the fact that the Editor, while formally trained as a Political Scientist, is primarily coming from the discipline of Criminology/Criminal Justice. Although there appears to be a clear effort to diversify the scientific approaches – beside criminologists, there is also a dominance of anthropologists and sociologists, and in the minority art historians and one or two approaches form the urban studies perspective. In a bookstore or library it is likely then that one will not find book in the architecture and urbanism shelf (where they are substantially missing from my perspective) nor in the art history shelf, but in the shelves of criminology, anthropology and sociology.

3. Forewords and Introduction

Before the four Parts that contain the chapters and structure the book, there are the not less relevant Forewords and Introduction. In a sandwich of texts, Jeffrey Ian Ross authors the Editor's Foreword and the Introduction, and in between the Foreword is authored by Jeff Ferrell.

3.1 About the Editor's Foreword

The Editor's Foreword is constituted by Ross' statement of his personal motivation to produce this book. In a very open and sincere approach it sets a comfortable tone for the reader, establishing the frame from which the book

emerges, and the profile of the Editor. Ross also identifies the dispersed and uneven quality of scholarly work on graffiti and street art. Also it is stated that the book exists as a reply to the identified lack of an academic reference book in the area. I tend to agree to the first part, otherwise the Street Art and Urban Creativity Journal (where this review is originally published) wouldn't make sense, but regarding the reference book objective, that only the time will tell.

In relation to the structure of the book, the Editor in the Foreword and throughout the publication is very consistent, generating a very well structured book. The book has defined rhythms, and good dimensioning of the Parts (with a slightly bigger Part III). Each part has an introduction (by the Editor) always with the same structure: introduction, overview of chapters, and omissions. The omissions give us a very relevant idea of the areas that have been identified by the Editor as missing for a realistic appraisal of each Part.

There is a methodological approach to the structure of the book, with attention to detail and horizontality in terms of the relation of each contributor. The inclusion of a variety of methods (with a tendency to criminology, anthropology and sociology as already mentioned), and the good practice of including the glossary and chronology, among other reasons, accomplish Ross' stated objective of avoiding a textbook style.

Regarding the contributors, it is assumed in the Foreword that not all aspects and areas of knowledge are included in the book. Positive factors assumed by the Editor are the contributions of world experts and scholars, confirmed by the profile and production of the contributors. The Editor also identifies as positive such matters as country coverage and diversity of disciplinary focus. However, this is contradicted by the already mentioned US and Anglo-Saxon predominance of the contributions.

The Editor's Foreword also identifies the intention of publishing the book for an eclectic audience. As much as this is an understandable and valued intention, in a certain sense it enters into conflict with the text book style format – an eclectic audience is difficult to achieve when the intention is to publish original chapters that represent groundbreaking revelations from the research point of view.

3.2 About the Foreword

Jeff Ferrell in the Foreword gives a positive complement to the book. Although he reaffirms the dominance of US topics in the book, he reveals a relevant opinion, stating that since the 1970s graffiti is being assumed to be “urban folk art” with significant extensions to commercial art, in triangulation with advertising, street and gallery in parallel with cleaning campaigns. He states generally that street art and graffiti are complex and contradictory.¹

In a synthesis exercise Ferrell attempts to simplify by identifying two trajectories – broken windows theory (Maskaly & Boggess, 2014) (cleaning campaigns) and gentrification (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2013) (promotion disposable campaigns). He identifies issues for research on street art and graffiti such as visibility and invisibility, act and art, and the hopeless durability of the works. The digital is also mentioned as something that is altering the essential meaning of work, giving the specific example of style sharing, that with no personal contact does not work. Some paradigms such as city wide are proposed to be now shifted to global wide, and he alerts us that the digital is generating free floating signifiers.

Ferrell proposes Banksy and Espo as high profile examples of the legal/illegal tension, and all this in a Foreword full of knowledge – something only possible from someone that has been following the subject closely for such a long time. This is a Foreword that makes relevant statements, but that with very few changes could had been published independently or in any other book. Beside the initial references to the book itself, almost not any other part of this Foreword is reactive to the book’s contents.

3.3 About the Introduction

Jeffrey Ian Ross identifies approximately four interrelated contextual axes that one can use to identify, classify and/or examine graffiti and street art: legal/illegal; content/aesthetic; author/perpetrator; location. This identification

1 - This reminds me of the seminal book, Venturi, R. (1977) Complexity and contradiction in architecture. Vol. 1. The Museum of Modern Art.

serves the purpose of framing the subject, at the same time distinct authors are mentioned by way of illustrating the knowledge produced about each of the four axes. The Introduction also mentions the absence of a sustained series of scholarly studies on street art and graffiti, dividing the existent literature into popular and scholarly, ranging from distinct theoretical concerns such as iconographic models, classification methods, to youth subculture, step to crime, political content analysis, and gender.² Ross specifically mentions Waclawek’s (2011) book as more useful to art history than to the social sciences, and a lack in the demystification of the gang graffiti subject (there is one chapter dedicated to this topic in the book).

Ross notes the absence of the themes of culture jamming, ad-busting and subvertising, which opens the way for the conclusion of the Introduction which is constituted partially as a repository of assumed omissions and potential avenues for future development, positioning the book as a comprehensive base from which to grow from. The field lacks a consistent identifiable body of hypotheses/propositions, theories, and models. Something of this nature may be helpful in order to move beyond descriptive studies. Ross also identifies that a considerable number of untested and unquestioned assumptions about street art and graffiti exist.

Specific suggestions for improvement are made, such as researchers needing to have a better grounding in art, art history, and aesthetic theory – and that this, according to the Editor, would help criminal justice responses. More time should be spent around authors during times when they are not painting. More surveys and geo-mapping studies could help in patterns of dissemination (here is where my personal research fits in), more literacy in respect to the wider public, being as open minded and as objective as possible, more studies about the relation between graffiti and street art with adbusting/culture jamming, and a better understanding of communicative and transgressive elements as tools for developing alternative and progressive approaches.

2 - A fact that, as already mentioned, is being worked through by the Journal where the present review is published originally, “Street Art & Urban Creativity Scientific Journal” - Urbancreativity.org

4 The Parts and Chapters

As already mentioned, this review does not consider each chapter individually, in this sense the analysis and review is focused on each Part's content as group. The structure of each Part is similar: it starts with the Part opening, written by the Editor and is composed by an Introduction to the Part, an Overview of the Chapters and Omissions. They are consistent with the titles, and always structured in the same way: an overview of the contents in the introduction, three or four paragraphs for each chapter in the chapter's overview, and desirable but missing subjects and topics in the omissions.

An overall tendency is identified in the relation of the contributor's expertise and the subject of the article, sometimes revealing more detailed facets of their work, and at other times reaffirming the already published material in the author's books and or thesis.

The quantity of chapters and pages in each part was already analyzed in Section 3 of this review (above). But it is again relevant to mention that Part III – Regional/municipal variations/differences of graffiti and street art - is slightly dominant although this does not represent more regional variations in the book (as already mentioned).

In the analysis of each Part I have taken into consideration the opening written by the Editor, and secondly the approach taken by chapters themselves, identifying key concepts in both sources, and confronting them chapter by chapter in a very uncompromising approach.

4.1 Part I - History, types and writers /artists of graffiti and street art, 10 chapters in 120 pages;

In the opening the Editor identifies the first chapter (Baird & Taylor 2016) of the first Part as an opportunity for readjusting the cultural value of today's works. The chapter's subject, ancient graffiti, opens the historical narrative of graffiti in the dawn of mankind. Regarding graffiti as historical data it prompts critical reading of the content of the graffiti and also shows the importance of the context. From this point of view the legal/illegal, art and not art issues are erased from the equation.

This very appropriate opening gives way to the subcultural world of hobo graffiti (Lennon, 2016), a regionalized type mainly studied in the US (which originated as a video documentary) considered by some as a form of ancestral train writing, having in common the goal of linking individuals through the "same type of canvas" (Hall, 2011). In connection to this emerges the third chapter of the book (Weide, 2016), also about trains and US freight trains, identified by the Editor as filling in a gap in the literature. This genre of graffiti writing is assumed to have a particular relevance within the graffiti subculture.

The next chapter (Phillips, 2016) focuses on gang graffiti – according to the Editor, this is a specific communicative genre. The acute expertise of this contributor helps – as already mentioned – to demystify this graffiti type, and at the same time to focus graffiti studies on the dynamics of social groups (Phillips, 2014). In the same line, the next chapter (Wilson, 2016), about prison inmate graffiti, although less regionalized than the previous articles is focused on the Australian prisons and one in the United Kingdom. This works as a diary as stated by the Editor, but it shows more about social group dynamics than anything else – something relevant to, but not specific to, graffiti and street art. The following chapter in reality and by logical sequence may have fitted better after the research on latrinalia (Trahan, 2016). Being also focused on a social dynamic, it splits analysis in terms of gender, the subject of the previous article (Pabón, 2016). Both chapters approach identity, and particularly gender, as a valuable contribution to the literature (Parisi, 2015).

In the yarn bombing chapter (Haveri, 2016) both the contributor and the Editor raise some doubts regarding this type of work being accepted within the study of street art and graffiti study. It is identified as fragile and is even identified as decaying as a genre by the contributor. In a non connected leap the next chapter (Kramer, 2016) unexpectedly named NY City's legal graffiti writing culture, a puzzling title that uncovers, in the words of the Editor, a multifaceted and fluid culture. Going back to the pre Columbus period, North American Indians today are approached in the last chapter (Martín, 2016) of Part I, signs of resistance according to the Editor, and extracted from the chapter is the claiming of rights as key concept.

4.1.1 Part I - Review partial conclusion

The Editor nominated omissions for Part I address several subtypes and topics such as hate graffiti as a potential genre, and the specificity of subway graffiti. Topics that are not directly approached include race and ethnicity; political graffiti and street art, and how they interact; and wartime graffiti as a specific type.

Part I opened with a chapter about the usually undervalued topic of ancient graffiti. The following chapters revealed a US perspective, folk, and (freight) train subcultures, NY legal writing, with emphasis for the very specific social group dynamics in the gang, prison and North American Indian graffiti. The rest of the chapters presented other types, such as latrinalia and yarn bombing (also US context case studies). The title of Part I identifies a focus on history, to be found above all in the first chapter, but in this section there can also be found a discussion of different types of graffiti and street art with an emphasis on US as context. I did not identify any chapter specifically about writers/artists of graffiti and street art.

4.2 Part II – Theoretical explanations of graffiti and street art/causes of graffiti and street art,

6 chapters in 72 pages;

The first chapter of Part II is about graffiti and street art as ornament, a chapter title in line with the contributor's book (Schacter, 2014). According to the Editor, this chapter serves, with other similar chapters, to identify how the subject fits with art history and theory. This is a chapter constituted by selected ideas from the contributor's monograph, partially deconstructing supported dictionary references and removing it from the art/vandalism dialectic, and full of architectural space relevant references. In a similar tone, the second chapter (Brighenti, 2016) of Part II addresses the issue of the divergent synthesis of place valorization with a key concept referenced by the Editor on the economic process of valorization. This chapter also mentions urban eventfulness, constituted by the expulsion, capture and re-inscription of graffiti and street art. In the third chapter (Evans, 2016) the place approach is maintained, dealing with the

relation between piece-making and place-making, framing in the Editor's opinion, city branding and cultural tourism. Other aspects addressed by this chapter, among others, include numbers for cleaning graffiti (as vandalism) and an identified tension between high street art and unpopular graffiti.³

In a topic shift, the following chapter (Macdonald, 2016) addresses gender, specifically the changing gender dynamics of the graffiti subculture, mentioned by the Editor as a reexamination of the research direction of this topic. The following chapter (Taylor, Pooley & Carragher, 2016) identifies a relationship between the post internet era and an increasing number of women as authors. Generic social analyses are present such as the socially conforming or non-conforming identity of youth, as they desire a sense of place, belonging and connection with society. The last chapter (Snyder, 2016) of Part II, the shortest chapter of the book, has the subject: graffiti and subcultural careers. The Editor mentions that this is an analysis of how subcultural capital changes into actual capital, and the chapter confronts the Birmingham School's assumption that subcultures are futile, and proven to be false by the success of old school graffiti writers.

4.2.1 Part II - Review partial conclusion

There are various omissions noted by the Editor such as the absence of any analysis of the relationship between graffiti and hip hop, and the detailed treatment of the subject of gentrification, and specifically the role of graffiti and street art in property development and as an engine for tourism. Part II presents contributions that are focused on theoretical explanations/causes which share both not very well known insights and already widespread considerations. This part can be characterized by two main angles of approach to the subject: one on the part of place, and its role in art history, economics, and urban planning; and the other from human sciences, looking to gender, digital influences, and a subcultural approach.

3 This contributor presented a paper on related issues at the Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity 2014 International Conference (Evans, 2014).

4.3 Part III – Regional/ municipal variations/ differences of graffiti and street art, has 12 chapters in 166 pages;

Part III is the longest section of the book and gathers 12 chapters from distinct regions. The first three chapters are from North America. The first chapter (Austin, 2016) is about New York City, a key site, and provides relevant time coverage (1969-1990). This is the second chapter directly about New York City in the book. It also addresses digital influence as a factor that has changed style and innovations that are no longer locally based – aspects already mentioned in prior chapters. New York City is a reference for both cleaning and promoting graffiti and street art, and the chapter provides some interesting mentions, such as the euro taggers in 1997, that generated specific cleaning policies. The second chapter (Piano, 2016) is about graffiti and street art in the “new” New Orleans, with reference to the post-hurricane period and how it influenced the development of graffiti and street art, the increasing use of social media, and non-accessible places. Further research is also mentioned as needed (D’Amico, 2014). The next chapter (Waclawek, 2016), graffiti and street art in Montréal (Pop culture and politics) mentions among other events, the Under Pressure Festival as an example, and mentions the legal issues faced by local author Roadsworth that echoed globally, and by this example extrapolated the influence that local phenomena may have internationally.

The following chapter (Palmer, 2016) is the only representative of the South American context. An honorable reference goes to Santiago de Chile, and a specific approach to the Mapocho River battle in the usage of public space, mentioned by the Editor in Part III’s opening text as a mixture of propaganda and hip hop graffiti. It is very interesting to understand the long history of mural production in Chile, and the abyss between political murals and graffiti that only converged in 2008 in the Open Air Museum of San Miguel. This chapter could serve as a good link to the chapter about Lisbon, by the similar trajectory of relations between political murals and graffiti, but in between there are the chapters about two the major global cities, London and Paris.

The chapter about London (Ross, 2016), authored by the Editor, mentions aesthetic and economic benefits, and uses London as a case study, to provide an analysis that

could fit many other major cities that are embracing street art “murals”. There are clear similarities to the chapter about Paris (Fieni, 2016), although with local particularities, in this case starting from Brassai, generating some interesting contrasts with the almost hegemonic discourse about New York City/Philadelphia graffiti history. Still in Europe but at another level of centrality, the Lisbon chapter (Campos, 2016) considers local developments in a similar approach to the Chile example (political murals to graffiti) in a generic overview of the development of Lisbon’s political murals and street art (with the omission of graffiti from the title but not from the content).

The Middle East is represented by two chapters. The first (Abaza, 2016), about Egypt post-January 2011 graffiti and street art, where the conditions that occurred post revolution configured specific outcomes, intensified by the relations between the Occident and Egypt. This context gives space for colonial critical culture and the parallel between writing in Egypt and the Anglophone world. The second chapter about the Middle East region is focused on Palestinian graffiti (Peteet, 2016), more specifically about the wall that divides this country from Israel. This is a chapter that exposes the fact that there is a significant circulation of images and words on the subject of the wall that are fostered by street art and graffiti, but in reality these have not opened a proper space for conversation, and are thus (just) reminders of the “occupation.”

The final three chapters of Part III are from Asia. Graffiti/Street Art in Tokyo and surrounding districts is a chapter (Yamakoshi & Sekine, 2016) that develops the (risky) exercise of reaching general conclusions from a specific case study, reminding us, with a marvelous quote from Ferrell, that “exclusionary controls and commercialization often destroy the history of alternative culture.” (Ferrell, 2002: 191) Beijing and Shanghai, claiming spaces for urban art images (Valjakka, 2016), is a chapter that beside many other specifically mentioned facts, reveals that that these practices are tolerated to some extent, and that removal is made mainly due to the fact that authorities are concerned with political implications. The author also recommends that research about this subject cannot rely on the internet due to the fact that there is real censorship of the contents that are in circulation. Also by the same author, the final chapter is about Hong Kong.

(Valjakka, 2016) This region is characterized by the author as transcultural and transnational, with a constant in- and out-flux of people. This has specific consequences such as that international authors/artists are still the ones that are given access to the commissioned production opportunities for their work. However, the author of this chapter notes that there is also an emergence of a more local scene, where street credibility is still a core value, even given the short life of the creators' works.

4.3.1 Part III - Review partial conclusion

The Editor identified omissions regarding approaches (at the very least) to the following regions/municipalities: Barcelona, Bologna, Buenos Aires, Moscow, Perth, São Paulo, Sydney, and Toronto, raising the possibly unanswerable question of: how many cities are necessary in order to provide a comprehensive treatment?

Also not discussed here is the neglect of any detailed consideration of the South American context, which has rich and meaningful centers of production and quality authors, not to mention this region's relevance in the history of mural painting involving also Central America. This is a very meaningful absence in Part III.

There are so many gradients and regional distinctions in Europe that proper studies of regional variations only about Europe would be encyclopedic and a colossal research endeavor, so it is understandable that there are choices that were made by the Editor. In this way, this Part is only constructively criticized here in that the reasons for the presented selection are not fully identified by the Editor (a question that is more developed in the final conclusion to this review).

4.4 Part IV – Effects of graffiti and street art,

7 chapters in 86 pages.

The first chapter (Ross, 2016) of this final section of the book develops an overview of how major centers in the US respond to graffiti/ street art, an approach that examines the effectiveness of the several processes used, concluding that (even if desirable) it is not possible to completely eliminate or

eradicate graffiti. The second chapter (Kramer, 2016) is focused on New York City 's moral panic over graffiti: normalizing neoliberal penalties and paving the way for growth machines. This is a chapter that addresses the reproduction of sound bites in association with neoliberal non-reflective actions.

The next chapter (Bengtson, 2016) is not based on any specific regional approach, giving a break to the tendency of US based chapters, with the title *Stealing from the Public: The Value of Street Art Taken from the Street*. This is a subject of some controversy and urges reflection. This chapter tends to the general conclusion that without context there is no art work. Coming back to the US context, the Editor authored chapter (Ross, 2016), entitled: *How American Movies Depict Graffiti and Street Art*, is a relevant chapter about the crossroads between graffiti and movies, but is also somehow challenging due to the fact that if not analyzed, the core of the intersection tends to repeat the recurrent issues that surround graffiti such as legal and illegal, or art and vandalism.

The following chapter (Bloch, 2016) considers a core and sensitive issue, not totally captured by the title: *Challenging the Defense of Graffiti, in Defense of Graffiti*. In reality, this chapter is about the fringe of non-contactable graffiti authors and the "barrier" made by the (non designated) spokesmen that have their own specific interests. This specific aspect is very relevant to have in mind when developing serious research projects.

The two final book chapters address graffiti and street art from an economic point of view. The first is about whether copyrighting law can protect graffiti and street art (Schewender, 2016). It is relevant to mention here that the legal framework adopted by this chapter is related to US copyright law. The chapter concludes that while it is possible to try to legally protect work, it is not advisable due to the vulnerability to direct public response. The final chapter: *Graffiti, Street Art and the Evolution of the Art Market* (Wells, 2016) reveals that the evolution of the art market is also built by generations. The teens of the 80s and 90s now are in their 30s or 40s so they have gained the capacity for assuming meaningful decisions in the context of artwork selection, which is associated with internet use, and their travels, which generates today's paradigm.

4.4.1 Part IV - Review partial conclusion

The Editor lists a number of omissions and makes reference to the absence of a chapter about the graffiti removal business, and on how graffiti and street art is taught to students in different settings. In this final Part of the book, there are several particularities – two of the chapters are from the Editor, and there is also a third book chapter directly about New York City.

5. Conclusion

This publication is of significant importance for the culture of research that is being formed around the topic of graffiti and street art. In reality, this culture of research has distinct trajectories depending on the disciplinary background of the researcher (or consortium leader). The book's Editor is a Professor in the School of Criminal Justice, at the University of Baltimore, formally trained as a Political Scientist, is primarily coming from the discipline of Criminology/Criminal Justice. However, the Editor makes the suggestion that researchers need to have better grounding in art, art history, and aesthetic theory, and that this, according to the Editor would help criminal justice responses.

To confirm the Criminological angle of approach, or the book project's departure, in a "back jacket endorsement", Professor Keith Hayward, Faculty of Law, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, writes: *Considering graffiti is both the world's most visible crime and a global subcultural phenomenon, it's strange that mainstream criminology has spent the last four decades steadfastly ignoring the subject. Finally, this seems to be changing. With the arrival of the Routledge Handbook on Graffiti and Street Art, criminology now has the sophisticated and comprehensive benchmark collection the subject deserves* (Hayward, 2016: n.p.).

Some contributors are criminologists, but there's a dominance of anthropologists and sociologists, and a minority art historians and (unfortunately) only one or two contributors that approach from the urban studies perspective. The lack of a substantial share of contributions from the urban studies field means that the volume may be overlooking some key relevant applied research on graffiti and street art.⁴

4 - This thought was recently confirmed at the Lisbon Street Art and Urban Creativity Conference 2016, the third day of which was dedicated to the relation of graffiti and street art with architecture and city planning.

The book includes contributions by world experts confirmed by the profile of the contributors. The diversity of disciplinary focus could be extended, but it has some variety as already mentioned. On the other side, the country coverage could be considerably extended, in the regional dedicated part and but also in the rest of the book. From the 35 chapters 10 have a title referencing the US. New York City, for example has three dedicated chapters, and there are 14 chapters that consider US based case studies. The prominence of a US perspective is reinforced by the fact that 22 contributors are from or based on Anglo-Saxon countries, leaving 14 authors to represent the rest of the world.

The concrete factors of book size and price are determinants for targeting an audience. In this sense although there is a stated intention to publish the book for a eclectic audience, the price of the book will make it difficult to access for singular researchers. The understandable and valuable intention of creating a reference book on the subject is accomplished, generating one more source of potential references, but it is hard to achieve the "ultimate" reference book in the presented format – original chapters are usually groundbreaking revelations from the research point of view, and there are already referential publications, that include work from many of the contributors.

It is also clear that this book represents an immense amount of work that needs to be recognized. The Editor has written 120 pages alone, without considering the glossary, index, chronology and the time and work needed for the coordination of a volume with 36 contributors and the organization of the book in general with the publisher. This is a very well structured book, with defined rhythms, and good dimensioning of the Parts (with a slightly bigger Part III). Each Part contains an introduction (by the Editor) always with the same structure: introduction, overview of chapters, and meaningful omissions.

Notwithstanding the difficulties in finding and securing appropriate contributors who are willing to produce a high quality chapter, the reasons for the choices that have been made about the topics included (and excluded) are not totally explained. In any case, I agree with Jeffrey Ian Ross when he states that this book is a respectable base from which

to grow and hopefully to move this research topic beyond descriptive studies. This handbook will be an important resource that can help in our efforts to clarify the untested and unquestioned assumptions about street art and graffiti that exist.

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After the Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity International Conference and book publishing in 2014, Seminar and Volume 1 (numbers 1 and 2) of the Street Art & Urban Creativity Scientific Journal (in 2015), the quality, quantity and originality of contributions from distinctive disciplinary fields, confirm the pertinence and relevance of our collective ongoing work.

For the 2016 open call we invited contributions from all disciplines to discuss the tensions and complementarities of Center, Periphery, Theory and Practice, as concepts and as concrete characteristics of the Street Art & Urban Creativity research topic.

What makes it distinct to be in the center or in the periphery of the urban context, of the practice or theory? How the approach from the practitioners, the art critics, the bloggers, the followers, contact the academic research and scientific approach? This are examples of the kind of issues that we were looking for to be addressed.

The 2016 edition, volume 2, is composed by 2 numbers, number 1 "Center, Periphery: Practice" and number 2 "Center, Periphery: Theory".

The number 2, is devoted to Theoretical approaches to Center, Periphery. Addressing tangible geographies like Uruguay and Brazil, methodological geographies centered in values, also about digital geographies, having space also for one philosophical essay and one book review.

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