UXUC

Interaction Design,
User Experience &

Urban Creativity Scientific Journal

How can cities become
better human habitat?

Vol. 1 / Nº 2

Urbancreativity.org

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co-editor, User Experience & Urban Creativity
Creator of Art Crimes (graffiti.org)
User experience design and research

Graffiti art (also called “style writing”) and user experience (UX) intersect in a lot of interesting ways. The most obvious are how graffiti art affects the experience of people in various situations:

Graffiti on passenger trains greets people on train platforms, showing off skills and hinting of adventures that the commuters can only wonder at.

Graffiti adorns hip-hop community events, venues, and merchandise. Graffiti writing was adopted by hip-hop culture in American urban centers and is now inextricably embedded in hip hop, worldwide.

Freight trains deliver exuberant messages from far-flung places to people in rural areas, freight workers, and people in automobiles watching the slow, noisy parade on the tracks. Railfans sell model trains with reproduced graffiti pieces on them, because to do otherwise would be to provide a less authentic experience.

Skate parks, where daredevils sail the concrete terrain and reach for the sky on wood and metal, would not be the same without the glorious ambiance that graffiti imparts.

Halls of fame are points of pride in many cities and towns. Local and visiting artists mingle in these autonomous zones where time allows some of the best work to surface. People of all kinds visit and try to capture a bit of these fantastic places for themselves.

Site-specific graffiti art often graces the shelters of last resort, the abandoned spaces. The places under bridges, in tunnels, in wrecked factories and squats, the living rooms of those who wander. Many writers decorate these ad-hoc home zones specifically for the enjoyment of those who occupy forbidden territory.

As travelers come and go worldwide, many leave marks in a silent exchange, communicating that I was here, I exist. They embrace and taunt each other over time and distance, sharing in-jokes, and making rude gestures against surveillance and control. Marks about seeking community, personal bests, creating a customized, personalized experience of neighborhoods. This is ours. You are welcome. Some people and some experiences are still free.

Unsurprisingly, some graffiti and experience design professionals connect, emerge, cross over, and enhance the many disciplines in each. Artists bring graffiti writing and design skills to the digital, sculptural, and architectural worlds. Experience designers document, facilitate, and embrace graffiti culture and experience in their own lives and work, recognizing the importance of people owning, co-creating, and humanizing the artifacts and environments we share.

With this journal, we hope to illuminate some of the compelling work being done at these intersections of people, concerns, design, research, media, environments, liberty, trespass, and aesthetics.

Rest in Power, Phase2. Respect.

Scientific Committee

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Tracing The Traceur
Architecture photography as an optic of knowing

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Abstract

This essay is a photographic exploration of parkour, tracing the experience of the traceur through the gaze of the architect, reflecting upon how photography can destabilize the point of views architecture operates from, and thereby expand the narratives on architecture possible to trace through photography.

Keywords: Architecture photography, parkour, urban materiality, visual practice

Alongside Barbican Art Gallery's and ArkDes' exhibition *Constructing Worlds. Architecture and Photography* (2014) came a publication with an essay by David Campany. The essay discusses photography as a distinct mode of representation and places the exhibited work in relation to different photographic attitudes towards the built that can be traced through the biography of photography. The strong ties between camera technology and the 'immobility' of built environment, giving architecture a special status within photography, is well documented (Baldwin, 2013; Elwall, 2004; Robinson & Herschman, 1987). But in the essay a rhetoric figure also emerges, a figure that is important when thinking of architectural practice and its ability to perceive (urban) experiences located outside its own.

Drawing on Walter Benjamin, Campany states that even though photography is incapable of capturing a building as such (since it is intimately linked to ownership and use), photography can "isolate, interpret, exaggerate or even invent a cultural value" based on buildings. Campany also suggests that it is in fact these cultural values that constitute architecture and therefore they cannot be separated from photography. Architecture is in such an understanding not identical to the objects (buildings, urban spaces, landscapes etc) generated by an architectural practice, but a specific way of looking, thinking and shaping these objects which in turn is interlinked with the methods, techniques and materialities that constitute a certain optics.

The exhibition *Constructing Worlds* gathers photographic work and photographers that to a various degree – and often overlapping – bridges over the documentary (Evans, Becher), artistic (Sugimoto, Lambri), commercial (Schulman) and anthropological (Kander, Baan). And even though they are sorted under the exhibition theme architecture, they depart from positions outside of architecture's own. In the sense that all works have buildings or built environment as the photographic object,

the sorting under architecture is both self-evident and uncontroversial. But if the selected work is studied in relation to the photographic images that circulate within the discipline of architecture and the professional group that produces (built) architecture the selection becomes less obvious.

Photography and its emergence within architecture is interconnected with the materials, technologies and distribution systems developed parallel to photography's shifts in development and reproduction, in other words the production and distribution of books, magazines and newspapers. These connections are still strong, and nowadays it is above all (architecture) magazines that act as prime distributers of conceptions revealing what is considered interesting, innovative and relevant architecture. In this, photography – the images of architecture – play a vital part in how the discipline and profession define their objects. Since magazines do not have the financial means in order to directly engage those that deliver images of published building projects, it is mostly the architects themselves that commission photographers for their own publication on websites and potential magazines or books. Thus, the view on architecture that is being reproduced is that of the architect, marked by her (idealized) conceptions rather than meanings that can be drawn from either the building's lived context or other visual practices. When images are so tightly tied to a specific sender, architecture photography not only tends to reduce itself to some kind of commercial photography. It also runs the risk of reproducing the architectural profession's conceptions of which cultural values that are encompassed in the concept architecture. What is sorted under the label *architecture photography* is thereby not only an indication of what kind of photography we are talking about but also of what is defined as (good) architecture.

Thus, architecture photography has had a peculiar ability to not only silence other positions but also to black box and naturalize its own. The architect's gaze is thereby disentangled from its 'body' and acts as if it could see "everything from nowhere" (Haraway 1991). In doing so, architecture photography cements a common misconception within architecture profession and education of architecture as 'timeless' and free from ideological, social and cultural dependencies (Till 2009). This bodiless gaze has also found its way into the computer rendered images which mimic the photograph by using the camera's photo points, focal lengths, focus points and converging vertical lines, but also by imitating architecture photography's most classical motif: the building when it is just completed. Not uncommonly these images manifest themselves early in the architectural design process and regarding the impact photographic looking had on 20th century modernistic architecture and the emergence of what Claire Zimmerman (2014) calls *photographic architecture*, it is still important to examine what aesthetics and thereby what power relations operate through the architect's gaze.

In order to widen the optics of architecture photography – and thereby its knowledge of how architecture is experienced and made use of – this essay presents a photographic exploration of parkour and reflect upon what it means to switch from the optics of an architect to the optics of the *traceur*. [1] Architecture photography is in the context of the essay not defined on the basis of a particular sender (architect or traceur) or wether it is part of a certain genre (art or architecture). Rather it is used as a tool for investigating how a shift in optics can capture the multiple experiences of urban everyday environments and the role photography plays in the making and shaping of urban subcultures, such as parkour.

1 - The photographic study was done during the work on my thesis *Arkitekturens kroppslighet. Staden som terräng* (Nilsson 2010) and some of the images presented here are part of that publication. However, in the thesis the photographs answered to a different aim than they do in this essay. Here they are rearranged, accompanied by other previously not published and (re)interpreted from the objectives of TELE SCOPE, an ongoing artistic research project on architectural photography.

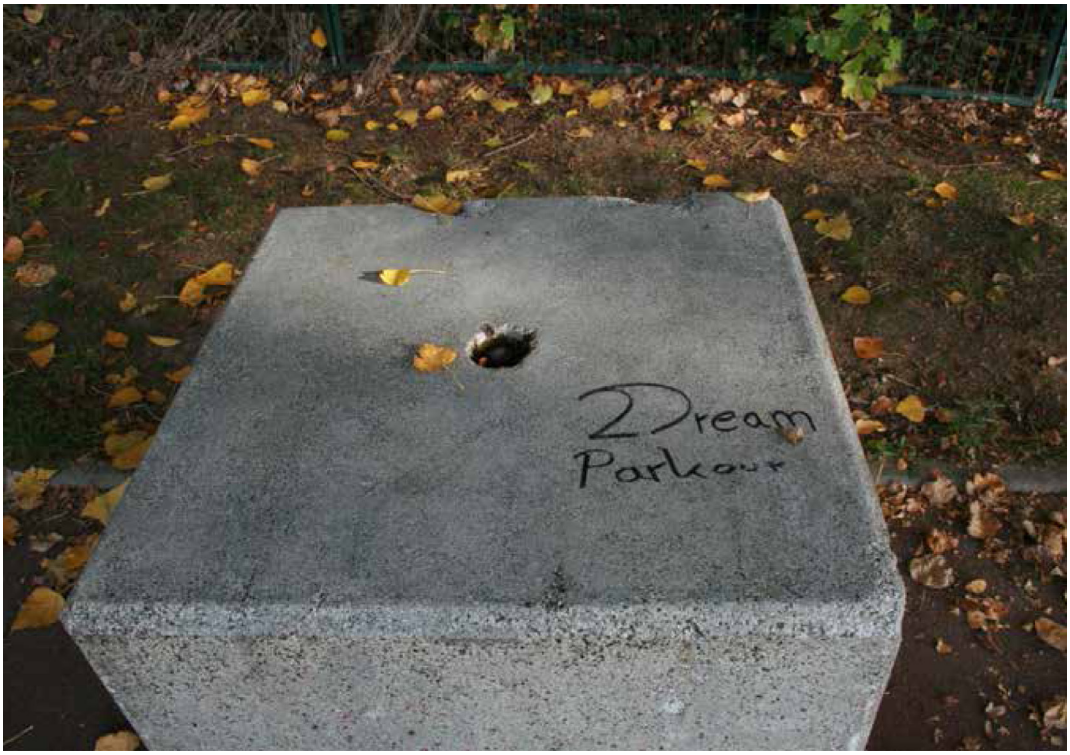

Figure 1 - Lisses / Evry Courcouronne, October 2009

Figure 2 - Lisses / Evry Courcouronne, October 2009

Figure 3 - Lisses / Evry Courcouronne, October 2009

Figure 4 - Lisses / Evry Courcouronne, October 2009

Figure 5 - Lisses / Evry Courcouronne, October 2009

Architecture photography is a practice built around vision, embedded in a particular way of observing spatialities, materialities and temporalities. It is *scopic*. If you follow the greek roots of the word you will find that scopic can be understood as an ”instrument for looking” (*skopein*). The camera acts like an instrument that enables for a certain kind of observations, but it is an observation which requires an observer (an eye) that directs its gaze and chooses a specific part of the world. The part chosen – the view – is not a neutral one. It presupposes a *point of view* which in turn is fixed by the horizon of understanding from which the looking operates (Bärtås, 2006). Architecture photography is thus characterized by choosing motif, framings, demarcations and focus based on the architecture discipline’s conceptions of space, material, time and process.

Similarly, the gaze of the traceur is embedded in a specific way of observing and making use of urban materialities. As part of a larger affinity such as parkour the traceur isolates, interprets, exaggerates and invents cultural values based on buildings and built environments. Though the experiences accumulated within the traceur are incorporated by a highly bodily encounter with the built they are also visually produced. The scopic practice of parkour not only shapes the affinity from within, it also gives access to those *outside* of parkour and makes it possible to trace their actions and favoured urban materialities. One of the more charged places of parkour is Lisses, the Parisian suburb where parkour was invented.

Figure 6 - Lisses / Evry Courcouronne, October 2009

Figure 7 - Lisses / Evry Courcouronne, October 2009

Figure 8 - Lisses / Evry Courcouronne, October 2009

A Parkour Expedition. 2009. 7:35 minuter.

Daniel Ilabaca - Trip to Lisses. 2006. 5:29 minuter.

Carlos & Christian Trip to Lisses. 2007. 6:48 minuter.

Figure 9 - Screenshots from selected online parkour movies (Nilsson, 2010)

Besides being an instrument for looking, the scopic can also be read as to ”spy/watch from a distance” (*skopós*). Architectural practice mainly spy and watch through orthogonal plan projections, based on different measure factors, that cut through the built in horizontal and vertical directions. Drawing is a planar projection that flattens the world in order to make visible contact surfaces otherwise hard to depict or understand. And in the same way as x-ray vision makes it possible to observe and gain knowledge of complex relations and dependencies, architectural orthogonal drawings enable architecture to understand and elaborate complex spatial configurations otherwise impossible to think of.

These planar projections not only allow for architectural practice to watch, but also to act from a distance. Thus, architectural practice is not only scopic – it is *telescopic* – in the sense that its methods and techniques both bridge distances and establish new ones. The telescopic character of drawing is a quality it shares with photography and this is particularly visible in the optics of parkour, where the practice of photographing or filming one’s movements and sharing them on various websites not only makes parkour recognizable and understandable for non-traceurs. They have also established parkour as a distinct activity outside of Lisses.

Figure 10 - Lund, July 2009

Figure 11 - Lund, April 2010

Figure 12 - Lund, July 2009

Figure 13 - Lund, April 2010

Figure 14 - Lund, July 2009

Figure 15 - Lund, July 2009

Figure 16 - Lund, July 2009

Whereas drawing above all describes spatial relations as if they were independent of time, photography is more transparent in showing that a disposition in space also implies a disposition of time (Latour, 1997; Law, 2002). When following a group of traceurs during their one day *summer-jam* in Lund I did not only adopt the praxis of documenting their activity. I also manipulated the photographs in ways common to parkour, by superimposing the traceur's movements into one image. These photo montages underline that the traceur not only articulates a specific body and it's technical skills. The traceur also articulates an architectural situation.

Through 'multiple exposures' like this (new) chronologies and chorologies can be created that begin to destabilize the point of views architecture operates from, and thereby also expand the narratives on architecture possible to trace through photography. With the experience of documenting parkour in action, I returned to their spots with my camera but now directing its gaze from the point of view of the traceur.

Figure 17 - Lund, April 2010

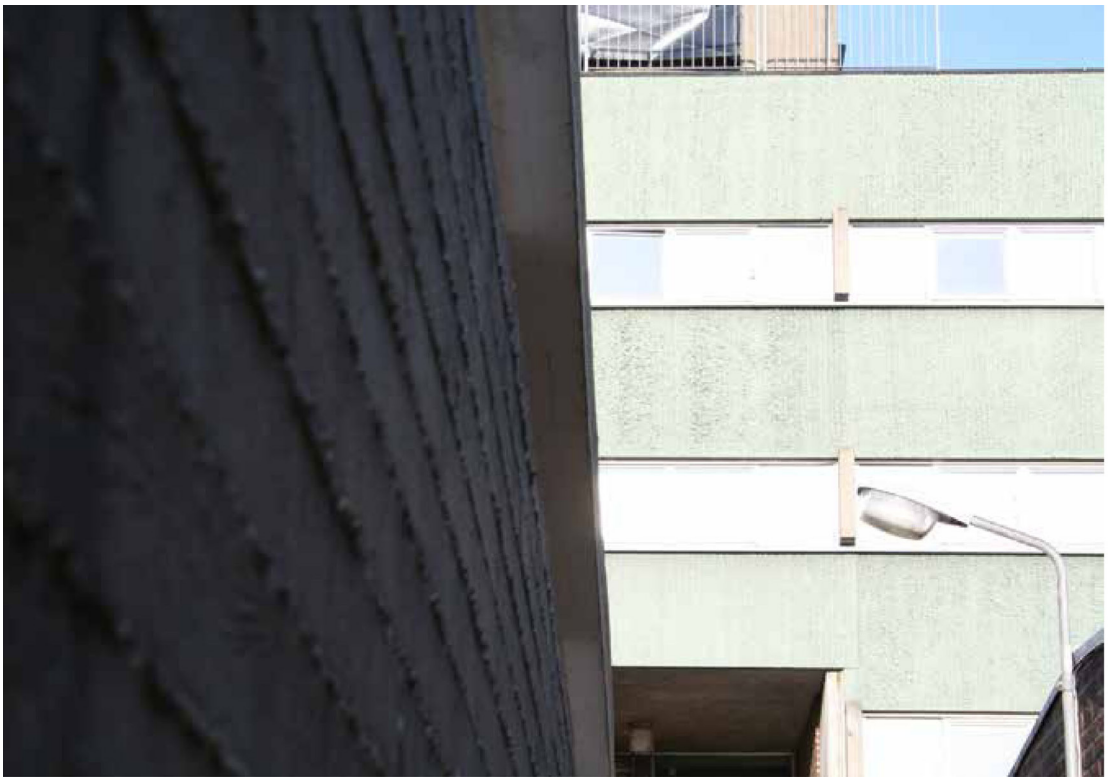

Figure 18 - Lund, April 2010

Figure 19 - Lund, April 2010

Figure 20 - Lund, April 2010

Figure 21 - Lund, April 2010

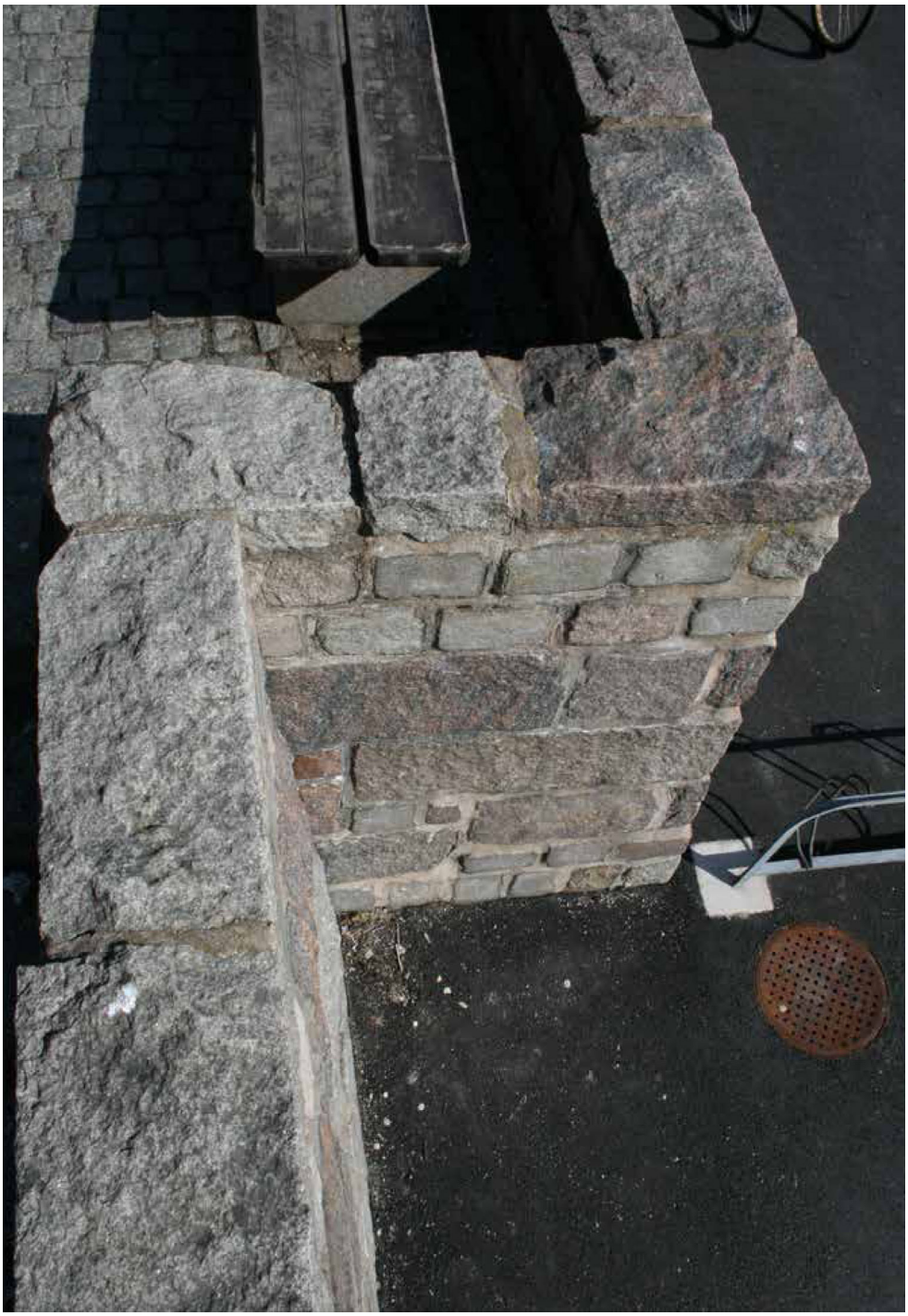

Figure 22 - Lund, April 2010

Figure 23 - Lund, April 2010

But who is the traceur looking through the camera's lens? And, what kind of experiences could be traced through the choice of motifs, framings, demarcations and focus?

Rather than a specific bodily experience it is an interpreted one, quite akin to the ways architectural practice operate in order to imagine the possible use and users of an architecture that is not yet (Kopljar, 2016). Above all they show a possible (and meaningful) gaze on buildings, urban materialities and how they can be interpreted. But for them to act not merely as an *optic of seeing* but also as an *optic of knowing,* the material figures depicted in the images have to be connected to the other spatialities, materialities and temporalities of parkour's *terrain* (Nilsson, 2010, 2018) [2].

The photographic material presented in this essay can be differentiated as three distinct methodological approaches: *archaeological* (traces of past narratives), *anthropological* (formations of cultural values) and *architectural* (spatial and material configurations). They all deal with material culture but carry some distinctions in how they trace the articulation of for instance traceurs and the urban materialities of parkour. Together they make visible that in order to understand the 'user experiences' of parkour one has to acknowledge how this is simultaneously a highly personal, individual production of experiences part of a broader affinity with a specific, though continuously negotiated understanding of what it is to be a traceur. Lisses is present in the situated movement up a particular configuration of walls, as is the collective of individual experiences in Lisses. In this, photography plays a vital part. Not only in the shaping of urban experiences, such as the traceurs'. Parkour photography also makes visible a different way of articulating architectural objects and their meaning. Incorporating their optics into architecture photography is a way to widen its understanding of the roles architecture plays in shaping (multiple) urban experiences.

2 - A more thorough discussion on the different roles architecture play in the shaping of traceurs and parkour culture can be followed in my thesis (Nilsson 2010) and my contribution to the anthology *Urban Walls* (Brighenti & Kärrholm 2018).

Figure 24 - Lund, July 2009

Figure 25 - Lisses / Evry Courcouronne, October 2009

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All photographs and montages by the author.

The Art of Getting Even:

Exploring gender equality in the graffiti subculture

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Abstract

Throughout graffiti's history, women have been ignored, sexualised and undermined. But despite the subculture's history of gender imbalance, female graffiti writers are on the increase. This paper examines the reasons why more women are practising graffiti and evaluates the extent to which equality has been achieved. A focus on the North East of England reveals a persisting lack of female graffiti writers. While graffiti in larger cities such as London have somewhat diversified, in smaller and more isolated scenes gender perhaps remains imbalanced and should prompt further research.

Keywords: graffiti, gender, masculinity, digital era, handstyle, crews

Introduction

Women in graffiti have made their mark fearlessly, claimed space prolifically, pushed creative boundaries and unapologetically disregarded the law, social expectations and subcultural rules. But in a male-dominated art form, they have been few in number. I will examine women's position in graffiti history and the existing theories on their absence. I will aim to calculate an updated gender ratio and track how this has changed, if at all. I hope to discover which factors encourage women to enter the subculture and which deter them from becoming involved.

The dictionary defines graffiti as 'writing or drawings scribbled, scratched, or sprayed illicitly on a wall or other surface in a public place' (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2019). This paper will concentrate on graffiti as understood by members of the subculture: the illegal spray-painting of a name or 'tag' on trains, tracksides or other public and privately owned surfaces.

For a focused investigation, this paper will concentrate on the United Kingdom. Many female writers I interviewed belong to the acclaimed graffiti culture of the country's capital but my fourth section will specifically investigate the smaller and arguably more isolated scene of the North East of England, particularly the industrial city of Newcastle Upon Tyne. I will argue that, while London's graffiti culture has somewhat diversified, Newcastle's absence of female writers exemplifies graffiti's persisting gender imbalance.

Graffiti as defined above emerged in 1960s Philadelphia and was thriving by 1970s New York (Gastman and Neelon, 2011). In the North East it exploded around 1983, prompted by the city's new metro system (Mr Zee, 2018). Though women have been 'getting up' throughout the subculture's history, my research will focus on the past thirty years. This timespan includes Nancy Macdonald's research of the early 1990s, allows for living memory accounts of currently active writers, and enables an examination of gender in graffiti before and after the internet's emergence.

Fig.1 – Sear [date unknown]

1.1 A brief history of females in graffiti

Figure 1 demonstrates confident wild style lettering. A broad colour scheme places warmer oranges in contrast to dominating, colder blues. Multiple textures are displayed, from smooth gradients to cracks in the letters, which create an illusion of impact. Classic thick, black shadow alongside bright white highlights demonstrate a striking handstyle. All is executed with sharp, clean edges. This kind of spray can art takes experience and talent. 'Sear', the writer's tag, is aggressive and reminds the viewer of burning pain. Powerful and active, it signifies mark-making. Through this non-gendered name, Sear makes the statement that she is here, claiming space and exhibiting skill.

In the past, academics, popular culture and graffiti writers often believed that graffiti is simply not suited to females. Women who disregarded expectations and pursued graffiti often became the subject of sexualised rumours (Macdonald, 2006), or were expected to purge their femininity and behave like men, 'against their implicitly 'natural' gender inclination' (Pabón-Colón, 2018). Their success might be attributed to their boyfriend, on the assumption that he trained her or put her name up himself (Macdonald, 2006). While graffiti attracts many practitioners for its rewards of fame, female writers – as the 'other' – have sometimes received additional attention. This denies the opportunity to gain fame from talent alone. According to graffiti writer She, 'there was always that slight edge of little sister vibe. [Men] were quite protective and looking after you' (She, 2018).

Sometimes this 'protective' attitude prohibited women from participating: '[in Milan] everyone was saying that security is so brutal […] if you're a girl they would rape you. The lads I was with wouldn't let me go because of that […] I felt like the choice was taken away from me,' recounts Bubbs (Bubbs, 2018). Female writers have been accused of 'exploiting their difference,' and consciously utilising this special treatment to advance their practice (Pabón-Colón, 2018). Crew membership and mentorship were also commonly denied to women (Pabón-Colón, 2018). Social gatherings and spaces such as jams, halls of fame and exhibitions – used for inspiration, networking and the exchange of piecebooks (Ferrell, 1996) – further represented male domination.

Macdonald theorised in The Graffiti Subculture that graffiti represents the opportunity for males to exhibit masculinity. She argued that female graffiti writers were then perceived as a threat to this masculinity and explains the treatment imposed on women – described above – as males safeguarding their subculture (Macdonald, 2006).

Fortunately, women disregarded these barriers and disproved misconceptions of female incapability through physical and artistic achievements:

Akit: I once walked along an abandoned elevated train track with, I dunno, 10 or 15 bridges to cross that ran over roads. Each bridge became incrementally more difficult to cross. First they were just rusty and shit, then it graduated to trapeze-wire-balancing-style on girders, or leaping from one to the other, with heaving traffic underneath. It was like game levels in Donkey Kong or something. Once across a bridge I couldn't go back or get down to the street, I had to go on. By the end of it I was practically hanging on to rivets to get across, trying not to fall to certain death. (Akit, GraffLondon, 2009)

Bubbs: Climbing a 10 foot wall to get to an amazing spot, going through fences to get to a yard, staying up all night to find a train to paint in a different country, tying two sets of ladders together with rope to get down into a really difficult spot […] dodging out the way of trains, exploring abandoned buildings. (Bubbs, 2018)

These women, relentlessly successful, then inspired others to follow suit.

Gender in graffiti today

In The Graffiti Subculture, Akit expresses her graffiti passion – 'I'm totally obsessed with it, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.' But the book concludes with her frustration six months later that 'the rules are bent and a female writer will never be on par with her male equivalent' (Akit, cited in Macdonald, 2006). Sexist treatment led Akit to resent the subculture. Impressively, her painting obsession endured and she persisted. Her story demonstrates female strength. There is some suggestion that male barriers drove female writers to become 'tougher' (Lady Echo cited in Ganz, 2004). Ten years later, Akit displayed more positivity: 'staying the course has given me some kudos and respect.' She even retracts the suggestion that graffiti is an uneven playing field: 'male or female, if you play the game right – you're a winner!' (Akit, GraffLondon, 2009). Since the 1990s, female writers – and credit given to them – are on the increase.

Another ten years later and Akit tells me, 'the world is moving more towards equality all-round and graffiti is just another one of these things that includes more girls now' (Akit, 2018). Between 1971 and 2013, the percentage of women in employment in the United Kingdom rose by 14% (Skills Funding Agency, 2013). Over half of England's higher education students are female (Skills Funding Agency, 2013). Akit parallels society's – slowly – changing gender attitudes with graffiti's growing openness to women.

But do the values practised in graffiti directly reflect those of wider society? Graffiti is situated in the real world but follows its own rules. Macdonald hailed the subculture as a 'hidden "other" world,' which 'operates its own governing system' (Macdonald, 2006), illustrating the subculture as separate from social attitudes. Taylor asserts that practitioners find graffiti-writing 'addictive' (Taylor, 2012); it dominates their lifestyles. But they do have careers and families and are therefore not entirely isolated from

society. 'The graffiti world is a separate, parallel world,' offers writer Fransy (Fransy, in Girl Power,2016); it reflects some beliefs of its surroundings but maintains a distance. I would argue that society's growing awareness of gender discrimination can account to some extent for the increase in female graffiti writers. For a fuller understanding of the change, however, I will focus on research within the subculture.

Graffiti culture has diversified. In the past twenty years, we have witnessed its commercialisation, the development of street art, and the digital era's influence – simultaneously embraced and resented by subcultural members. I argue that these three changes have helped accelerate female graffiti activity.

2.1 Graffiti as a mainstream trend

Handwork completed speedily. Fences and obstacles negotiated with physical strength. Constant vigilance for authorities and night-time dangers. Dedicated studying of site security, train schedules and guard rotation. Figure 2 – Akit's artwork – appears hasty. But whole cars – graffiti pieces which cover an entire train carriage – take weeks of planning. The artwork's documentation provides insight. Blurred and low-quality, the photograph was probably taken on an inconspicuous compact camera. The tight-perspective angle suggests it was taken hurriedly – looking back – seconds after the piece's completion and before getaway. This photograph expresses the characteristics of illegal graffiti. Studying it, we learn of the risks, danger and adrenaline inherent to graffiti's night-time adventures.

Figure 2 – Akit [date unknown]

Figure 3 – Akit [2018]

By contrast, I witnessed Akit complete a recent piece, Figure 3, over an entire day at a legal jam celebrating the centenary of women getting the vote. With no fear of arrest or sudden death, the relaxed atmosphere enabled a wider variety of pattern and detail within the bubble lettering. The documentation seems composed without time pressure. These artworks are now familiar in London's gentrified areas. Not always monetised but permitted by property owners, legal work produces a mixed reception among writers. Claw Money states that illegal work is 'the pinnacle of graffiti' (Claw Money in Girl Power, 2016); for writers, legal work lacks the same appeal. The abundance of legal work today demonstrates the adoption of graffiti into mainstream culture, regardless of writers' responses. The subculture has been appropriated into the gallery and advertising, despite the 'subverting, trivializing' possibilities of commercialising a 'countercultural movement' (Kuttner, 2015). In the 1990s, Akit described graffiti as 'a clique,' as 'underground […] it's for that certain sect of people' (Akit, cited in Macdonald, 2006). Today, Akit claims the culture is 'dreadfully mainstream' (Akit, 2018). But she cites this as one reason for the increase in female writers; more people have joined the scene, including women. Graffiti now appeals to a wider demographic. It is increasingly visible and accessible and consequently more women have been swept into the trend. Today legal jams are more common, partly because property owners are more willing to allow graffiti on private walls, and women have engineered all-female jams. The legality of these jams can be unappealing to writers. In the case of all-female jam Femme Fierce, participants became frustrated by the event's over-commercialisation, leading

to its abandonment a few years after launch (Pabon-Colón, 2017). Overall, however, these jams celebrate women writing, increase their visibility and inspire others. Growing bonds with wider society – due to mainstream attention – might also leave graffiti more susceptible to outside influences, such as an increasing awareness of gender equality. Despite criticisms that writers and academics associate with graffiti's growing acceptance – such as exploitation, monetisation and a move away from graffiti's origins – women are consequently less hesitant to join the subculture.

2.2 Street art culture

Related to but distinct from graffiti, street art has been developing in the past few decades and is often perceived as more open to women. The abundance of female street artists has been associated with its 'safe environment' (Ganz, 2004) – the works can be prepared at home and installed quickly. The freedom in materials allows the use of 'feminine' mediums such as 'guerrilla knitting', which apparently appeals to women (Fransberg, 2018). These ideas are easily read as reinforcements of the gender expectations which problematise graffiti. The absence of the tag somewhat detaches street art from the pursuit of ego. Some believe that women, with motivations beyond the ego, are therefore attracted to street art (Minna, cited in Fransberg, 2018). But many existing female writers exhibit hunger for fame; it is not a solely male desire. Fransberg approaches the growth of women in street art as a statement of 'individualism and selfhood' (Fransberg, 2018). Macdonald suggests that men in street art are usually 'supportive and embracing of the contributions of women' (Macdonald, 2016). Men don't need to protect this culture to preserve their masculinity. Women perhaps encounter fewer sexist barriers in street art.

While women are active in street art and this might lead them to graffiti, we must remember that the two are separate cultures, driven by different goals. It is 'not adequate to study street art and graffiti as one united group,' asserts Fransberg (Fransberg, 2018). Investigating street art therefore provides limited aid to our understanding of gender in graffiti.

2.3 The digital era

The internet plays a controversial role in graffiti. Some complain that many now practise graffiti 'only to put it online' (Kiff, cited in Pablón-Colón, 2018). Akit prefers the 'thrill' of graffiti in situ (Akit, 2018). Others appreciate the increased visibility and international communication enabled by the internet. Positive or negative, the digital era is arguably the largest factor that has levelled graffiti's gender balance. Since its development, women use online zines, blogs and social media to promote their graffiti. Before, female writers were isolated from each other. Writer She 'never really considered [graffiti] as something for me because when I was a lot younger, there weren't a lot of females on the scene […] It definitely felt like it was something really niche I was doing as a female' (She, 2018). The lack of role models meant that writing graffiti failed to occur to her. But now, women employ international communication for support. Previously, the temporal art form's documentation happened mostly through the exchange of piecebooks at male-dominated events. Graffiti heroes were hailed as men, by men. Now, female writers assemble their own online portfolios. Women are changing graffiti's unbalanced representation and 'reversing the effects of a canon constructed without them' (Pabón-Colón, 2018). Female writers' 'increased visibility' online provides role models for others and subverts gender expectations (Macdonald, 2016). This has created a more level playing field for graffiti writers.

The digital era has provided a platform for the formation of all-female crews. Crews, are usually formed through local bonds and physical collaboration. But through the internet, female writers form national and international crews, with the benefits – support, mentorship, sense of belonging – similar to that of traditional crews. Members of Girls On Top – the 'UK's first all-female aerosol crew' (Girls on Top, 2018) – are spread worldwide yet 'always in communication with each other' (Candie, 2018). They operate a website and Facebook page. Members explain Girls On Top's original motivations:

She: It was kind of necessary to create that space for other female writers […] to put a message out there to say "nah it's not just a male arena, girls can be here too," and let us unite the females on the scene together.

(She, 2018)

Candie: It definitely broke down a lot of barriers […] to inspire, to show younger generations it's not just for boys. It shouldn't be intimidating. There are other girls doing it. I think it has trodden a path for other women.

(Candie, 2018)

Girls On Top act as role models, making apparent the potential of female graffiti writers. They 'consciously refused to be dissuaded from participating,' claims Pabón-Colón (Pabón-Colón, 2018), which inspires other females to act similarly. Other advantages of membership include technical guidance – 'you can just be like "hmm should I do this colour key line?" (Candie, 2018); networking – 'between you, you've got loads of connections' (Pixie, 2018), and friendship – 'we're best buddies' (Candie, 2018). Girls On Top exemplify how female writers use the internet to reap the benefits of crews otherwise denied to them.

The internet has encouraged female writers. But to what extent has it balanced the gender ratio? The internet 'is ultimately going to benefit male writing too,' comments Macdonald (Macdonald, 2016). It has the potential to breed the masculine behaviours practised on the streets, tracks and train yards. Pabón-Colón warns that writers whose 'identity is represented and made visible' will not necessarily be 'liberated from the oppressive effects of that same identity' (Pabón-Colón, 2018). Women are not in total control of their online representations, rather open to vulnerability and criticism. These criticisms might be founded in the same sexism rooted in graffiti's past, rather than creative judgement. Nonetheless, women are claiming space online fearlessly and leading others to follow suit. The digital era has catalysed female graffiti activity.

The factors above help to explain graffiti's increased openness to women. Female writers now enjoy access to jams, support from their crews and work alongside male writers. 'Perceptions have changed. Men are not nearly as sexist as they have been,' says Lady Pink (Lady Pink, in Girl Power, 2016). But has the fight been completely won?

Graffiti's gender equality: has the problem been buffed?

Equality has been achieved and all problems are – metaphorically – buffed, or solved. This is an attitude I encountered regularly from female writers. Many seem reluctant to even discuss gender. Utah claims 'I'm not a graffiti girl. I'm a graffiti writer. That's it' (Utah, in Girl Power, 2016); Akit agrees 'I hate being called a female graffiti writer, it is redundant; I'm a graffiti writer' (Akit, 2018). Girls On Top, initially united by feminist motivations, now emphasise, 'we prefer to not be known as just girl writers. We're writers, but we happen to be girls' (Candie, 2018). These women refuse to be defined by their gender. They practise graffiti not because or in spite of being a woman, but simply for its addictive, adrenaline-releasing, creative potential. This abandonment of labels seems a positive demonstration of the graffiti scene's progression. But I worried it rendered my research redundant: the writers themselves deny the topic's relevance. What authority does an outsider have to disagree? Akit reminds us that people today are abandoning the confines of binary genders and are open to 'women doing "male roles", gay people being gay, people of colour being non-white, LGB, trans, asexual…' (Akit, 2018). I was concerned that research which categorises and labels females is regressive. McRobbie recognises the risk that researchers 'impose our culture-bound frame of reference' on a subject and how 'personal preferences surface […] as we write up the research' (McRobbie, 1991). It seems wrong to arrive at conclusions discordant with the voices of graffiti writers. Furthermore, graffiti is intended to be an anonymous artform which – partially – frees the artist from their identity. Perhaps audiences should be sensitive to this.

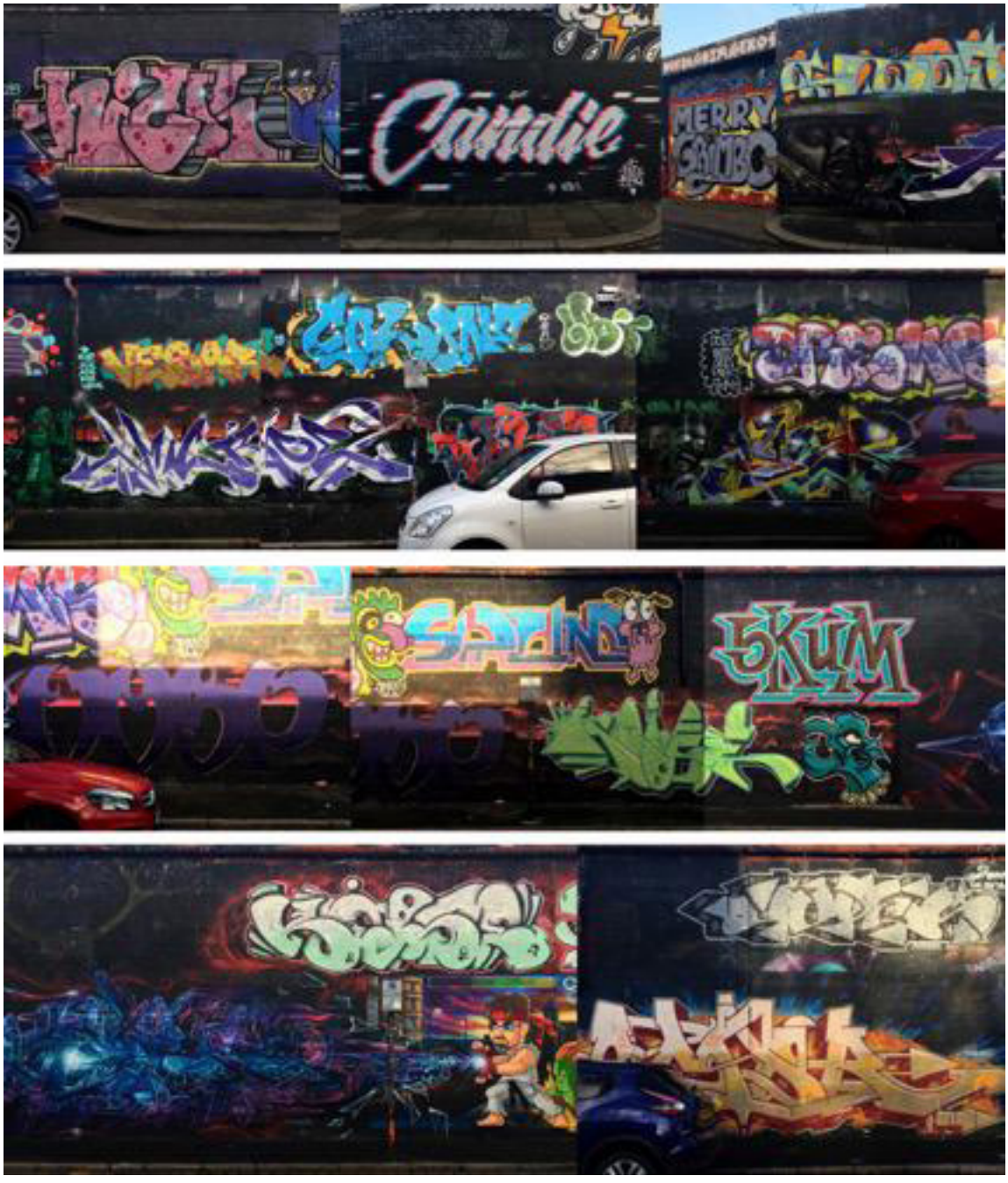

Figure 4 – The walls of Biscuit Tin Studios [2019]

I deliberated why women in graffiti might have such an aversion to this 'female' label. Perhaps it comes from a past focus on gender over talent and skill; of the 'shortcut to fame' and the sexualisation. Fransberg theorises that a writer's rejection of feminism is due to 'fear of exclusion' (Fransberg, 2018): because feminism conflicts with graffiti's performance of masculinity, it might result in a writer's isolation. Fransberg's argument, if correct, proves the persisting necessity to work toward a more inclusive playing field. Writer Motel7 abstained from interviews due to constant '"girl questions"' (Motel7, in Pabón-Colón, 2018). So, these attitudes might also be caused by outsiders' fixation on an aspect of identity that for writers holds no interest. These writers never wanted fame for their gender or from feminism: they want to earn respect for their determination and skill. But Pabón-Colón believes they 'perform feminist acts […] when they take public space, exceed gendered expectations, raise each other's consciousness, and support one another's artistry,' and are 'a model for contemporary feminist movement' (Pabón-Colón, 2012). To Pabón-Colón, these writers are feminists whether they like it or not. She establishes the importance of recognising and remembering the struggle and triumph of female graffiti veterans who helped carve the path for future writers, rather than forgetting or refusing to talk about inequality.

Furthermore, graffiti photographer Martha Cooper says, 'before, women might have made up one 10th of a percent, and now maybe it's 1 percent' (Cooper, in Wyatt, 2013). Susan Farrell, creator of Art Crimes, estimates the growth as from 2 to 5 percent (Susan Farrell, 2014). Though difficult to produce reliable statistics, these women – experienced in graffiti observation – provide some indication. The number of female writers has perhaps more than doubled or even multiplied by ten, an impressive increase which might explain these writers' misconceptions of equality. But the figures are far from equal. Returning to gender equality in wider society, the United Kingdom's gender pay gap lingers at 18 percent (The Lancet, 2018). McRobbie believes that 'those utterances of forceful non-identity with feminism' are an example of 'post-feminism,' which risks the achievements of twentieth century feminists becoming 'undone' (McRobbie, 2004). In this sense, claims of equality in graffiti and rejection of feminism could result in the reversal of advancements. It is important not to be content with progress so far but strive for absolute equality.

Another aspect which likely affects writers' perceptions of equality is their geographical location. Many writers cited above practise in London and internationally, where a selection of active, visible female writers exist. Smaller, less internationally connected scenes might not show so much progression. They are also the subject of less research, meaning that any inequality is more likely to remain ignored. Distant from London's evolving subculture, the North East serves as an interesting focal point for further examination of gender equality in graffiti today.

Gender in North East graffiti

Figure 4 shows the walls of Biscuit Tin Studios, an exhibit displaying North East graffiti talent. The building, which also houses the scene's favoured spray paint shop, has been relinquished to the control of local writers (McConway, 2019). While many North East writers get up illegally, the building is a platform for legal practice. A system of 'rotation,' means the walls are constantly painted over (Mr Zee, 2018), providing fresh brick for writers and maintaining the interest of onlookers. These images present the temporal art space on one day. They demonstrate diversity: in handstyle, from traditional bubble to experimental, abstract writing; in form, with names, characters and landscape; and in colour. But considering the identities behind the tags reveals less diversity: just two belong to women. Candie, from London, left her mark while visiting. Raven – the artist of the gory, deathly face on the corner to the right of the shutter – is the sole local female writer currently on the walls.

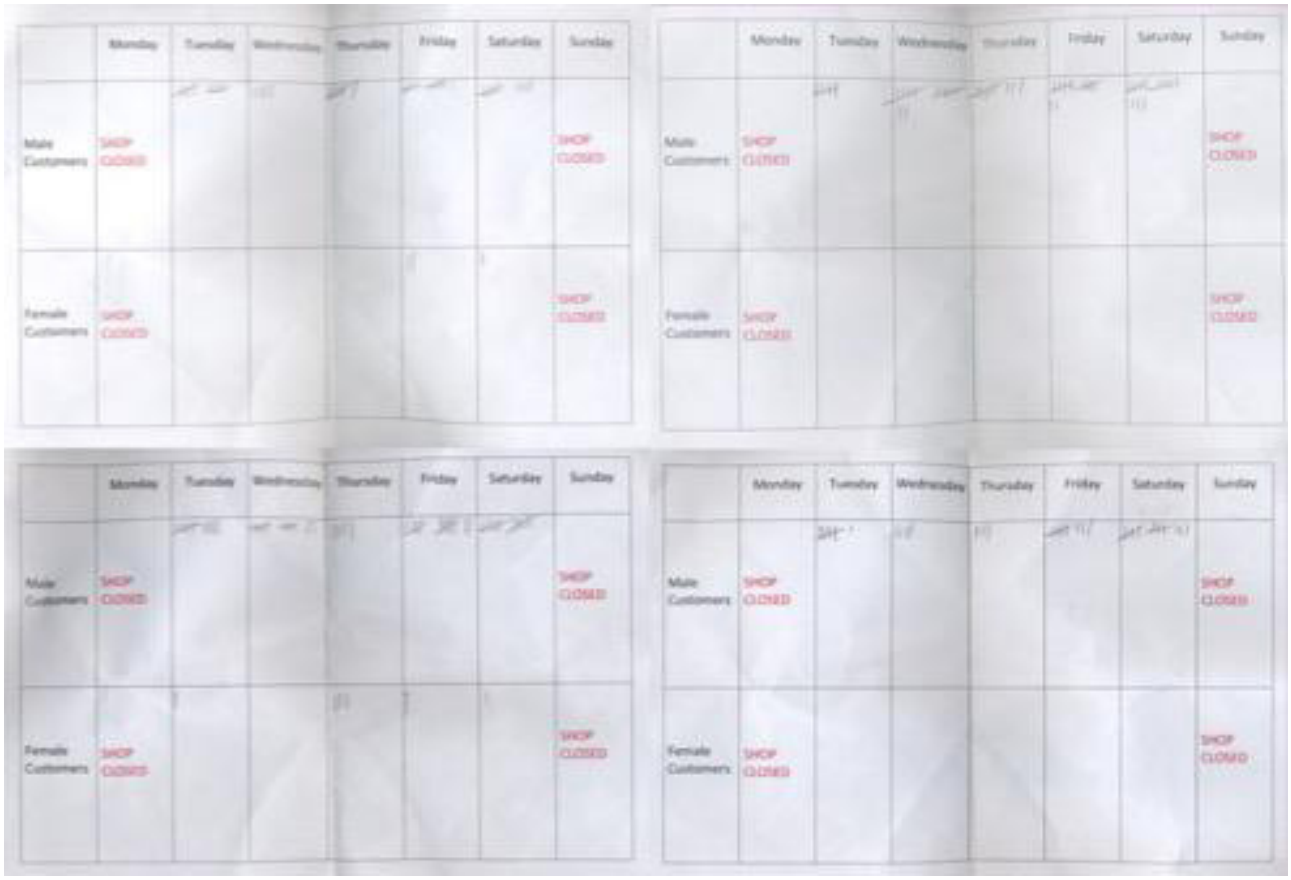

Figure 5 – Table recording sex of customers in Colours spray paint shop, Newcastle [2019]

Figure 5 presents a further indication of gender ratio in North East graffiti. I asked Dan McConway, owner of the spray paint shop, Colours, to record the sex of customers over four weeks. The limitation on this study's accuracy must be noted: customers might buy paint for non-graffiti projects; writers today often source paint

online; the time of year contributes to poor business. But the numbers offer a relevant hint, revealing that overall, just 5 percent of customers were female.

The gender imbalance on Biscuit Tin's walls and of Colours' customers suggests a serious absence of local female writers. Newcastle's graffiti means that 'writers from elsewhere come up here and their chins hit the floor' (Fuller, 2011). The scene impresses and thrives. But while London's writers vouch for graffiti gender equality, why does the North East scene still lack gender diversity?

Raven, along with one other local, active female writer, did not want to be interviewed. A male writer described Newcastle's female writers as 'more reserved than the males' (Mr Zee, 2018). For whatever reason, this heightened urge for anonymity might explain their reluctance to speak. Possibly, these female writers are even plentiful – just better than males at remaining undetectable. The choice to remain highly anonymous – surely preferable to arrest – belongs to writers. Dedication to remaining incognito reduces visibility, however. It decreases the potential to inspire and attract other women to graffiti, and could therefore be one reason for the North East's absence of female writers.

I spoke to Bubbs, who previously practised graffiti in Newcastle and now paints legally with Girls On Top in London and abroad. Her urge to write was motivated by the 'competitive side' of graffiti, often perceived as masculine.

For Bubbs, being 'different from the female stereotype' felt 'natural' (Bubbs, 2018). But in rejecting her social conditioning and following her instinctual urge, she was largely alone. 'When I started I knew there was one other female writer,' remembers Bubbs (Bubbs, 2018). A few decades later and seemingly little has changed in the North East. Other than isolation as a solo female, Bubbs' account leads to no obvious explanation for this absence.

Struggling to find female voices, I asked male writers to evaluate the scene's openness to women. Do writers here operate any of the sexist barriers described in The Graffiti Subculture? Young writer Angel Mob expresses a desire for female competitors, because 'it would be more interesting' and 'more diverse' (Angel Mob, 2018). 'We embrace people. We're friendly. We don't really isolate people,' claims experienced writer Mr Zee (Mr Zee, 2018). McConway asserts that he and his colleagues are welcoming to women entering his shop and encourage them to paint on the surrounding walls (McConway, 2019). Mr Zee and McConway have taught graffiti workshops to boys and girls, providing the mentorship previously denied to females. Mr Zee appraises female students as 'more concentrated' and their work as 'of a better quality' (Mr Zee, 2018); McConway agrees that they 'pick it up a lot faster' (McConway, 2018). Both assign this to a lack of ego. Whether or not verifiable, the teachers convey dismay at how these talented students tend to migrate to 'other creative industries,' over illegal, high-risk graffiti. I spoke to just a handful of male writers, whose responses were possibly guarded and less authentic than when in conversation with other writers. However, I detected no direct discrimination against women getting up. This openness is hugely positive but left me feeling far from understanding the North East's persisting absence of female writers. I investigated further.

In section 2, I argued that the digital era, street art, and graffiti's 'mainstream' revolution have all encouraged female writers. I wondered if gauging these aspects' developments in North East graffiti might provide insight into my queries. I interviewed Dan McConway – knowledgeable about local graffiti through activity in Colours – and renowned writer of thirty years, Amor, on these three themes.

The internet and North East graffiti

In Section 2.3, I examined how the internet catalysed female graffiti. The North East, with access to the internet, suffers no lack of online graffiti activity. Through the Instagram account Newcastle Style, for example, writers upload graffiti photographs via a mediator who preserves their anonymity (McConway, 2019). Bubbs cites 400ml, a now inactive forum where 'North East writers would post photos and chat about painting,' as her introduction to graffiti (Bubbs, 2018). Admittedly, some North East writers show aversion to the internet. Amor complains that new writers 'put five or six things online' and receive recognition. 'It takes more than five or six things to be a graffiti writer,' he asserts (Amor, 2019). There is a sense that this misplaced acclaim undermines the efforts of hard-working writers. McConway expresses nostalgia for the pre-digital era, when 'you'd have to get on the train, ride the tracks and that's the only way you would see it […] you'd have to be amongst it, doing it, to know what's going on' (McConway, 2019). Despite their reservations, Amor and McConway admit to having multiple Instagram accounts. Social media lends North East writers access to graffiti beyond their area. But some writers argue that consequently, European graffiti's influence abolished 'Newcastle style' – a handstyle identifiable to the city (Vigo, 2018). Opposition to the internet is reported among writers in other cities and is not specific to Newcastle, however. Furthermore, it does not seem to hinder online graffiti activity. 'I think people use the internet to promote graffiti as much the same here as anywhere else,' concludes McConway. Women in the North East can witness and interact with graffiti online. However, as I acknowledged as a possibility in Section 2.3, male dominance is still present among North East social media pages. Though Bubbs remained undeterred, the lack of local female graffiti role models online might discourage women, as it enforces the expectation that this graffiti scene is for men. The urge to try graffiti might therefore be less likely to occur to women in the North East.

Street art in the North East

In Section 2.2, I explained that street art, without a focus on name and the pursuit of masculine performance, is often perceived as more open to women. Is there a street art culture open to women in the North East?

'There's never really been street artists,' McConway believes of the area (McConway, 2019). Newcastle's metro system breeds pure, illegal, trackside graffiti which defines the scene and is separate from street art, asserts Amor (Amor, 2019). Women might be led to graffiti via street art but its absence renders that difficult. McConway mentions locals Prefab77, 'who aren't street artists but do street artist type work,' by adopting an urban aesthetic which remains mostly within gallery walls. Though outside the graffiti subculture with its masculine associations, Prefab77's website broadcasts the caption 'gangs, tribes and fraternities' (Prefab77, 2019). Clearly masculinity still plays a significant role. Furthermore, there seems to be some animosity between the two cultures. Amor feels that street artists are driven by motivations of commodification, therefore are discordant with graffiti writers'. Both Dan and Amor refer to Prefab77 in degrading language. If street artists do practise here, their relationship with graffiti writers is perhaps unhealthy. Collaboration is unlikely. Therefore, a woman who begins to practise street art is less likely to migrate to graffiti. This might hinder the North East graffiti scene from welcoming all genders.

North East graffiti as mainstream

In Section 2.1, I argued that graffiti today is widely accepted and attractive to more people, including women. How mainstream is North East graffiti? Have perceptions softened? 'Attitudes have changed over the thirty odd years I've painted,' recounts Amor (Amor, 2019). He remembers people's fear when graffiti was new, as opposed to today's reactions from people who have grown up surrounded by it.

Graffiti's acceptance has largely been accelerated by commercialisation. Newcastle has seen an increase in 'commercial businesses using graffiti artists to do stuff' (McConway, 2019). But, McConway recognises, compared to London where 'there's loads of people who want commissions or jobs done,' Newcastle's scene has been less heavily commercialised. This is partially due to Newcastle City Council's zero tolerance policy on graffiti: 'if it's a council-owned shop, they can't paint the front of it'. Local businesses often cannot support graffiti. In his council-commissioned research, Fuller argued that Newcastle's writers have a negative relationship with authorities due to the 'lack of legal opportunities' available (Fuller, 2011). In Helsinki, Fransberg found that zero tolerance 'deepened the male dominance, as women were widely isolated from each other'. It meant that female writers, forced to remain anonymous, were disconnected from each other (Fransberg, 2018). Harsh legal consequences might explain why Newcastle's few female writers remain hyper-anonymous and less visible, and why the scene remains largely uncommercialised.

While elsewhere the fine art world has adopted graffiti, the Newcastle graffiti scene's relationship with galleries remains problematic. According to McConway, 'if there was a gallery that was open to local writers, they would jump at the chance' (McConway, 2019). But any attention paid to graffiti and street art focuses on international artists. Unit44 of Hoults Yard promotes art 'born upon the raw brick of the street' (Unit44, 2019). but lists exhibitions by artists from elsewhere. The Baltic's exhibition Spank the Monkey included graffiti-influenced artists, but emphasised international names over local ones (Baltic At, 2019). This attitude disengages the local graffiti scene. Furthermore, Amor thinks that galleries are 'scared' of graffiti and unwilling to be associated with vandalism (Amor, 2019). Anyhow, McConway and Amor place significance on the North East's non-commercialised, illegal graffiti: 'we don't have legal writers, who are self-promoting art businesses'; 'it's never something we've been interested in'. Galleries remain uninterested in local graffiti, while local writers' dedication to their anti-establishment, non-monetised artform prevails.

Though the North East has seen broadened attitudes and hints of graffiti commercialisation, the development has been seemingly slowed or obstructed by an unhealthy relationship with galleries and strict authorities. The scene, hailed as one of the 'most underground scenes in England' (Fuller, 2011), remains separate from wider society and less likely to attract attention from outsiders, such as women.

Regional characteristics in relation to graffiti gender

The area's broader characteristics also mould its graffiti identity. Size and geography might affect gender equality advancements in the area, in comparison to the capital. In Akit's view, 'London is the best and most diverse city in the world' (Akit, 2018). Unverifiable and biased, her statement contains some relevance. Ross names London as 'the second most renowned epicentre in the world for graffiti,' due to 'galleries, museums, auction houses, and art critics,' and 'a large creative class of people who serve as a catalyst for this kind of work' (Ross, 2016). London's artistic mass results in a diverse and busy graffiti culture. While Newcastle's art scene flourishes, its population and size are minuscule compared to the capital. The number of Newcastle's 'serious' writers has been estimated at just twenty (Fuller, 2011). In this respect, expectations of Newcastle's graffiti scene being diverse as London's are unrealistic. Akit continues that London 'can sometimes "set the trend" […] which will then "trickle down" to other parts' (Akit, 2018). Perhaps London's graffiti gender diversity will follow this pattern and spread further north. Delays in this development might be assigned to Newcastle's geographical location. Distance from London and other cities somewhat isolates Newcastle from outside culture. Amor asserts that Newcastle's graffiti scene has always been 'self-contained' (Amor, 2019). London has 'easy access to other international centers of graffiti' (Ross, 2016), which diversifies its culture. By comparison, Newcastle is far from other cities and less internationally connected. During Amor and other practitioners' early writing days, travelling to London meant having to 'hide in the train toilet for three hours or six hours on a coach overnight,' which was 'hard' and 'cost money' (Amor, 2019). 'We were in a bubble,' concludes McConway (Amor, 2019). Consequently, Newcastle's writers developed the scene independently without much outside influence. This led to a proud and unique identity but might have caused the area to miss out or fall behind on advancing ideals, such as on gender, which other cities were sharing with each other.

Concluding possible explanations for North East female graffiti absence

The North East graffiti scene, thriving and unique, is undeniably still male-dominated compared to advances elsewhere in gender equality. Its male participants seem supportive of females entering the scene, offering mentorship and access to legal wall space. Factors that have accelerated the number of women in graffiti generally, however, have developed differently in the North East. While the digital era has catalysed female graffiti activity, a lack of local role models online might discourage women in the North East from writing. While street art's development elsewhere has attracted women, its growth in the North East seems slow, and its relations with graffiti practitioners sour. Elsewhere graffiti has become mainstream, but in the North East it remains mostly uncommercialised and unendorsed by the fine art world. While London's busy creative activity, vast population and international connections place its graffiti scene at the forefront of developing gender ideals, Newcastle's geography maintains both physical and ideological distance from the capital and its scene is self-contained. Possibly a lack of existing research focused on the area's graffiti culture means that gender imbalance remains ignored; further attention paid to the issue might help to equalise the scene. The North East's lack of female graffiti role models is likely to maintain the imbalance. The scene needs active, prolific women made visible on the walls and trains, at public jams and online, to help other women realise their graffiti potential.

Conclusion

Women in graffiti today are inspiring and relentless. Their achievements deserve celebration, their rejection of labels demands respect. However, I argue that their persistent scarcity marks the need for serious consideration of graffiti gender imbalance.

Many female writers today seem unwilling to discuss or acknowledge their sex. Frustrated by the focus on their gender, they want recognition for their talent, skill and efforts alone. Some argue that gender inequality within graffiti has been amended and the conversation is redundant. Complacency, however, is dangerous. Graffiti experts confirm that graffiti's gender ratio has balanced, but only very slightly. The need to pursue equality is evident.

The North East graffiti scene illuminates this necessity. While female graffiti in cities such as London has increased, the North East's percentage remains low, despite its members' assurances of a welcoming attitude to aspiring writers of any sex. The few active women remain highly anonymous, perhaps hindering their ability to inspire others. Interviews with local writers revealed how factors that have increased female activity elsewhere – online female visibility; street art; mainstream acceptance – are developing in North East graffiti slowly or not at all. Admittedly, expecting an abundance of female writers in Newcastle on a similar scale as the capital – larger in size and population – is unrealistic. Additionally, Newcastle's distance from other cities has seemingly cultivated a self-contained environment. This has generated a unique style, but perhaps protected tradition from wider society's changing ideals. While elsewhere graffiti is diversifying, the North East awaits its female graffiti revolution.

The persisting absence of women in North East graffiti underlines the need for more discussion. It demands a celebration of feminism and the remembrance of previous female graffiti success. It demonstrates the importance of action, through online presence, public jams, workshops and pure, illegal graffiti visible and inspiring to women. Finally, it should prompt further research to document and explain the imbalance and recommend a plan for change.

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Understanding the city as Habitat and Habitus:

the case of Stray Art Festival, a Sustainable Street Art Festival

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Abstract

Our understanding and use of the urban environment is constantly changing. Applied sciences, technology, creativity, design, architecture, art and imagination play an important role in the continuous reconstruction of cities, whether they are a modern megacity or a small provincial town. Graffiti and Street Art have taken on prominent positions in dialectics of urban design, which encourages more views in more and more locations. In an attempt to follow the explosive developments and realize its vision, a group of people created a Street Art Festival in Hermoupolis, Syros, the capital of Cyclades archipelago. This paper presents the design of festival with respects to strategy, vision and values that govern it. In addition, its changing relationship with the concepts of growth and sustainability is addressed and analyzed, and its impact on the day-to-day lives of residents and visitors as well as on the development of cultural capital is recorded. In conclusion, Stray Art Festival seems to be able to be temporally sustainable by being able to attract a critical number of returning visitors and locals, who, like the festival organizing team, live and perceive the city as a vibrant and constantly changing region, for which they are invited to contribute their knowledge, their ingenuity and ideas, or simply their constant presence, thus becoming active members of a creative community that aims to take the city back.

Keywords: street art festival, branding, design, creative design, murals, island

1. Introduction

In today's global society, due to the diffusion of Street Art and the changes that have emerged in its neighboring fields, its tolerance and acceptance by society is wide. This is further exemplified by the emerging body of professional artists in the field. The artists plan and undertake projects for implementation in both private and public spaces. In many municipalities and cities, the authorities organize events and give public spaces to the artists, which they can use for the needs of a community or a neighborhood, at times being in the forefront of 'urban revival' projects. "This is mainly about large-scale

visual interventions, organized by public bodies, whose purpose is to reform and remake the new image of the urban center, with the participation of important artists and active artistic groups," (according to the Greek Ministry of Environment and Climate Change) in the implementation of the "Athens - Attica 2014" program, the grey brutality facades of buildings in Athens were designed and remodeled in collaboration between the municipality and street artists. This particular project has been conducting a competition to find multi-dwelling surfaces that have been designed by large-scale students and graduates of the Athens School of Fine Arts.

At the same time in smaller cities in the world, in suburbs, provincial cities, towns, and even villages, the impact of modern artistic creation methods and technological achievements interact by leaving their traces. A footprint that does not simply serve purposeful purposes but often helps to flourish the cultural and economic capital of the region and, above all, allows people, as users of urban space, to discover or experiment with new and different interpretations of their surroundings and local culture. In this paper, we study and explore the association of concepts such as the habitus and habits of people with the city, the application of artistic creation in the form of Street Art and Graffiti to it and the benefits that govern it, and finally, concepts such as gentrification and sustainability that are an example of imitation or avoidance on a case by case basis.

The article is divided into three main sections: the first section presents the city as the framework in which human organisms act and create. There is an analysis of how people work in the city, but also how their daily practices translate into habits and living conditions and the process of shaping it. In the second section, we present the links between Street Art, Graffiti, Gentrification and Sustainability, through presenting and analyzing the current situation and examples from around the world. The third part discusses the emergence of the Stray Art Festival on the island of Syros and its capital, Hermoupolis, in parallel with the activity of the organizing team and the response of the residents and visitors. In particular, the Stray Art Festival and the organizing team behind it are talking about the design decisions and actions they have taken, adopting practices that enable the festival to grow and find new ways of using and managing the urban landscape. In the light of this study, the festival is not a mere phenomenon but the beginning of the creation of a creative community that shares the objectives and goals of this festival. This perspective brings greater sustainability to the project, democratizing the production of local cultural capital and dissolving power relations between the people and the public governance. In the conclusions, there is a series of reflections on how Design and Street Art can further intervene in the development of the surrounding space and suggest possible pathways for more exploration of the relationship between them.

2. Cities as modern habitats

Cities breed contention. Maintaining that the city constitutes a fertile ground for social movements, it acts as an empty canvas where social movement activity unravels (Uitermark et al., 2012). Density, size and diversity being the formative characteristics of cities provide the basic elements for contention to grow (Wirth; 1996). Contention thus derives from small interactions in the city, in the sense that a large amount of people live in close proximity where competing demands vie for domination. Social movements crystallize when people coordinate to conjointly claim urban space. Contention and movements emanate from cities but also stretch outwards as activists broker relations between local and their more geographically distant allies (Uitermark et al.; 2012).

Cities not only breed contention; they also breed control (Uitermark et al.; 2012). The governing side, in their eternal battle to maintain compliance and control, develop strategies and techniques to mediate the ebbs and flows of contentiousness coming up from the civic grassroots, even going as far as finding ways to neutralize the radical dimensions of the movements that oppose the hegemony. The city is a fruitful place of movement, making it the perfect ally for change, it constantly generates new methods to obtain social order including repression, surveillance, clientelism, corporatism, and participatory and citizenship initiatives.

The central idea is that the right to the city entails the capacity to remake ourselves by remaking cities. (Harvey; 2003). The emergence of design in transition studies is very welcome. Design is often marginalized as utilitarian

and/or decorative largely due to its ubiquity—virtually everything we interact with every day was designed by someone; the clothes we wear, the tools we use and the buildings we inhabit. (Irwin et al., 2015) However, design can be defined as “devising a course of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones” (Simon; 1988) it is this view of design that enables it to act as a tool for societal transition.

The commons is usually understood in two primary senses: as a paradigm of governance and resource-management, and as a set of social practices in virtually all fields of human endeavor. As a system of governance, the term refers to the norms, rules, and institutions that enable the shared management of specific resources. Commons aren’t simply material or intangible collective resources, but processes of shared stewardship about things that a community (a network or all of humankind) possesses and manages in common or should do so. These things we are entitled to use collectively may be gifts of nature or collectively produced resources like knowledge and cultural techniques, urban spaces, landscapes, and countless others. A resource becomes a commons when it is taken care of by a community or network. The community, resource, and rules are all an integrated whole (Bollier et al.,2015). To accomplish this kind of transformation considering the members of a community not as ‘consumers’ but as citizens participating alongside the functionaries in the deliberations and decisions that concern them is necessary. (Dardo et al.;2014)

A service can be a regulated form of co-production of benefits between two or more parties, aiming at providing a solution through the application of knowledge and skills creating value in use. Thus, a service results from an interaction. (Meroni & Sangiorgi; 2011) When referring to collaborative services one can understand that the level of the cooperation is higher in building the service itself. There is a form of cooperation to its core that is of complementary nature. Due to that complementary nature ideally, we would be talking about Deriu's conviviality in the context of degrowth: "Conviviality refers to a society in which contemporary tools are used by all in a comprehensive and common way, without being dependent on a body of experts who control them” (Deriu; 2015). This difference between collaborative services and standard services (Manzini & Cipolla; 2009) exemplifies the dichotomy of symbiotic and non-symbiotic tools. A tool is considered symbiotic if it can be used and adapted easily for the purpose chosen by the individual and if it results in the extension of freedom, autonomy and human creation. The structure of social relationships and the structure of the tools are co-defined and evolved in a circular way with no unified direction. In the intimate society, all social phenomena, regardless of whether they are impersonal in their structure, are transformed into personal matters in order to have meaning (Sennett; 1977).

At the center of collaborative services lie creative communities. Groups of people that get together around a common interest and through collaboration they co-create convivial tools. According to Manzini (2017) social forms are made possible, durable and, where appropriate, relocatable by acting on a social ecosystem to make it more desirable. This can be done through two main courses of action: the design of dedicated enabling systems that foster the existence of a specific family of social forms; or through the modification of the characteristics of the environment as a whole, so as to make it more desirable for a multiplicity of social forms.

The theme of collaboration refers to a way of living in the home, the neighborhood and the city that includes the sharing of spaces and services in a framework of self-organization, mutual-help, friendship and good neighborliness (Manzini and Jegou, 2003; Meroni, 2007). The application of this framework of creative communities fosters the creation of tools and approaches that enable people to ‘take back the city’ through the expression of narratives that are left behind or hidden by the hegemonic managers of cultural capital in a city.

3. Street art, Graffiti, Gentrification, Sustainability

3.1 Street Art and Graffiti in the Public Space

According to Waclawek, Graffiti and Street Art are special forms of art for three main reasons. Above all, as non-standard intrusive practices, they challenge art institutions and "legal" urban art. Secondly, these practices are driven by and lead the visual identity of the city, assimilating the environment and recreating it. Thirdly, writers and street artists criticize the meaning of ownership through the creative process at a fundamental level, because they perceive the city through an alternative visual (Waclawek, 2011: 9). By privatizing public space and re-processing

Figure 1. A mural created by the Greek street artist INO, inside the Greek - Cypriot Parliament.

the spots used by advertising companies, street artists critically explore modern urban life. Just as the streets are transformed into spaces through the movement of people, it is precisely Street Art that transforms the urban fabric through its transient materiality and the imaginary narrative and spiritual dialogs it raises (Waclawek, 2011: 186).

Street art, regardless of the way it is done, sometimes openly and freely, legally or illegally, other times commissioned and other times not, continues to decorate the cities of the world. Although Street Art is present today across the globe, from America to Australia and from Asia to the southern edge of Africa, preserving a variety of expressions and showing signs of locality, one thing that has changed in recent years is the public criticism and disposition against the phenomenon. Large events, often supported by public or private sectors (as in the case of Philadelphia Murals, Wynwood Walls in Miami or the Bushwick Collective in New York), invite artists, and while a few years ago smaller societies faced the expression in the streets with suspicion, today they tend to embrace such actions or even create them in their neighborhoods.

From different perspectives, Graffiti and Street art produce different meanings, but also perform different purposes. While there are still strong supporters of the creation of Graffiti and Street art outside the legal frameworks in many places worldwide, there undoubtedly exists the phenomenon of commercialization of these types of expression. This commercialization does not refer exclusively to the collection and distribution of works in galleries but also to in the commission of artists, either by public (such as the Cypriot Parliament commissioning the Greek artist INO) or by private bodies for advertising or recognition purposes, touristic development or simply economical profit.

Street artworks are the derivatives of the passer’s-by contact with the inscribed surface of a wall: it is direct and ephemeral. "These works cannot be ‘held’; they can only be seen". Irvine endorses Bochner's concluding argument with the opinion of a street artist: "By collapsing the space between the artwork and the viewer, a wall painting negates the gap between lived time and pictorial time, permitting the work to engage larger philosophical, social, and political issues". The orientation of the walls has changed: what was previously a discussion of a work done in an institutionalized art space has been shifted to the public space. If the zones and boundaries are completely removed, a continuity can be recognized between the institutionalized space of art and the public space that surrounds everyday life (Irvine, 2012).

In her article, 'Public Space: Open to Everybody but How?' Emma Paulsson (2009), uses Street Art (and Graffiti) as an example for portraying different interpretations of the right of free expression in the public space. On the one hand, she argues, there are those who believe that uncommissioned works or personal expressions of Street art constitute threats to the public character of the public space. On the other hand, there are those who see Street Art and other alternative local interventions as fundamental prerequisites for a democratic city and as a contribution to the development of cities in general. Street and Graffiti Art practices cause intense controversy in political and urban circles: Illegal art is considered a threat to the organized class and is associated with insecurity. Those who view Street Art as a threat often have an interpretation of the right in public space that differs from that of people who use the city in an alternative way.

To sum up we posit that Street Art and Graffiti are artistic expressions of activism in the city. The goal of this guerilla paint war is to take the city back, to combat gentrification and to prove to the people that they can take charge of the commons around them and enforce their collective values to them. However, for this process to be fruitful continuous sustainable social processes have to be put in motion. A war after all is nothing more than a collection of battles.

Figure 2: Left: a 3D crafted logotype of Stray Art Festival below the iconic building of the town hall of Hermoupolis marking the beginning of one of the many different pre-events of the festival held in Syros throughout the year. Right: An exhibition (Stray Art Fest pre-event) under the title “Mixed Guests” presented artworks by the Greek street artists Kez, Pupet and Same84 in Syros (June 2018).

4. Case study: Stray Art Festival

4.1 A Street Art festival in a small Cycladic island

The Stray Art Festival began to be created at the beginning of the year 2016. Since then, it has been organized twice, in 2017 and 2018 with the third edition being prepared at the moment. The main core and aim of this festival is the creation of murals in abandoned, neglected or "indifferent" parts of the city. The festival lasts for three days, in which artists create their works - though some of them start earlier than the predetermined dates - and in this weekend the creation of murals is accompanied by live music, performances and other types of artistic or even sporting spectacles. Stray Art utilizes different surfaces of the urban landscape every year, adhering to all the legitimate processes and providing all the necessary licenses, aiming to spread Street Art to as many points of the island as possible. One of the slogans of the festival is "we want to leave something behind every year", which has become fact with the murals created by famous street artists in the Greek and the international Street Art scene.

The undertaking of the festival exists within the doctoral project of the Author that aims to explore the extent and depth of interaction and cross pollination between Street Art and Design. The main research question and one of the main objectives of this research is the study of cases where designerly theories, methodologies and techniques can be used to contribute to the development of processes and works of Street Art. Stray Art Festival is such a case, bringing together design practitioners and methods relevant to the overall objectives of said doctoral project.

Figure 3. Stray Art Festival 2017: at the first edition of the festival, the chosen wall to be painted was the main wall of Neorion, the shipyard of Syros.

Figure 4. Final artworks on the wall of Neorion (Stray Art Festival 2017). From left to right: Alex Martinez, Billy Gee, Fro, Achilles and Taxis (on random order, not the actual one painted on the wall).

The objectives and the core values of the Stray Art Festival include creation, culture, expression and communication. More specifically, Stray Art tends to become a festival that is:

• Open to all: addressed to everybody, regardless of color, gender, age, inviting them to participate. It is based on freedom, accessibility, openness and hospitality.

• Contemporary: refers to an organization that is modern and 'hip' while being diachronic and can be a meeting point for communication and culture.

• Respecting the environment that hosts it: Ideally, it will leave the space in which it is hosted, cleaner and more beautiful than it was. It fosters cooperation, harmony and adaptability.

• Trusts its heritage: if history is repeated, let's try to repeat it, avoiding mistakes and focusing on the positives. As tradition teaches; authenticity, wisdom, and finally, family.

Already two years old, Stray Art Festival is the opportunity to invite Graffiti artists and muralists, musicians and other performers to the island of Syros. Following the imperative of branding and strategic planning, Stray Art Festival, with the effort to remain firm in its vision, values and specifications, succeeded in a short time to become a Street Art "stop" for one of the many islands of the Greek archipelago, but also managed to allow the inhabitants of Hermoupolis to see Street Art in relation to their own city with a different set of eyes.

Figure 5: Stray Art Festival 2018: on the left, artists working on the walls (and a car!) at the Public Sports Center 'Dimitrios Vikelas' in Syros, at the third and final day of the festival. On the right, the very same place at night, full of people dancing and celebrating the end of the festival.

4.2 A sustainable Street Art festival

In its first year, the festival used an initial capital, a small amount of money donated by local authorities and local stores, which allowed for initial running costs. Subsequently, much of the volunteer work of the team members focused on creating products and services that would allow for a development of financial resources. Those products and services varied from food to drink and merchandise (clothing, stickers, bags etc.) on sale during the festival and other design or artistic services throughout the rest of the year, in exchange for in kind or financial sponsorship.

At this point, it is important to stress that Stray Art Festival is open and free of charge to all visitors who attend. There is neither an entrance fee, nor tickets for the concerts or the parties. Additionally, all the invited muralists and Graffiti artists - 13 on the first year (2017) and 20 on the second (2018) - had their transportation, accommodation and food for the three days of the festival secured by the organizing team. The same applies to the invited musicians and any other performer invited by the festival.

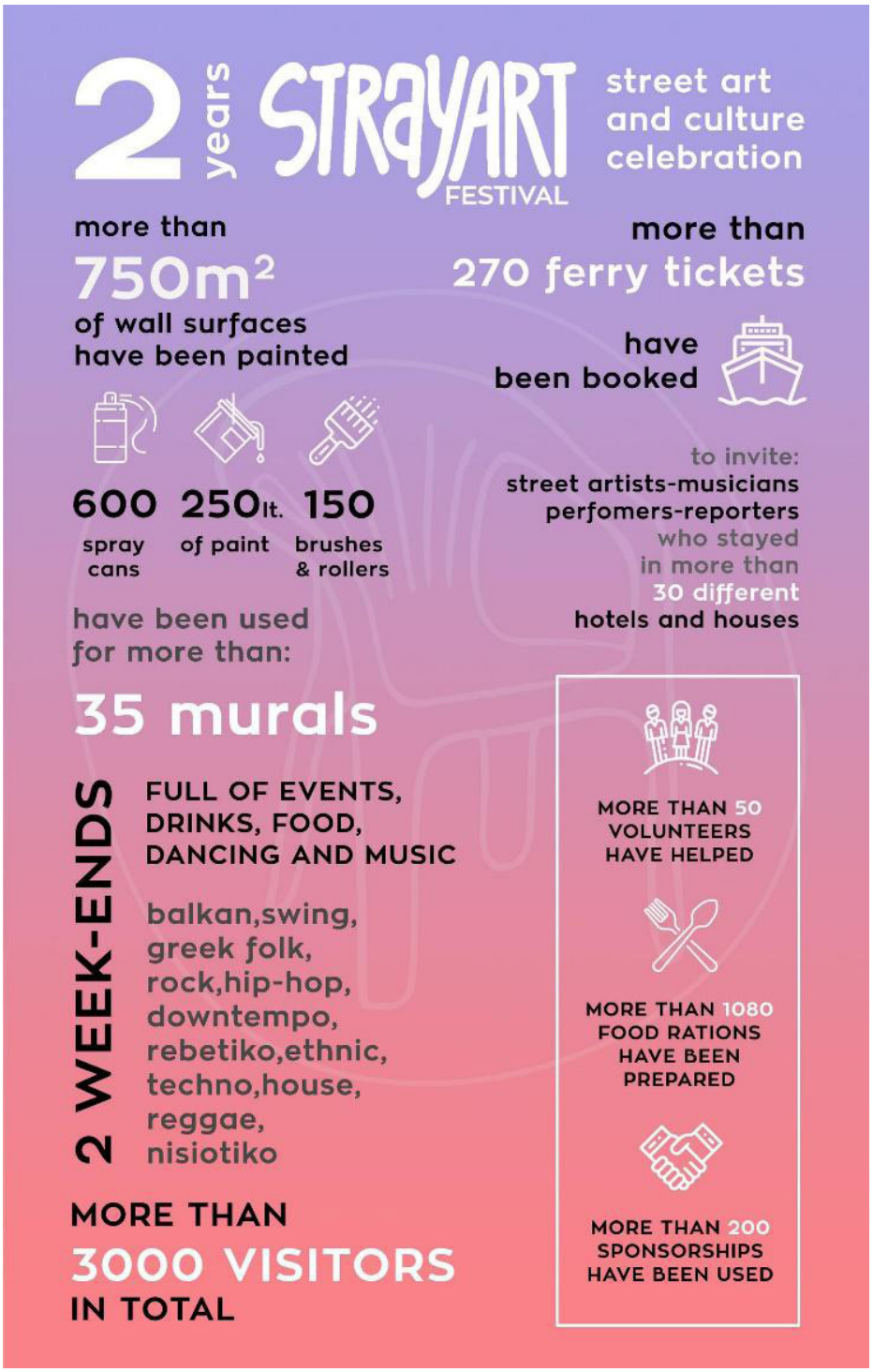

Figure 6. An infographic created by the branding team of Stray Art Festival.

In this way, every year, the response of both the public and the prospective artists is greater - few are the ones who gave a negative response on the prospect of spending a weekend with everything paid on an island in the Aegean and in which they have the opportunity to advertise their work, whether it be music, painting or even seminars or workshops that can be hosted. Moreover, when the turnout is bigger, so the publicity for the festival is bigger. More ferry tickets are cut, local shops have more traffic, the summer season is lengthened: all these are reasons that, over time, make the municipality and the local community trust and support even more the organizing team and the festival itself, either financially or by other types of action. Additionally, word of mouth is another kind of advertising that makes the festival and its identity become stronger.

This is the power of Street art: it has the ability to transform the urban environment, while on a larger level and at the same time with the aid of design processes it can bring profit to all the stakeholders involved. It must be stressed that stories like this are “written on the walls”, and as a starting point, the walls are transformed into colorful palimpsests, which appeal to more devoted fans, who do not hesitate to visit Syros again and again, to admire the artworks and to attend the festival. The economic, social and cultural benefits are indisputable; apart from historical indicators, they are also instruments for the promotion of Syros in Greece and the world. The value of these murals therefore invaluable. The trump card of Stray Art Festival and of any other Street Art festival whatsoever, is that when it continues to evolve year after year, artworks in many different public spaces on the island will be created; or in other islands also if Stray Art Festival succeeds in “wandering in other neighborhoods” in the future. This spatial spreading of stray art acts as a reminder that both the commons, public spaces in the city, and the cultural production and character of a place belong to all of us. By going beyond the ephemeral character of a festival and investing time and effort in fostering the emergence of a bottom up creative community we believe that a long term strategy for managing and negotiating who the city belongs to has been created.

But what are the benefits for the people who are planning and implementing this festival? What is it that makes the organizing team and the volunteers come back each year to spend precious time and energy on this endeavor? The answer is not one-dimensional. Each and every person returns for his own reasons. However, one of the things that every member of the group shares with the others, more or less, is the opportunity to be empowered, to leave their mark in the place where they live and study, or work. This kind of engagement allows them to look at the public space as an extension of their everyday life and as a fertile ground to cultivate their ideas and reap the spiritual fruits of their labors. This may also be the true concept of cooperation, through the design process. This is an example of a method for designing a service that furthers local sustainable cultural capital by investing in Street Art.

Figure 7. Stray Art Festival 2018: artists Apset and Dem working on the 'final touches' for their mural.

5. Conclusions

The juxtaposition between ephemeral and permanent has long been discussed in art theory. In this setting we see the same interplay take shape in a different way. Is the festival or the creative community and the ongoing transformation of the city the central offering of the whole process? The festival is a three day happening that transforms the urban environment with color and sound, and it is this transformation that communicates the possibilities to the standerbys. At the same time the festival would never take place without the self-organized community of people to support it. The team itself would fail to grow and include more citizens without an offering, or a touchpoint, a time and place to interact with society. In short, neither the festival nor the creative community are the ends for this process they are simply the means. Each operates in different timescales and temporalities acting in a complementary way in the dialogical process of living in the city.

The strategic and tactical lessons of this approach highlight the ongoing process of mediating the city and the production of social capital in it. Street Art, just like any other tool, has the capacity to emancipate city dwellers and to act as a catalyst for the reconstitution of the public. However, at the same time it can become a tool of Gentrification creating bland, boring, corporate junk spaces devoid of any essence of place, grassroots participation or soul. In the words of Ken Liu "Every dystopia is a utopia for somebody else. It just depends where you are."

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Street Art Hunting:
Instagram And The Gamification Of Creative Placemaking

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Abstract

The large scale and public nature of murals are quick and easy social media subject matter for visitors to broadcast their discoveries to the world and claim an authentic experience of a special time and place. Wide access to digital photography and social media—Instagram in particular—delivers a game-like social experience of "hide-and-seek" for street art lovers, cultivating a sense of intimacy with the murals, the artists, and connection to the larger community. This paper explores the unwritten rules of the game through the lens of a case study in Phoenix, Arizona. It unveils the ways in which Creative Placemaking is fostered through the spontaneous emergence of digital and physical interactions between artists and their audiences, without interference from social organizations or public officials. This position paper ultimately argues that self-organizing, grass roots community arts activities may be more inclusive, egalitarian, and potent than institutionally-driven creative placemaking efforts.

Keywords: social media, gaming, creative placemaking, Instagram, street art, urban studies, play, murals, social equity

1. Introduction

I move around a lot, so I know well the feeling of displacement. Finding a sense of place and belonging can be elusive even in familiar locations, and even more challenging to find in a completely new environment with its own geographies and cultures. When I moved to Phoenix, Arizona in 2016, I didn't know anyone. I had only visited once before, so when I relocated there, I knew finding my people would take some effort.

The first strategy I used to find my bearings was simply to start walking. Exploring the city on foot makes things visible in ways that speeding by in a car doesn't. I experienced the city with all my senses—noting not only its visual character, but also its sounds, smells, and textures. During my treks around Phoenix, I was most surprised and delighted when I would turn a corner or glance down an alley to find murals, drawings, and graffiti writing. I became obsessed with walking different routes each time I ventured out, looking for the city's street art. I didn't know it at the time, but when I began to post photos of the art on Instagram, I unintentionally joined the game of "Street Art Hunting." Playing this game has been a key factor in developing my sense of home in Phoenix.

Street Art Hunting can be classified as a type of Creative Placemaking activity. The game fosters sense of place through the spontaneous emergence of digital and physical interactions between artists, their audiences, and the city itself. Street artists and street art seekers play together, each taking on different roles at different times—sometimes the hunter, sometimes the gatekeeper, other times the foil. The game has no official name and no written rules. In fact, it isn't even discussed. Participants

Fig. 1: Artist Tato Caraveo, 2019 (photo: Danielle Foushée)

enter into it by virtue of their shared interest in street art, their motivation to experience the art in real life, and their delight in sharing their progress on Instagram. In Phoenix, the impromptu social networks created through Street Art Hunting connect people online and in person. It's played in cities world-wide, so the communities built in Phoenix also co-facilitate playful relationships between people all over the world.

From my perspective as a scholar in Visual Communication and as a Street Art Hunter, I want to understand the ways in which communities create both virtual and physical places by playing together with the images they make. For this case study, I used a combination of qualitative methods including ethnography, informal interviews, visual observation, and field research. I examined the ways in which Phoenix-based street artists and their audiences engage with one another via Instagram. As a researcher, my experience as an embedded, participant observer provides an insider's perspective of the community, its unique customs, and its unspoken rules.

Fig. 2: Artist Jesse Perry, mural destroyed in 2016 (photo: Danielle Foushée)

This paper has three parts. In the first, I'll share an overview of the practice of Creative Placemaking and examine both beneficial and problematic ways it impacts cities. In part two, I'll illustrate the shortcomings of Creative Placemaking through a close look at the history and cultural context of urban art in the streets worldwide. And finally, in part four, I'll show you how the Street Art Hunting game already accomplishes the goals of formalized Creative Placemaking efforts in Phoenix without institutional intervention. I will argue that street artists in Phoenix are doing the work of placemaking in ways that are racially, economically, and socially inclusive, and perhaps more potent than so-called Creative Placemaking interventions by governments, institutions, and other official means.

2. Creative Placemaking

"Creative Placemaking" is a relatively new buzzword used to describe a longstanding practice, namely, the ways in which artists engage with cities and communities to develop and enhance the lovable qualities of a place. In government and academia, the term usually refers to a formal relationship/partnership between an artist or artist collective and a community-based organization, business, or government entity that exists to accomplish certain social goals—most commonly economic development. Who is included and excluded in placemaking initiatives is an important factor that shapes communities around the world.

"Sense of Place" is a concept that enjoys widespread discussion across many sectors including urban planning, community development, economics, healthcare, and the arts. Since the Industrial Revolution, people have become more uprooted, more mobile, and less tied to a specific geographic location. The growth of international brands over the past 100 years has also contributed to a kind

Fig. 3: Artist Denzone for Phoenix Mural Festival 2018 (photo: Danielle Foushée)

of homogenous landscape in which companies across the globe offer the same goods and services in the same ways, everywhere. On one hand, the similarities found in different locations by transitional populations creates a sense of familiarity, but on the other, places no longer feel special or unique.

Organizational and environmental psychologist Fritz Steele meditated on the characteristics of place in his seminal book, The Sense of Place, in 1980. These criteria include: strong location, boundaries, geographic distinctiveness, scale and proportion, plus rich identity and imagery (Steele, 1981, pp. 53–62). While these physical attributes of a location are important, Steele (and others) also promotes the idea of a special "spirit" that must be present for cultivating a sense of place. This spirit, he claims, is defined by several qualities: choices and options, memories and fantasies, vitality, and personalization (Steele, 1981, pp. 183–199). The practice of Creative Placemaking involves activating these characteristics of place using arts and culture as the catalysts.

Since the publication and widespread popularity of Richard Florida's Rise of the Creative Class in 2002, artists have gained recognition as important contributors to the success of cities. Florida (2002) defines the Creative Class as the professionals working in "science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music, and entertainment whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology, and new creative content" (Florida, 2002, p. 9). More recently, Florida published a follow-up book that highlights the shortcomings of his original thesis. In The New Urban Crisis, he points out the community devastation that can occur without well-planned and executed economic development interventions (Florida 2017a). Despite his recent statements contradicting his

Fig. 4: Artists Keisr, Drek, Arko, mural depicting institutional violence in Mexico, 2017 (photo: Danielle Foushée)

original ideas (Florida, 2017b), the idea of the Creative Class is now widely accepted as a primary driver of contemporary urban economies, often without critique.

Over the past two decades, academics, bureaucrats, and industry executives have argued that the hierarchical, top-down approach of the industrial age no longer promises desirable outcomes. In For the Love of Cities, community development expert Peter

Kageyama (2011, p. 41) states, “Things that make communities interesting and loveable don’t necessarily cost a lot of money. What they do require is insight and sensitivity to the idea that we are building emotional connections with our citizens—not just paving roads, expanding our tax base, and collecting garbage”. Google understands that creativity, flexibility, and humanity are key elements for success in today’s world. The company is well-known for its inward-facing research that examines corporate culture, defines success measures, and determines best practices. One such study showed that Kageyama’s intuition was correct—people connect with other people, not with statistics and systems. To determine the characteristics of the best workplace managers, Google conducted a study of over 10,000 manager data points. They were surprised to find that technical skill came in last as a predictor of success. Instead, they noted that the best leaders exhibited the most EQ, or emotional intelligence (Schneider, n.d.). It’s the soft-sell, personal relationships that create a sense of place and connection, not the nuts and bolts of day-to-day activities. This is the overarching theme of Creative Placemaking.

Fig. 5: Artists Hugo Medina, Ryan Alexander, Carlos Mendoza for Phoenix Mural Festival 2018 (photo: Danielle Foushée)

Armed with this evidence, city and business leaders realize the need to address community concerns with innovative and unexpected interventions that synthesize many points of view. Some qualities of creativity—like divergent thinking, playfulness, and social connection—can breed a sense of uncertainty for people in traditional administrative roles. In response to their unfamiliarity with creative processes, seats at community and economic development tables may be offered to artists, designers, and other creative professionals.

In its 2016 publication, How to Do Creative Placemaking, U.S.-based National Endowment for the Arts (NEA, 2016, p. 1–3) outlines the practice. Jason Schupbach, the book's editor and former director of Design Programs at the NEA, highlights the organization's support for Creative Placemaking activities. The focus is on bringing artists together with urban planners, transportation managers, community organizers, and other officials to address specific social or structural concerns within existing bureaucratic systems. Roberto Bedoya, cultural affairs manager for the City of Oakland, critiques this hierarchical approach to Creative Placemaking. He points out the reality that "before you canhave places of belonging, you must feel you belong(Bedoya,2013).He highlights the complex history of placemaking, in which efforts to create places benefitted some groups and served to control others. As examples, Bedoya recalls the U.S. government's historical policies of forced migrations of Native Americans and internment of Japanese Americans during World War II (2013). In both instances, entire populations were forcibly removed from their homes to make way for new, more socially, politically, and economically powerful residents to recreate those places in their own image. Bedoya's concern highlights how Creative Placemaking, when practiced carelessly, could easily become a facilitator for gentrification.

The NEA uses its Our Town grants to support Creative Placemaking initiatives across the United States. Applicants must comply with a bevy of rules to fit within the funding requirements. The sources of these criteria are vague; possibly developed by arts administrators, business and political interests, and perhaps a smattering of citizen input. While these public servants' intentions may be sincere, artists and organizations must necessarily shoehorn their work into somebody else's idea of place if they want access to the funding that makes their work possible. Certain criteria, such as the requirement for matching funds and sponsorship by established arts organizations, can also build obstacles into the system that will lock out some would-be applicants altogether.

Street artists are especially vulnerable, even in Phoenix. Jurors and panelists may have bias against the urban arts, since these are commonly considered "low brow" or outside the boundaries of conventional arts formats and distribution channels. Street artists' race, economic condition, immigration status, and educational attainment can create additional barriers to participation and access within established systems such as those funded by government agencies and wealthy donors.

Creative Placemaking should welcome all kinds of participants. At the national, state, and local levels, leaders tend to prioritize the facilitation of formal partnerships between artists, governments, and organizations. However, Jenna Moran, program manager at National Association of Counties, envisions a wider scope. She writes, “Creative placemaking can take place anywhere—inside or outside an organization’s building. It does not matter what you call it—outreach, community engagement, creative placemaking, etc. What matters is that the work is being done” (NEA, 2016, p. 31).

In Phoenix, artists and grass-roots activists have been doing the work of placemaking all along. Yet, they’re often overlooked among institutional advocates for Creative Placemaking. Many times, artists are already members of the communities they serve. Phoenix has a prolific, locally-based population of muralists and wall painters who usually work as independent agents—without institutional collaborators, wealthy funding sources, or approval through official channels. These street artists work towards a vision of place that comes from themselves and their neighbors. Their works are located in and comment on their immediate locations.

One of the most important functions of street art is its creator’s ability to tell stories and share ideas within their communities and among their peers in public. Street artists’ independent creative interventions might align with outsiders’ ideas of the place. But it’s just as likely that the work contradicts or even resists those ideas, while at the same time portraying a more accurate picture of the place locals wish to see.

3. Street Art

Street art is commonly associated with youth delinquency, vandalism, and other criminal activity. While muralism and graffiti as public art have existed in some form for millennia, the genre as it’s currently known was born in New York and Los Angeles in the 1970s (Deitch, 2011, p. 10). Cultural conditions came together to create environments where this underground art form flourished: the suburbs had succeeded in luring middle- and upper-class residents and their money from inner cities, quality jobs and educational opportunities were lost in urban areas, and the country suffered from political and economic uncertainty.

The people left behind in urban centers were often people of color, immigrants, and other populations who commonly face systemic discrimination. Residents had little economic opportunity and basic services were neglected by officials. They lived among numerous abandoned buildings with little oversight from authorities. However dismal these conditions were, they also provided opportunities for black and Latino youth to exercise new freedoms and test their limitations after the Civil Rights Movement. These ‘forgotten’ places became canvasses where people could express themselves, share ideas, and build community. Street art became a powerful medium that unleashed new creative voices into the public sphere.

These artists invented potent expressions of an alternative American experience, one that many powerful people hoped would stay underground and unexamined. As this new creative vernacular bled into mainstream culture, America’s dominant business and political classes resisted it by publicizing negative stereotypes about urban artistic production and by criminalizing its associated behaviors (Ferrell, 1993, p. 115–125). Authorities zeroed in on street artists and graffiti painters—their visual evidence became an easy target for social resentment and regaining control.

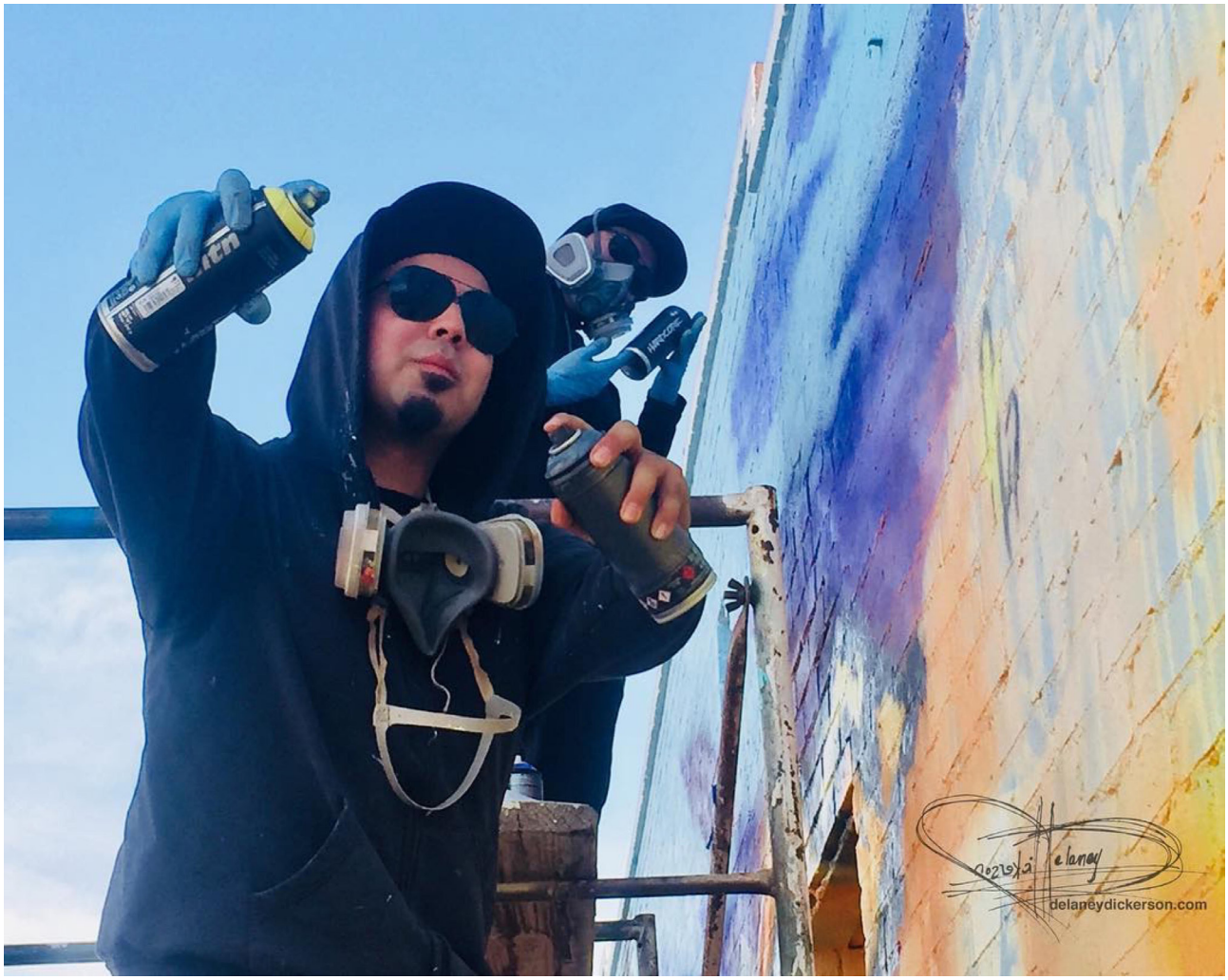

Fig. 6: Father and son Such & Champ Styles, at Phoenix Mural Festival 2018 (photo: Delaney Dickerson, Instagram)

Over the past 40 years, negative attitudes about street artists and their work have been hard to shake. Law enforcement continues to view graffiti as expensive property damage; even sanctioned murals and street art are often treated with suspicion or whitewashed. Officials prosecute artists harshly. In 2010, well-known Pittsburgh artist Daniel Monano (aka MF ONE) was convicted of graffiti vandalism. He spent time in prison and was sentenced to 2,500 hours of community service, plus $232,000 in restitution. In an interview during his incarceration, he said, “I always wanted the world to be a certain way, and when it wasn’t, I tried to force it. But I’m learning to accept the world the way it is. It’s greater than me and I’m never going to win” (Jones, 2010).

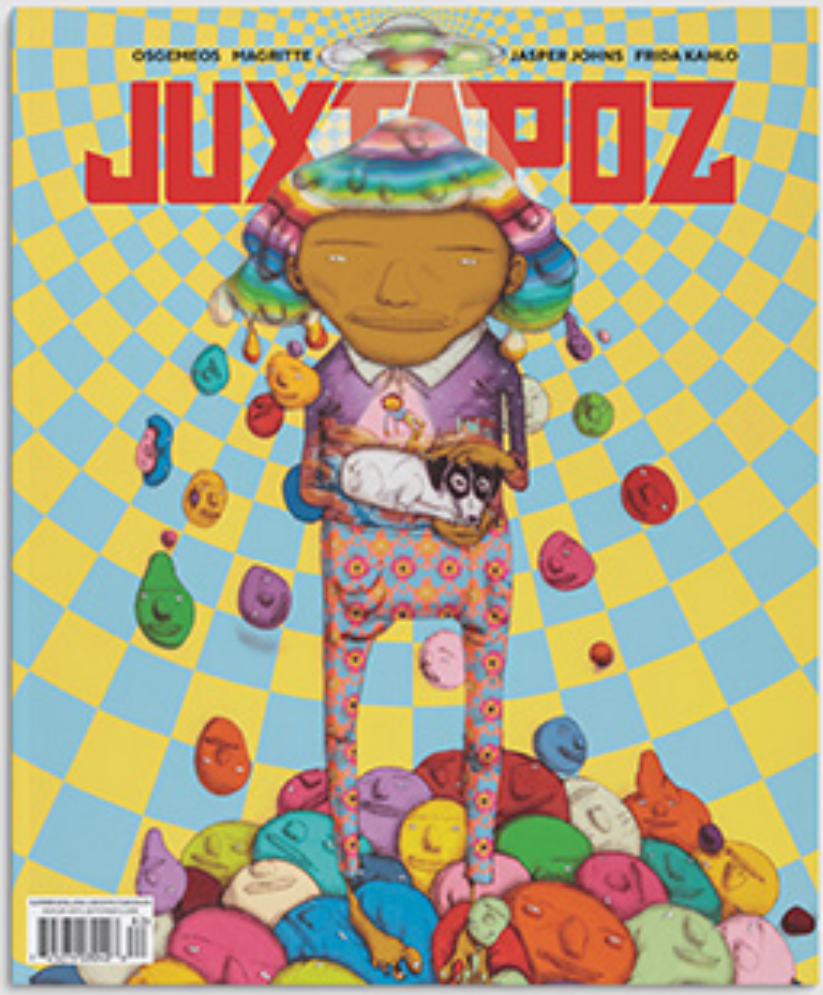

Figure 7: Juxatpoz magazine cover, Spring 2018 #206

On one hand, artists including MF ONE experience ongoing systematic punishment for their creative work. On the other, muralism, graffiti writing, and other kinds of street art have seen exponential growth in popularity and cultural influence over the past decade. As far back as 1994, Juxtapoz magazine began to offer some legitimacy to underground artists in California. Still in publication in 2018, it features skate-, surf-, and hot rod-inspired work, in addition to graffiti, street art, and other illustration-based graphic forms. By 2009 it had higher circulation than any other art magazine in the U.S. due to its focus on popular culture, commercial arts, tattoos, and comics (Beato, 2009). Unlike high-end galleries and art dealers, the magazine continues to make art accessible by offering

Fig. 8: Artist Banksy, Park City, Utah (photo: Danielle Foushée)

Figure 9: Instagram #tourparis13

Several factors converged in 2010 that gave muralism, graffiti, and street art a bigger platform, resulting in an explosion of the genre's critical and popular recognition. First, Time magazine included the mysterious street artist Banksy on its list of "100 Most Influential People." Shepard Fairey (2010), famous for his 2008 Obama Hope Presidential campaign poster design, wrote, "Banksy's work embodies everything I like about art. It's accessible, public, not locked away. He makes social and political statements with a sense of humor."

In 2011, French street artist JR won the prestigious $100,000 TED Prize to create his iconic "guerrilla art" installations (Kennedy, 2010). At the same time in Los Angeles, the Museum of Contemporary Art was planning the first-ever large-scale exhibition devoted to graffiti, muralism, and global street art. Titled "Art in the Streets," the show opened in early 2011 and provoked mania ranging from admiration and excitement to criticism and protest. Naysayers complained that the exhibition increased illegal activity in the areas surrounding the museum (Nagourney, 2011). Suddenly, street art was on the minds of vast numbers of unlikely patrons around the globe — and outside the usual art world channels.

Also during this time, smart phones were becoming more ubiquitous, further democratizing photography and image-making across society. Social media became the default space where these images are published and shared. Six short years after its founding, Facebook dominated social media, boasting 500 million users by 2010 (Wauters, 2010). The photo sharing app, Instagram, came online that same year, and has grown to become one of the most popular social media platforms in 2018 (DeMers, 2018). Members of the street artist community often tell me that they wouldn't know anyone if it weren't for social media, especially Instagram.

Another massive celebration of street art, "Tour Paris 13," brought 105 artists together from around the world to paint every surface of an old apartment tower slated for demolition. Over seven months in 2013, they worked to transform the building into a massive collaboration that included over 400 works of art. The resulting exhibition was limited to 30 days, and more than 25,000 visitors waited up to 13 hours to enter (Lallier, 2016). Viewers documented their experiences of awe and excitement on social media: a quick search for the tag #tourparis13 on Instagram reveals over 10,400 images. One of the artistparticipants, Mear One from Los Angeles ,told The Telegraph (2013),"We are the new artists. Graffiti art is the world's biggest art movement. In the 1970s, art was so elite that only the upper level people could do art or appreciate. . . and now. . . this is the art form." At the end

of the 30-day exhibition, the building was demolished as promised. And just like that, everything they created was destroyed.

4. Street Art Hunting: The Game

The City of Phoenix has a lot in common with other large street art cities worldwide. However, there are key differences that make it an ideal location for the Street Art Hunting game. Founded in 1881, Phoenix is a relatively young city. It recently became fifth largest city in the U.S. with a metropolitan population of nearly five million residents. Local artists have tight-knit relationships regionally, but outside neighboring states, Phoenix is largely unknown as a prolific street art city with a one-of-a-kind visual language. According to an extensive Google Map created by Phoenix Mural Project, less than 5% of over 600 wall paintings were created by artists from outside the Southwestern United States.

Phoenix is located in one of the most inhospitable regions of the United States—the Sonoran Desert. It's typically the hottest city in the nation, averaging about 106°F (41°C) in July. Water is scarce, and is channeled from the Salt River into the oldest canal system in the Americas. The Hohokam people built it by hand starting around 600AD—long before European explorers colonized the Americas. Some of these canals are still in use today and sustain the growing population.

Despite several hundred years of ongoing national government policies of eradication and oppression, Native American culture is omnipresent across the United States' Southwest region. And Phoenix is one of the most diverse and fastest-growing cities in the country. The U.S. Census estimated in 2018 that people of color make up nearly 60% of the population. Also unusual in the United States, 37% of Phoenicians speak a language other than English at home. Social conditions like these—along with the city's hyper-local network of artists—allow for large-scale cultural exchange and create an environment conducive to Creative Placemaking through the Street Art Hunting game.

It may seem counterintuitive to think about street art practice as a kind of Creative Placemaking. Along with its typical makeup of institutional partnerships, Creative Placemaking activists often mistakenly assume that

Fig. 10: Artist Siek for Shake & Bake 2018 (photo: Danielle Foushée)

community stability — a kind of permanence — is a desirable outcome. But street art is ephemeral by nature; it's there one day and buffed out the next. And most street artists work independently, outside the boundaries commonly associated with both art and Creative Placemaking. Creative Placemaking purports to connect people — to bring neighbors together and build ties in physical spaces. But many street artists use monikers to mask their real identities. Because they often work at both ends of the legal spectrum, they may use their given name for approved public paintings and their pseudonym in other contexts. One might expect these factors to stymie efforts to create a sense of place, but they serve as the foundation for Street Art Hunting, a social media game that builds virtual and physical connections locally and around the world.

Instagram serves as the gaming platform for Street Art Hunting and other "hide-and-seek" games. Jeroen Timmermans (2015), senior policy advisor at Erasmus University Rotterdam, describes the ways in which social media facilitates play. He writes, "Social network sites resemble games, because acting on them is characterized by a playful mood and has playful elements to it (humor, competition, teasing), but also because they constitute a world on their own. A world in which we can experiment a bit with our identity, without suffering immediate and direct consequences outside of the cybersphere" (Timmermans 2015, p. 289). Social media's ability to render identity fluid is key to understanding its relationship to street

Fig. 11: Artist Ashley Macias painting at Phoenix Mural Festival 2018 (photo: Danielle Foushée)

artists and their paradoxical desire for both anonymity and recognition. The Street Art Hunting game on Instagram offers opportunities for both.

Like most, I stumbled unwittingly into the game of Street Art Hunting. At first, I simply wanted to see more art in Phoenix's streets. Each find was a thrill. Seeing the art in person was part of what made it so exciting. Eventually, I began to share images of the art I discovered on Instagram. The more art I found, the more curious I became. I followed the artists whose work I saw, because I wanted to see more of their work and learn about what motivates and inspires them. I also learned more about their social networks and personal lives. This progression, unbeknownst to me, was my initiation into Street Art Hunting. New players, myself included, usually have little to go on. They lack experience, so their first "finds" are often popular, sanctioned works in prominent places. Perhaps they encounter the art unintentionally. However, each find provides new information such as artists' names or monikers and their Instagram accounts, and generates momentum for the next hunt.

"All play has its rules," declares Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1949, p. 11). Play must be bounded by a place and a time, and rules agreed upon by participants. Without parameters, there is no frame of reference for exercising one's options, and players can't anticipate the actions of others. Ian Bogost (2016, ch. 5), Georgia Tech professor and author of Play Anything, contends that the rules of the game are what draw us in. One of the primary requirements of Street Art Hunting is that players must avoid providing exact locations. Street Art Hunting, like scavenger hunting, is a game of aggregating clues that lead seekers

Fig. 12: Artist Lalo Cota 2018 (photo: Danielle Foushée)

to a specific physical location in search of a prize. The clues are provided by game participants through their Instagram feeds. The challenge is thrill of the hunt. The urgency is the fleeting nature of impermanent art. The effort is aggregating clues. And the prize is unraveling the mystery of place. Some would-be players hope to skirt the system, and use Instagram to ask other participants directly for paintings' locations. The online community usually ignores these requests, effectively ostracizing the offender. Huizinga addresses this phenomenon when he describes the "spoil-sport," who destroys the game itself: "he must be cast out, for he threatens the existence of the play-community" (1949, p. 11). Without adherence to the game's rules, social ties within the entire group become threatened and the community itself becomes vulnerable.

Fig. 13: Artists Faust, Awer, Aztec Smurf, and Gorizona at Phoenix Mural Festival 2018 (photo: Instagram screenshot)

It isn't enough that a player figures out an artwork's location, though, and then keep their find to themselves. The Street Art Hunter must publicize it. Artwork must be seen in person, photographed, and posted on Instagram for all to see, along with one's own cryptic message about the experience of seeing it in person. The point is to acknowledge the inherent ephemerality of urban art and to emphasize that one cannot fully experience it except in person. The paradox between the secrecy around production and the potential for public accessibility is a key driver of audience engagement, participation, and social acceptance. Winners of the Instagram Street Art Hunt build trust and may eventually earn admission to the in-person club.

Perhaps due to its association with social activism, illegal activity, and vandalism, street art culture is shrouded in mystery. This quality of secrecy inherent in games

(Huizinga, 1949, p. 12) simultaneously incentivizes continued play for insiders and excludes the uninitiated. The rules of Street Art Hunting create barriers that police entry into the group, protect artists' anonymity, and test community members' commitment. Keeping street art sites secret can also extend the life of the artwork, especially if it was created without permission. The City of Phoenix spends over $2 million each year to fund its Graffiti Busters program (Zeng, 2018), contributing to the ephemerality of artworks in the city's urban spaces. Interestingly, the tension between art-makers and art-removers adds to the allure of the Street Art Hunting game. Players are in a race against the clock; they don't know exactly where an artwork lives, nor how long it will be there.

Creative Placemaking occurs through the process of playing the game. Gamers visit unfamiliar neighborhoods to track down the art, and simultaneously gain a more complete perspective of the city itself. Light-hearted Instagram conversations begin to flow as a Street Art Hunter reaches new "levels" in the game, allowing personal, if virtual, relationships to form amongst both players and artists. As one new friendship turns into another, and another, other aspects of the Phoenix street art community are revealed, further deepening a sense of community and belonging.

Fig. 14: Artist Sentrock, n.d. (photo: Danielle Foushée)

Diversity is a key feature of the game. I've observed and talked to Phoenix street artists of all ages, and from every economic background and education level. Some have formal arts training, and others developed their skills on the streets. Their racial makeup resembles the overall city's population — something many conventional arts sectors cannot claim. For example, Hyperallergic reported in 2017 that 80.5% of artists represented by New York City galleries were white (Vartanian, 2017). In contrast, artists of color made up 55% of the participants in 2018's Phoenix Mural Festival. Phoenix-based street artists live all over the city as well, and come from all kinds of neighborhoods.

Embedded in the Street Art Hunting game is the opportunity to get outside one's comfort zone and experience much of what a city has to offer.

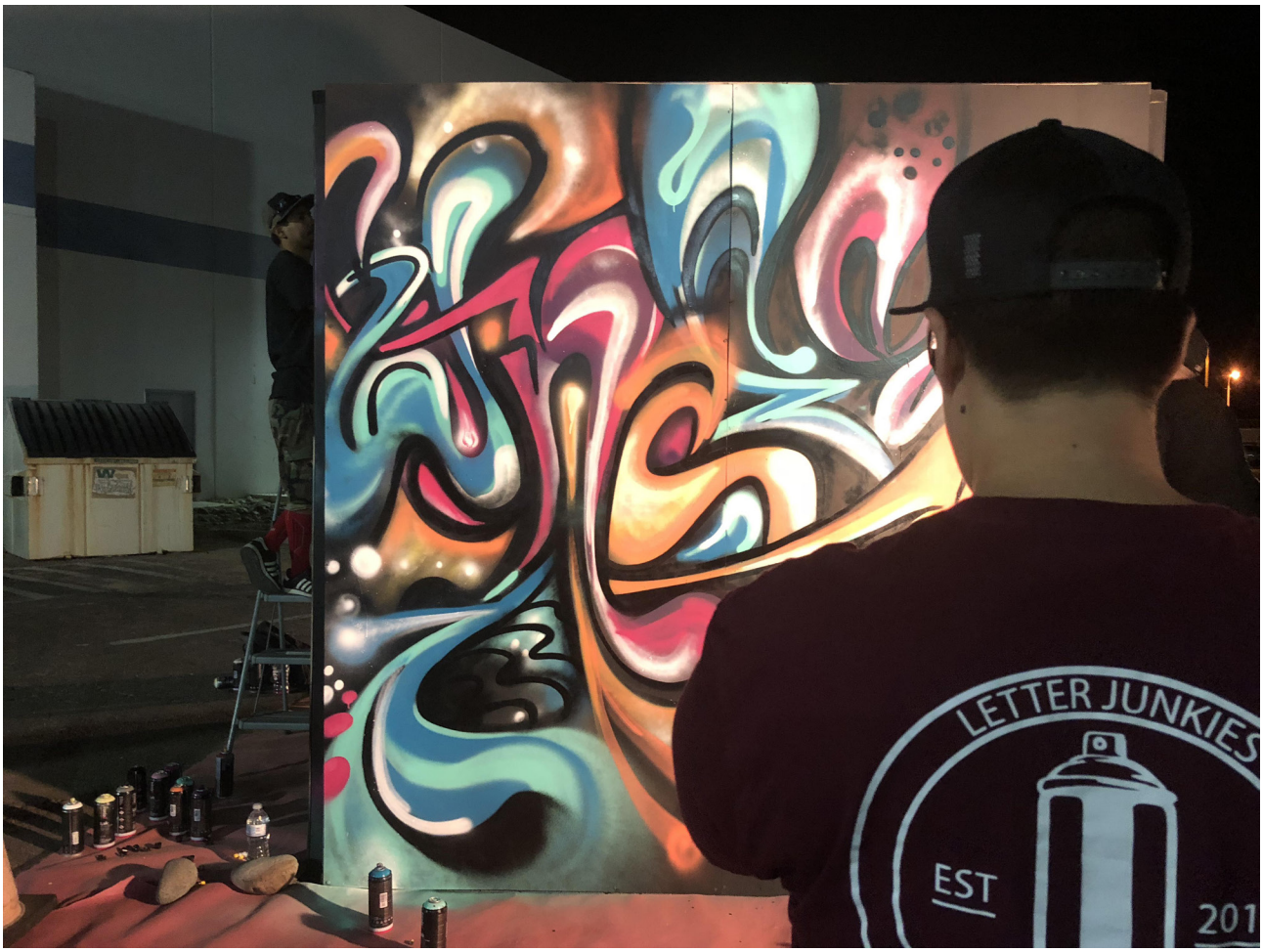

Fig. 15: Artist Chuck at Resonate 2018 (photo: Danielle Foushée)

As players advance as Street Art Hunters, they prove themselves as worthy initiates into the in-person community. Hunters eventually gather enough knowledge of the city and evidence from Instagram to find works in progress or even catch an artist at a site while they're working. Discoveries like these are rare and signal deep focus and dedication in the Street Art Hunter. Meeting an artist on site, in person, is exhilarating. That first personal introduction is the key to future meetups, and suddenly the player is welcomed into the community's fold. Event invites start to roll in, messages are returned, and friendships are formed along the way.

5. Conclusion

Street Art Hunting is Creative Placemaking — without institutional oversight, intrusion, or funding. Discovering art in the streets is only part of the joy of playing the game. It draws its players to unknown neighborhoods, offering a new perspective on a place they may have assumed they knew well. Participants learn new things about the place, and their bond with it deepens. They begin to see more of what is already there; find new appreciation for their neighbors and their contributions to the local culture; and create personal friendships across lines of race, language, or economic status. Street artists and Street Art Hunters don't need officials or organizations to show them how to accomplish the goals of Creative Placemaking. Everyone who plays is already making the city what they want it to be — while making no effort to fit within some other framework from somewhere else. Street Art Hunting celebrates the city and its people as they are; not as those in power wish it would be. Familiarity and friendship breeds comfort, and we begin to really belong to a place when the two converge, as in the Instagram game of Street Art Hunting. I've lived in nine states, and who knows how many different neighborhoods in my lifetime. It was only after playing the Street Art Hunting game in Phoenix, Arizona that I ever felt as truly at home in a place as I do now.

Fig. 16: Local artists Skye Lucking, Rudy Jaime, and Danielle Foushée (photo: selfie)

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Early Concept Validation through Provocative Experience Prototyping

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Abstract

This essay reports on a research project aiming at validation of a concept for an AI-driven speech interface for smart services in public spaces. The research team created a simple experience prototype that simulated the envisioned functionality and was used to experiment with subjects in dialogues. The interaction with the prototype invoked a provocative experience that allowed test subjects to better imagine the impact that such a concept for smart services would have in their neighbourhood.

Keywords: Provocative prototype, Smart city, Conversational agent

Introduction

The research was prompted by plans of the municipality of The Hague to create a Smart City Infrastructure using lamp-posts as multi-functional hubs, starting with a pilot in one neighbourhood. These smart lamp-posts will have various sensors and offer Wi-Fi to the public. Large developments like this, technically complex and involving large investments, are often developed and implemented from a technology-push viewpoint. To complement this, the present research project explicitly focused on the viewpoint of citizens (van Leeuwen et al. 2018).

Research method

The project explored smart services in outdoor public spaces that can enrich urban life, by first investigating explicit and latent needs of citizens and then evaluating conceptual scenarios through a makeshift prototype and a Wizard of Oz technique (Dahlbäck et al. 1993).

From conversations with residents in the pilot neighbourhood, a number of user stories were collected and a recurring theme was chosen that reflected a common need – better informed communication in and about the neighbourhood. Residents were concerned about the solidarity in the neighbourhood between the various groups of residents, about the preservation of cultural and historic values, and about the alignment of municipal policy with the wishes of residents. Communication between residents and with local government appeared to be an issue. According to some residents, the municipal government is only moderately informed about what is at stake in the neighbourhood.

The design question became twofold: (1) How can local information, about what's going on in the neighbourhood's public space, be registered and shared? (2) How can an interactive channel be realised that citizens can use to communicate about their local environment, so that they feel heard?

Concept

Creative sessions led to the concept of a 'Conversational lamp-post' – an AI-based point of contact in the neighbourhood, built into a lamp-post. These conversational lamp-posts form a super-local social network for citizens and are a communication channel to the municipality. A speech interface is used to conduct conversations between passers-by and the lamp-post. Conversational lamp-posts remember what is being said by passers-by and also have sensors to listen, smell, feel and look around, building up an information repository of their direct environment: they always have an interesting story to tell and one can query the information they have stored about its environment.

Conversational agents using speech interfaces are getting commonplace in domestic environments (Porcheron 2018). The use of speech in public outdoor settings is less developed and needs research (Clark et al. 2018).

Experience prototype

To evaluate the concept, an experience prototype was created that test subjects could interact with. The experience prototype consisted of a loudspeaker positioned on a tripod and connected to a laptop computer. A document was prepared containing envisioned flows of dialogues, questions and answers that would be used to simulate the conversation between the AI-agent and the user. The researcher conducting the experiment selected sentences in response to the participant's utterances and had the computer pronounce these using its standard speech functionality. The participant was asked to imagine the prototype as a lamp-post in a public outdoor space.

After the interaction with the prototype, participants were interviewed regarding their experience, the concept's usability, its desirability, and topics such as privacy, social preconditions, and ownership of collected data. Of particular interest was the participants' willingness to engage with a conversational lamp-post in their own neighbourhood and under what circumstances different aspects of its functionality would be considered acceptable.

Fig.1 Concept of the conversational lamp-post

Fig.2 Crude prototype of the conversational lamp-post - loudspeaker on a tripod

Scenarios

Questions and answers of the dialogue were prepared for various possible scenarios, anticipating the responses of test subjects and different directions the conversation could take. Three topics were prepared: finding a runaway cat; nuisance by youngsters on scooters; and litter on the street.

Results and Discussion

The provocative experience prototype in this project was created with the simplest possible means, aiming to provide a sufficiently convincing experience for test subjects and stimulating an in-depth discussion afterwards regarding this experience and possible future scenarios. The prototype served to evaluate, in this very early stage, the usability, usefulness, and desirability of the interaction, but also to explore, in subsequent interviews, the boundaries of acceptability of the concept of a conversational agent in public spaces. Through the use of the experience prototype, participants of the session were inspired to imagine the workings of the concept and stimulated to consider its usability, usefulness, and acceptability in their neighbourhood.

The research team experienced this form of low-key experience prototyping as very efficient: participants engaged effortlessly in the dialogue, which proceeded fluently. Experiencing the interaction helped them envision potential use cases and reflect on privacy issues: the dialogues revealed subjective limits of what kind of personal information people were willing to share with the lamp-post. For example, some showed much interest in opportunities to find new relationships in the neighbourhood. Others stated they would feel uncomfortable if the lamp-post would initiate the discussion, particularly when using their name, unless it would clearly represent the municipality – trust as a key-factor (Begany et al. 2015).

Fig.3 Test subject interacting with the experience prototype

Working with the provocative experience prototype has revealed sufficient insights to take the project to its next iteration: a working prototype for experiments in a semi-public space. These experiments will provide further insights into the use of speech interfaces in public, with factors such as the presence of other people nearby and the effects of environmental noise on the user experience. Further iterations of the project include experiments with additional sensors and the use of big data to enhance the conversational lamp-post with relevant and local information.

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As travelers come and go worldwide, many leave marks in a silent exchange, communicating that I was here, I exist. They embrace and taunt each other over time and distance, sharing in-jokes, and making rude gestures against surveillance and control. Marks about seeking community, personal bests, creating a customized, personalized experience of neighborhoods. This is ours. You are welcome. Some people and some experiences are still free.

Unsurprisingly, some graffiti and experience design professionals connect, emerge, cross over, and enhance the many disciplines in each. Artists bring graffiti writing and design skills to the digital, sculptural, and architectural worlds. Experience designers document, facilitate, and embrace graffiti culture and experience in their own lives and work, recognizing the importance of people owning, co-creating, and humanizing the artifacts and environments we share.

With this journal, we hope to illuminate some of the compelling work being done at these intersections of people, concerns, design, research, media, environments, liberty, trespass, and aesthetics.

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