

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY ISSUES IN WORKS OF GERMAN STREET ART

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Abstract

This article deals with the development of environmental and ecological issues in Germany since the 1970s, and how these issues are represented in works of street art since the beginning of the development of modern graffiti, and later street art, in Germany.

The purpose of this research is to identify differences in the ecological and environmental issues in works of graffiti and street art from the 1970s to present day in Germany. This has been done by examining general themes of environmental and ecological issues in graffiti and street art and by studying some of the specific examples of artwork, using research methods by visual analysis based on study “Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design” by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, and visual analysis of iconography and iconology, described by Marion G. Müller in “*The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods*” by Eric Margolis and Luc Pauwels. The first phase of the research involves an overview of the socio-political background of the ecological and environmental issues in Germany since the 1970s, as well as development of modern graffiti and street art in Germany in the context of ecology and environment, using the method of iconology. The second phase involves examining physical examples of graffiti and street art in Germany. The final phase deals with regional differences reflected in artists’ work in Germany.

This article will provide general insights in graffiti and street art in Germany and it will explore how German artists tackle the environmental and ecological issues in their works.

Keywords: *graffiti, street art, ecology, environment, Germany.*

Introduction

Not only in Germany, but also in Western Europe, the rapidly growing industrialisation in the 19th century and its effects on the environment, ecology and ecosystem began to rise, as well as the research of these issues. Up until the second half of the 20th century, the German public did not pay much attention to environmental pollution from overly intensive industry work, which had a strong impact on the environment. Due to industrialisation and urbanisation, ecosystems were destroyed. As agriculture, production of food and economic activity developed, chemical products were used, polluting water, air and the environment. Due to the development of industrial farming, the contaminated environment began to transform habitats, which threatened the existence of local species and whole ecosystems. It was not until the 1970s, along with several other movements, such as the protests against nuclear power and nuclear war, and the women's emancipation movement, the so-called environmental movement (German *Umweltbewegung*) developed. This was heavily focused on tackling natural and environmental problems after the industry contaminated the environment and increased concentrations of toxic substances in the air. Following the unification of Germany, there was a renewed interest in ecology and environmental protection, not only within the national framework but also globally, leading to a variety of "green-thinking" organisations, and at that time in Germany the political party "Alliance 90/Greens" (German *Bündnis 90/Grüne*) was also founded. Today, Germany is one of the "greenest" or most environmentally friendly countries in the world, which not only successfully addresses various issues related to global environmental challenges but also sets an example for other countries that lack in the field of environmental protection and ecology.

This article will examine the environment and ecology of German areas, as well as global areas and the impact of environmental and ecological concerns on graffiti and street artists' views on various local and global environmental issues. Consequently, the purpose of this article is to analyse techniques, methods and views of street artists, who deal with environmental and ecology issues, which are reflected in their artwork in Germany from the 1970s to present day.

Insight into ecological and environmental issues and their development in Germany

The industrial outbreak in the 19th century, the First and Second World War, as well as the production and use of new technologies and nuclear energy, led to the public interest in environmental and ecological issues in German territory in the 1970s. Society participated in various protests, movements and demonstrations, protesting environmental pollution, emissions from motor vehicles and industry that negatively affected the air and water, nuclear bomb testing and the use of nuclear

energy, promoting the protection of different species and other environmental and ecological concerns.

Although the debate of environment and ecology issues appeared only in the second half of the 20th century, interest in nature already emerged in Ancient Greece, with the first efforts to understand and describe the cause and processes of the world. The first philosophers of that time, or pre-Socratic philosophers, around the 6th and 5th century B. C., marked a new phase in human thinking, shifting from mythic thinking to logical thinking or *logos*, trying to explain the processes in nature and humans. Later, environmental and natural ideas continued to develop by atomists and sophist Protagoras, that separated natural desires of human from the socially established customs and assumptions that person observes [Taylor, Lee 2015].

In future eras and centuries, the interest in nature remained, but the importance of nature was shifted to different areas and aspects, such as world and human in a religious context in the medieval period; nature and human research in Renaissance; nature as an escape from the reality in literature and poetry in Romanticism, mainly in the German-speaking area [Romanticism]. Industrial revolution was the breaking point of the environmental and ecological research. Although the industry breakthrough was an important milestone in the development of humanity in the context of socioculture, the environment was damaged by the consequences of the industrialisation. As the welfare of people increased, local ecosystems were destroyed due to building of factories and other houses. Industrial activity resulted in release of substances, including toxic chemicals, harmful to health and the atmosphere, polluted water, air and streets. At that time environmental and natural research started to develop, including studies of living organisms, different natural and environmental processes and relations [McLamb 2011].

But in the first half of the 20th century, focus on environment protection and ecology was more and more held in the background, affected by the First and Second World War. As a result, not only human lives were destroyed, but the environment and ecosystems with different kinds of plants, animal species and other living organisms were also heavily damaged. The problem also escalated in the post-war era, when the world was increasingly focused on nuclear weapons, testing, building and using nuclear power and nuclear energy. The environmental and ecology peak developed in the 1970s and 1980s, when a variety of mass demonstrations and movements were launched in several countries around the world, voicing various environmental, ecological issues, as well as human rights. These protests led to the formation of “green” parties and non-governmental organisations, which advocated for environmental protection, ecology, human rights and freedom. Over time, interest in the ecology increased, establishing non-governmental organisations and foundations, that support environmental protection, recycling and ecological lifestyle.

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Until 1990, two German countries with different national structures and political systems existed: The Federal Republic of Germany or West Germany and the German Democratic Republic or East Germany, ruled by the socialist regime and strict censorship of information and human rights [Abels, Bellermann 2001]. The socialist regime led to strong monitoring of public demonstrations or other activities, preventing citizens from expressing their views. But in the Federal Republic of Germany, affected by student movements in 1968, society over the next decade actively protested various state-initiated processes that harmed the environment and society. Several other demonstrations, including movements by environmental activists: anti-nuclear movements (German *Anti-Atomkraft-Bewegung* or *AKW*) protested nuclear weapons production and the use of nuclear power [Abels, Bellermann 2001], increasing number of participants in the demonstrations after the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 [Schildt, Sigfried 2009]. There was also an environmental and ecology movement (German *Umweltbewegung/Ökologie-Bewegung*). The ecological movement was based on protests against various processes in the country, including local damage of environment [Glaser 2007].

The origins of causes of the environmental and ecological movements are to be found in the 1970s, especially in 1973, when the oil crisis took place. As a result, the impact of rapidly growing industrial and urban environment was sharply criticised [The Limits to Growth]. In the 1980s, demonstrations and movements in society increased [Glaser 2007]. Nevertheless, a major change developed in early 1990: the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the German reunification in 1990. This was a new impetus for the action of environmental activists and the “green” parties, which led to the German Green Party joining the East German Green Party and concluding its future cooperation. In 1993, the combined “green” party merged with the German Democratic Republic Party “Alliance 90” (German *Bündnis 90*) by establishing a single party union “Alliance 90/The Greens” (German *Bündnis 90/Grünen*), with a view to representing all the common interests of Germany or the people of West Germany and former East Germany [Abels, Bellermann 2001].

During the 21st century many solutions have been reached in Germany to phase out nuclear power and weapons. Several laws were adopted that contributed to the development of the environment and ecosystems, recycling, use of renewable energy production systems, as well as welfare of people [Bündnis 90/Die Grünen. Partei 1999–2002]. Since the 1970s, Germany, both the government and society, has invested heavily in improving the environment. Environment protection is one of the country’s top priorities. In the 21st century, Germany is seen as one of the environmental leaders in the world and “pioneers” of the use of renewable energy [Frankfurter Societäts-Medien 2015].

Insight into the development and tendencies of German street art

As mentioned above, two German countries existed until 3 October 1990. The division of territory, the political system and the Berlin Wall had a strong impact on graffiti formation in both German countries. However, graffiti developed very differently in each country. Graffiti formation was heavily influenced by Berlin Wall, as well as by a wall that parted West Germany and East Germany, thus preventing young graffiti artists from influencing other artists, since crossing of the wall was strictly prohibited.

In Germany, graffiti has been documented since the late 1970s, but only in the second half of the 1980s it thrived. In the context of graffiti, during these decades until the eve of the 1990s or the fall of the Berlin Wall and German unification, it can only be discussed in the context of the Federal Republic of Germany, because in the German Democratic Republic, strict censorship did not really allow graffiti artists to express their views. Specifically, this was the case for graffiti artists who at the time were treated as hooligans and vandals. Till 1990, graffiti in East Germany area and urban environment was severely banned [Hertel 2003].

The rare appearance of graffiti in East Germany is also explained by the fact that it was largely impossible to obtain spray cans on the territory of the country because their production and distribution were strictly controlled or banned at all [Van Treeck 2001]. The Berlin Wall that divided Berlin till 9 November 1989 into two parts was also an important factor in the development of graffiti. There were young people and “outcasts” of society who tried to cross the Berlin Wall and get to know the urban environment of West Berlin. Artists there were free and creative in developing their artistic capabilities, synthesising different styles and techniques, creating a unique German graffiti platform. Although people in East Berlin, who tried to “write”, were strictly punished, there are a few graffiti works fixed in the second half of the 1980s, when political systems and society in both countries were preparing for changes. At the time, the country did not provide such strict control due to frequent demonstrations and protests, so young graffiti artists were more likely to cross the Berlin Wall [Abels, Bellermann 2001].

The graffiti development in East Germany may be considered to have begun in 1989, when the Berlin Wall was torn down. Relatively experienced artists of West Berlin could present young East German graffiti artists with a variety of graffiti styles and techniques [Henkel, Domentat, Westhoff 1994]. In the early 1980s, West Berlin was a place where graffiti artists had an opportunity to develop their artworks, that later became an important part of Berlin. In West Berlin, artists were free to express their views and protests, developing themselves as artists. As the area of West Berlin was surrounded by the Berlin Wall and East Germany, graffiti was seen more frequently in other cities of West Germany at the time, such as Dortmund, Munich

and Cologne. Artists from the cities of West Germany later travelled to West Berlin to develop their artistic capabilities and both – graffiti styles and techniques in general [Van Treeck 2001]. The fall of the Berlin Wall was also an impact for young East Berlin artists that were inspired from West German artists. It was an important step in the development of artists' works, since the two countries reunited. In the mid-1990s, Berlin was the city with the highest number of graffiti artists [Van Treeck 2015]. Each year after the graffiti breakthrough in Berlin, graffiti spread to other cities of the Federal Republic of Germany [Van Treeck 2015].

In the late 1990s and early 21st century, the direction of street art gradually evolved from graffiti subculture. Artists started to experiment with different techniques, synthesizing materials, colours and shapes. The result stems from a broad spectrum of diverse street art manifestations and styles, lifting the value to a new level. The Berlin Wall project in the 1990s played a major role in bringing together many local artists and artists from other countries around the world, inviting them to create works on different topics. The artists formed large-format works on the former Berlin Wall, which had not been demolished entirely and later served as a cultural-historical monument. The work mostly covers such topics as the Berlin Wall and the German division, but there were other political and socio-critical graffiti works, including environment, human rights and ecology.

Approaching the 21st century, graffiti artists continued to experiment and develop different graffiti techniques and styles, as well as new materials to discuss different topics. Due to emergence of new techniques, materials and styles, a phenomenon of street art that changed the perception of both arts, developed from graffiti. Using a variety of materials, surfaces, techniques and styles, artists synthesized different themes and political messages, developing graffiti and street art at a new level.

Description of the method and the importance of research

For the analysis and interpretation of street art and graffiti works, the author of the article uses two different visual research methods as well as mapping, through which street artworks are viewed in the context of location, describing regional differences of German territory.

In analysis of street art works, one of the methods of visual research is based on the theory of visual research methods by the professor of culture and semiotics Gunther Kress from the University of London, and professor of social semiotics and dean at the University of Technology of Sydney Theo van Leeuwen "Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design". The authors offer a variety of visual research methods and criteria that can be used in visual material analysis and interpretation. According to Kress and Leeuwen, visual information has several levels of encoding, consisting of different visual elements such as composition, colour and shape

contrasts, element layout, symbols of different meanings, letter and word arrangements in text, etc. These elements are called visual grammar, according to the authors, since each visual element attaches importance to the work by creating a certain meaning in the overall composition of visual information. In Kress and Leeuwen's opinion, visual language is interpreted in different ways, like linguistics or language in text, oral or verbal form.

Similarly, street art analysis is fundamentally influenced by work of Eric Margolis's and Luke Pauwel's "The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods". Street artworks are studied based on the iconography/iconology method described in this book, which has been analysed and described by German-American political scientist and Professor Marion Müller at the Jacobs University of Bremen. The methods of iconography and iconology are viewed within one context, since the nature of both methods is very similar. Iconography identifies types of visual themes and describes certain characteristics but does not rely on objective sources and studies. Iconology, on the other hand, is inductive, critical, analytical and interdisciplinary in nature. Iconology includes a holistic approach, an essential subjectivity and a focus on the traditions of the Western world in a cultural context. Through the iconology method, visual material is viewed from several viewpoints: the work is viewed from both its artistic value and from the background of socio-political or socio-cultural, i.e. when and where the work has been made and for which time, place and audience it is designed. Both methods are synthesised and used in visual material analysis and interpretation.

As a third research method that helps to perceive street art in Germany is mapping. When collecting visual material, namely images with street art examples showing a message or a protest in relation to the environment and ecology, the location of street artworks is marked on the geographical map of Germany. Thus, an overview of street artworks is acquired. This dotted map makes it possible to compare regional differences in the context of street art with reflected environmental and ecological issues. The map highlights all graffiti and street artworks available to the author of the article. The map reflects the state of street art and graffiti in German territory during the period from the 1970s up to now. Although it is not possible to describe the general situation of German street art by the mapping method, as the author of the article does not have access to all non-existent and existing graffiti and street artworks; it is possible to highlight certain tendencies with the available street artworks.

Based on the selected research methods, several categories were created which were used in the analysis and interpretation of visual material, namely graffiti and street arts. The specific graffiti and street artworks have not only been analysed, but the number of studied artworks has been broken down by:

- topics, themes and messages that appear in works;
- work titles;
- displayed characters in works;
- techniques, styles and materials used to create works;
- location.

In the context of work analysis, street artworks were selected on the basis of regional ownership, topics in works and messages related to environmental and ecological issues, and on the basis of street art techniques and styles that had been used to create works. The visual material has been collected from Norbert Schnitzler's photo collection of graffiti, documenting and classifying graffiti works at various times, places and topics. Personal archives, publicist materials and electronic resources, in which works on the subject can be found have also played an important role in this research.

Environment and ecology in German street art.

Analysis and interpretation

As in East Germany in the 1970s and 1980s, due to the strict censorship of the socialist regime, it was practically impossible for graffiti to develop; graffiti began to take shape in West Germany, giving young artists the opportunity to express themselves creatively by displaying their views and socio-critical views on the processes in the country. The reflection of the environment and ecology in works from this period appeared very rarely, as mostly artists protested against local political processes. The first works showing environmental and ecological coverage have been documented from the mid-1980s. At the time, environmental and ecological issues were of interest to only a small proportion of graffiti artists, since a large proportion of artists, as mentioned previously, did not focus on environmental pollution and the importance of ecology, and often themselves polluted the surroundings with used spray cans. Although the chemical content of the colour was not harmful to the environment, packaging of spray cans consisted of material which did not decompose completely in nature [Van Treeck 2015].

However, those who were interested in environmental protection and ecology, largely reflected protests against nuclear power tests and use, and the production of radioactive substances or nuclear energy in their works. Using *tags* and *pieces*, as well as simple composition structures, this was a key theme in graffiti artists' works in the context of the environment and ecology that remained until the mid-1990s. Then, other environmental and ecological issues began to emerge in works of graffiti and street artists. In the graffiti works of the 1980s, references to the negative and disastrous consequences of nuclear power dominated. Harald Naegli has created a work called "Fish Death Dance" (German *Totentanz der Fische*). Cologne artist

Joachim X, after the 1986 Swiss chemical factory disaster and its consequences, was one of the first who reflected fish bones using *stencil*. Graffiti artist Thomas Baumgertel in his works also reflected skeletons as a response to the devastating consequences of the Chernobyl and Hanau nuclear power disasters. Also, in the works of Aachen artist Klaus Paier, the reference to the negative effects of the use of nuclear power dominates, which is reflected in the death of the world and of humanity. The works show compositions and images, as well as provocative phrases and text. In works, such as *DER TOD IST EINE WEISSE WOLKE* (transl. from German “Death is a white cloud”, see fig. 1), *DEIN REICH KOMME* (transl. from German “Your Reich/Empire is coming”, see fig. 2), a symbol of radioactivity appears, indicating the harmful and destructive effects of the use of nuclear power.



Figure 1. *DER TOD IST EINE WEISSE WOLKE*. Aachen, Germany (Klaus Paier).



Figure 2. *DEIN REICH KOMME*. Aachen, Germany (Klaus Paier).

In the 1990s, a very small number of graffiti and street artworks were also documented in the context of environmental and ecological issues. Moreover, a big part of the available graffiti works during this period were made on the Berlin Wall, the graffiti works of the East Side Gallery, set up in 1990, reflecting environmental and ecological issues. The environmental and ecological topics in this project can be seen in approximately 10 works, which, according to the author of the article, make around 10% of the total of 101 graffiti works in the East Side Gallery. Original works were created in 1990; however, due to the weather conditions, that led to masonry erosion of graffiti, in 2009 all works of the East Side Gallery were restored. During this period, in graffiti works protests against the effects of nuclear use and nuclear bomb testing still dominated, but new topics also emerged, such as protests against rainforest deforestation, reflected in the work of the East Side Gallery by Brigida Böttcher *Flora geht* (transl. from German “Flora leaves”, see fig. 3) and in the work *KEINE RINDER AUF REGENWALDBÖDEN! BOYKOTTIERT*



Figure 3. *Flora geht*. Berlin, Germany (Brigida Böttcher, 1990/2009).



Figure 4. *Keine Rinder auf Regenwaldböden! Boykottiert McBurger!!* Berlin, Germany.



Figure 5. *DER SCHATTEN VON HIROSHIMA*. Aachen, Germany (Klaus Paier).



Figure 6. *ATOMTESTS jetzt UNTER PARIS*. Berlin, Germany.

MCBURGER!! (transl. from German “No more cattle on rainforest land! Boycott the McBurger!!”, see fig. 4) that appeared on one of the Berlin bridges. As nuclear weapons testing grew, more and more protests on this topic also rose. In the work by already mentioned artist Klaus Paier, *DER SCHATTEN VON HIROSHIMA* (transl. from German “The Shadow of Hiroshima”, see fig. 5) and in one of the Berlin works *ATOMTESTS jetzt UNTER PARIS* (transl. from German “Nuclear bomb testing is now being conducted by Paris”, see fig. 6) there is a clear reference to the potential negative consequences of the use of nuclear weapons.

Approaching the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, there were differences in composition structure – artists began to expand their field of activity – from the cities of West Germany to the cities of the former East Germany, experimenting with the layout and perspective of composition elements, highlighting the message in their work with different colour contrasts, symbols and textual elements. With the development of street art, the 21st century German graffiti and street art works

show significant differences, both in the context of the reflection of environmental and ecological issues and in the structure of composition. In works from this period, environmental and ecological themes reflect changes: artists begin to show global environmental issues, such as global warming and climate change, environmental pollution, endangered species, but there are also calls for ecological lifestyle and recycling. The impact on this theme comes from the activities of the government and national parties, as mentioned earlier in the article, which lead to making decisions about environmental and ecological development or degrading. The reaction to these decisions and party action is reflected in the works of artists. There is also a tendency to experiment with techniques and styles, combining and synthesising them, using new materials in works.

In the 21st century *murals* dominate in Germany, as well as various installations and sculptures. There are also techniques and styles such as *piece*, *stencil*, *tags*, *wheatpasting* and *woodblocking*. The composition structure also shows experiments with the representation of compositions, the arrangement of elements and perspective, namely that works show different types of layout at the same time, as well as changing perspectives. The trend shows that graffiti and street art works show a mostly negative message in the context of the environment and ecology. Artists in works mostly reflect a warning about the potential consequences of global environmental problems, as well as a variety of future scenarios that can happen if environmental and ecological issues are not going to be solved. One of the works of the streets of Essen reflects the oil spill disaster, resulting in pollution of sea. The Italian artist's *Blu* work in Berlin shows a sandglass with a melting glacier or iceberg at the top, while the bottom shows a town drowning in the amount of water produced by the melting glacier (see fig. 7). There are topics such as protests against environmental pollution, different endangered species, protests against nuclear power and the use of nuclear energy, deforestation, global warming and climate change. The popularity of climate change is increasing among street artists and their works.

But there are also positive topics, such as the harmony of humans and nature or promoting ecological lifestyle. For instance, a group of German street artists, called *Herakut*, made a piece "*Wenn ich wüsste, dass die Welt morgen untergeht, würde ich heute einen Apfelbaum pflanzen*" (transl. from German "If I knew that the world ended tomorrow, I'd still plant an apple tree today", see fig. 8), as *Herakut* artists say, the work reflects the idea of living and enjoying life now. There is no need to spend the short time given to everyone on this earth, in misery and destruction. You must spend time helping someone or something to grow [Herakut. If I Knew The World Ended Tomorrow, I'd Still Plant An Apple Tree Today]. Artists may have wanted to reflect, in parallel with the negative events and various global challenges, the hope that there is also something that makes it worth living and fighting for.



Figure 7. Untitled. Berlin, Germany (Blu).



Figure 8. *Wenn ich wüsste, dass die Welt morgen untergeht, würde ich heute einen Apfelbaum pflanzen.* Berlin, Germany (Herakut, 2015).



Figure 9. *Brauche Geld für meine Familie im Regenwald.* Germany (OroVerde).

Also, the environment and nature itself are also involved in street art works as part of various environmental protection campaigns and promotions. In one project of the conservation and protection of tropical rainforests fund *OroVerde* (German *Oroverde Tropenstiftung*) in different German cities, to more than 100 trees, growing in urban areas, posters were attached, calling for donating to rescue rainforests. Every poster bore the same text, “*Brauche Geld für meine Familie im Regenwald*” (transl. from German “Need money for my family in the rainforest”, see fig. 9) [The Donation



Figure 10. Global warming is a lie! /Donald. J. Trump/. Berlin, Germany (*Barbara*).

Army – OroVerde]. Also, German street artist *Barbara* has created a sculpture of the current President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, who with a poster “Global warming is a lie! /Donald. J. Trump/” is drowning in some water body (see fig. 10). Thus, the environment and nature are also involved in the works of street artists.

Street artists who use unconventional materials and techniques have been successful in recent years. To reflect the world’s growing and neighbourhood-threatening environmental pollution, artists often make works from a variety of municipal waste, such as tires, wires, plastic and metal plates, furniture, car parts and other objects found in garbage dumps or abandoned factories. The Portuguese street artist *Bordalo II* makes a variety of animals, birds and fish from these materials, thus reflecting the damage caused by humans, not only in nature in general but also in a variety of species whose status is recently increasingly declared as endangered species. Recently, the artist created a sculpture of a rhinoceros dedicated to the last dead white rhino [Bordalo II. Big Trash Animals]. In Germany his sculptures are seen in Hamburg, Berlin and Dresden. Also, a group of German street artists, *Bosso Fataka*, make a variety of sculptures from garbage that are designed to show the society environmental pollution and the large amount of unrecycled waste. The group has been working since 2011, organising a number of projects and street art exhibitions, which mostly consist of plastic-made waste, such as polythene, polyethylene, various household items made of plastic materials [Brownstone 2013].

In the recent years of the 21st century, individual street artists and groups, along with a variety of themes, have increasingly focused attention on environmental

protection and ecology-related issues in their works. Artists, using different materials, visual images and symbols, try to draw public's and government's attention to global environmental issues that have to be solved as soon as possible.

Conclusion

Comparing three periods: from the 1970s and 1980s, time after the 1990s and recent years of the 21st century, it is important to mention a number of main conclusions. By the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, when street art emerged and developed on the basis of graffiti, it can be discussed only in terms of graffiti trends and styles. During this period, references to the most pressing environmental and ecological events of its time dominated in graffiti works. The 21st century shows the phenomenon of street art and its trends, including the innovation of different styles and techniques, as well as the use and synthesis of various materials in the construction of works. Artists in street art works mostly reflect global challenges, focusing on the most urgent issues in the context of environmental protection and ecology.

The origin of graffiti development in Germany is to be found in the 1970s in West Germany, while the graffiti phenomenon flourished in the mid-1980s, thanks to the arrival of western culture in the country. During this period, messages of graffiti works were related to the protests and movements in society at the time against the use of nuclear power station and the production of nuclear energy, the potential consequences of which were reflected in the works of graffiti artists. Artists often reproduce corpse- and skeleton-like silhouettes of animals and humans. The radioactivity symbol is very often reproduced. It is seen in almost every graffiti work of the 1980s in the context of environment and ecology. Simple compositions and small-format works, like *tags* and *pieces* mostly dominate.

A significant turning point in German graffiti development was the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which led to the expansion of West Berlin artists into the territory in East Berlin, later also throughout East Germany, affecting young artists who had previously had no chance of developing graffiti. In the early 1990s one of the first graffiti projects, which reflected various local and global challenges, was the project of the East Side Gallery of the Berlin Wall, where 10% of all graffiti works reflected environmental and ecological issues. The theme of nuclear power and the consequences of the use of nuclear energy still dominated in the works of this period, but new topics also emerged, such as the protest against nuclear bomb testing and rainforest deforestation. The works show both simple and complex compositions.

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, artists were increasingly experimenting, both with compositions and styles, techniques and materials, resulting in street art that developed from graffiti in the early 21st century. Environmental and ecological

issues were reflected using a mix of techniques, styles and materials. The most popular manifestations of street art in the 21st century are *murals*, which are seen as large-scale artworks, sometimes reaching the height of a nine-storey building, as well as sculptures/installations for which artists use, for example, unneeded household items, disposable objects and waste, preaching about the rapidly growing environmental pollution in the world. The works reflect global environmental and ecological issues: global warming, environmental pollution, threats to animal species, etc. But there is also a reflection of human and natural harmony, as well as a call for an ecological lifestyle.

The trend shows that graffiti and street art works are still mostly formed in West Germany, showing the impact of strong historically political processes in the development of graffiti and street art. In addition to other political themes and challenges, environmental and ecological protection themes are increasingly being developed, indicating the interest of street artists in drawing German public attention both to care and preservation of the local environment and to tackling various global challenges.

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Appendix

Figure 1. *DER TOD IST EINE WEISSE WOLKE*. Aachen, Germany (Klaus Paier).¹

Figure 2. *DEIN REICH KOMME*. Aachen, Germany (Klaus Paier).²

Figure 3. *Flora geht*. Berlin, Germany (Brigida Böttcher, 1990/2009).³

Figure 4. *Keine Rinder auf Regenwaldböden! Boykottiert McBurger!!* Berlin, Germany.⁴

¹ Schnitzler, Norbert. *Bilder des Aachener Wandmalers Klaus Paier*. Available: <http://www.norbertschnitzler.de/Sammlungen/Graffiti/Paier.htm> (viewed 11.12.2018.)

² Schnitzler, Norbert. *Bilder des Aachener Wandmalers Klaus Paier*. Available: <http://www.norbertschnitzler.de/Sammlungen/Graffiti/Paier.htm> (viewed 11.12.2018.)

³ From the private archive of Alise Ausmane.

⁴ Van Treeck, Bernhard (2001). *Das grosse Graffiti-Lexikon*. Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, S. 394.

Figure 5. *DER SCHATTEN VON HIROSHIMA*. Aachen, Germany (*Klaus Paier*).¹

Figure 6. *ATOMTESTS jetzt UNTER PARIS*. Berlin, Germany.²

Figure 7. Untitled. Berlin, Germany (*Blu*).³

Figure 8. *Wenn ich wüsste, dass die Welt morgen untergeht, würde ich heute einen Apfelbaum pflanzen*. Berlin, Germany (*Herakut*, 2015).⁴

Figure 9. *Brauche Geld für meine Familie im Regenwald*. Germany (*OroVerde*).⁵

Figure 10. *Global warming is a lie! /Donald. J. Trump/*. Berlin, Germany (*Barbara*).⁶

¹ Schnitzler, Norbert. *Bilder des Aachener Wandmalers Klaus Paier*. Available: <http://www.norbertschnitzler.de/Sammlungen/Graffiti/Paier.htm> (viewed 11.12.2018.)

² Schnitzler, Norbert. *Graffiti aus Ost-Berlin*. Available: <http://www.schnitzler-aachen.de/Sammlungen/Graffiti/politik3.htm> (viewed 11.12.2018.)

³ Creativism. *Climate Change summed up by Street Art Genius Blu*. Available at: <http://creativism.com/climate-change-summed-up-by-street-art-genius-blu/> (viewed 11.12.2018.)

⁴ If I Knew The World Ended Tomorrow, I'd Still Plant An Apple Tree Today. Available: <http://www.herakut.de/2015/05/10/if-i-knew/> (viewed 11.12.2018.)

⁵ Adopt A Tree – so leicht werden Sie zum Regenwaldretter. Available: <https://www.regenwald-schuetzen.org/spenden-helfen/ohne-geld-helfen/adopt-a-tree.html> (viewed 11.12.2018.)

⁶ Urbanshit. "Global warming is a lie" *Installation von Barbara*. Available: <http://urbanshit.de/global-warming-is-a-lie-installation-von-barbara/> (viewed 11.12.2018.)