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Introduction

INVITING *ALUMNI* FOR A TRANSDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE ON GRAFFITI AND STREET ART

Graffiti and street art is a contemporary phenomenon, in public urban space in particular, which has been discussed in this volume of articles in order to encourage a broader discussion of functions of graffiti and street art as social art, its legality and conservation issues. This volume invites the *alumni* of the bachelor and master programmes of the Latvian Academy of Culture, whose research interests are connected to studying graffiti and street art in the context of cultural theory, cultural policy, cultural management, as well as intercultural communication and cultural heritage studies, for a dialogue. Researchers from such scholarly disciplines as ethnology, folklore studies and legal sciences have also joined.

This volume of articles is an output of the research project “Graffiti in Latvia: challenges for artists, society, and conservators”. The project was developed and implemented in close cooperation among teachers and students, and funded by the Latvian Academy of Culture. During the international scientific conference “Culture Crossroads” in 2017, a transdisciplinary panel was organised on graffiti and its presentations have served as inspiration and basis for the present collection of articles.

As part of the conference, a public debate with experts and professionals was organised, for discussing the role of graffiti and street art in the urban development planning of the city of Riga, legal and ethical issues for the preservation of respective artworks, as well as future visions of interest for inhabitants and guests of Riga. The discussion was led by the *alumni* of the Latvian Academy of Culture, Auguste Petre and Oskars Goba, and with participation of Rihards Bražinskis, DJ and experienced musician of alternative musical scene, freelance cultural journalist, who has cooperated with street artist *Kiwie*, Gvido Princis, Riga city architect and director of municipal agency “Riga City Architects’ Office”, Ilze Dūduma, chief artist of the urban design department of Riga City Construction Board, and Sintija Saldābola, conservator, expert at the Collections Preservation Centre of the National Library of Latvia.

This volume of articles, prepared as a result of the above-mentioned conference, starts with the article by Auguste Petre, *alumna* of the Latvian Academy of Culture,

who analyses graffiti as social art and means of communication with society, seeing contemporary graffiti as a prolongation of a historical tradition. The greatest part of this volume consists of articles where concrete examples of graffiti and street art of Latvia, Bulgaria, Germany and France have been analysed, revealing social and cultural aspects regarding specific features of content, stylistics, techniques, and provides comparative views on diverging practices for promoting and preserving graffiti and street art.

Elīna Balode, *alumna* of the Latvian Academy of Culture, explores personal aims and motivation of street artists and graffiti writers, as well as the role of authorship in artistic creativity and communication among artists, taking the example of graffiti and street art developments in Riga. Researcher Miglena Ivanova proposes insights into the role of graffiti in identity construction, exploring interconnection of signs from different periods in the urban space in Sofia, Bulgaria. A separate theme – environment and ecology – and its interpretation in the street art in Germany, is dealt with by Alise Taškāne, *alumna* of the Latvian Academy of Culture. Further on, Valērija Želve, *alumna* of the Latvian Academy of Culture, invites to examine the possibilities of taking the experience of Paris, France, as a source of inspiration for promoting graffiti and street art creative processes in the urban environment in Riga.

This volume also draws attention to graffiti and street art in the context of policy making and legal regulations. Oskars Goba, *alumnus* of the Latvian Academy of Culture, analyses the usage of graffiti and street art as a resource for urban development planning, taking the example of Riga. Particular attention is paid to the normative regulation related to graffiti and street art, which is explored by researcher Vadim Mantrov, namely in the context of Latvian authors' law. The analysis of graffiti and street art from the perspective of legal sciences thus provides concrete references to legal regulations applicable to such creative artistic processes.

Important innovation of this volume, in Latvian context, is that the challenges of conservation of graffiti as contemporary art form have been addressed for the first time. Sintija Saldābola, *alumna* of the Latvian Academy of Culture, examines the problematic issues of conservation of graffiti, and ethical concerns regarding its restoration – what to preserve, what to leave, what to remove, are layers of drawings to be seen as artistic communication, and what is the role of conservator in relation to the artist's perception of the vanishing nature of artwork? Hence, the volume raises a question, whether preserving artworks is in line with the nature of graffiti and street art.

The introductory part of this volume has been supplemented with a selection of photographs of graffiti and street art, made by Aija Melbārde and Auguste Petre, which has been created as a reference to a broader collection of photographs that was exhibited during the international scientific conference “Culture Crossroads” in

2017. This volume of articles has been also provided with an addendum – insight into an interactive map of Riga street art, created by street art hunters, a group of enthusiasts based in Riga, and commented by Agnese Aljēna.

Articles of this volume provide an insight in chronologically, topographically and thematically broad studies, proposing directions for further research. This also brings forward conceptual connections between graffiti, street art and cultural heritage. It reminds of historical drawings on the walls as cultural heritage, and invites to exchange views on how to perceive graffiti on cultural monuments, when contemporary art meets heritage protection, and whether graffiti could be interpreted as a documentary heritage of its time. This volume altogether encourages answering the question whether graffiti and street art is a threat to cultural heritage, or, on the contrary, its part.

Doc., Mg.art. Zane Grigoroviča

Doc., Dr.art. Anita Vaivade

Ievads

ABSOLVENTU IESAISTE TRANSDISCIPLINĀRĀ DIALOGĀ PAR GRAFITI UN IELU MĀKSLU

Grafiti un ielu māksla ir publisks laikmetīgs pilsētvides fenomens, kas šajā rakstu krājumā iztirzāts plašākas diskusijas veicināšanai par vairākiem tā analīzes aspektiem – grafiti un ielu mākslas kā sociālās mākslas funkcijām sabiedrībā, ar to saistītajiem tiesiskajiem aspektiem un restaurācijas problemātiku. Rakstu krājumā šiem jautājumiem veltītā dialogā piedalās Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas bakalaura un maģistra studiju programmu absolventi, kuru pētnieciskās intereses saistās ar grafiti un ielu mākslas daudzveidīgajiem izpētes aspektiem kultūras teorijas, kultūras politikas, kultūras menedžmenta, kā arī starpkultūru komunikācijas un kultūras mantojuma studiju ietvarā. Tāpat arī krājuma tapšanai pievienojušies pētnieki no tādām zinātņu jomām kā etnoloģija un folkloristika, kā arī tiesību zinātnes.

Rakstu krājums veidots, pateicoties Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas atbalstītam, docētāju un studējošo kopīgi veidotam un īstenotam pētniecības projektam “Grafiti Latvijā: izaicinājums māksliniekam, sabiedrībai, restauratoram”. Tā ietvaros Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas rīkotā starptautiskā zinātniskā konferencē “Kultūras krustpunkti” 2017. gadā noritēja grafiti veltīta transdisciplināru pētījumu sekcija, un tās referātu lasījumi kalpoja par iedvesmu un pamatu šā rakstu krājuma tapšanai.

Konferences ietvarā tika rīkota arī publiska diskusija ar ekspertiem un profesionāļiem, pievēršoties grafiti un ielu mākslas nozīmei Rīgas pilsētas attīstībā un teritorijas plānošanā, radīto mākslas darbu saglabāšanas tiesiskajiem un ētiskajiem aspektiem, kā arī nākotnes vīzijām, kas būtu interesantas gan Rīgas iedzīvotājiem, gan viesiem. Diskusiju vadīja Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas absolventi Auguste Petre un Oskars Goba, un tajā piedalījās Rihards Bražinskis, dīdžejs, pieredzējis alternatīvās scēnas mūziķis un ārštata kultūras publicists, kas sadarbojas ar ielu mākslinieku *Kiwi*, Gvido Princis, Rīgas pilsētas arhitekts un pašvaldības aģentūras “Rīgas pilsētas arhitekta birojs” direktors, Ilze Dūduma, Rīgas pilsētas būvvaldes Pilsētvides dizaina pārvaldes galvenā māksliniece un Sintija Saldābola, restauratore, Latvijas Nacionālās bibliotēkas Krājuma saglabāšanas centra eksperte.

Konferences norises rezultātā veidoto rakstu krājumu ievada Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas absolventes Augustes Petres pievēršanās grafiti kā sociālai mākslai un komunikācijai ar sabiedrību, aicinot uzlūkot laikmetīgo grafiti kā noteiktas vēsturiskas tradīcijas turpinājumu. Krājuma apjomīgāko daļu veido raksti, kuros analizēti Latvijas, Bulgārijas, Vācijas un Francijas grafiti un ielu mākslas piemēri, atklājot sociālos un kultūras aspektus, kas nosaka specifiskās iezīmes saturā, stilistikā, tehniskajos paņēmienos, kā arī piedāvājot salīdzinošu skatījumu uz grafiti un ielu mākslas veicināšanas un saglabāšanas dažādajām praksēm.

Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas absolvente Elīna Balode atklāj mākslinieku un grafiti rakstītāju jaunrades personiskos mērķus un motivāciju, autorības nozīmi mākslas jaunradē, kā arī to, kas un kā veicina mākslinieku savstarpējo komunikāciju, par piemēru ņemot grafiti un ielu mākslas attīstību Rīgā. Pētniece Miglena Ivanova piedāvā ielūkoties grafiti nozīmē identitātes veidošanā, atsedzot dažādu laikmetu zīmju mijiedarbi urbānā vidē Sofijā, Bulgārijā. Atsevišķas tematikas – vides un ekoloģijas – atainojumam ielu mākslā Vācijā ir pievērsusies Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas absolvente Alise Taškāne. Savukārt Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas absolvente Valērija Želve aicina izzināt, kādas ir iespējas Parīzes, Francijas pieredzi ņemt par ierosmes avotu grafiti un ielu mākslas jaunrades procesu veicināšanai Rīgas pilsētvidē.

Rakstu krājumā ieskicēta grafiti un ielu mākslas attīstība politikas veidošanas un tiesību piemērošanas kontekstā. Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas absolvents Oskars Goba atklāj grafiti un ielu mākslas kā resursa izmantojumu pilsētplānošanā, pievērsoties Rīgas piemēram. Tāpat arī atsevišķa uzmanība veltīta ar grafiti un ielu mākslu saistītajam tiesību normatīvajam regulējumam, ko Latvijas autortiesību kontekstā iztirzā pētnieks Vadims Mantrovs. Grafiti un ielu mākslas jaunrades vērtējums tiesību zinātņu skatījumā piedāvā konkrētas atsauces uz tiesisko regulējumu, kas ir attiecināms uz aplūkotajiem mākslas jaunrades procesiem.

Rakstu krājuma būtiska inovācija Latvijas kontekstā saistāma ar to, ka pirmo reizi tiek aktualizēts jautājums par grafiti kā laikmetīgās mākslas formas saglabāšanas izaicinājumiem. Latvijas Kultūras akadēmijas absolvente Sintija Saldābola izvērtē grafiti saglabāšanas problemātiku un restaurācijas ētikas apsvērumus – kas būtu saglabājams, kas tiek atstāts, kas tiek noņemts, vai pārzīmējumi ir skatāmi kā mākslinieciska komunikācija un kāda ir restauratora loma iepretim mākslinieka iecerei par mākslas darba zūdamību. Rakstu krājumā likumsakarīgi ir aktualizēts jautājums, vai mākslas darbu saglabāšana ir saskaņā ar grafiti un ielu mākslas būtību.

Krājuma ievada daļu papildina Aijas Melbārdes un Augustes Petres grafiti un ielu mākslas fotogrāfiju izlase, kas veidota kā atsauce uz plašāka fotogrāfiju klāsta izstādi starptautiskās zinātniskās konferences “Kultūras krustpunkti” ietvaros 2017. gadā. Tāpat arī krājums papildināts ar pielikumu – ieskatu Rīgā dibinātās domubiedru grupas “Ielu mākslas mednieki” izveidotajā un Agneses Aljēnas komentētajā interaktīvajā Rīgas ielu mākslas kartē.

Krājumā ietvertie raksti kopumā sniedz ieskatu hronoloģiski, topogrāfiski un tematiski plašā izpētē, piedāvājot virzienus turpmākiem pētījumiem. Krājums vienlaikus aktualizē grafiti, ielu mākslas un kultūras mantojuma konceptuālās saiknes. Tas atgādina par vēsturiskiem sienu gleznojumiem kā kultūras mantojumu un rosina viedokļu apmaiņu par to, kā vērtēt grafiti uz kultūras pieminekļiem, sastopoties laikmetīgajai mākslai un pieminekļu aizsardzībai, un vai grafiti varam interpretēt kā sava laikmeta dokumentāru mantojumu. Krājums kopumā rosina rast atbildi uz jautājumu, vai grafiti un ielu māksla ir drauds kultūras mantojumam, vai gluži pretēji – daļa no kultūras mantojuma.

Doc., Mg.art. Zane Grigoroviča
Doc., Dr.art. Anita Vaivade

VISUAL INSIGHTS INTO GRAFFITI AND STREET ART IN RIGA. PHOTOGRAPHS

Mg.sc.soc. **Aija Melbārde**

Latvian Academy of Culture

Bc.art. **Auguste Petre**

Alumna, Latvian Academy of Culture

Mg.art. **Zane Grigoroviča**

Latvian Academy of Culture

Graffiti and street art are continuously topical for the cultural space of Latvia. Graffiti and street art are created, exist and vanish in a short period of time, questioning borders of art, its social function, as well as legality. Till now, an unexplored field of study in Latvia has been the necessity and possibilities for the conservation and restoration of graffiti and street art.

Photographs taken by Aija Melbārde and Auguste Petre serve as an example of documenting and exposing signs of our time. They also raise questions for reflection – What is the significance of graffiti and street art within the scene of contemporary art? What are the functions of graffiti and street art in society, as social art? What are the aspects of legality of graffiti and street art? What are the issues for conservation and restoration of graffiti and street art?

These photographs invite and challenge the audience interested in cultural and artistic expressions and general public to question the valuation and preservation of contemporary cultural heritage. Through exposing graffiti and street art as a significant segment of urban environment, this selection of photographs invites to consider the use of graffiti and street art for diverse purposes – for publicity and attracting tourism, or as a means of communication in urban culture, among other.

The present selection of photographs is based on the exhibition that took place at the “Culture Crossroads 2017” scholarly conference in Riga and complemented the transdisciplinary section “Graffiti: challenges for artists, society, and conservators”. For locating visual testimonies of graffiti and street art in Riga, the Street Art Map of Riga is presented as addendum to the present volume.



A. Melbārde. Rīga. 2017.



A. Melbārde. Rīga. 2017.



A. Melbārde. Riga. 2017.



A. Melbārde. Riga. 2017.



A. Melbārde. Rīga. 2017.



A. Melbārde. Rīga. 2017.



A. Melbārde. Riga. 2017.



A. Melbārde. Riga. 2017.



A. Melbārde. Riga. 2017.



A. Melbārde. Riga. 2017.



A. Melbārde. Rīga. 2017.



A. Melbārde. Rīga. 2017.



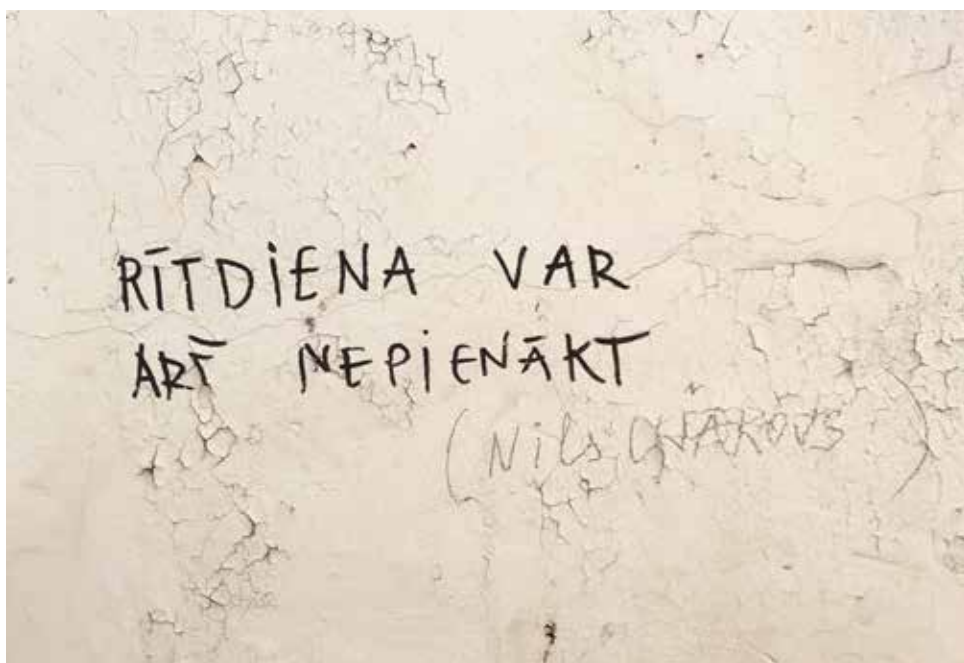
A. Petre. Riga. 2017.



A. Petre. Riga. 2017.



A. Petre. Riga. 2017.



A. Petre. Riga. 2017.

THE CODE OF THE STREETS. SOCIAL AND ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE OF THE WALLS OF RIGA

Bc. art. Auguste Petre

Alumna, Latvian Academy of Culture

Abstract

In the past few years graffiti has become a very popular topic for discussions. Many analytic researches prove that the different expressions of graffiti are a sufficiently interesting field for studies in Latvia and elsewhere in the world. It might seem strange – a visual phenomenon that is most frequently associated with vandalism, has taken an important place in the work of art and culture researchers. What makes this self-evident sight so appealing? Furthermore, why do we perceive graffiti as a self-evident sight? Quite possibly it is a code that set in our social perception thousands of years ago, and what we call *graffiti* in the 21st century is an ancient tradition that has been, and still is, practised all over the world.

Examples of ancient graffiti have been found in the city of Pompeii, Italy, but the most significant place to search for it is the New York City. Street art and graffiti of Riga has adopted a lot from both of these traditions. Local urban environment is alive and densely filled with different socially and artistically significant writings and drawings. The graffiti of Riga fits in the context of worldwide examples and has become a valuable part of social art, introducing artistic and political tendencies, as well as interpreting them in public environment.

Keywords: *graffiti, social art, Pompeii, New York, Riga.*

Code of graffiti. Pompeii

The murals made in the Palaeolithic era have great importance in the context of artistic and social means of art history, and very often they are associated with the tradition of antique graffiti. For a long time, all kinds of mural paintings have served as a component of communication. Many examples of antique graffiti are evident in Europe, South America and Asia. However, the best archetypes of antique graffiti are still visible in the city of Pompeii, in Campania, South region of Italy.

This historic city was buried and partly destroyed after a violent eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD and at that time had around 15,000 inhabitants. Thankfully, it is still a home for around 10,000 graffiti inscriptions. The graffiti of this Ancient Roman city has a significant meaning serving as a representative of visual content and, most importantly, has achieved great value as a mediator for communication and reflection of political opinion among citizens. Frequently these antique murals and inscriptions are considered to be the prototypes of political advertisements.

In context of graffiti, it is crucial to distinguish between their stylistic differences and conceptual approaches. Ethologically, the word *graffiti* has originated from the Latin word *graphium*¹. Over time, the meaning of this concept has undergone considerable change – since the mid-19th century, in Italian language it has transformed to *graffiare*². Taking a wider view of this notion, it is possible to assume that it is an artistic technique performed by applying various scratches on layers of paint or other material. In Antique Pompeii these inscriptions were made on special stone platforms and walls of buildings, reflecting the political views of the city inhabitants or their reflection of ordinary life. A researcher of the Pompeii territory – Francesco Maria Avellino – had a substantial role in discovering these wall writings. He began his work in 1839 and highlighted that the antique graffiti was a unique chance of exploring ancient culture through the means of language. Recently, it has also become an important field of studies, and the Pompeiian graffiti has been linked to the development of Latin. One of the most relevant researchers is Rex E. Wallace – an expert of ancient languages, who classifies graffiti by its content and use. He divides these writings into two categories – *graffito*³ and *dipinti*⁴. The meaning of these inscriptions is quite opposite – graffiti or *graffito* indicates the everyday life affairs and is a medium for public expression of an opinion. On the other hand, *dipinti* is a political advertisement made by professional street artists.

In the ancient world graffiti had immeasurable value – not only in context of historical research, but also as a Pompeiian way of communication in the public space and a moderator of inhabitants' lives. Regarding the quantity of wall inscriptions, the city has become a diary of the society. Research and analysis of the antique wall writings affirm that it is crucial to take into account ethical and aesthetic principles of that time. Bright drawings and political writings can be explained by a simple need of advertisement in a pre-historic age. *Graffito* can be construed as a Pompeiian reflection of life. Like today, in the ancient city, it was a pronounced trend to write one's name on the walls. The inscriptions were a

¹ Writing tool or style – from Latin.

² Scratch – from Italian.

³ Marking made with a special engraving or charcoal pen.

⁴ Bright paintings on walls.

method to maintain the position in society for representatives of the highest social strata [Petre 2017b: 106–109].

Antique graffiti is a possibility for contemporary researchers to take a look at the ancient society by reading the marks and texts left on the walls of Pompeii. Ancient graffiti can be considered as the beginning of social art and allows to assess the importance of street art for centuries. Despite the geographical location, political and economic situation or time in the world history, graffiti continues to exist as a visual representation of society in an urban environment.

Social experience of walls in New York

The first evident marks of modern graffiti in the United States were seen around the 1920s, when various criminal gangs operated in several cities. With spraying cans, they blew large-sized inscriptions¹, thus “highlighting the concerned area” [Hoover 1999]. However, by the modern assumptions, the onset of graffiti art is attributed to the second half of the 20th century, especially the 1960s and 1970s. This was a time in the world when people, strained by the socio-political changes, wrote inscriptions on the walls of the buildings as a way to protest and communicate with the government. At the time, the U.S. were particularly exacerbated by severe issues concerning racial inequality and common human rights. More frequently the substantial meaning of graffiti was to reflect the social problems and a diversion of the day-to-day phenomena through an aesthetic prism [Petre 2017b: 106–109].

A stylized writing of one’s nickname, also known as *tagging*, became particularly popular in the late 1960s. It was also the most common form of graffiti amongst teenagers. The chosen pseudonym had an extremely important role and usually consisted of a combination of one’s nickname and the street number of residence². Name of the tagger was the only sign of expression and recognition. Soon the graffiti as a tendency begun to fascinate the elderly and these simple, representative signatures became bright and calligraphic illustrations. Graffiti writers were influenced by pop-culture and animation, thereby laying foundation for new social and aesthetic culture [Farthing 2015: 552]. The spraying paint gave significant artistic freedom and a leg up for artists to sign and make multi-coloured drawings easier³. The ideal platform for such drawings were the subway trains, often inscribed with specifically addressed messages. By 1989, the New York subway coaches were covered with drawings and writings by more than 3,000 artists. That created the possibility and

¹ Most frequently these inscriptions were direct gang names (Author’s note – *A. P.*).

² Gray, Steve. *20th Century Graffiti – The Rise of Graffiti Art*. Available: <http://www.widewalls.ch/20th-century-the-rise-of-graffiti/> (viewed 23.03.2017.)

³ Bambic Kostov, Ana. *80’s Kings: Basquiat, Haring and Futura*. Available: <http://www.widewalls.ch/80s-graffiti-new-york/> (viewed 25.03.2017.)

platform for a new field of urban culture research, and authors, such as Norman Mailer, to study the development of street art in context of socio-political events. In 1985, the government of New York started the “Clean Train Movement” in order to clean up or replace the rolling stock¹. This contributed to the modification of the urban art. The manufacturing of the graffiti-style drawing on canvases and becoming an integral part of an interior increased, changing the attitude towards modern street art for many graffiti artists. Just like in the ancient times when the house walls were used to transfer information, the New York City graffiti of the 1970s exists as a proof of human existence.

Social experience of walls in Riga

Since the 1980s, street art in Europe has rapidly spread, however in Latvia, this fruit of western culture manifested itself by installing a fragment of Berlin Wall in 1989. At that time, the underground culture, hip-hop music and street art thrived in Latvia. The underground movement resisted the censorship of information and propaganda art. Any whiff of western culture was perceived with great enthusiasm and became an interpretation and expression of freedom. The achievement of freedom was associated with eternal harmony, although publicly enthusiasts implemented it in a progressive way. Conceptually, Latvian graffiti continued the tradition of the United States, but there were some quite significant differences. While street artists from New York gradually occupied galleries and private spaces, in Latvia, the social art sphere remained as a significantly small form of communication and creative expression.

The first graffiti in Riga was made between 1987 and 1994 in the tram tunnel of Mazā Krasta street, and its authors were the pioneers of Latvian street art – Krys, Malysh and Picasso.

Their drawing was a composition of a laughing rat on the background of a semi-ruined city and an image of Jesus. Symbolically, the authors expressed their view on heavy moral political compulsion of the time [Petre 2017a: 21]. This work was initially made completely illegal, but at the same place, since 2014, legal drawings have been developed there by the graffiti team *Tribal.lv*. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the development of graffiti in Latvia crumbled as a result of the reduced need for protest. However, some part of young people continued to write messages of social content on the walls of Riga. Nowadays, with the increasing importance of communication through social media, for the graffiti subculture, the facades of the city buildings still remain a platform for political and social opinion expression [Petre 2017a: 45].

¹ Kordic, Angie. *Brooklyn Graffiti: History and (R)Evolution*. Available: <http://www.widewalls.ch/brooklyn-graffiti-new-york/> (viewed 26.03.2017.)

The next graffiti wave of Riga is attributed to the first decade of the 21st century. Organised by a local graffiti artist Malysh, the first hip-hop and graffiti festival in Riga titled *NRG*¹ which was held from 1997 to 2004 [Pavāre 2010]. In 2003, the public event “re:publika” took place, inviting artists from all around the country to create interactive, local-context based works. It was a social project, aimed at promoting the integration of Riga suburbs in different infrastructures. Part of this project was a hip-hop and graffiti event *Moskovskij Bazar*, organised by an artist group Bio.codes. This event was an attempt to communicate with the gypsy commune living in *Maskavas foršate* neighbourhood [Krese 2007: 238]. It revealed the visually communicative role of graffiti in the context of social practice – with the help of art, various political challenges were highlighted.

Graffiti in Riga (and Latvia) strengthened around 2006, when many new authors, such as Kiwie, Saki, Sēne and Farp, started to work [Bražinskis 2017: 30–37]. They developed a new, previously unseen style, playing with typefaces² and supplementing the inscriptions with images or *characters*. Kiwie and his distinctive drawing became particularly recognizable, and now he is commonly known as the cult Latvian graffiti artist. With the activities of these authors, the local graffiti scene completely changed, losing the peculiarities of local expression and adapting the drawings to the European and U.S. tradition. It was largely an aftermath of the skyrocketing technology development. The Internet became a great platform for young graffiti enthusiasts to draw their inspiration from the global street art processes. Graffiti increasingly lost its importance as a way of protest, but also became a proxy to society and its social processes. Socially and politically important actions were fixed with an ironic approach by using a stencil. In Riga, the development of such street art was first observed in 2006 and 2007, when an anonymous author³ (or a group of authors) filled the streets with visualisations of different politicians and their distinctive expressions. They were humorous, even mocking portraits inspired by public opinion on socially significant events.

In Riga, graffiti has been present for a relatively short period of time, but has played a huge role in the overall view of the urban environment. Many Latvian graffiti authors have obtained international recognition and keep leaving their signatures in

¹ This event, as well as the festival *Legal Wall*, was organised by graffiti artist Malysh. (A. P.)

² At that time the style of *throw-up* writing became popular. In slang this term is used because the inscription is quickly “tossed” on the wall. It is a stylistically copied author’s signature that does not contain many characters and uses two or three colours. (A. P.)

³ While painting and writing graffiti in most cases is attributable to anonymity, usually some works can be recognized by authors by their alias or signature. When analysing stencils, it is far more difficult to identify the author because this technique is not characterised by an individual approach. (A. P.)

their hometowns and elsewhere all over the world. The original aim of graffiti – to protest against the existing political situation – has been replaced by a desire to prove the strength and competitive edge of Latvian graffiti at a global level [Petre 2017a: 23]. Exactly like in the ancient Pompeii and last century New York, Riga graffiti and street artists are challenging the boundaries of art and its meaning, also playing an important social role in communication between the city and its citizens.

Artistic experience of walls in Riga

In context of graffiti, the most pressing question is whether a graffiti drawing is considered an art object or not. Certain level of avoidance is contributed to this part of modern and contemporary art and its research field. Most of the research studies devoted to this topic, look at the legitimacy of graffiti and street art by comparing the urban art scene in Riga to other European cities. On a broader scale, the value of graffiti was discussed in 2014, during the project “Riga 2014. The European Capital of Culture”, when different street art and graffiti related events were organised. The most popular event of 2014 was the graffiti development festival “Blank Canvas: Art-ground, play-ground, crime-ground” aimed to begin a discussion about graffiti as a part of societal and professional environment. Taking part, eleven street artists from different countries created 10 legal large-scale murals¹. One of the most fascinating murals at the festival was “*Saule, Pērkons, Daugava*” (“Sun, Thunder, Daugava”) by Latvian authors Kiwie and Dainis Rudens. The aim of this work was to “remind the citizens of Riga and Latvia about our national history and cultural values, to be aware of ourselves, our inner strength and take pride in our origin”. The debate of graffiti being art or not highlights the issues of professionalism. If the primary objective of graffiti – being a social communication promoter in the urban environment – is not applicable to measure the level of professionalism and artist’s quality of work, then the modern graffiti or street artist’s prestige can be determined by his or her experience. By this theory, the most professional graffiti artist in Riga is Kiwie, because of his creative activity for more than 10 years. He has also worked a lot on maintaining his public image as a law-abiding artist and tried not to tie himself up with the practice of illegal graffiti. As a result of a successfully executed marketing strategy, Kiwie became the best-known Riga street artist. Moreover, he became a distinguished brand. In recent years, Riga graffiti movement has changed in direct relation to his professional activity [Petre 2017a: 43]. More often graffiti artists make solo exhibitions, partly refusing to accept the necessity of remaining anonymous, due to the illegal aspects this art genre entails. This kind of development of street art has contributed to the division of artists, raising doubts about the future of the urban

¹ The map and photos of created works is available: <http://www.blankcanvas.lv/en/> (A. P.)

culture in Latvia [Petre 2017b: 106–109]. In the post-graffiti period, various urban subcultures have combined, creating a new, vibrant and powerful branch of modern culture and expanding the concept of public art. Street art has advanced to different types of visual expression, such as fashion and photography, as well as extreme sports and music [Gastman 2007: 29–34].

In order to describe the artistic impression of street art in Riga as accurately as possible, it is necessary to do a graffiti classification. Like any other expression of art, graffiti has evolved over the time. As mentioned above, in the 20th and the 21st century, graffiti has lost its importance as a way of protest, due to increased association with public and legal art. If in the ancient times it was possible to distinguish two types of writings and drawings (*graffito* and *dipinti*), this classification is far more complex. Graffiti has always been based on either textual meaning or the development of painting letters, the so-called urban calligraphy [Bražinskis 2017: 30–37]. By expanding the boundaries of graffiti and street art, these two terms are often confused or associated with one or another. However, it is essential to understand that the concept of graffiti refers to textual work, while the interpretation of street art is used more freely and includes large-scale drawings, creation of stencils and both legally and illegally performed art on environmental objects. Therefore, it is concluded that the base of graffiti art is a simple tag – a monochrome author's caption or initials, containing encrypted messages, for the communication of graffiti writers¹. These short texts are often considered to be the identity of the graffiti writers and are the most common, because they do not require any artistic talent [Petre 2017a: 48]. Such tags on the house walls are sprayed with a paint can or written with a marker. But in more uncommon cases (according to the traditions of ancient Pompeii) they may even be scratched with a sharp object. The already mentioned *throw-up* is the brightest type of tagging and can be written as bright coloured letters with a 3D effect shading and contours of letters [Bražinskis 2017: 30–37]. In Riga, an extremely common form of graffiti is a *piece* or a *masterpiece*. This type of graffiti usually reflects on national or global pop-culture related topics, are quite large and have a broad colour register.

But the artistic and social experience of *trash graffiti*² is particularly interesting in Riga. Except for tagging, this is the most common type of Riga graffiti, most of which resembles the primitive inscriptions of ancient Pompeii and New York. These inscriptions and childish drawings tend to be either scratched with a sharp object or written with a marker, pencil or pen. Trash graffiti can be defined as an ironic remark of the social reality that is often created by previously inexperienced graffiti authors.

¹ Encrypted messages that these tags can contain are mostly unflattering opinion of graffiti writers on another author. (*A. P.*)

² Definition invented by the author. In Latvian – *naivie grafiti*. (*A. P.*)

First of all, it is an instinctive tendency to mark a public place without following any guidelines or principles. Secondly, it is considered as the most impulsive, conceptual and contemporary form of graffiti, because the content is limited exclusively to the author's mystified reflections on current environment. If tags are well-considered and recognizable signatures of a graffiti writer, then on the contrary, the indistinct trash graffiti author's identity is irrelevant [Petre 2017a: 49]. Trash graffiti reveals information about society in the most direct way. It addresses every passer-by on a personal level and is based on the principles of association. The house walls are not used for advertising purposes or art, but just simply to stand as a free space for everyone's expression of thoughts [Petre 2017a: 49]. Graffiti is not only socially and politically charged, but also contemporary. Its peculiarity can fade as fast as it can appear, and create an environmentally exclusive and unique communication, regardless of the time being.

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STREET ART AND GRAFFITI IN RIGA: MOTIVATION, OPINION AND WORK PROCESS OF ARTISTS

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Abstract

This article describes characteristics of graffiti and street art in Riga.

The aim of the article is to present features of street art and graffiti phenomenon, as well as to highlight portrait of a typical urban Riga artist by analysing types of activities, motivation and other characterizing aspects of graffiti writers and street artists.

The author of the article introduces general street art and graffiti phenomenon, highlighting differences between these forms of art, following analysis of such topics as manifestation of street art and graffiti in Riga, the most common forms of street art and graffiti in urban environment of Riga. The author of the article also provides analysis of street art and graffiti artists' motivation of their activities and describes street artist's one-night run that was studied during conducted inclusive observation thus allowing understanding the characteristics of typical Riga urban environment artist.

Keywords: *graffiti, street art, street artist, graffiti writing.*

Introduction

Classical graffiti is one of the most common forms of art in urban environment which originated in the United States of America (USA) around 1960. During that period a distinct culture of advertisement existed in the USA that encouraged marginal groups of society and other "ignored" members of society to advertise themselves with wall drawings and signatures. Initially graffiti served as territory marking instrument for various deviant groups. Nowadays, too, graffiti writers have created or marked their territories continuing the original traditions.

Whereas, street art in Europe originated in France at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s in the so-called Student Events of May as manifestation of social protest using

artistic means. Soon after, it spread also to Germany, the USA and elsewhere in the world [Sebastian 2009: 20]. Still both graffiti and street art often serve exactly as a form of protest, besides fulfilling city beautification function.

In Latvia, graffiti and street art developed later – a couple of years before collapse of the Soviet Union the first graffiti piece was created [Sedliņa 2007]. With regaining of independence and access to new types of artistic expressions, e.g., colour sprays, both forms of art have slowly changed and developed.

The techniques used in street art include stencils, stickers, posters, video installations and three-dimensional art objects (e. g., sculptures, installations), etc. Graffiti and street art are included in the so-called *guerrilla art* genre that is deeply connected with surroundings and city, which in this case is the background and foundation of art piece [Delacare 2018]. They cannot be moved and are exhibited in the place of their creation – on the street, which is part of the art piece. Graffiti writers and street artists quite often travel to spread their work elsewhere in the world. The main difference between classical graffiti and street art is that graffiti historically is “writing” meaning letters, words and signatures created in various artistic expressions, while street art is image-based message delivery to the society [Lu 2014].

The aim of this article is to highlight a portrait of typical Riga urban environment artist by analysing graffiti subculture agents’ and street artists’ types of activities, motivation and other characterizing aspects.

Despite the efforts to define street art, this concept does not have a specific definition. Street art is perceived as various art manifestations found in urban environment. It is rebellious art form that is independent from popular culture or galleries and possibly best understood when seen in its original location. For majority of the society street art is an obstacle, but for street artists it is a way to show dissent, to ask difficult questions and express political concerns. The definition of street art changes. Initially it was a tool to express protest against the existing polity, but for the current youth it is also a tool to beautify and renovate urban environment [Art radar 2010].

However, graffiti can be defined. Graffiti is graphic depictions of letter drawings or drawn, coloured or scratched letters that can be found on various surfaces and walls mainly in public spaces [Zeynep 2012]. Graffiti representatives have clear cause of their action and purpose of created work. Possibly, precisely, because graffiti “writers” manifest themselves exactly within the subculture, the society does not understand their goals and motivation [Sebastian 2009: 20].

Methodology

To understand graffiti and street art manifestation forms and artists’ motivation to act, empirical research based in qualitative methodology and using two

qualitative research methods – in-depth, semi-structured interviews and inclusive observation – was conducted.

In total four interviews were conducted with aim to understand street artists' and graffiti writers' viewpoints about graffiti and street art as element of Riga urban environment.

Length of each interview was approximately one hour. Additionally, inclusive observation was conducted during which author was able to observe street artist at his activities.

While recruiting respondents who would agree to share their viewpoint and experience with illegal artistic forms of expression, it was concluded that not only these artists were very cautious, but also mostly, they did not want to be researched.

In total three respondents were interviewed face-to-face. Out of these three respondents, one positioned himself as street artist who worked only underground. The second respondent positioned himself as graffiti representative who preferred legal projects, but worked also on illegal ones. The third respondent who positioned himself as graffiti representative worked with one pseudonym on legal projects (mainly spray art), but used a different pseudonym that was not disclosed during the interview when working on underground projects. Another graffiti representative who worked very actively on legal projects, collaborated with other artists and with various companies (both large and start-ups) replied in written form. Answers to interview questions were given in written form as during the research study he was not in Latvia.

Inclusive observation in framework of such research study is quite a unique opportunity. During inclusive observation, it was possible to delve into peculiarities of street artists' subculture by understanding all processes street artist carried out before going to his activities, as well as asking questions about all issues of interest to which artist answered by sharing his experience. This method allowed understanding how activities are carried out in real life.

Graffiti and street art manifestation forms in Riga

Street art and graffiti manifestation in Riga city. In Riga street art and graffiti manifests the same as in other countries – it is a way in which artists present their message to society, and the society likes it or does not like it. Despite the fact that this phenomenon in Latvia is topical comparatively recently, there are talented artists in Riga capable of creating original ideas and surprising not only the society, but also their fellow artists.

Riga street art and graffiti differ mainly with the fact that there are no accessible legal locations in urban environment where street artists could work legally and express their ideas at any time of the day. Such solution has been found in other

European cities by making such territories as tourist attractions, therefore Riga artists see the lack of such opportunity to have legal place to work as a problem. According to the author of this article, if such space were provided for graffiti representatives and street artists, it would be appropriate solution, e.g., for useful utilization of degraded city territories. Artists deem to think that in Riga there are many young, talented self-taught artists who have developed their talent on their own without acquiring education in art schools. They emphasize that Riga street art is rich in ideas, but exactly because quite often it reflects real opinions of the society, inhabitants of Riga do not notice it, condemn it and are, according to respondents, ashamed of themselves. Nevertheless, in spite of the disapproval by the society, there are people who like this form of art; that is why they are interested in it, follow street artists' progress and graffiti development in Riga, or engage themselves in this art form.

"In general, it happens the same as everywhere else in the world. This art is found in public space and affects passers-by. Some hate it, some are indifferent, some become fans and start to do it themselves. In Riga and Latvia this phenomenon came in comparatively recently, if we look at the world's background. But despite the fact that we are small and kind of helpless, we quite often "turn up trumps" against big countries by surprising them with our styles and ideas."

According to artists, graffiti and street art is also a medium. It fulfils media function when artist by leaving his message shows to the society visually on the street topics that are pressing at that moment for public. One of the artists stressed that it is mass medium in its core as street art is not subject to censorship or affected by any political power, it is exactly the same as the society is and sends to the society messages that are not broadcasted by traditional media. Looking from historical viewpoint, already in the settlement centres of Ancient Greece the most current information was scraped straight into the walls of buildings, nowadays it is done with different methods, but according to artists, the idea stays the same.

"It is one of the means. It is medium. It is.... Basically stencil, graffiti, street art – it is medium. I don't know, it is called the fourth power, right?"

One can observe internal hierarchy between graffiti representatives in Riga. There are one or several so-called kings or leading graffiti writers whose work can be seen all over the territory of Riga. Graffiti writers earn the place on top of hierarchy mostly with large-scale and qualitatively done pieces in open spaces. Then there are the so-called toys – graffiti beginners who are trying to gain visibility on the streets at first with classic tags and simpler works to show themselves and gain their spot and recognition among graffiti representatives. However, in this case toys have to be careful, because if any beginner by accident or intentionally damages or overwrites a work by king, all future toy pieces and signatures will be demonstratively painted out or wiped out.

Therefore, every graffiti representative must know particular hierarchy, and, according to information collected during face-to-face interviews, graffiti representatives are confident that people who follow graffiti activities on the streets are familiar with current hierarchical structure. Graffiti representatives acknowledge and explain that in cases when work of toys is painted out it is done not out of antipathies against a particular person, but because there are allegations against which the toy is acting, probably also due to his own ignorance. This proves that graffiti subculture is very active in its internal structure, despite the opinion that in Latvia and Riga this subculture has not developed yet or probably is already lifeless without even having started. Subculture as such has developed, but it has not been accepted by the society yet even in its legal expression forms, as in society's mind graffiti is mostly associated with trivial bumbling on building walls and other public spaces.

“Well, if seven years ago you once sprayed on Faro graffiti, then... (laughing) Then soon you could feel what fame is and offend the one in charge.”

“The principle is that, let us assume that there is crew and some toy tags over to someone from the crew. Toy is alone and crew, let us assume, consists of three people. All those people will simply shut you down. And nothing will be left over from you.”

Graffiti and street art forms in Riga urban environment. The most widespread in Riga is graffiti. Notwithstanding the fact that there are many stencils and stickers in Riga urban environment, graffiti is the most developed and best known of these forms. One can conclude that graffiti in Latvia is very advanced because graffiti writers have developed their own style without copying foreign graffiti writers as it had happened before. More widely known forms of graffiti in Latvia are tagging or signing and writing, as well as more qualitative, neat signatures that are painted out.

“The most there is bombing, of course, as it takes two to five minutes – to leave your nickname, signature or you call it – it is the most as it really takes neither resources, nor time, just a small daring or craving for some sort of adrenaline. Next is writing. Namely, it is when a person paints out their nickname neatly until the end, when he starts to work for quality. And we have very little art.”

Topics expressed in works of art. In street art works, mainly current political, social and everyday common topics, important at that particular moment in society or for particular artist, are portrayed. However, graffiti works as already mentioned earlier do not portray any topics important for the society and often are not comprehensible to society in everyday life.

“Everyday life, routine, but you do not see it at first view. Then there is first of all something populistic, then – political and both mostly are joint. And then from that at the end comes out that, what there is on that street.”

When analysing topics expressed in street art works, earlier mentioned is verified, i. e., this form of art serves as medium in Riga because actual topics are

visualized in works. Surveyed artists did not specify distinct topics that they publish on the streets. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude that for graffiti representatives, exposure of illegal works is more related to the essence of the process itself, rather than to provision of specific message. While street artists in their works express visually an idea or opinion of what is important to the society.

Motivation of graffiti writers and street artists to expose their work. There are various motivations for specific actions. Mostly they believe that in this way they beautify the environment and make society observe something creative besides the advertisement. Another opinion stated was that street art nowadays is used for marketing activities. However, primarily artists express their thoughts, feelings and opinions both to themselves and to the society and reasoning depends on each artist individually.

“One highlights, another expresses opinion, other one simply wants art, the other one wants simply to paint something over, somebody is irritated about something (smiles). Practically motivations are different. For example, “Саша я тебя люблю!” (Sasha, I love you!)”

“Definitely, everyone has their own reasons. One is angry with the world and therefore draws. Other does not know what to do therefore tries all in a row. Graffiti is a lifestyle, just like rockers on the bikes or anglers. Every man needs something to be keen about and what to do in spare time.”

In addition, adrenalin and awareness of illegal action are important aspects both to street artists and graffiti representatives and to their actions. They enjoy the process itself that police can arrive or they might be interrupted. Legal street artists do not find adrenalin so important in their actions.

“Sort of not approved, but it is also nothing legal and it is somewhat a little adrenalin [...] Vandalism, it is exactly towards the action (pressure), not about self-manifestation or how to advance yourself. Of course, development takes place – nicer lines, faster work and like that – improves as well. But mostly it is adrenalin and nightlife [...] There is the thing that there are artists who are like individual artists or at least consider themselves graffiti artists or some graffiti person, and then there are people who simply seize the adrenalin.”

Once can conclude that all the best-known street art and graffiti forms – stencils, stickers and mainly classical graffiti – exist in Riga. The research study showed that classical graffiti and all manifestations related to this art form is leading and most popular in Riga urban environment. Tagging or signing one's name is the most popular of them. Graffiti writers' hierarchy has developed and exists in underground exactly in relation to graffiti in Riga urban environment, but it is very pronounced and mostly known to its representatives. Topics expressed in street art works are mainly related to everyday life, politics and other topics related to processes important to

the society that are visualized by street artists on the street in their own way. Reasons and motivation of artists' activities, according to their opinion, are mostly related to beautification of urban environment, addressing society, as well as the process itself that creates adrenalin for artists.

Inclusive observation. Street art work exposing process

An unstructured observation method was also used to carry out an empirical part of the study to understand how in this case street artist executes his actions during the night. Observation report holds wide, holistic activity description based on previously established guidelines.

Observation guidelines:

- 1) to understand street art artist's activities before going out in the streets;
- 2) to observe street artist's choice of route;
- 3) to observe the choosing of place where street art work will be created;
- 4) to cognize street artist's previous experience in conducting the same activities;
- 5) to observe street art work creation process.

Street artist's activities before going out in the streets are specific – at first city district where activities will take place is chosen. In this particular case, it was Purvciems district. The artist claimed that choice of district was important as he liked to get to know the city, therefore he, in his opinion, risked and went to such city districts he was not familiar with. Thereof mostly when he was not going alone in his activities, district well known by other person was chosen and other person stood on watch or looked after the artist so that at that particular moment of creating the piece he would not be interrupted by, e.g., arriving police.

Dark, comfortable, inconspicuous clothing that would not attract people's attention is chosen. One, particular, previously cut out stencil (in this particular case one) is chosen and will be used.

The artist pointed out that in his case stencil was chosen according to his mood. Also, colour of the spray is chosen according to the mood (in this particular case – black).

The stencil is placed in opaque folder held by the artist during the whole period of activity. The artist takes also a backpack containing paint spray. Gloves are worn so that next day the artist does not have to explain at work why hands are black.

When the artist is ready, activity route is chosen. Choosing of route is random. The artist claims that choice of route depends on the city district. But choice of district is very important because this particular artist knows Riga very well, therefore he chooses the darkest and least inhabited city areas at night. In this particular case the district was known approximately. It was decided that by walking down Vaidavas street, we will reach Ūnijas street, there will be several small bystreets and walking

down those we will reach the territory of VEF that is well known to the artist. Next plan of the route was not decided at the beginning, it was planned randomly – according to the artist – where the eyes are showing, there we are going.

Street art work location choice – random. Initially location is looked for on the basis of the lowest possibility of people or cars passing by. So, the location should be as dark, inconspicuous as possible, but open enough space. Open space because the artist according to his opinion beautifies environment, so he wants his work to be seen by people who will wake up in the morning and go to work.

“Who knows, maybe I will create a smile for someone, thereby will improve the day with my work!”

Later, when according to the artist, adrenalin had reached its high, no more noticeable caution was observed, and more attention was paid to presence of people, cars or police. The artist started to display his work in more open spaces.

The street artist's experience in this field is approximately 10 years.

The process how street art work is created is the following – stencil is placed on the chosen surface, spray is taken and sprayed on the surface smoothly. Afterwards the stencil is removed and the chosen art piece is left on the surface. Paint cannot be put on in too thick layer, otherwise it will drip down and the work will fail. Once a tendency of the artist was observed (which he also stressed) – he liked to *frame* his work, e.g., spray-painting it in a place that looks like frame. The artist tells that street artists who have reached particular level of quality start to match up their work to the environment or environment to the work. He added that despite the fact that stencil artists do not sign their work he is thinking about his pseudonym at the moment. The artist justifies it with the idea that the more qualitative art works become, the more desire to be noted among other artists increases.

As the street artist knows hierarchy among graffiti writers in Riga, he tries not to exhibit his works at places where currently dominant graffiti representatives have left their signature. The artist mentioned that graffiti representatives quickly notice and start to differentiate also stencil artists despite them mostly not signing their work as they have their own style with nuances. Therefore, there is a possibility that his work can be impaired because he might have offended some graffiti writer or crew. The worst scenario according to the artist would be if he offended a writer from union, as there are at least three people in every union that would rally together and demonstratively would paint over his works everywhere in Riga.

Due to information gathered during inclusive observation, various factors researched during in-depth interviews were confirmed. One of the factors confirmed was that in street art work (in this case in stencil) represented topic depended on the artist himself and his internal emotion at particular time, the same way colour of art work was chosen. It was concluded that also motivation fully depends on the artist –

he beautifies the environment hoping that next morning he will improve mood for some Riga inhabitant. Thinking of choice of the location, it is not intentional or personal vandalism. The artist does not even think if it is state or private property. For him the main factors are that (1) the work does not offend any of graffiti kings, (2) the work is not exhibited on a freshly painted or new façade, (3) the work is visible enough and, (4) in this case, the exhibition process or adrenalin was also important. Besides, the technical process was cognized allowing to understand which items and tools were needed to exhibit stencil work.

Conclusions

Despite the fact that street art and graffiti quite often seem to be the same to the society, these are two different distinguishable art forms and should be researched separately. In practice as well as often combinations of these techniques are made. This can be explicitly seen in, e.g. street art work "*Saule, Pērkons, Daugava*" ("Sun, Thunder, Daugava") where both techniques – graffiti and street art – have been used. Notwithstanding street art is based on pictures and drawings, while graffiti mainly (though not always) is an art form based on calligraphy. These art forms overlap in other activities by the artists; although street artists do not create crews and they do not have their own tag, they are aware of and follow hierarchy prevailing in graffiti subculture.

Graffiti writers differ from street artists for several reasons. Firstly, target audience of their work is different (graffiti artists' audience is often other graffiti writers, while street artists' audience is the public or society). Secondly, message they want to deliver is different (marking territory or existence in particular place versus social or political message). Thirdly, communication style is different (calligraphically developed words versus various artistic manifestations). And, fourthly, motive of creating art (bad reputation versus socio-political problem exposure to the society) [Kimvall, 2006]. However, all these forms of artistic manifestations undoubtedly should be perceived as art. According to one of the various definitions of art, we can define art as various forms of human actions related to creation of different material and non-material items that hold any value for mental capabilities (psyche or mind), senses and emotions. Thus, art is created when person expresses himself in any way.

The artist of Riga urban environment with his actions addresses society and his fellows. This artist is talented, original and capable of surprising the society. One of the main obstacles for artists is the fact that there is no legal space in Riga where one can express himself creatively and practise, as well as show his ideas. Albeit he has developed his talent by self-study, has created his own style without special education.

The artist of Riga urban environment is capable of inspiring both the society to follow topicality of graffiti and street art and attract new people to particular art

forms. This artist, in his opinion, fulfils the function of medium as neither graffiti, nor street art is subject to censorship or any political power. He shows the society both the existing topicalities that affect it and mirrors the society itself.

Graffiti writer in Riga is a representative of subculture. This subculture has internal hierarchy that is followed not only by graffiti writers themselves, but also by street artists. Hierarchy is pronounced and known to everyone who illegally operates in Riga urban environment. If someone is not aware of it, he learns it quickly.

Motivation of why a particular artist is working can be different for every person, but typical artist believes that he beautifies environment and/or delivers message to the society or fellow artists with aim to suppress the leading advertisement culture in urban environment. He leans on creativity, but the main reason for artist's activities is adrenalin that rises during illegal creative expressions.

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GRAFFITI WRITING IN SOFIA: IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND URBAN SPACE

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Abstract

The article is based on the analysis of fieldwork studies of the local graffiti and street art production in Sofia, Bulgaria. The author argues that at present the majority of the graffiti writers there tend to produce TTP graffiti following the global graffiti tradition and taking into consideration its conventions and heritage. As a result of that the meaning of the local TTPs and street art is quite clear and understandable to the foreign TTP writers, to the majority of the young people in the city as well as to a growing group of connoisseurs. The rest usually see in the same writings either strange art or nothing but scribbles, oddly deformed letters and unclear symbolic images. The article interprets the processes of mutual understanding or misunderstanding which contribute to the creation of new types of coherences and differentiation in the local urban milieu.

Keywords: *graffiti, identity, urban space.*

Introduction¹

Some graffiti writings easily render themselves to reading while others carefully hide their meanings. In the last decades old legible graffiti in the city exteriors have been gradually replaced by new, almost illegible ones. Big, colourful and sprayed in a specific manner, they usually consist of special graffiti names – TTPs (i.e. tags, throw-ups and pieces) chosen and written in compliance with the global graffiti tradition. Basing myself on a study of the graffiti production in Sofia including interviews with writers and documentation of thousands of pieces, I will further

¹ The article was written as a result of the work of the author on Project DH 09/17 sponsored by the Bulgarian National Science Fund.

outline some of the specifics of the local TTP graffiti scene while at the same time paying attention to local street art, which is genetically linked and closely connected to them¹. I will then seek to explain why and how the inherent meaning of the TTPs and street art in Sofia is quite clear and understandable to the foreign writers keeping to the global graffiti tradition, to the majority of the young people in the city, as well as to the growing group of connoisseurs but, by contrast, the others usually see in the same works either strange art or scribbles, oddly deformed letters and unclear symbolic images. All that will allow me to outline the resultant processes of mutual understanding or misunderstanding which contribute to the creation of new coherences and differentiation in the local urban milieu, create new urban networks and modify local identity construction.

TTPs and street art in the polis

TTP graffiti writers actively use central public space to write their graffiti there, thus communicating with one another and differentiating from the rest. While the earlier graffiti names tended to be written close to some remote locations in the city where young people hang out and where the elderly rarely used to go, in the 1960s and in the beginning of the 1970s a number of special graffiti alias began to circulate in the busiest urban spaces of Philadelphia, Los Angeles and New York turning them into a kind of a billboard [Austin 2001: 41–48]. The most popular writers were the ones from the New York subway – mainly young guys aged between 11 and 18, they became quite skilful in making fame by establishing their alias in the urban space and by creating specific ways in which their particular writings could be better seen and made impressive. In the 1970s as well as in the 1980s these writers invented a specific calligraphy by experimenting with strange and unusual forms, with the outlining of the letters, with the background, as well as while using big size, bright colour combinations and ornaments such as arrows and dropping. As a result, the basic types of graffiti writing were invented: tags (stylized signatures), throw-ups (signatures where the contours of the letters are outlined), as well as more sophisticated works usually called pieces within the writing community [Castelman 1982: 52–65]. Parallel to that, community standards for the quality of the graffiti production were created [Lachman 1988: 234–243]. In the 1980s the New York subway graffiti were actively popularized by the film industry and in the advertising campaigns of the hip-hop culture, as well as on special happenings and thus became

¹ This scene is thoroughly under-researched. It has been documented by the author and recently by a team of researchers from the Department of Cultural Studies of the University of Sofia, whose work has not been published yet.

quickly spread in Western Europe¹. Around 2000 TTPs were already globally spread. Today it is probably difficult to find a country where there are none of them. At the same time the writing production is more or less similar all over the world because of the following of the already global graffiti tradition with its basic models, variations, principles of creation and even by way of following of some of the specific ethical propositions invented in the tunnels of the New York subways [Castelman 1982: 52–65; Ferrell 1993: 5–16; Miller 2002: 21–22; Neef 2007: 418–420]. Thus, this specific way of graffiti writing which used to be local in the beginning has gradually become a global one.

The TTP graffiti scene in Sofia is a comparatively new one as far as single examples of this type started to appear in the city in the period between the middle of the 1990s and the year 2000. Instead of inscribing the names of their preferred groups, bands and teams, the writers started to write their own graffiti names or the ones of their respective graffiti crews. All TTP names in Sofia are special graffiti alias showing close sound and visual resemblance to the pseudonyms used within the global graffiti traditions. Following a well-established pattern, they sound American, make wide use of a specific word play connected with the global graffiti tradition and are written in Latin, thus being radically different from the traditional Bulgarian names which are written in Cyrillic and more often than not follow Orthodox models. In addition, the names which the Bulgarian crews tend to choose for themselves sound as mottos or graffiti promotions: Crazy Bombing Crew or Flash the Dark Crew, etc. Other writers are not expected to know those names, but only their abbreviations (e.g. CBC or FDC). Every new crew is more or less expected to choose a name, basing itself on a similar principle. Thus, the choice of the name already implies in itself an aspiration of belonging to the international graffiti tradition.

The authors of Bulgarian murals are predominantly young men aged between 12 and 28. They have all consciously chosen for themselves to do graffiti because of a strong attraction to the pleasure of doing murals and despite of the never ending moral, physical and legal hazards, which that hobby brings to the practitioners. The collaboration between the writers is to a great extent practically determined and aimed at diminishing the perils of their hobby, even more so because writers run the risk to be exposed to public condemnation or police prosecution. At the same time, precisely because of the substantial risks, willingness to engage yourself

¹ At the same time in the 1980s the New York City administration totally discouraged graffiti writing in the subways so the local writers' culture ceased to exist in its initial form. This was also the point when the best writers became already quite eager to present their pieces in art galleries or to work for the commercially oriented hip-hop culture [Lachman 1988: 243–248; Austin 2001; Dickinson 2008; Snyder 2006].



Figure 1. Bombing done by Ko3 crew at the turn to the twenty-first century.
Photo Miglena Ivanova, Sofia, 2005.

in mural writing is strongly fuelled by the young men's need to prove themselves in difficult conditions. Doing murals itself is in addition highly praised and respected mostly because it brings you inside a close circle of graffiti writers belonging to an international tradition, within which you can prove your bravery, courage, persistency, devotedness and creative potential. Even more, it offers opportunities to gain respect and fame among other peers. All those possibilities already stay open for somebody who dares to choose and follow a career within the writers' community.

In the course of time and with the growing of the mastery and age of the first cohorts of Bulgarian graffiti writers some of them have started to do street art which is often commissioned by connoisseurs or by certain private NGOs organizing graffiti festivals, exhibitions and other cultural events connected to street art and graffiti writing. As a result of that some former graffiti writers who have now indulged in street art have been able to make successful careers and to a certain extent their living from what used to be just hobby in the teens.

Illegal graffiti (called bombing within the writers' community) remain quite long on the streets of Sofia while legal writing and street art enjoy wide attention not only among the local connoisseurs and some of the guests of the city, but also the municipal administration, some of the school masters and even certain politicians and managers. All that actually allows safely to say that the attitudes to graffiti writing and street art in Sofia are quite tolerable. This is most probably due to the general



Figure 2. Legal piece done by the End2end crew. Photo Miglena Ivanova, 2005.

tolerance to graffiti writing created gradually in the city in the period between mid-1980s and especially in the early 1990s¹. This is also a tendency which continues well into the 21st century despite the fact that as early as the last decade of the 20th century some other forms of graffiti were popular in Sofia – mainly youth street performances and political graffiti of the early 1990s, but also some remnants of the earlier youth graffiti writing of the 1970s and 1980s.

Besides, youth activist graffiti (called also political graffiti in Bulgaria) and student protest rally performances were the most representative forms of the protest art in the 1990s Bulgaria. They were aimed at getting voice and visibility in the urban space, explore the very limits of artistic and non-artistic creativity and function (both directly and indirectly) as opinion outlets, reaching far beyond the immediate youth social context. Remaining there comparatively long, their political statements distorted and transgressed the values, encoded in the static elements of the city exterior. The grotesque, politically engaged enactment of the performances lasted only a couple of hours but effectively supplied new critical points of view. Main streets, squares and places were turned into cheerful workshops for redefining meanings, social attitudes and artistic tastes. At the same time in the early 1990s political graffiti and the performances demonstrated a remarkable quality to overpass the confines of the urban street setting and to multiply their transgressive impact on wider audiences by providing for colourful media coverage. From the middle of 1995 to 1997 political graffiti were gradually diminishing in

¹ For the purposes of this analysis I am mainly interested in raising the general level of tolerance. Though, it is probably important to mention that in the last years of socialism tolerant attitudes were predominantly developed towards the graffiti of the football fans or towards the youth opinions in the public space such as individual musical and other preferences, subgroup belonging, certain graffiti maxims, etc. In the first years of the transition period the tolerance towards these types of graffiti continued, but at the same time the abundant political graffiti were also widely tolerated.

number and were later substituted by other forms of youth political promulgation. At the same time, with the beginning of the NATO strikes in Bosnia, a lot of anti-American and anti-NATO graffiti started to appear in Sofia and in other big Bulgarian cities. Their peak was during the visit of the USA President Clinton in Sofia in the autumn of 1999. Although produced at a time when artistic graffiti tags were widely popular in Bulgaria, even in the late 1990s political graffiti were unsophisticated slogans and easy to read signs or sign combinations and thus quite different from the TTPs.

Today, despite the fact that TTPs are definitely the predominant type of graffiti production on the streets of Sofia, the majority of the local citizens are rarely able to decipher the distorted Latin letters and to understand the meaning of the particular works. Resultantly, TTPs tend to be often considered by the general public images rather than writings and are often appreciated as a kind of a strange, colourful art or, alternatively, are simply considered splash of paint or dirt. Even for those of the representatives of the general public who do take their time to read TTPs they continue to be quite difficult to understand as far as their reason for existence and their presence in the city exterior is concerned:

“This mild autumn Sofia is all in graffiti... Have you seen reports from Bronx where every building looks like as a tattooed prisoner...? At present we see the Balkan variants of all that... While walking on the streets of Sofia, I always note the amazing energy and industriousness of somebody’s hand that painted walls, vans, billboards, telephone boxes, schoolyards, subways, universities, military barracks, etc. with the mysterious writing “Vapski”. Who is Vapski...? All over the world the writers do their works and then do their signatures, but in Sofia the writers just leave signatures” [Krastev 2004].

Abreast of Times. The case of the monument to the Soviet Army

Memorials dedicated to the victory of the Soviet Army in the Second World War were built during socialism not only in the former Soviet Union, but also on the territory of some of the so-called sisterly countries such as Poland, Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, the former GDR, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. In Bulgaria these memorials still remain in their places despite the fact that their existence, meaning and future have been ardently debated in the transition period, as well as in the recent years. On 17 June 2011, under the cover of the night anonymous group of young men painted one of the massive bas reliefs of the most representative monument to the Soviet Army – the one in the centre of Sofia. As a result of that the Soviet soldiers from the composition representing the victorious march of the Red Army in the Second World War were turned into heroes from popular American comics such as Jocker, Wolverine, Santa Claus, Superman, Captain America, Wonder

Woman, etc., while the Soviet flag was painted into the stars and stripes of the American one. A caption saying “Abreast of Times” was added beneath.

In the 1990s and in the first decade of the 21st century the monument was quite often covered with inscriptions and drawings, but they had little to do with the memorial itself. By contrast, the authors of the 2011 action managed to both integrate and subvert the initial propaganda meanings implied in the bas relief bringing forth a new group of heroes who are not so well-known in Bulgaria, but are at the same time quite common in street art in general. The painting triggered numerous and long-lasting reactions on the local level and abroad proving besides that the initiative touched two substantial debates – on the one hand, the debate for the future of the Soviet war memorials from socialist times and, on the other hand, the debate on the nature of modern graffiti and street art together with their increasing presence on some of the most important places in the cityscape. Here I will concentrate on the analysis of some of the reactions on the local level as far as they allow to test from a particular and very specific angle some of the conclusions reached in the previous part of the article.

In the social media the representatives of the local graffiti writing and street art community congratulated the intervention on the monument to the Soviet Army. At the same time, when certain members of the community gave an interview for a newspaper, they did not recognize those who painted the monument as being members of the local writing community; they didn't even believe them to be graffiti writers or street artists. In addition, ordinary people, but also journalists and specialists in anthropology, art, urban studies, etc. referred to the action as connected to graffiti writing and street art.

The monument remained painted for several days and was then whitewashed. Meanwhile, thousands of the citizens and guests of Sofia visited the site and joined the debates in situ. Even more, the locals actively participated in the debates on the media. The attitudes expressed ranged from paying due tribute to the transgressive nature of the act to different speculations about the motivation of the authors of the intervention, and from considerations that those who did it suffer from a lack of elementary culture to an understanding of the action as a brave artistic act with strong symbolic implications for the overcoming of the communist past not only in the country, but also in the region of Southeast Europe.

In the beginning when Destructive Creations – the crew which painted the monument – had not taken responsibility for their artistic action, different motifs and understandings of graffiti writing, street art and the action itself were widely discussed. When in the autumn of 2011 the crew were finally interviewed for a popular youth magazine, it turned out that they were not a homogeneous group but rather everyone had his own understanding about street art, graffiti and the



Figure 3. The big interest in “Abreast of Times”. Photo Destructive Creations, Sofia, 19 June 2011, <http://destructivecreations.com>

action itself. Being liable to persecution and also because of the fact that at least some of them were Bulgarians doing their university studies abroad, they even later relied in the local debates on certain proponents presenting them and their opinions. One of these proponents was the young journalist Mihaela Samardzhieva – Mi who had worked together with the group on another project and had made an interview with them about the painting of the monument to the Soviet Army – a situation making herself both a proponent and to a certain extent an insider.

According to Samardzhieva, street art and the painting of the monument to the Soviet Army in particular is quite cool. She believes that it includes “installations, street performances, acts of vandalism with a definitive political flavour, actions, posters, stickers, writing on emblematic public buildings, protests” and turns our “going to work, the beer that we have after that, our dates, our promenades, our background in a place full of insights, in a coded background which waits to be read”. At the same time, according to her, street art has many negative side effects such as causing misunderstanding and perplexing, intolerance to stagnated thinking, fear, painful honesty and thus is not for everyone [Samardzhieva 2014]. As a result of all that Samardzhieva finds street art appropriate for a comparatively narrow circle of true connoisseurs. Actually, the debate connected to the monument of the Soviet

Army shows that those appreciating the action are quite a lot: wide general public, as well as artists, art historians, anthropologists.

Probably precisely because of being cool for all of them street art was thus capable of creating conglomerates of otherwise very different people. These human relations are based on common interest. They are temporary and could easily cease to exist, but are somehow remarkable as they help to raise strong public interest to street art and graffiti writing.

Conclusion

Both street art and graffiti writing effectively re-inscribe important places in the urban space and affect the identity of the city. Alison Young characterizes street art as a well-established place-making activity in the contemporary city [Young 2013: 35]. In the case of Sofia, I would rather extend this proposition to graffiti writing, too. During the last 25 years, when TTP graffiti writing and street art entered the local graffiti scene, they have caused substantial changes in the way the city looks both because of the sheer number of these works and because of the important places where they were situated. Resultantly, graffiti and street art have been able to influence both the image and the identity of the city itself. Yet, it is even more important that TTPs and street art have proved themselves as effective tools for the construction and demonstration of youth identity in the urban space.

At the same time, the tolerant attitude to graffiti writing and street art in the city allows for a large number of works to stay quite long on the streets of the city and makes them habitual in cityscape. It also contributes to some favourable interpretations of graffiti writing and street art as *vox populi*¹. All that enhances the proliferation of the resultant production, the creation of a number of legal graffiti writings and graffiti events, as well as the mainstreaming of street art.

In the last decade there was a notable tendency of mainstreaming all over the world allowing for the professionalization of the best writers and street artists so that they could make their former hobby a means of living but also affects the art market and all those who appreciate this form of art. Created comparatively late, the Sofia scene has actually undergone considerable development in this respect with the professionalization of some of the best street artists who had started their careers as graffiti writers. Very important in this respect is the degree of widening of the graffiti and street art publics, as well as the various cases of re-use of the works for civil, social, ecological, business and even political purposes. Although being a promising object of study, the majority of these specifics fall beyond the scope of this article and

¹ *Vox populi* – literally “the voice of the people”; part of the longer Latin maxim “*Vox populi, vox Dei*,” which means “The voice of the people is the voice of God”.

will be analysed elsewhere. Here I will confine myself to concluding that in certain cases, these re-uses have already effectively helped for the temporary mobilization and re-grouping of the citizens of Sofia for the implementation of particular projects, causes and purposes thus having a profound effect on the civil and social level.

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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.

* * *

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.)

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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.)

PRESERVATION OF STREET ART IN PARIS. AN EXAMPLE FOR RIGA?

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Abstract

In many cities graffiti and street art is considered as vandalism and is often connected with crime. However, in some cities majority of the population does not agree with such a statement. They see street art and graffiti as decoration of the city. They think the artists deserve a safe space for expressing themselves. It is already a little step towards preserving the street art movement, as, of course, not all the citizens will share this opinion, since place of street art is still a very arguable question in many cities around the world. More and more organisations, associations and projects of different types are being created to promote and protect the urban art. Promotion of street art can be expressed in different ways, for example, panel discussions and workshops, exhibitions and festivals. Several street art and graffiti related spaces are being opened in Paris. Museums, warehouses, walls, schools – every kind of space could be used as a platform for the artists. This is also a nice way to show to the city council how important this culture is to the citizens of Paris. At the same time Riga cannot be yet proud of a thriving street art and graffiti culture. But what if Riga actually took Paris as an example? Could similar organisations in Latvia improve the society's attitude towards urban cultures? Could the safe platform for street art be a solution for its popularization in Riga? The aim of this paper is to introduce organisations which promote and protect street art and graffiti in Paris and to evaluate if street art positions in Paris could actually be an example for Riga. The conclusion is that the bigger amount of such organisations is able to actually change the attitude of society towards the urban art and Riga can surely learn a lot from Paris – creating spaces for graffiti and street artists can not only make their positions better, but also it can have a positive impact for the city's social life and attract a specific type of tourists to the capital.

Keywords: *street art, preservation, graffiti, history.*

Nowadays graffiti and street art are one of the components of the urban space. Tags, murals, stickers, stencils and mosaic are placed on the buildings and lamp posts and catch attention of passers-by. Population of any city where graffiti and street art are popular is usually divided into two parts. One part is against this movement and they try to control it by any means whereas the second part actually supports the artists and try to find legal ways for their expression. While street art is thriving in most of European capitals, why is the situation different in Riga? Riga definitely has some fine graffiti and street artists who are known not only in the country but also abroad. But while in cities like Lisbon, Copenhagen, Wrocław and Paris, street art is protected and promoted by their citizens, majority of Riga's inhabitants seem to be against it. Young generation in Riga often complains about the lack of place where urban artists could express themselves. Would that be one of the reasons why Riga is left behind the street art destinations in Europe? Could it be one of the possible solutions to improve the ongoing situation in one of the Baltic capitals?

Protection of graffiti and street art could be achieved in several ways. It could become protected as a cultural property. The government could guarantee and protect certain rights of the artists. It could protect the artwork – if the artwork were located in a space legally intended for artwork, then no one would have the right to remove it. However, if such an artwork is located on a privately-owned wall not intended for artwork, then no surprise it would be removed from there as quickly as possible. While much of action is awaited from the legislator or at least the city council, it is the citizens who should start putting effort to create their own way of legally encouraging the urban art.

Street art in Paris – past and present

To show how the preservation of urban art can make the city famous for incredible graffiti and street art artworks, let us look at one of the cities where graffiti and street art are impossible not to notice. Paris. The capital of France is famous for street artists like Le Monsieur Chat, Invader, Miss Tic, Blek le Rat, Zevs, to name a few. These street artists have transformed the streets of Paris into their playground. Their works could be found in each district of the capital and even in the suburbs surrounding it. One does not have to go far from the centre to look for it. A famous Salvador Dali mural made by Jef Aérosol, one of the French street art pioneers, is located just next to the contemporary art museum Centre Pompidou. Some of the works date back to the 1990s. Invader started placing his mosaic figures (most commonly known as “Space Invaders”) in the early 2000s. Nowadays there are more than 1000 of them only in Paris. The artist does not stop only by working in his homeland. He shares his art across Europe and even on other continents.

The beginning of French graffiti and street art movement started at the same time as the student protests in May 1968. During the manifestations some of the students started writing on the walls their messages to the government [Ponosov 2013]. Today such an expression of someone's opinion sent to the officials is common between the street artists. The beginning of the movement was also connected with the destruction of Les Halles in 1971, a huge green market located in the heart of the capital of France. When the building collapsed, the ruins did not disappear quickly. Gérard Zlotykamien was one of the people who actually went inside the demolished site and started painting silhouettes of reclining human figures. It was artist's metaphoric depiction of the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima, which took place in 1945. The 1980s are described as the peak of graffiti and street art in Paris. As these styles became more and more popular, more and more people started experimenting with them. During that period works by such artists as Gérard Zlotykamien, Ernest Pignon-Ernest, Blek Le Rat, Jef Aérosol appeared on the streets of Paris [Kostov 2014]. Miss Tic is also one of the pioneers. She started her street artist's career in 1985 and her artworks always depict ordinary women and incisive sentences. Miss Tic is provocative but at the same time she tries to bring the philosophical layer of herself through her stencils [Miss Tic]. Most of her works have been made in Paris and especially in its Northern part.

Preservation of street art in Paris

It is important for the citizens of Paris who appreciate street art and graffiti to protect the artworks by famous street art and graffiti artists. Even though street art is not legal in Paris, there are still some platforms where the artists can work safely. Lately more and more organisations are being formed in order to support the graffiti and street art movement and to provide space for their expression. The list of such organisations is quite long, but the most famous ones are Le Mur, Art 42, L'Aérosol and Lab 14.

Le Mur, translated as The Wall, was established in 2003. It is engaged in promoting contemporary art, especially urban art. Le Mur is located in the 11th district of Paris. This spot is rather popular in Paris, full of bars, clubs and cafes. The organisation owns a wall of 3×8m, which is situated at the crossroads of Rue St Maur and Rue Oberkampf. The association invites street artists to make mural art on it. All kind of techniques are welcomed, and artists can use any material they want. The association works as an open-air museum – the wall is free of visit and it is located outdoors in the street. In 14 years around 244 murals have been created [Le Mur]. There are four books published by Le Mur. The books contain the murals and some descriptions provided by the artists [Le Mur]. The association have found their own particular way of demonstrating the greatness of urban culture. Not only it provides

artists with a safe space for their art, but it also adds a certain charm to the area. However, due to the fact that the created artworks are removed from the wall later to provide space for a new drawing, this place also demonstrates how fragile the street art can be and how difficult it can be to preserve the artworks.

Another association which is devoted to the preservation of urban cultures is Art 42. The project was created to allow visitors to discover urban art that does not have a permanent exhibition in France. It was created by Nicolas Laugero Lasserre, an art collector whose passion is street art and graffiti. He created a street art museum ART 42 in school 42, located in the Northern part of Paris and providing the first learning programme in computer engineering, which was free of charge. At the museum there are more than 150 artworks by such artists as Clet, Banksy, Obey, Shepard Fairey, Madame and even frescos of MonkeyBird [Art 42]. The artworks (posters, drawings, paintings, sculptures) are located in the museum on its walls or in the hallways, which adds a specific charm to the school itself. Since the museum is located in the school, one can actually observe the students working at their computers.

At the beginning of August 2017, another spot for graffiti and street art admirers was opened in Paris. L'Aérosol, translated as The Aerosol, is named as the paradise of urban culture in France. L'Aérosol occupies the former warehouse belonging to SNCF (French Railway Company) and the surrounding territory. This place offers different activities to its visitors such as graffiti workshops, DJ performances, roller-skating evenings, food and drinks, and museum. In the museum works by Obey, Lush Dagger, Crash, Banksy, Blek le Rat and other worldwide known artists are exhibited. The place has become very famous and it attracts a lot of families, too. Visitors have an opportunity to purchase some air spray paint and actually make their own graffiti in L'Aérosol. On the walls outside the warehouse many Parisian street artists have made their murals [L'Aérosol]. L'Aérosol has been doing a lot to preserve the urban art. It proves how urban and cultural goes together. It shows that urban attracts not only teenagers, but also adults and families. L'Aérosol is a place where society becomes one whole and where social status is of no importance.

One more organisation which has a strong influence on street art and graffiti promotion and protection in Paris is Lab 14. Lab 14 has curated different urban art projects. One of the latest projects took place from December 2016 until February 2017 in an old French post-office in Paris. It occupied two floors of the building and it also had two exhibition rooms. Murals, installations, sculptures, mosaics, tags, stickers are just some of the artworks exhibited at Lab 14's latest project. Unfortunately, the project only lasted for a few months [Lab 14]. Like at L'Aérosol, different people came to visit Lab 14. It was a family-friendly project and people of different ages visited it during the three months.

Unfortunately, the city council of Paris has not provided any legal space to encourage and promote the street art and graffiti artworks. Paris is full of tags, stickers, mosaics, murals, stencils and objects. And many of those artworks have not been demolished thanks to the citizens who respect urban art and urban artists. Some of the inhabitants of the capital of France have formed various groups which later became organisations and associations which are promoting and protecting urban art. Not only they provide a safe space to create art, but they also encourage people to see the bright side of it. If the number of such collectives grows, probably it will have some more significant influence on the legislative processes, and it will make them take a bigger step to preservation of the rich street culture of Paris. At the same time the current development of urban culture in Paris is something Riga could really look up to. If some of the empty spaces or alternative bars were available as a canvas for street artists, the city could change its face not only in eyes of its tourists but also of its citizens.

Promoting street art in Riga

Even though there are few street artists in Riga who use public space for their artworks, the movement is still present in the city. In 2014, Riga was one of the two European Capitals of Culture and many art events took place during that year. One of them was aimed at popularizing street art in Latvia. Street art festival “Blank Canvas: art-ground, play-ground, crime-ground” took place from 13 to 17 May. Its purpose was to raise discussions about place of street art in the city. Curator of the festival Edvards Zvirgzdiņš said that one of the goals was to prove that a dialogue between street artists and society can exist, that it is possible to create qualitative street artworks, especially, if there is a place to do it legally. In curator’s opinion, the festival could help with cooperation between the street artists and municipal institutions that are responsible for Riga’s outlook [Alksnis 2014]. As a result, various street artworks have been created around the city, not only in the centre. Festival’s Facebook page provides addresses to see the artworks. Most of the artworks are still present, they have not been painted over, thus it could be concluded that such events not only attract international artists to Riga like M-City, ROA, but also serve as an example of how to integrate street art into the city in a legal way and ensure that the artworks will be preserved.

Nowadays most of the street artworks in Riga are to be found in Andrejsala, city’s port premises. Before this part of the city became a place of fancy restaurants, it used to be a meeting place of various subcultures, which would tag the walls and draw on them. Latvian Museum of Naive Art was situated there as well. Its walls are full of drawings by Latvian street artists. At the beginning of the 2010s Dirty Deal Cafe was also located in Andrejsala. Owners of this place would often organise

various culture events which attracted youngsters to the area. It was possible for the visitors to create their street art or graffiti as the Dirty Deal Cafe strongly supported the street art movement and underground subculture. Unfortunately, none of these places exist today. All what is left is just a few street art pieces and countless tags.

One of the places in Riga that is legal for creating street art and graffiti, is the creative quarter of the Latvian Artists' Union "Kombināts Māksla". This place is situated next to Brasa bridge, which could be called the end of the "far" centre. This area is used for art days or art symposiums. From time to time local and international street artists are invited there and given free spots on the walls for creating their art pieces. "Kombināts Māksla" is not the most famous area in Riga, but it is a to-go place for those who like underground culture. Many of the artworks are located on the walls of garage and workshops, the place looks a bit destroyed but it does have a very strong street art and graffiti atmosphere.

Possible solutions for preserving street art in Riga

As mentioned at the beginning of the article, street art can be most likely preserved if it has been made at a legal place. This could not only help the artists when they are looking for a wall to work on, it could also become an attraction for the citizens, as well as tourists. If such legal areas were spread around the city, the tourists would have a better chance to see the urban art of the city, not limiting themselves to walks in the Old Town and Art Nouveau area. Even though some street art enthusiasts could then argue that creating street art in legal spaces makes the movement lose its charm, it is still a good idea at least at the beginning to prove that this movement was not all about violating the rules. It could also help to slightly improve situation in unsafe areas, as attracting people to such places in the city, does have an impact on better safety. If Riga followed example of Paris, and, for instance, allowed citizens to use premises of old warehouses, it could not only create an environment for artists, where they could apply their imagination and use the empty walls for creation of street art and graffiti, it could also bring the community together and make them change their opinion regarding the street art movement. One of the ways how to follow the Paris example could be through Free Riga movement, as the people behind Free Riga organisation do allow citizens to get empty old buildings for their use [Free Riga]. Free Riga could be a great starting point for graffiti and street art enthusiasts. Another way of preserving street art in Riga would be organising street art and graffiti festivals, similar to "Blank Canvas: art-ground, play-ground, crime-ground". Even with the participation only of local artists, great results could be achieved and once again it would prove that the underground culture has some beautiful consequences – works of art on the walls of the city. However, it might be difficult for a group of street art supporters to create a big festival, there are many

street art enthusiasts working in cultural centres like “Kaņepes Kultūras centrs”, where street art has been amply presented on the walls of its building. Therefore, there is a possibility of discussing a chance of making such an event on their premises. Another option could be addressing Riga City Council. Even though, as seen in Paris example, it does not necessarily guarantee that street art will be completely legalised, there is still an opportunity to find a compromise with the representatives of the City Council which could improve the position of street art in Riga and not only.

To conclude, it is important to understand that street art and graffiti can not only bring a visual pleasure, but it can also make a social impact and open a new path for tourists in the city, as seen from Paris example. It can bring Riga on the map for street art tourists, as well as it can provide the citizens a better understanding of urban cultures, which nowadays is strongly supported by the young generations. Having protected areas for making street art could also make Riga a destination for street artists that live in neighbouring countries like Lithuania, Estonia, Russia and Belarus. It could also make the knowledge-sharing process possible which could be a great addition to the cultural exchange between the above-mentioned countries. Seeing the amount of street art that people from Latvia are posting in social media like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter (for this hashtag #streetartlatvia or #streetartriga should be entered into the search tab when opening any of the above-mentioned application), I have myself created an Instagram account by the name “makslaulic” with a purpose of documenting the street art that I see not only in Latvia, but also while travelling. Digitalisation of art could also become one way of how to keep it safe and available in the future. All these efforts combined can lead the citizens of Riga towards a great experience of underground culture present in the capital and more attention from the tourists which could benefit the city and the country in many ways, but most importantly, it could also make our local street artists famous and make Riga known as a city that supports street culture.

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THE ROLE OF STREET ART AND GRAFFITI IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING. THE ANALYSIS OF THE CITY OF RIGA

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Abstract

Creative city discourses have named the arts as a driver of urban change and regeneration. Although governments continue to criminalize graffiti, they have taken part in the creative city discourses [McAuliffe 2012]. Opportunities for graffiti writers to have their graffiti recognised as something valuable have arisen. Meanwhile street art has been recognised as a legitimate urban artistic practice [McAuliffe 2013]. Nevertheless, the strategic urban development planning of the city of Riga does not include street art and graffiti. Meanwhile Lisbon municipality pursues these practices strategically. It has established street art and graffiti as fields of expertise of The Department of Culture Heritage. It is responsible for the institutionalization of street art and graffiti in Lisbon. However, Riga city representatives lack the knowledge and understanding about the positive contribution of street art and graffiti. Initiatives to create legal places for graffiti in Riga have been unsuccessful because the views of the municipality members and the graffiti writers in regard to these territories and their use have differed greatly. Besides, the development planning in the city of Riga is a relatively new practice; therefore, planning in specific fields has not been developed yet. This article will examine how graffiti and street art supports urban development and how these practices are implemented in the cities of Riga and Lisbon.

Keywords: *street art, graffiti, public art, urban design, development planning.*

Introduction

Gradually throughout the years perception of street art has changed considerably. Initially considered as vandalism, today street art is also seen as a creative expression. Municipalities and inhabitants of various cities have realized that the creative process they have been fighting against nowadays has the ability to represent and shape their

cities from a new perspective. In addition, in some parts of the world street art and graffiti festivals and various events and contests are organized, thus the street art and graffiti culture has been embraced in the local culture of various cities.

Similarly, in the last few decades the importance of cultural development strategies as a means for economic development has increased. The mindset of cultural expression and its impact on the city has changed as cultural expression is thought less as a socioeconomic practice, but is regarded instead as the motor of the urban economy [Loukaitou-Sideris, Soureli 2016]. Whereas the city walls serve as canvas on which graffiti and street art can provide decorations to the daily life of the city with varieties of colour, meaning and style. Thereby urban artists shape public space into cultural space otherwise non-existent within the urban environment [Gleaton 2012].

Creative city discourses have named the arts as a driver of urban change and regeneration. Furthermore, public art plays an important role in the production of urban space by contributing to the production of innovative and creative environment where creativity can flourish. In regard to urban regeneration, public art contributes to the reputation of places as creative, with transgressive public art, such as graffiti and street art operating as signs that attract rather than reject investors [McAuliffe 2012]. Although state and local governments continue to criminalize graffiti, they have taken part in the creative city discourses. The promise of the creative economy has led to investment in cultural planning mechanisms and public art policies [McAuliffe 2012]. This article will examine how public art phenomena – graffiti and street art support urban development and how these practices are implemented in different cities, especially in the cities of Riga and Lisbon.

City branding and its role in urban design

City image can be one of the key indicators of how a city municipality wants its visitors to experience their city. Furthermore, it can often serve as a means to create a shared vision amongst constituents, which is important in the city image building [Grodach 2009]. Creating a city image requires leadership from city's political leaders. However, they need partnership with the city's power elite: businesses and its citizens. City branding requires effort from local municipality members. They have to create a specifically designed sense of place and promote it. Jon Lang, architecture and urban development and design professor, has distinguished that there are three approaches to city image making: first, changing activities that take place in the city; second, changing its physical attributes; third, changing the image of a city that is presented in the media. Urban design, architecture and landscape architecture are involved in the first two. The third requires word-of-mouth and advertising. The urban design process involves creating a vision of what the city and its spaces have

to be like, and then developing it. The municipality has to encourage the developers to invest in this vision the way it is desired and not in any other way or in a different city. A part of the city image provides opportunities for a better quality of residential, work and recreational life for the city's inhabitants. The focus in urban design is on the public space – the streets, squares and parks – and how they are formed by the buildings that surround them [Banerjee, Loukaitou-Sideris 2011].

City municipalities everywhere are tasked with a difficult challenge, which inevitably comes with the city municipality office. The workforce of city municipality is responsible for the combination of a number of perceptions of the city in a unified message – the city's image. This image encompasses urban, symbolic and economic value of the city, which is further transmitted to city inhabitants and visitors, entrepreneurs and investors, as well as the rival cities, in order to reach objectives set by the city municipality. Urban planning policy, which includes urban design, architecture and landscape architecture, should take into account city's marketing strategies, in order to develop effective general urban planning politics for the city. Urban design requires ability to use knowledge from different fields, in order to shape and adapt the city environment in sustainable ways that contribute to the social, economic, political, spiritual, artistic and technologic demands of the city inhabitants [Zebracki 2013].

Public art, street art and graffiti – the intermediaries of urban design

Spatial organization of the public arena in the city is of great importance in logistic and strategic city planning. Its importance in the city planning lies in the fact that it is not only the product of confining buildings, technical facilities and plantings, but that it also determines their spatial arrangement. Public space is the central component in urban design, even though it was not recognized for a long time during the 20th century [Frick 2006]. Urban design is concerned with the physical form of cities, buildings and the space between them. British urbanism expert Rob Cowan defines urban design as “everything to do with planning that is not covered by the Town and Country Planning Acts” [Greed, Roberts 1998]. From this point of view illegal graffiti and street art pieces are also important parts of urban design, since illegal street art and graffiti expressions are often made without authorisation and are not covered in planning acts.

Urban design is the method by which people create a built environment that fulfils their aspirations and represents their values. It allows people to use their acquired knowledge to control and adapt the environment in sustainable ways for social, economic, political and spiritual benefits. However, the built city is an element of people's spiritual and physical culture and, thus is one of the highest expressions of their cultural values [Moughtin, Cuesta, Sarrirs, Signoretta 1999].

Thereby urban design is an interdisciplinary process, which requires the input not only from the fields of design, architecture and landscape architecture, but also the engagement of the society and also collaboration with several other fields, in order to deliberately create and administer urban environment and solve its problems. As such it inevitably is also connected with public art, street art and graffiti expressions.

Public art refers to either permanent or temporary artworks, including art practices which are openly accessible, outside conventional settings such as museums and galleries [Zebracki 2013]. Public art is usually authorized and sometimes financed by the government or an entity administering the respective space or area. However, graffiti and street art can be viewed as *guerrilla* public art [Krause Knight, Senie 2016].

Graffiti includes pieces created in various techniques often without permission with various means: spray paint in aerosol cans, stickers, stencils, photocopies, mosaics, objects and drawings [Sedliņa 2007]. “Although some writers work legally by commissioning their work, the majority start and sustain illegal careers. Illegality is a natural starting point for a new writer. Graffiti is a craft and like any other craft it comes with its own range of techniques, skills and procedures. Suffice it to say graffiti has a steep learning curve which graffiti writers follow and complete often through practical illegal experience” [Macdonald 2001]. Meanwhile street art is a graffiti sub-genre. While graffiti writers are a part of a closed community, street art is open to anyone who is willing to interact and discuss openly through the means of street art. Furthermore, street art is drawn with a pictorial focus rather than textual, and it is rebellious but not purposefully destructive because its original intent is to beautify the urban environment [DeNotto 2014]. The most recognized contemporary street artists are Banksy from the United Kingdom and Shepard Fairey from the USA.

Nowadays street art is recognized as having aesthetic and commercial value in the global marketplace. However, the jurisprudence of street art has begun to raise a lot more questions than when it was seen as an activity with no commercial value. “Public bodies have become increasingly accepting of the distinctions between graffiti and street art but concern about the effect on the urban environment has continued” [Mulcahy, Flessas 2016]. In creative city discourses opportunities for graffiti writers to have their graffiti recognised as something valuable – a manifestation of innovation and creative energy – have arisen. However, street art has increasingly gained validation as a valuable medium. In several cities, which are pursuing creative cities strategies, street art has been recognised as a legitimate urban artistic practice, while graffiti often remains as a transgressive, illegal practice [McAuliffe 2013].

Strategic approaches to the expressions of street art and graffiti

Cities often have different strategies and approaches to the use of street art and graffiti in their urban environment. In 2008 the Tate Modern Museum in London opened the world's first major public museum display of graffiti and street art. Six international artists were invited to decorate its facade with enormous murals. Meanwhile the United Kingdom court had a huge trial in which eight graffiti members were sued for an estimated one million pounds in graffiti-related damages across the country. Adam Cooper, cultural strategy officer for the Mayor of London in the interview with "The Guardian" (British daily newspaper) in 2015 revealed that graffiti was a positive force in its own right. He suggested that the Mayor's office of London could provide more spaces for graffiti [Cathcart-Keays 2015].

Embracing the cultural value that graffiti and street art brings forward can boost city's tourism industry. For example, the festival "See No Evil" in 2012 brought 50,000 people to the city of Bristol; in Stavanger, Norway, the city walls are transformed into a canvas annually for the highly successful festival "NuArt". Even without these events painted walls in several cities are used in tours to entertain tourists. Meanwhile Buenos Aires has been using graffiti as a tool of political communication, resistance and activism for years. Although there are laws prohibiting graffiti, the city has gained worldwide recognition for its urban art [Cathcart-Keays 2015].

Geography doctor at Lodz University Justyna Mokras-Grabowska in her paper "Art-Tourism Space in Lodz: The Example of The Urban Forms Gallery" states that contemporary tourism offers a continuously expanding spectrum of new assets functioning as objects of tourism interest. This helps when cities are seeking new ways of economically activating their city after the collapse of industry. These cities are often regarded as places not worth any tourism interest and often require the creation of new tourism attractions. She feels that activities connected with street art and contemporary art fit into this post-industrial sphere and constitute an alternative to mainstream culture [Mokras-Grabowska 2014]. Thus, Lodz has become recognized as a city of murals. Urban Forms Foundation, which began in 2009 offers Urban Forms Gallery, an exhibition of street art set in an urban space.

In the meantime, in recent years Lisbon City Council has promoted a new policy towards graffiti and street art. This was done in reaction to the dynamics and the growing visibility of these phenomena on the walls of the Lisbon city. The graffiti and street art policy include mechanisms for fighting and controlling these practices in some neighbourhoods, particularly in Bairro Alto neighbourhood, which is the main cultural quarter in the city. Lisbon City Council developed strategies and projects in order to facilitate support and institutionalize street art and graffiti in specifically dedicated spaces. Thus, an urban art gallery was established in the city of Lisbon [Costa, Lopes 2014].

There are also several street art and graffiti examples in the city of Riga. The most noticeable one is the large-scale mural called “Saule Pērkonš Daugava”. This mural incorporates Latvian national symbols and values; thereby it is very meaningful locally. The mural was made during the street art festival “Blank Canvas”, which was one of the events during “Riga-2014”, when Riga city was the European capital of culture in 2014. However, Riga city planning documents do not include public art in its strategies, thereby also street art and graffiti. Therefore, the author wanted to examine the experience of Lisbon city and their urban art policy, in order to offer proposals for further development of Riga municipality’s work in regard to street art and graffiti.

In order to examine the use of public art phenomena – graffiti and street art in urban development plans in the city of Riga and Lisbon in 2017 author conducted 10 in-depth interviews with urban planning experts, street artists, municipality tourism planning representatives and other street art and graffiti researchers. From the data acquired through these interviews the author carried out a comparative analysis of Riga and Lisbon city practices regarding street art and graffiti.

Comparison of usage of street art and graffiti in Riga and Lisbon

As stated previously the strategic urban development planning of the city of Riga does not encompass street art and graffiti. Meanwhile Lisbon municipality, on the contrary, pursues these practices strategically. Lisbon municipality has established street art and graffiti as fields of expertise and its Department of Culture Heritage is responsible for the strategic activities regarding these practices. The Department of Culture Heritage is responsible for the Urban Gallery project (GAU), which was established by Lisbon municipality with a goal to institutionalize street art and graffiti practices and, in doing so, to diminish vandalism and visually enrich the urban environment of Lisbon city. Furthermore, legal street art and graffiti projects in Lisbon city are carried out also by several other associations, entrepreneurs, galleries and museums. Since 2008 the GAU project has hosted more than 400 artistic initiatives from which only 80 have been supported from the GAU project funding given by the Lisbon municipality [Lisbon Urban Gallery project description, received electronically from The Department of Culture Heritage in Lisbon municipality].

Riga city representatives lack the knowledge and understanding of the positive contribution of street art and graffiti, as well as the benefits from these practices. This could be changed through a mediated discussion between the representatives from all parties involved in the process. An NGO or an institution from the culture sector should mediate this discussion, in order to facilitate advantageous progress through dialogue. Up till now Riga municipality initiatives to create legal places for graffiti have been unsuccessful because the views of the municipality members

and the graffiti writers about these territories and their use have differed greatly. It is important that the city municipality understands that the territories given for legal graffiti do not completely eradicate the illegal practice; however, it is one of the means of fighting it. The festival “Blank Canvas” that took place in Riga in 2014, as well as several private initiatives have contributed to the development of legal street art and graffiti practice, thus a way to coordinate legal street art and graffiti initiatives have been vaguely established. The Property Department of Riga municipality carried out a programme through which the education facilities in the city of Riga got their facades renovated. After renovation process these facades acquired visually enriched graphic designs. This can be evaluated as a positive tendency which indicates that Riga municipality can acquire allotted funds and produce high-quality murals in doing so. Historical monumental painting practice in the city of Riga also confirms that wall paintings are a part of the historic identity of Riga.

Development planning in the city of Riga is a relatively new practice which was established in the nineties, therefore planning in specific fields has not been developed yet. So strategic street art and graffiti planning should be established by creating thematic planning for street art and graffiti in the city of Riga. Here an important error that the Lisbon city experience analysis highlighted should be taken into consideration. The Lisbon Urban Gallery project was created to organize only the legal street art and graffiti activities. However, the budget for control of illegal activities is allocated in a different department. This has created difficult situations and problems in communication with graffiti subculture representatives.

Street art and graffiti also serve as evidence of creativity in the urban environment and indicates that a city has a creative environment. Therefore, when Riga city development planning, where creativity is one of the development courses, is carried out, it should be taken into account by cultivating the strategic use of street art and graffiti as means of development of creative infrastructure. Riga municipality should start using street art and graffiti in communication about tourism objects available in the city of Riga, as well as in development planning, especially by establishing regulation for street art and graffiti that enables creative image building.

It is not common to use street art and graffiti in the culture tourism in the city of Riga. It can be argued that there are not enough pieces, in order to establish an offer for tourists regarding street art and graffiti objects in the city of Riga. The image of the city of Riga that is created by the materials managed and made by “Live Riga” – the office of the Riga tourism development. Its materials do not include information about street art and graffiti in Riga. Experts interviewed in the city of Riga by the author revealed that the image of Riga consists of traditional tourism objects – churches, old town, museums, art nouveau etc. The city image made by “Live Riga” consists of the view that the people working in the institution

have about the city of Riga. It could be possible that the representatives of “Live Riga” do not have border vision of the things available and happening in the city of Riga. Meanwhile, Lisbon city offers several street art and graffiti tours. These tours are made both by the Lisbon municipality and private service providers. These tours bring in revenue not only to the organizers, but also contribute to the financial development of the territories where street art and graffiti pieces show up. This confirms the hypothesis that street art and graffiti pieces in the urban environment provide economic benefit to the city.

The experience of Lisbon city shows that street art and graffiti can be seen as cultural expressions, but only if the works possess high visual quality. However, the link between these practices and art is judged critically because street art and graffiti expressions mainly are not approved by the traditional art institutions – museums and galleries. The tendency to create street art and graffiti pieces in a global language that allows them to be admired and recognized by everyone often does not allow the artists to visually express the local culture and incorporate the locals living in the area where the pieces are created. Nevertheless, the experience of the artists is that the involvement of the local people in the process in Riga and Lisbon cities has left a positive impression on the understanding of the process that is taking place in the area where these inhabitants live. Therefore, Riga municipality and the organizers of street art and graffiti initiatives should establish communication between the residents of the area where the pieces are made and the artists making them because this complementary action promotes understanding about street art and graffiti in the society.

Street art and graffiti visually enriches the public space which can change people’s perception of certain locations, even territories. Lisbon city experience shows that neat and organized public space with street art and graffiti pieces can advance the intensity in which the public space is used by the public. However, it depends not only on the actions of the municipality, but also the residents and institutions of the area ought to take responsibility. The increasing growth of street art in public space can cause problems as well. There should be locations and neighbourhoods in the city without street art and graffiti. However, the city of Riga should begin by creating places for legal street art and graffiti. These locations should be created in different neighbourhoods and they should be properly locally adjusted – accessible and visible. The city of Riga should naturally begin by opening one neighbourhood for street art and graffiti initiatives.

Street art and graffiti as public art expressions have the potential to advance urban design development in the city. These expressions could enable different neighbourhoods of Riga city to create their unique visual identity. In many municipalities in the cities of Europe street art and graffiti issues, for example, initiative

development and street art or graffiti festival organization is the responsibility of the members of the municipality. Riga municipality should appoint a structural unit which would administer legal street art and graffiti initiatives. Experts interviewed in the authors' research asserted that the contents of legal street art and graffiti pieces should not be controlled. Yet the prevailing experience in the city of Riga has been diverse – legal graffiti wall initiatives pursued by Riga municipality were aborted because the municipality was dissatisfied with the contents in these areas, however murals made in the festival “Blank Canvas” in 2014 were not coordinated, so as not to influence and change artistic vision of the artists. The control mechanisms suggested for commissioned street art and graffiti are diverse: a competent jury might evaluate the ideas (not sketches) given by the contestants; a precise and measurable assignment could be given and everyone willing to take part could apply with their visual ideas of solutions to the assignment; a contest where a jury evaluates sketches of the idea based upon thematic guidelines; a regulation could be made that creates a certain frame for the pieces that could be made legally etc. It is important to begin with a discussion between the parties influenced by the issue, then decide if the thematic planning of street art and graffiti activities in the planning documents of Riga municipality should be made and afterwards come to an agreement on control mechanisms for the legal street art and graffiti activities.

Conclusions

This article examines how street art and graffiti are and can be used strategically in order to benefit city's urban development. The research carried out by the author gives a perception of the role of street art and graffiti in urban development and its planning, as well as the experience of the city of Riga with these practices in comparison to Lisbon. During the research the author wanted to create suggestions for strategic use of street art and graffiti in the city of Riga.

By analysing theoretical framework, the author concludes that the importance of graffiti and street art in the city's urban environment has increased significantly over the years. Nowadays, especially due to the increasing popularity of creative city discourse, street art and graffiti contribute to promoting creativity and innovation. By analysing theoretical literature, it can be concluded that street art and graffiti can serve as marketing tools for creating and promoting a creative city brand – promoting its image and reputation both at the city level and beyond its borders. Various authors point out that graffiti and street art play a key role in urban regeneration processes. Various studies offer examples where graffiti and street art practices have been used in different cities, creating both privately and municipally funded large-format street art pieces or offering legal places where graffiti skills can be developed legally. While institutional support and local authorities' efforts to adapt the illegal

nature of graffiti and street art have contributed to their commercialization, they have also contributed to their development and increased their importance in urban development and planning.

In his research, the author concludes that the members of Riga city municipality lack understanding of how to use street art and graffiti practices strategically, contrary to the way these practices are applied in Lisbon, where strategic use of street art and graffiti is carried out not only by the municipality, but also by working together with different associations, entrepreneurs, galleries and museums. Riga city municipality members currently lack the knowledge of the benefits from street art and graffiti practices and their positive contribution to the Riga city brand. This could be resolved by having meaningful and mediated discussions between the parties involved – municipality members, city inhabitants, graffiti and street art writers, cultural institutions etc. Previous initiatives to create legal places for graffiti in Riga have been unsuccessful due to disagreement that lacked the basis of discussion prior to creating the legal spaces for graffiti. However, various private initiatives have contributed positively to the development of legal street art and graffiti practices and have created basis for potential development of these practices in the city of Riga. The municipality should reconsider the use of street art and graffiti in both communication about the city of Riga and future development planning, in order to promote both the creative image of the city and the establishment of street art and graffiti regulation in Riga.

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PROTECTION OF STREET ART (GRAFFITI) FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LATVIAN AUTHORS' LAW

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Abstract

Street art (covering all street art types including graffiti) is considered as one of expressions of urban life and, simultaneously, one of peculiar intellectual creations. For years, street art was not recognised as a type of art and was usually subject to public condemnation, but street artists were (and still are) subject to liability arising from vandalism (hooliganism) acts. However, attitude against street art and its different expressions has been changing in recent years becoming recognised and valued as a specific type of modern art. This shift has been influenced by visual attractiveness of different creations of street art mainly murals containing graffiti; commencement of commercialisation of street art including sale of murals embodying graffiti at auctions; and court disputes over protection of street art expressions. Street art including graffiti may be subject to legal protection, yet it depends on a particular jurisdiction. The aim of the present article is to consider possibility of protection of street art in Latvia from the perspective of authors' law (i.e. copyright) law. This paper discusses specific issues in relation to street art for its protection within Latvian authors' law such as authorship as street artists usually create street art expressions anonymously; the concept of work by discussing compliance with criteria put forward to a work under authors' law; integrity of a work as street art expressions such as graffiti are usually murals involving a clash between property law and authors' law; distinction of street art from pure vandalism; and necessity for specific rules addressing specific nature of street art. The paper provides conclusions for identifying proper place of street art within legal framework of Latvian authors' law.

Keywords: *street art, graffiti, street artist, authors' law (copyright), vandalism (hooliganism).*

Introduction

Art and artistic expressions in contemporary world have become so much sophisticated and elaborated as no one could imagine in the previous decades or even centuries. Street art and its different expressions is one of such examples. Street art has occupied the place of a specific type of creative activity in the modern world in urban areas being itself an urban phenomenon. Undoubtedly street art existed for centuries already in ancient times which demonstrate different examples of different paintings, writings and murals [Smith 2013: 260; Latviešu konversācijas vārdnīca 1931: 10401]. However, the difference of street art in the modern sense from that which existed in ancient times relates to acquiring a special place in modern art and culture in urban areas with a set of specific issues discussed below.

Initially street art in urban areas was considered as an act of pure vandalism (or hooliganism as it is perceived in some jurisdictions) as street art expressions were and still are usually carried out without permission of the owner of that thing on which these expressions are embodied (this reflects one of specific features of street art). However, the understanding of street art changed gradually by being currently recognised as a specific branch of art. Such recognition allowed for street art to acquire its (and depending on a street artist – even significant) economic value (even an asset) which is demonstrated by commercialisation of street art, especially by sale of street art expressions at auctions. The most famous purchases relate to murals created by the famous street artist *Banksy*: the mural *Wet dog* was sold in 2008 for 1.8 million US dollars; *Slave labour* in 2013 for 1.1 million US dollars; and *Kissing coppers* in 2014 for 575,000 US dollars. In this regard one may notice that street art becomes art when the street artist becomes famous.

Considering this shift in the understanding of the public concerning street art, the issue of street art cannot be discussed in isolation as it involves a set of interdisciplinary aspects such as legal, artistic, economic and others. Therefore, from the modern point of view, street art as an urban phenomenon and a specific branch of art is not possible anymore to consider just an act of pure vandalism, an activity undertaken by a socially irresponsible society member or just a type of social protest. Likewise, street art cannot be solely viewed from the position of prejudice and disparage. Street art has become a specific type of artistic creation which involves economic value and, therefore, deserves a special approach even in law.

From the legal point of view, street art involves a bundle of conflicts involving different rights and interests. This situation raises an issue whether street art could be or even already is subject to legal protection. In this regard, street art could be characterised as “legal grey area”.

The legal perspective in relation to street art depends on available legal forms as there is no *sui generis* regulation for street art. Therefore, the aim of this article is to

consider street art from the perspective of its protection within authors' law¹ in the Latvian situation. Authors' law has been chosen as it could be currently considered as the most appropriate legal form for protection of street art². At the same time, this article argues that a street art expression should be perceived as a special type of author's work which requires *sui generis* legal regime in authors' law.

Discussion of protection of street art has been more and more attracting the interest of legal commentators. Generally legal commentators of intellectual property or specifically authors' law (i.e. copyright) are not so much interested to consider the issue of street art which is characteristic both at the European level [e. g., Bently, Sherman, Gangjee & Johnson 2014] and the Latvian national level [Rozenfelds 2008, Grudulis 2006]. Therefore, legal discussion surrounding street art is left for specific studies. If initially this issue seemed to be interesting to legal commentators from common law countries such as the United States [Smith 2013] and the United Kingdom [Bonadio 2017] who considered protecting possibility of street art from the point of view of copyright, such interest has been demonstrated more and more in recent years also by European legal commentators by conducting studies concerning the situation in different European countries including Latvia [Mantrov 2017].

The area of street art employs different specific concepts which could be defined differently by different authors; therefore, these concepts should be discussed at the beginning of the article. The term "street art" could be understood as "art placed in public places as well as for various forms of acceptable or tacitly tolerated graffiti" [Bloch 2015: 2500]. Thus, it would be necessary to perceive this concept in the broader meaning covering murals, paintings, texts and other expressions while the concept of graffiti, which is sometimes inaccurately used in that meaning, as one of expressions of street art [Bonadio 2018]. As it is characterised in legal literature concerning street art, "[t]he word *graffiti* comes from the Italian verb *graffiare* which means *to scratch* (the Italian word deriving in turn from the ancient Greek verb *grafein*, which means *to write*" [Bonadio 2017]. From this position, this term refers to "writings or drawings" on different types of objects in public places. Vandalism (or "hooliganism" as it is understood in certain jurisdictions including Latvia) in the similar meaning [Kraštinš 1997: 80] generally refers to "mindless and malicious harm and injury to another's property" [Black's Law dictionary 2008].

¹ Within this article, the term "authors' law" is exploited instead of the more common term "copyright" as the former better reflects the understanding of protection of works and rights of authors from the perspective of continental European countries including Latvia. This issue is discussed in Latvian legal literature [Grudulis 2006: 57–58].

² Though the author of these lines does not limit protection of street art only to authors' law, yet further studies in this regard are needed.

The concepts of author and work

If recognition of street art including its protection is viewed from the perspective of authors' law, one should refer to the issue of authorship and criteria for protection under authors' law (the so-called copyrightability criteria).

As regards Latvia, regulation on authors' law including criteria for protection under authors' law is provided by the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (initially entered into force in the territory of Latvia on 15 May 1937, after the restoration of independence of Latvia – on 11 August 1995 [WIPO, Contracting Parties, Berne Convention, Latvia]) and the Copyright Act¹ (adopted on 6 April 2000, entered into force on 11 May 2000).

Authorship

The Copyright Act contains regulation on subjects of authors' law, i.e. authorship. A specific feature of street art relates to the issue of authorship. The author of a street art expression is covered by a special term "street artist". As street art expressions are usually (but not always) made without permission, a necessary feature of a street artist usually is his or her anonymity. The Copyright Act allows that an author remains anonymous (Article 8 Copyright Act) which could be attributed also to street artists. If a street artist is considered as an author, he or she has personal rights (explicitly envisaged in Article 14 of the Copyright Act) and material rights (also directly provided by the Copyright Act in its Article 15). However, the anonymous character of a street artist may lead to a difficulty to establish authorship as the street artist should prove that it was him or her who created a particular street art expression.

Exploitation of personal or material author's rights by a street artist should be viewed in conjuncture with the concept of the occasion of the work, i.e. a street art expression. It has been already identified in legal literature concerning legal status of street art that it is necessary to establish *causa* for creation of a street art expression. Possible answers to this question could involve such situations as creation of street art in order to acquire authors' law which further deals with the situation of exploitation of material rights of an author; perhaps street art expression was created as a part of public domain which could assume that material rights of an author are transferred to a particular community, i.e. municipality; or it is a donation to community which has the same consequences as in the previous situation; it also may be considered outside of authors' law being a social, political or other protest; commentary; or finally, it could be a pure act of vandalism.

¹ If the term "Copyright Act" is used in this article, it refers to the Copyright Act adopted in Latvia.

Work

Furthermore, the Copyright Act understands the concept of the work and recognition of authors and their rights as much as possible. The doctrinal principle behind this protection is that the work is the continuation of the personality of the author [Grudulis 1996: 57].

As regards the concept of **work**, Article 2(1) of the Berne Convention provides that the expression “literary and artistic works” shall include every production in the literary, scientific and artistic domain, whatever may be the mode or form of its expression [..] The Copyright Act proceeds with the same approach. Specifically, Article 1(2) of the Latvian Copyright Act provides the legal definition of the term “work” which is defined as the result of an author’s creative activities in the literary, scientific or artistic domain, irrespective of the mode or form of its expression and its value. Likewise, Article 2(2) of the Latvian Copyright Act envisages that authors’ rights shall apply to works of literature, science, art and other works referred to in Section 4 of this Law, also unfinished works, regardless of the purpose of the work and the value, form or type of expression.

As one may observe from these provisions concerning the legal definition of the term “work”, street art expressions may be generally covered by that term and, therefore, protected under authors’ law.

The Copyright Act envisages non-exhaustive list of types of works (Article 4 Copyright Act) including artistic works in non-exhaustive listing (Article 4(6) Copyright Act) and in such a capacity they have been discussed in Latvian intellectual property literature [Rozenfelds 2008, Grudulis 2006:67]. Street art expressions are usually perceived as artistic works as envisaged by Article 2(1) of the Latvian Copyright Act and Article 4(6) of the Berne Convention. The former provision envisages that the objects of copyright, regardless of the manner or form of expression, shall comprise the following works of authors: drawings, paintings, sculptures and graphic art and other works of art.

Furthermore, similarly like such legal acts in other jurisdictions, the Copyright Act envisages a set of specific criteria that should be satisfied for such a work to enjoy protection within authors’ law. One may establish that artistic expressions may correspond to the requirement of **originality** which is explicitly mentioned in the legal definitions of the terms “author” (Article 1(1) Copyright Act) and “work” (Article 1(1) Copyright Act) (as referred to above as well as in other provisions of the Copyright Act). A work must also satisfy the requirement for being embodied in **materialised form** explicitly required by the Copyright Act (Article 3(1) Copyright Act). At the same time, there is no requirement in authors’ law for **permanency** of the work as walls of buildings or other objects located in public places embodying street art expressions could be destroyed. However, neither the Berne Convention nor

the Copyright Act requires that an author's work should be created on a permanent basis. For instance, if a particular street artist or any other person has fixed the mural containing a street art expression (for instance, by taking a photo) as already suggested by legal literature [Smith 2013: 281] and later the wall of the building where the mural was created is destroyed, still this street art expression satisfies the criteria put forward for the work under authors' law.

Street art expressions are generally of such a nature which meet the above criteria as provided by both the Berne Convention and the Copyright Act irrespective of the technique used in creation of street art expressions.

At the same time, it is not possible to identify a single case in Latvian court practice (as far as the anonymised Latvian court practice data base is concerned) where a street art expression was tested for compliance with the above criteria. However, Latvian court practice is familiar with street art expressions which were recognised as an act of vandalism (i.e. hooliganism in Latvian legal terminology).

This issue involves a debate whether authors' law may protect such street art expressions which do not correspond to public moral, for instance, rude or offensive paintings or writings without conveying artistic meaning. Such a situation creates a clash between authors' law, the right of expression protected under constitutional law and public order. This issue is recognised and dealt with in Latvian court practice, for instance, in one of cases a Latvian court made such a conclusion:

"[a]s a graffiti, the drawing is a depicted octopus-like creature that, in the opinion of the Administrative Commission, cannot be regarded as abusive, since it does not convey a violation of immorality or moral norms. In turn, the inscriptions are made up of different types of abridgements and abbreviations whose meaning is unknown (perhaps it is known to a specific, narrow circle of people). Considering that the inscriptions are not endowed with a certain meaning, i.e. any kind of calls or statements, and they do not use rude, indecent or offensive words and expressions, they cannot essentially express disrespect" [Judgement of Latgale Regional Court (appeal instance court) of 19 December 2014 in administrative offence case No 126011614].

Relation with material object and integrity

Another specific feature of street art relates to tight relationship between a street art expression and a material object which embodies that expression. For a street art expression (i.e. a work in the terminology of the Copyright Act), the issue of separation of a work from a material object where it is embodied acquires significant meaning. Authors' law is based on the principle that a work should be distinguished from the material object on which it is embodied. This principle is explicitly recognised in Latvian Authors' law. Indeed, Article 2(1) of the Latvian

Copyright Act provides that authors' rights shall **belong to the author** [emphasis added – author's remark] as soon as a work is created, regardless of whether it has been completed. Furthermore, Article 16(3) of the Copyright Act envisages that

authors' law is **not linked with property rights** [emphasis added – author's remark] to the material object in which the work is expressed. Copyright to a work expressed in a material object shall be **dissociated** [emphasis added – author's remark] from possession of such work. **Transfer** of possession of a material object (also a copy of the first fixation of the work) **shall not of itself** [emphasis added – author's remark] result in the transfer of copyright to the work.

Therefore, a street art expression if it corresponds to the term "work" shall be distinguished from a particular place which embodies a street art expression. This discussion immediately leads to the issue whether a street art expression was created with or without permission. This issue is discussed in the next chapter of this article.

Permission

Existence of personal and material rights of an author in respect of street artists in relation to their created expressions of street art is contrasted with ownership rights in relation to the thing embodying a street art expression. The concept of permission to create a street art expression on the thing (for instance, the wall of a building) may be provided either by a permit (being a unilateral legal transaction) or on the basis of a contract (being a bilateral legal transaction) with the owner of that thing (see Article 1427 Civil Act). It is possible to distinguish two situations in this regard: a street art expression which is created **with** the permission of the owner of that thing (for instance, the building) and a street art expression which is created **without** the permission of the owner.

If a street art expression is created **without permission**, which is a common scenario for creation of street art, a street artist does not have any legal right to oppose destruction of that thing and, therefore, destruction of the street art expression. The Copyright Act provides that an author has both a personal right for inviolability of a work (i.e. the right to permit or prohibit making of any transformations, changes or additions either to the work itself or to its title) as provided by Article 14(5) of that Act and the personal right to oppose any distortion, modification, or other transformation of his or her work as envisaged by Article 14(6) of this Act. However, both these personal rights of an author are **outweighed** by a right to property to the thing which embodies a street art expression created without permission. In this regard, the Civil Act provides that a right to property means the full right of control over property (Article 927 Civil Act).

The situation might be different if there was such a permission which could raise an issue of the integrity of work and a right of a street artist to oppose destruction of his or her work. This issue has been already raised in Latvian intellectual property literature [Grudulis 2006: 50]. Latvian courts are unfamiliar with a dispute over an expression of street art which was created with permission considering its protection against destruction (as far as the anonymised Latvian court practice data base is concerned).

However, the mere fact that a street art expression has been created without permission does not mean that this expression cannot qualify to be considered as a work in the meaning of authors' law. Neither the Berne Convention nor the Copyright Act envisages that protection is granted to such works which are created within a legal activity only, i.e. with permission of the owner of a thing. Therefore, every author's work should be protected **irrespective** whether its creation was carried out during **illegal activity**, i.e. during vandalism (hooliganism) as already suggested by legal literature [Lerman 2013: 316]. Such an attitude reflects difference for perceiving author's works in comparison with the American approach as discussed below.

This conclusion, however, is **distinct** from the issue of liability under either criminal or administrative penal law for vandalism (i.e. hooliganism in Latvian legal terminology). Latvian court practice is familiar with the situation when a street art expression is created without permission which leads to qualification of creation of a street art expression as an act of hooliganism.

Foreign court practice, especially in the United States, demonstrates examples of such disputes. Court practice of the United States contains different examples of such disputes which could provide a useful guide for problems that could be faced by European courts in the future. However, these cases are usually accomplished with a settlement preventing to analyse the court's reasoning.

In **Villa v. Pearson Education** (2003), the subject matter of the dispute related to the street artist Hiram Villa ("Unone") who brought a copyright infringement claim for reproduction and publication of his mural in a book. An American court held in this case that whether a mural "is not protected by copyright [...] because it is illegal graffiti [...] turns on questions of fact," i.e. "the legality of the circumstances under which the mural was created."

As this case finished with settlement, it is unknown (yet it could be assumed) the final conclusion of the court on the basis of the federal copyright law concerning existence of a copyright in an expression of street art which was created without permission.

Likewise, in **Rime vs. Jeremy Scott and Moschino** (2016) the reproduction of the mural *Vandal eyes* was involved which was created without permission. In this case, an American court acknowledged its attitude on the discussed issue:

“Tierney’s graffiti is the product of illegal trespass and vandalism and, therefore, does not enjoy the privilege of federal copyright protection.”

Finally, foreign, especially American, courts have dealt with cases involving street art expressions created with permission by applying US copyright law [Bonadio 2018]. For instance, a Miami street artist *AbolSniffsGlue’s* brought a claim against a retailer, the legal basis of the claim related to the use of his mural which was commissioned by a local community. The case ended with the settlement so ultimate attitude of the court remained unknown [Elias and Ghajar 2005: 4].

Conclusion

By summarising discussion reflected in the article, street art has occupied its own place in the contemporary world of art and, by acquiring such a place, street art should be subject to appropriate legal regulation by searching for a proper place of street art in modern law. However, the specifics of street art – such as an author covered by the special term “street artist” and specific circumstances of creation of expressions of street art – demonstrates that it is not suitable to regulate street art with the currently effective regulation of intellectual property rights, especially authors’ law (copyright). Such a situation calls for a *sui generis* regime for street art by taking into account specifics of street art. Such *sui generis* regimes for specific situations are not unfamiliar in authors’ law in Latvia as they were already introduced in such specific situations as *droit de suite* (Article 17 Copyright Act), orphan works (Chapter IX¹ Copyright Act), data base *sui generis* rights (Chapter IX Copyright Act).

The *sui generis* regulation of street art should reflect conditions for protection of street art and its scope giving full protection within regulation of authors’ law (i.e. copyright). This regulation should also address several specific issues like physical integrity of the work, right of remuneration, protection from destruction/removal and sale. There could be also interrelation with other objects of intellectual property rights such as design right as well as interrelation between an object of intellectual property rights and a property right in relation to a public place embodying street art expression. Adoption of street art orientated legal regulation is more and more carried out in different jurisdictions. For instance, regulation for street art was recently adopted in the city of Moscow (adopted on 17 May 2018 and entered into force on 2 June 2018) [Act of the city of Moscow of 17 May 2018 No 10].

If the approach of *sui generis* regulation is undertaken, another question for further research arises concerning necessity for a European-wide measure. Street art has acquired its global dimension early enough. Therefore, *sui generis* regulation in relation to street art could be more appropriately addressed at the European Union level by adoption of a special directive on *sui generis* legal regime of street art.

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ISSUES CONCERNING THE PRESERVATION OF GRAFFITI. DEVELOPING CONSERVATION PRACTICES WORLDWIDE

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Abstract

This conference paper is dedicated to rising issues concerning the preservation of graffiti. The author outlines practical and ethical aspects conservators are dealing with while preserving an industrial canvas. How to treat artworks that are tangible and intangible at once? Graffiti is not just a drawing we see on the murals. It is a form of social movement, an artistic expression of opinion. We can draw similarities with contemporary art, where an idea might be an essence of the artwork and artists do not always think about the longevity of their creations. Artists might use materials and techniques that make conservator's work practically impossible. That is why conservation in its traditional interpretation is an unsuitable solution for graffiti. Various ethical and practical questions have to be answered before conservator and society decide to preserve the art of graffiti.

Keywords: *graffiti, restoration, conservation, preservation, street art.*

American philosopher John Dewey has said that artwork, regardless of how old it is, in fact, and not potentially is an artwork when it resides in an experience of an individual. The material itself is just a reminder of time, an artwork comes to life every time when it is aesthetically experienced [Chiantore 2013: 53]. The statement successfully describes the essence of contemporary art. It is important to mention that the material of an artwork does not always play the main role since sometimes the intangible message is more valuable. To understand the issues concerning the preservation of graffiti, narrow introduction in the field of cultural heritage conservation-restoration has to be provided.

Preservation of the cultural heritage began a long time ago but back then could never be manifested as conservation by the intentions. Cleaning the monuments, filling the lost fragments of building facades and other preservation treatments were

carried out without a professional framework. Artists and craftsmen visually and functionally preserved the tangible heritage which was publicly valued [Conti 2007: 7–8]. At the end of the 18th century, Edward Petro began deliberate cleaning of paintings and began to develop guidelines for the preservation of paintings. Petro was the first who highlighted the need for a school where principles of preservation could be taught. He emphasized the importance of the original material and importance of respecting artist's intentions [Darrow 2000:1–4]. However, despite being one of the first known conservators for paintings, Pietro's ideas for the conservation of cultural heritage did not become the origins of the theories used nowadays. The founder of the first historical conservation theory is an art historian and formalist Alois Riegl. His ideas, even though oriented towards preservation of architecture and cultural monuments, can also be applied to art objects. He emphasized the importance of striking a balance between the historical and the modern approaches, which is still topical in the field of contemporary art preservation nowadays [Schädler-Saub 2010: 1]. Riegl's theory was followed by the theory of an art historian and conservator Cesare Brandi. The theory was published in 1964 and still has a significant role in conservation practices. It provides common principles for the preservation of the tangible cultural heritage and emphasizes the aesthetics of work of art, that is based on the idea of irreplaceability of the original [Schädler-Saub 2010: 1].

The field of deliberate theoretical conservation-restoration of cultural heritage fully flourished in mid-20th century when the first iconic cultural heritage policy documents and institutions began to emerge. These documents provided description of conservator's profession as well as duties conservator had to follow and, most important, the ethics of conservation was developed at that time such as¹:

- creativity in conservation is unacceptable, the conservator is not an artist but a person who helps the artwork to maintain its aesthetic and historical values;
- conservator should not make subjective decisions;
- the material form is the one that expresses historical and aesthetic value;
- it is the patina that provides information about the history and use of the object;
- complete reversibility is a prerequisite in any conservation activity;
- the original form represents the values of artistic work;
- the treatment of conservation must be identifiable. The conservator should not hide the treatment of preservation, but rather make it noticeable [Barassi 2010].

¹ Morea Morera Santabarbara, Carlota. Conservation of Contemporary Art: A Challenge for the Theory of Critic Restoration. Available: <https://ifc.dpz.es/recursos/publicaciones/35/83/20conservation.pdf>

These norms promote the principles and general rules of remedial conservation, restoration and preventive conservation for the tangible cultural heritage and have been followed by conservators and used in practice since then. Although it is important to mention that there is no common methodology in preserving contemporary art. Even though classical theories have been applied in cultural heritage preservation for years every contemporary artwork is unique in its appearance whether it is a complex material or conceptual artwork and they have to be viewed individually. The classical preservation approaches that insist on saving the original material do not always match with an idea of contemporary art. Nevertheless, various suggestions and systems for the preservation of contemporary art were developed more than twenty years ago when the first case studies towards the preservation of modern art began to emerge [Beerens 2015: 12–16]:

- the artist's instructions in the process of preservation of contemporary works of art are irreplaceable. The artist is the one who determines whether the artwork is temporary or permanent;
- the material, idea and the technique used to create the artwork should be taken into consideration;
- preventive conservation should be considered as one of the leading preservation practices;
- preservation procedures for objects that are temporary or designed to disappear must be fully justified;
- before the process of preservation of contemporary art has been started, it is necessary to evaluate the risks and clearly identify involved parties who will do the actual work of preservation and will be entirely responsible for their actions [Chiantore 2013: 52–53].

Problems concerning the preservation of mural paintings have been topical for years. Although classical approaches can be easily applied to historical paintings on murals, it is challenging to apply conservation criteria and methods to graffiti. Even suggestions on contemporary art preservation cannot be fully applied to it, because of graffiti diverse nature, social and legal aspects.

The movement of graffiti began to emerge when the development of paint caused a change in the history of arts. In the mid-20th century artists began to experiment with various polychrome techniques, and replacing classical painting dogmas with contemporary approach, taking over all possible forms of colour expression. Synthetic and industrial paints used in the car industry or spray cans, fluorescent pigments, and polychrome ready-made objects began to appear in the creative work of an artist. These forms of expression became a hallmark of the century. Artists experimented with different types of polychrome forms without paying attention to their quality or manufacturing technology [Temkin 2008: 20]. Within the development of artistic

colours, application of ethical principles for the preservation of these artworks became even more complicated.

Graffiti artists mostly use synthetic paints that have many good properties, for example, they are cheap and dry fast and they have lots of tonal variations [Chiantore 2013: 31], textures as well as they are more sustainable than organic paints, but even that does not help when it comes to environmental impact. Since in most cases the act of graffiti is illegal, the artists do not think about the longevity of their creations. Graffiti is made outdoors where rain, sun, cold, and other weather conditions seriously damage it. More solutions have been suggested in a form of case studies for preserving unprotected artworks such as:

- detaching the object and move it to better conditions;

The case study of Vasarely's wall painting preservation [Brakebusch 2016: 267–268] outlines the issue when art gets moved from its original location to museums. Originally Vasarely's wall painting was made on the wall in a residential complex. Since the building went under reconstruction conservators decided to separate the painting from the wall and move it to the museum. Even though Vasarely's wall painting cannot be assimilated to graffiti the preservation of his artwork can be used as a prototype for preserving graffiti. Both graffiti and Vasarely's wall painting are artistic creations that are site-specific art and created to exist in a certain place. But ethical issues arise when site-specific art is preserved by disconnecting an artwork from its origins. Conservators have to be critical when applying such a method – since some artworks cannot survive without the context of the original site – thereby becoming *homeless art* [Brakebusch 2016: 267–268].

A decision of moving Vasarely's artwork was based mainly on the authority of the artist. In the case of graffiti, it is hard to apply such criteria since most of the artists stay unknown.

- conserving the original by strengthening its structure;

Street art conservation in Athens [Chatzidakis 2016: 17–23] is a successful example of practical conservation of graffiti where conservation professionals together with conservation students are running a project where they preserve the original structures of the street art without separating it from the original site. Initially, it seems like the best solution for preservation of graffiti, but ethical issues such as deciding on what to preserve arise such as: do tags and overdrawing should be considered as a part of the street art movement? How to evaluate what to preserve and what not to preserve? Also, the fact that most of the graffiti in Athens are made on historic sites creates dissonance between historic monuments and contemporary movement, i.e., are they equally valuable? Does graffiti become vandalism when it appears on historic sites or, on the contrary, complements the nature of the sites by reflecting vibrant intangible social movements? If an object is stored in the museum

or owned by other institutions working towards the preservation of art, then it is easier to preserve it because the responsibility of any memory institution is to provide the longevity of their collections. But what happens when artwork does not belong to anyone and is illegal? Graffiti artists may stay unknown and do not share their identity even if their artworks are appreciated and acknowledged by society. In some cases, their art appears on historical buildings or on private property and legally can be interpreted as a form of vandalism.

One of the main arguments for conservators who did conservation work of the graffiti in Athens was that graffiti was one of the tourist attractions in the city beside historic site tours, more and more people were willing to attend graffiti tours of Athens thereby favouring the prosperity of the city, especially during time of economic crisis in the country.

- reconstruction of the artwork;

Reconstruction is a repetition of an artwork based on the original material. Reconstruction can claim the status of an artwork. The method is usually applied to repeat ephemeral artworks, such as installations, media art, most often conceptual works of art. In the context of conservation, the term “reconstruction” is used to refer to the activity performed to re-create art the work that has been lost or the artist anticipates its reconstruction.

The case study of Keith Haring’s wall painting preservation in Melbourne [Dickens 2016: 29–37] is an example of the method where conservators instead of moving the artwork from its original location decide to preserve the artwork by repainting it. Again, various ethical issues arise – by repainting the original we assume that the idea of artwork is more important than its physical appearance. On the other hand, artist’s style, the original paint, and the patina are lost during such a treatment. And most importantly the decision of preserving the mural was highly criticized by the locals. They were not fully informed about planned treatments on the mural. Since Haring’s wall painting was highly appreciated in the local community the protests arose with intentions to stop government’s and conservators’ intentions to preserve the mural. Only after long discussions and compromises both parties – locals and conservators – came to a settlement. The protests showed how important role society can play towards the preservation of graffiti as well as conservators should always communicate clearly and appreciate the opinion of the locals.

- reproduction and migration of an artwork;

Reproduction is an imitation of a work of art, reproduction does not always force to imitate an art object in its original size and not necessarily in the same technique. Reproductions can be replicated in innumerable copies and do not qualify for artwork status. Reproductions are usually seen in museum shops, postcards, art

albums or other forms of souvenirs. The best-known example of reproduction of graffiti is Banksy merchandise. Reproductions of his graffiti are well known and have been used to make souvenirs all over the world.

Migration is a method used in conservation by conveying the idea into comprehensible and accessible form. A method of migrating graffiti was used during the International Research Conference Culture Crossroads 2017 in Riga where photos of Latvian graffiti were projected on the wall of the conference venue.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that graffiti is not only the visual manifestation we see on the murals. It is a social movement, an artistic expression of opinion. It is important to enhance understanding of the context of the mural and environment itself, artist's intentions and if there are more than one graffiti on the mural, then the context of all them together. Not always overpainting and tags can be looked as a vandalism. It can be social interaction, and if they are removed without justification, it can be perceived as censorship [Chatzidakis 2016: 17–23]. Some graffiti artists express themselves visually and the aesthetic result characterizes their intentions. On the other hand, there are artists for whom the material form of graffiti is not as important as the message it represents. In this case reconstruction of an idea as the method of preservation treatment is more suitable, since material often plays only a secondary role. And since the essence of the graffiti is mainly the message it presents it is very complex to preserve it. In order to express their ideas, artists use materials, techniques, and methods that make the conservator's work practically impossible. The society has a major role in preservation of graffiti. Most of the safeguard work has been done thanks to the group of activists that have proved the value and the need of preservation for some exceptional graffiti.¹ But it has to be mentioned that financial aspects can suspend good intentions, where to get financial support for preservation of graffiti if it does not belong to anyone and does not have a status of cultural heritage or is illegal and has to be removed by the owner of the property? Preservation mostly relies on donations, patron funds and crowdfunding, and when object is recognized by the government then only public funding can be applied.² Therefore, it is often not the conservator who preserves street art for future generations, but the society who can do documentation, film, photographs, or with other documentary methods provide longevity [Kyi 2016: 98–103].

All the objects with artistic value cannot be saved and passed to future

¹ The Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles (2012). MCLA Restores "LA Freeway Kids!". Available: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1541595750/mcla-restores-la-freeway-kids/description>

² Vankin, Deborah (2014). Anthony Quinn "Pope of Broadway" mural to get restored. *Los Angeles Times*. Available: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-anthony-quinn-pope-of-broadway-mural-eloy-torrez-20141028-story.html>

generations. Only that what has survived to this day¹ is known, but it is enough to create a history and distinguish the characteristic of art in each era [Chiantore 2013:14]. We can draw similarities with graffiti – not all the mural paintings and drawings can be safeguarded but it is important to preserve the concept and pass it on to the next generations. Still there are no clear methodological practices developed that can be applied to conservation of Graffiti because of the lack of research and practical work done in this field. It will take more time for conservators to create objective conclusions and practices.

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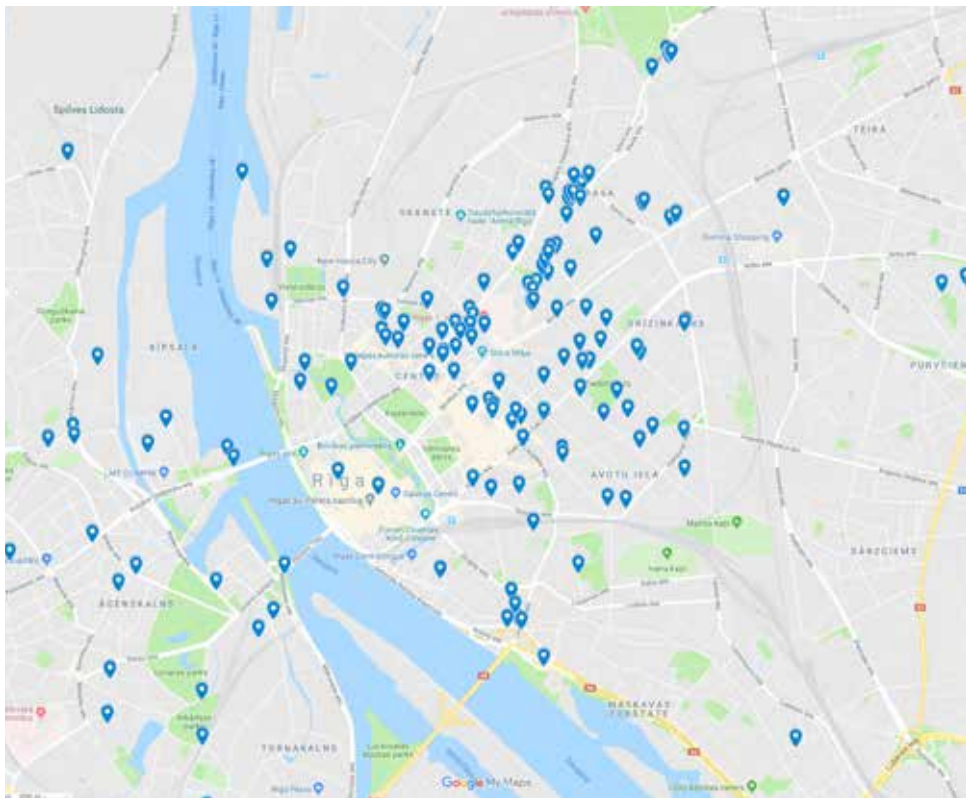
STREET ART MAP OF RIGA

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Riga street art map was made as a collaborative project by FaceBook group Ielu Mākslas mednieki (street art hunters). The group was created in September 2017 after an initial FB post by Agnese Aljena inviting people to create such map. Post went viral and soon the group reached 500+ members, all hunting street art in Riga and posting online their findings. It took about 2 months to create initial street art map covering most of the notable street art object of the city. Later new created artwork was added and identified destroyed art work is marked with black markers.

Available: <https://ej.uz/streetartmapofriga>



Google Maps. 2019