

Painting the City

Performative Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Space and Art

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Abstract

Understanding everyday urban practices as performative, political, and potentially transformative, this dissertation aims to explore how graffiti- and street art use, subvert, and, via media, extend urban space in Stockholm. Drawing upon a performative ethnographic approach, the study focuses on both the practice of and the various forms of social commentary and critique generated by graffiti and street art in Stockholm. The findings illustrate the diversity of positionalities that abide in this cultural cluster, noting, in particular, the ambiguities, juxtaposition and tensions therein. Furthermore, the dissertation explores the cosmopolitan potentials of graffiti and street art as transnational movements, which create connections through shared imaginaries and senses of belonging. The analysis is based upon in-depth interviews, nine months of fieldwork, and numerous photographs, and addresses three research questions: (1) how is contemporary Stockholm graffiti- and street art culture articulated and performed by its makers and in what ways the culture collapse with other media than “writing”/ painting?, (2) what characterizes the scope of social critique articulated as part of the performative repertoires of Stockholm graffiti and street art discourses? and, (3) what are the critical and aesthetic cosmopolitan potentials and/or deficits of graffiti- and street art culture and under which conditions do they materialize?

Theoretically, the study draws on the concept of aesthetic cosmopolitanism in order to explore and analyze the acts and practices of “world-making” through aesthetic performances. By linking aesthetic cosmopolitanism with ancient Cynic philosophy, the concept of *performative cosmopolitanism* is introduced. *Performative cosmopolitanism* captures the varieties of outlooks and spaces that open up through critical, sensorial, and, in certain cases, even transformative, interventions in the city and their mediated extensions. Using mediatization as a paradigmatic approach, both an increase in digital dissemination and visibility and a decrease in actual performances and visibility are observed. In this respect, the mediatization of graffiti and street art remains a paradoxical process. Given the entanglement of different media with graffiti and street art performances, the study further introduces the concept of *hyper-mediatization* to articulate an interdependent relationship between the actual and virtual forms of these urban performances: they fundamentally affect and extend each other by both sustaining and expanding existing imaginaries and connections and generating emergent ones.

The dissertation paints the image of a contested, controversial and subversive urban culture and its contemporary mediatized extensions. It shows how graffiti and street art can be understood, both culturally and politically, as a critical, alternative and essentially anti-capitalist aestheticization of the urban. Utilizing the concept of *regimes of cosmopolitanism*, the author highlights the potentials and deficits of “comingtogetherness” *through* and *during* creative practice and the dual dynamics of hospitality and encapsulation. Particular emphasis is placed upon the tensions related to gender and the ways in which such tensions factor into the social relations within these artistic communities and the aesthetics they produce.

Keywords: *graffiti, street art, performance ethnography, aesthetic cosmopolitanism, performative cosmopolitanism, urban space, regimes of cosmopolitanism, hyper mediatization.*

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For my children

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Prologue

Growing up in Nacka, a Stockholm suburb, in the 1990s, one of the most active and notorious graffiti crews I witnessed was WUFC, which stands for Writers United Football Club. I felt like they (along with the crew VIM) were basically everywhere. I used to stop and look at what they had written and wonder who they were and why they did what they did. I was totally fascinated by these people running about, probably in the middle of the night, writing their names everywhere. WUFC did not always write Writers United Football Club though. Sometimes they changed the meaning of the F and the C. When I was in the 7th grade I remember my just-as-fascinated friend telling me how one morning she had seen them write Writers United Full of Champagne, for example. I remember us having a serious 13-year-old giggle about that. That was the first time graffiti put a smile on my face.

Some time later, in 1995, France decided to do nuclear test bombings in Mururoa, an atoll in the Pacific Ocean that is part of French Polynesia. Jacques Chirac was the president of France at the time. The nuclear test bombings caused worldwide protest and an embargo against the French wine industry. I was almost 14 at the time. One day I was sitting on the train to Stockholm when I passed Henriksdal, the last stop on the Saltsjöbanan train before you get into town. I looked through the window and saw a wall where WUFC had written “Writers United Fuck Chirac.” That was the first time graffiti made me both smile and realize that writing can be political.

Introduction

In 2008 the graffiti artist and art student NUG tagged a subway car in Stockholm and recorded it on camera. The performance was part of his examination project “Territorial Pissing” at the University College of Arts, Crafts and Design (Konstfack) in Stockholm. In 2009 the video installation was exhibited at the art fair Market, where it was witnessed by the Minister of Culture. She was immensely provoked: “Graffiti is by its nature illegal. This is not art” (*author’s translation*), the Minister affirmed (Pallas, 2013). The project caused an outrage, and several politicians demanded that public financing for the University College be cut. The headmaster was called to Riksdagen (the Swedish Parliament) for questioning, but mysteriously enough, the subway car in question was never found and therefore NUG walked away from the whole thing not only unscathed but also well on the way of becoming a Swedish art icon (Söderin, 2013). “Territorial Pissing” shows, like almost no other case, the remarkable level of emotional stir that graffiti can provoke.

Graffiti, along with street art and every other form of unsanctioned visual expression, has been deemed illegal in Stockholm, and few opportunities exist for performing these art forms legally. Inspired by New York policy on graffiti, Stockholm has practiced zero tolerance (in different forms) against graffiti and street art since the 1990s. In 2014, however, the ban was lifted. This relaxation clearly did not mean it was suddenly possible to paint everywhere. The City of Stockholm still has a policy against graffiti which, among other things, involve a “sanitation guarantee” stating all graffiti should be removed within 24 hours (Stockholms stad, 2015). The removal of the ban did however mean that it became possible to launch legal projects, festivals, and open walls for graffiti and street art, none of which had been possible prior to the lifting of the ban. The lifting of the ban was followed by several initiatives for legal graffiti walls, but over these past four years only two such walls have been built. When the first wall opened in the southern part of Stockholm, the most common reaction I met when speaking to non-graffiti/street art people who visited the wall was, “But it’s so small!” Graffiti and street art in Stockholm today is thus situated in quite a paradoxical situation: it is formally possible to paint legally, but the actual opportunities to do so are very scarce. Although some celebrated the building of legal walls, the practice has also encountered massive resistance and criti

cism. Following the “broken windows theory,” which suggests that small, visible crimes can be the start of an increasing spiral of crime and violence, disapproving city politicians often argue that illegal graffiti and vandalism increase in proximity to legal walls (see, for example, Gelin, 2016). Stockholm’s local news media publish frequent reports on how graffiti has increased in the area around the legal walls, feeding into the same narrative (Stigfur, 2018). At the same time, others argue that it is not possible to establish causality between legal walls and increasing graffiti and street art. Stockholm graffiti and street art consequently still remain in an in-between situation, in between ideological ideals and political practice; in between acceptance, love and disgust; in between articulations of art and vandalism. Despite the formal of zero tolerance, graffiti and street art in Stockholm thus still cause emotional stir and controversy through their “in-your-face” expressivity. The city’s 2015 policy against illegal graffiti states, “Stockholm should be a secure, safe, pure and beautiful city” (Stockholms stad, 2015). It is made perfectly clear that illegal graffiti poses a threat to this vision.

Creating illegal graffiti and street art in public is thus a *de facto* form of “space hacking” (Dodge & Kitchin, 2006). Graffiti and street art become “an urban dirtiness, a ‘visual pollution’ by presenting another idea of how the urban could be aestheticized” (Thörn, 2005, p. 174; see also Thor, 2017). It becomes “urban dirt” that threatens the “secure, safe, pure and beautiful.” These visual artifacts *critically* intervene in the hegemonic narrative and “construct new interpretations of reality in the service of critical activity” (Boltanski, 2011). Graffiti and street art offer narratives, traces, and fragments of *other* urban stories. They are re-imaginings of the city that create other, and *othered*, spaces and places in everyday life (cf. Christensen and Thor, 2017). In that sense, as practices that are de-institutionalized, and sometimes anti-institutionalized, graffiti and street art bear political potentialities for (re)creating urban and public space.

In this vein, we could consider graffiti and street art to be a kind of materialized difference. Living in cities in the 21st century means living with ubiquitous opportunities and risks—depending on how one sees it—for encountering difference. Facing the unknown, the less familiar, and the different is part of experiencing and living in cities. Passing through cities carries the potential of encountering these multimodally mediated diversities, as well spatial and communicative articulations of perceived threats and risks often associated with “living with difference.” In a contemporary milieu where *difference* has increased presence and visibility, the question of how we can convey *and* make room for difference is an ever-present question. We can encounter difference and diversity through everyday dwellings in cities and through the electronic media we carry around in our bags and pockets; on the subway, on the street, at coffee shops, on campus, on Instagram, and at other sites. This, of course, comes with counter-reflexes, such as walling up and encapsulation (Christensen and Jans-

son, 2015), which are today technologically experienced through filter bubbles and algorithmic flows, as well as the actual territorial compartmentalization of cities.

Furthermore, graffiti and street art cultures are also about creating an own and new “constitutive inside” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001), most often in a state of exteriority. These interventions are also a cultural assemblage with their own logics (albeit cellular), rules, and structures. Graffiti and street art performances thus become manifestations of public space as a battleground “where different hegemonic projects are confronted” (Mouffe, 2007). In other words, when graffiti and street artists are excluded from political and cultural institutions, that very exclusion leads to the creation of their own spaces of belonging, with their own structures and cross-cutting hierarchies that transcend national borders and local situations.

At the same time, graffiti and street art also appear within cultural institutions, such as museums and galleries, and within frames that parallel the hegemonic ideals of a city like Stockholm. When co-opted or commercialized, as is the case in some parts of London, for example, these art forms become part and parcel of the dominant view of the city. The status of graffiti and street art is accordingly not inherent in the practice or in the imagery itself, but rather is bound up in different space-times in which these practices travel along different axes. They are sometimes articulated as crime and sometimes as art, sometimes situated as interventions and sometimes as hegemonic reproductions. The contemporary status of graffiti and street art presents another dimension of complexity in their movement through digital media. A graffiti piece in one spatiotemporal situation might have an intervening function in an analog environment, but the same piece might be disseminated through commercial and institutionalized social networking platforms. This creates a situation where a visual artifact simultaneously becomes part of an “anti-system” and a political/economic “system.” This makes graffiti and street art in-between media forms that potentially move in and out of different spatial visions, narratives, and counternarratives, movements that gain further complexity and depth in the entwinements of the analog and digital.

The characteristic feature of graffiti and street art can accordingly be described as “nomadic” or “in-between,” in the sense that it is excluded from certain domains at the same time that both graffiti and street artists and aesthetics gain a foothold in cultural and political arenas and institutions (Thor, 2017, 2018), sometimes simultaneously, in their different modalities. These spaces can be thought of as what cultural studies and communications professor Nikos Pastergiadis and cultural studies scholar Daniella Trimboli call “folds” of “different surfaces” (2017, p. 565). These “truly transnational” art movements

(Kimvall, 2014) create shared communicative spaces manifested in digital and analog spaces, and in “imagined communities” simultaneously tied to many *different* localities, at the same time that these visual expressions are expression without a designated place. As suggested elsewhere (Christensen & Thor, 2017), graffiti and street art “as networked art-forms [...] generate certain senses of locality, and their ephemerality and changing nature temporalize the city as a transient space of global mediations” (p. 592). In that respect, graffiti and street art are embodiments of Diogenes’s cosmopolitan aphorism “I am a citizen of the world.” Graffiti and street art practices can therefore also be considered in terms of what one might call (sub)cultural “comingtogetherness” (Thor, 2015), which feeds into an aesthetic world consciousness and an aesthetic cosmopolitanism through artistic practice, largely supported by the possibilities provided by globally disseminated newer media. The increased degree of digital and embodied connectivity and encounters through global mobilities has prompted a corresponding level of academic interest in cosmopolitanism over the past few decades. These explorations seek to understand and scrutinize borderless “comingtogetherness” (Thor, 2015) as an idea and ideal concerned with the ethical and moral possibilities for living together with, and respecting, difference (see, for example; Beck, 2006; Christensen & Jansson, 2015; Georgiou, 2013; Nava, 2007). At the same time, graffiti and street art are very much located and emplaced in specific sites, which function as hubs for and also contributors to such makings. Exploring graffiti and street through the lens of cosmopolitanism accordingly points to the contrasts, interactions, and coming together of the locally and globally *emplaced* and the kind of visions and dispositions such (sub)cultural embodiments and performances contain. The study of graffiti and street art in specific locales, in this case Stockholm, can offer an incision through time to reveal how these dynamics play out and what they imply for understanding how certain visions and performances of cosmopolitanism unfold in urban spaces.

By exploring these artistic practices I thus examine the dynamics of spatial and artistic creation and subversion; comingtogetherness across institutionalized borders; ephemeral urban arts as visions of cosmopolitan potentials; and dispositions toward living with and in “glocal” (R. Robertson, 1995) differences and paradoxes. These explorations provide a window to see what stories of the city are being told, and by whom and where; the tactics adopted by those without access to formally institutionalized power; how these art forms ultimately challenge notions of access to the “common,” un-/belonging; and what cosmopolitan imaginaries and social critique they articulate.

Examining Stockholm Graffiti and Street Art

Research Problem

Graffiti and street art have been investigated in a range of disciplines, such as art history (Bengtson, 2014; Jacobson, 1996; Kimvall, 2014), visual education (Andersson, 2006), and criminology (Shannon, 2003; Young, 2005, 2014). In most of these accounts, graffiti and street art have been regarded as either a subcultural or “outsidered” (Christensen & Thor, 2017, p. 585) artistic practice. Such studies address, for instance, how graffiti is framed in policy and the media within a discourse of criminality (as vandalism/by vandals) and challenge the simplicity inherent in such mainstream narratives (see, for example, Young, 2005, 2014).

In a similar vein, this study applies a critical perspective but differs from earlier studies in that here my attention is directed towards the nuances and multiplicities of social critique that are articulated through the graffiti/street art cultural cluster. Furthermore, this study directs attention to the ways in which graffiti and street art become digitized, and how digitization processes become entangled with such critiques. Due to the illegality of these arts, and to some extent their historical emplacement, the act of creating such art is a de facto subversive and critical practice, in the sense that these illegal performances form a counter-discourse—something several earlier studies have also pointed to (Christensen & Thor, 2017; Patterson, 2011; Thor, 2017; Waldner & Dobratz, 2013). Yet another new dimension of inquiry in my study are the ways in which these critical performances take place not only in cities, as spatial subversions, but also the ways in which they appear in and make use of commercial and mainstream Social Networking Service (SNS) platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. This, in turn, creates a potential tension between graffiti and street art as counter-hegemonic practices and their mediations as (potentially) hegemonic process. Building on these perspectives, this study explores the multiplicities of this counter-discourse and its mediatized condition. More specifically, I analyze the diversity of critiques and positions embodied in this cultural cluster—noting, in particular, the contradictions and tensions not only between mainstream discourse and counter-discourse, but also *within* this artistic field of counter-discourse. These complexities acquire yet another dimension of tension in their entanglements with mainstream digital media. I explore the distinctions among *what* the artists themselves and their art oppose/articulate critique against—such as spaces, ideologies, or social, cultural, and economic conditions—using their own stories, visions, and visual artifacts. Further, in order to achieve a holistic understanding, I examine how, where, and when illegal art becomes critical: in the act of creation itself, in the conveyance of messages (content),

and in its place of creation (digital/analog place-making). In sum, I investigate the manifold ideological, ontological, material, moral, and political formations that mark the field of graffiti and street art today. The study itself is based on the Stockholm case, as will be discussed in the following section. Its key analytical themes are thus manifestations of difference and multiplicities of social critique as articulated in graffiti and street art cultures.

At a theoretical level, these areas of inquiry will be linked to a combination of concepts and paradigmatic tropes that are relevant and significant to the core of the study. One such trope concerns place and space. Conceptualization of graffiti and street art as social critique is closely linked with how it is situated in, and creates, space and place. Following geographer Doreen Massey, space is considered as political, shared and *relational* (Massey, 2005). Place, then, following Massey and Judith Butler (1999), can be conceptualized as a spatiotemporal “event” (Massey, 2005, p. 138) created by performance.

Following such considerations of space and place, the study brings cosmopolitan dimensions of spatially challenging practices into the discussion. In Stockholm and most other “world cities,” the act of creating illegal graffiti/street art, in most instances, is subversive of, and oppositional to, dominant norms and practices of place-making, and in that sense often counterhegemonic. At the same time, graffiti and street art are present within economic, political and cultural institutions and structures (Christensen and Thor, 2017) and have, in that sense, an “in-between” character (Thor, 2017). Such presence does not necessarily take away from their counterhegemonic character and potential; rather, it amplifies the complex dispositions of graffiti and street art. This creates an urban condition where different paradigms of place-making spatially coexist but discursively contend with each other, both in actual terms and through media representations. At the same time, their in-between character loosens the borders, thereby creating potentials for “lines of flight” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2013) between different spaces and hegemonies and counterhegemonic ideals and interventions.

Sharing of space and peaceful coexistence does not come easy. Space, in this sense, is always a site of conflict. In an effort to account for difference and juxtapositions that underlie the urban condition, scholars have increasingly focused on cosmopolitanism as an outlook that is both transnational or post-national and acknowledging of difference. Media- and communication studies have directed less attention towards ethnographically oriented critical analyses that focus on the possibilities of cosmopolitan outlooks and everyday practices (Christensen, 2017; Christensen & Jansson, 2015). Other notable scholarly contributions connect the empirical and theoretical strands of cosmopolitanism (see, for example; A. Robertson, 2010, 2015; Miller, 2007; *ibid.*). Building on

these lines of critique, I link my areas of inquiry (graffiti and street art as subversive, embodied social critique and as place-making practices) to an analytical framework of aesthetic and performed cosmopolitanism. Such a bottom-up conceptualization of cosmopolitanism is not new. There have been several accounts of vernacular cosmopolitanism (Bhabha in García-Moreno & Pfeiffer, 1996) or visceral cosmopolitanism (Nava, 2007), to name a few. Here I seek to apply a nuanced understanding of cosmopolitanism by approaching graffiti and street art and their articulations as performative and nonconformist practice and situate this in relation to aesthetic cosmopolitanism and early cosmopolitan Greek philosophy. Carving out from the idea of aesthetic cosmopolitanism, I conceptualize a dissident artistic practice in terms of what I call *performative cosmopolitanism*. By revisiting the early strands of cosmopolitan philosophy, the study contributes to the understanding of how cosmopolitanism, as vision and practice, unfolds in the contemporary milieu and in specific locales. Through its specific foci and take on cosmopolitan thought, the dissertation also offers a *critical* inquiry into a specific cultural practice and the multiplicities and fields of tension that abide in that practice. These have implications for theoretical framings of both art and cosmopolitanism and their linkages and—in a more empirical sense that aims to illuminate the experiential dimensions—the conditions and shared outlooks that bring people together and the differences that set them apart.

In sum, this study contributes to the academic literature through: 1) scrutinizing graffiti and street art as a combination of “performative act,” “content,” and “place-making” that produces social critique; 2) linking these to considerations of cosmopolitan thought in order to critically analyze sociopolitical and cultural interventions and their mediation; and, 3) offering a specific account of an artistic/aesthetic practice as *performative cosmopolitanism*, based on the Stockholm case. I seek to make a politically informed contribution by commenting on the tensions that surround living with difference in contemporary urban cities.

Aim

Previous research has pointed to how graffiti functions as social commentary and how there abides a grand narrative of social discontent as a motivating factor within graffiti cultures. At the empirical level, I explore how graffiti and street art relate to, use, and subvert urban space in Stockholm and extend this focus to the multiplicities of how this critique is *articulated*. Drawing on the theoretical concept of *articulation* (see Laclau & Mouffe, 2008), I examine the different forms of social commentary and critique within graffiti- and street art discourses in Stockholm. Here, I take the act itself, and its contents, as embodied performances of place-making.

Stockholm is particularly interesting in this regard because of the city's history of strict regulation of graffiti/street art. The Stockholm case distinctly points to the subversiveness and politicized character of illegalized urban arts. The political (*à la* Mouffe, 2005) character of these art forms means creating alternative arenas of communication that emerge outside/alongside institutionalized political ones, contesting the hegemonies that govern urban space. As such, these interventions by definition constitute a form of social critique. Performance is key here. Clearly, a performance cannot be distinguished from a performing subject and is profoundly enmeshed with the stories and experiences of the performers. The articulating subject is implied in the performance itself, and the performance, in return, defines the subject. Therefore, my specific aims and research questions here take performance as a key node of inquiry, and I read performance through the articulated and articulating subjects.

Elevating the findings of this empirical study to a broader level of theoretical reflection, I find further significance in the potentialities inherent to aesthetic cosmopolitanism (Papastergiadis, 2012; Papastergiadis & Trimboli, 2017) through virtual mediations. Graffiti and street art are very transnational movements that spread all over the world through digital media, and their remediations connect people through shared imaginaries and create senses of worldly belonging.

Research Questions

I unpack my research aims through three levels of questions. The first is more descriptive and concerns what could be called a “sociology” of Stockholm graffiti/street art. This first set of questions aims to map the field in order to create a contextual understanding of the cultural cluster. The second set of questions specifically addresses what visions and dispositions exist and how critique is articulated within this cultural cluster. The third dimension focuses on how graffiti and street art can be explored through the lens of a performative aesthetic cosmopolitanism conveyed through this specific creative practice.

Question 1: How is contemporary Stockholm graffiti and street art culture articulated and performed by its creators, and in what ways does the culture become entwined with media other than writing/painting?

This rather descriptive first question aims to create a context for the study but also to map out what Stockholm graffiti and street artists articulate their work as being. As both Andersson (2006, p. 49) and Bengtsen (2014, p. 61) note, graffiti/street art is a field of constant change. One factor that has contributed to changes in this field in recent years is digital media. Although both graffiti

and street art “traditionally” have been very analog urban media, today they very frequently appear in digital spaces. I therefore turn analytical attention to the *mediatization* of graffiti and street art: i.e., the ways in which media other than writing and painting have become intertwined with the making, remediation, and conveyance of graffiti and street art. The question accordingly turns attention to the ways in which different media technologies—analogue and digital—interact with each other, and the ways in which such interactions alter their respective conditions and contexts.

Question 2: How is social critique articulated through the performative repertoires of Stockholm graffiti and street art discourses? Are there similar or different positionalities within these graffiti and street art groups?

In order to offer a critical account of the diversities and multiplicities of critique produced through an artistic practice that seeks to subvert, this second dimension focuses on what kinds of critiques are articulated in the cultural cluster, and how. As noted above, the act of making these (often illegal) arts is often subversive and critical when done in public spaces in Stockholm. Building on the first research question, this question specifically directs focus towards what kinds of positionalities (visions, dispositions) exist within this subculture and what forms of dissent are produced through the practice, and how these positionalities contest and unite. Placing the study in a post-structural scope, I use Judith Butler’s (1999) notion of performance and performativity in order to conceptualize the practice of making street art and graffiti, how and when it becomes subversive, and through what *tactics* subversion is or is not created. The idea of tactics, i.e. “a calculus which cannot count on a ‘proper’ (a spatial or institutional localization)” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix) can be understood as a conceptualization of the counterhegemonic placement of graffiti and street art. I use the idea of *performative repertoires* (see, for example, West, 2008) to theoretically connect *performance* and *tactics*. Positioned in relation to Butler’s point, the performative repertoire is understood as an assemblage of subversive tactics created in response to another hegemony. As important as how social critique is articulated are the questions of what kinds of critique are not articulated. Considering silences and silencing is an important part of attending to the multiplicities of critique.

I primarily explore this second dimension through in-depth interviews with graffiti and street artists, focusing on questions of where artists paint and why, who are included and excluded, their visual artifacts, and the kinds of resistance or views these creators articulate.

Question 3: Under which conditions do critical and aesthetic cosmopolitan potentials or deficits materialize in Stockholm graffiti and street art culture, and how are digital media entangled in such conditions? How can the empirical findings of this study be linked to a broader consideration of urban artistic interventions as performative cosmopolitanism?

Performing graffiti or street art is not only a matter of critiquing or subverting the surrounding society but also a matter of creating shared spaces. This brings us to the third dimension of the dissertation: conditions for aesthetic cosmopolitanism—more specifically, performative cosmopolitanism through artistic street practices. As urban performances, graffiti and street art often intervene in the aestheticization of the city. This question directs attention to how these performances, in their execution, simultaneously create shared spaces for peers and the like-minded, but also potentially visions for others through the creation of communicative spaces. Accordingly, this question is meant to address the tensions within these communicative art spaces: potentially inviting yet guarded, locally emplaced yet globally circulated, counterhegemonic yet reproducing of other hegemonies, and uniting yet alienating and excluding. Given the entanglement of digital media with graffiti and street art performances, I also direct specific interest towards the ways in which digital media might function as facilitators or obstructers, or potentially both, for these potentials.

I explore these aspects primarily in terms of *aesthetic cosmopolitanism* (Papastergiadis, 2012). According to Papastergiadis, cosmopolitan values such as hospitality and openness and respect towards the unknown are connected to creation of shared imaginaries through artistic practice and mediation. Aesthetic cosmopolitanism is therefore brought in order to explore the relation between cosmopolitan spatial creation and artistic practice, as well as the conditions that graffiti and street art, and their mediation, create for producing and accommodating difference.

I examine this question mainly through performative participation in the field: i.e., visits to places of graffiti and street art performances in Stockholm and “tag-alongs” (Thor, 2017) with graffiti and street artists.

Combined, these three dimensions create an image of the contemporary urban setting as a contested site by addressing both the act of creation (the act itself), conveyed messages (content), and place (place-making). In this case, graffiti and street art are in focus, but these performances are only one case from the realm of the political (Mouffe, 2005). Practices of othering are continuous, and this study explores just one piece of that. By studying communicative potentials of urban arts and their mediations, I contribute to the field of media and communications studies, in particular by linking critical artistic communication and its mediations to the everyday situated politics of urban space. By investigating

the various dimensions covered by these three research questions, the dissertation contributes to research on expression and embodiment in the city artistic practice as social critique, the potential of aesthetic cosmopolitanism through artistic urban communication and mediation, and what all this implies for living in the contemporary city.

The Field of Graffiti and Street Art

The following section lays out the context of the graffiti and street art field where I have performed my observations. I will give a short historical account of wall writing and move on to historically situating graffiti and street art both in more general terms but also in the specific context of Stockholm. The final sections give specific attention to a few specific characteristics of the field of graffiti and street art in Stockholm.

Painting and Writing as Urban Communication

Graffiti—writing on walls—alongside the free newspapers in the subway and other kinds of artistic street performances, is one of the few remaining analog media in today’s cities. It has lived alongside and has become entangled with all these other media through different eras, in the form of Instagram or Facebook accounts, films and documentaries on graffiti, and graffiti fanzines. Through these intertwinements with other media, which in many ways have moved into digital spaces, the analog medium itself has always sustained its analog presence in cities. It appears in different colors, forms, and with different messages, but the basic performance of writing on walls has stayed the same: an urban medium of communication with the people living in and traversing the same urban space. As such, graffiti and street art are practices that literally inscribe and *paint* the city.

Graffiti is also one of the oldest media that can be experienced in urban spaces today. Among the earliest examples of public writing on walls, one of the most prominent is the wall writings of Pompeii. According to Kristina Milnor, “the ancient Roman city had, at least after the time of Augustus, a wide, varied, and almost omnipresent regime of writing in public” (Milnor, 2014, p. 54). Along the same line, Rebecka R. Benefiel noted that the number of wall inscriptions in Pompeii is estimated at 11,000, nearly equals to the total number of residents in the city (Benefiel, 2010). The relation between number of residents and number of walls inscriptions implies that wall writing was used and considered something different from today’s conception of graffiti. As Milnor points out, communication through writing on walls was far less controversial in the early Ro-

man city than it is today. Graffiti such as that in Pompeii thus says something about cultural and political spatiotemporal conditions of the city. Engaging more in the spatial and social context of such writing can accordingly contribute to a deeper understanding of the social conditions under which graffiti was created: power relations, public participation, and other dynamics (Benefiel, 2010). Graffiti speaks to and of the cultural and political system it is embedded in, both in terms of its content (what people have written) but also in terms of its commonality.

The messages and function of public wall writing take many forms and range from political and social critique to personal messages, an expressive span that appears to have existed also in Pompeii (Milnor, 2014, p. 97). These different messages often exist alongside each other, as in the case of the May 1968 uprisings in France, where people inscribed everything from “I love you!” to “Free everyday life!” on the walls (*Maj-68*, 1968). Most people have had the experience of sitting in a public restroom and reading the same kind of texts. Sometimes the text asks the reader to call someone; sometimes the writer wants to proclaim their love to the world, and sometimes the text reveals an utter dissatisfaction about something in life. These everyday stories and snippets of peoples’ lives and experiences are mediated through texted imprinted on public walls. Such experiential inscriptions and stories then become part of the larger public’s lives. These visual expressions are, as Susan A. Phillips (1999, p. 7) points out, not only part of everyday urban experience but also a topic that most are familiar with and have some kind of relation to.

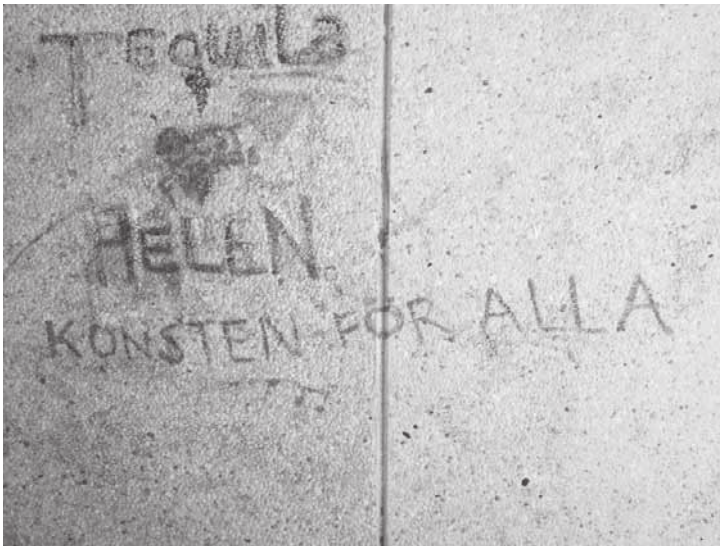


Figure 1: Tequila <3 Helen/ Art for everyone, Hökarängen. Photo: Tindra Thor

There are several examples of how graffiti has been used as political communication channel during times of social unrest, such as during the Arab Spring or during the financial crisis in Greece. In Mia Gröndahl's book *Gaza Graffiti*, the photojournalist describes how graffiti started appearing in Gaza during the first Intifada (Gröndahl, 2009, p. 10). Under the censorship of the media and the lack of Palestinian newspapers, TV, and radio programs, the walls became the people's "newspaper," where "graffiti activists" spread uncensored even though the Israeli military often ordered the walls to be cleaned (ibid.). Similarly, Marwan Kraidy (2005) argues that graffiti is a result of contradictions within the political, cultural, and economic realms, and in many instances it is performed by those lacking other channels of communication and influence over their own environment (ibid.). Accordingly, in certain space and times writing on walls has functioned as a publicly available communication channel for those who lack voice in mainstream political debate.

At the same time, graffiti and street art are not inherently oppositional. Graffiti has an emotional span to it that historically has encompassed everything from messages of love to messages of revolution—and of often both, along with almost everything in between. As previous studies have shown (Jonsson, 2016; Kimvall, 2014), graffiti and street art are discursively formed and named differently in different spaces and times.

The Collective Memory of Graffiti and Its Contemporary Mediatized Condition

Today graffiti is mostly associated with the kinds of visual expressions that became popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s in New York and Philadelphia, which were absorbed into hip-hop culture. In classic hip-hop culture, graffiti (writing) counts as one of the four elements, alongside MCing (rapping), DJing (turning tables), and B-boying (breaking). Some name five elements, adding either *knowledge* or *beat boxing*. This graffiti is sometimes labeled "hip hop graffiti" (Phillips, 1999) and sometimes "spray-can art" (Jacobson, 1996) or "subway graffiti" (Ong, 1990). This kind graffiti most often refers to visual expressions, also labeled as TTP—*tags*, *throw-ups* and *pieces*—graffiti. The *tag* is a name/alias written with a singular stylized line. A *throw-up* is an alias painted in a more elaborate manner than a tag. It is often painted using two colors (filling and outline). Many recognize the throw-up from its bubbly or bulky letters. A *piece* refers to a larger more elaborate painting with several colors, sometimes also adding in *characters* (figures).

The writer Taki 183 is often mentioned when describing the origins of contemporary graffiti culture. Taki (short for Demetrius) started writing his name plus his street number, 183rd Street, all over New York in the late 1960s and had hundreds of people following the example (Hosan Charles, 1971). However, Swedish art historian Staffan Jacobson has noted that Taki 183 was not first to do so. Instead, Jacobson identifies a small group of writers from Philadelphia as the first writers. Jacobson specifically points to the significance of the writer Cornbread, who started writing his tag in 1967 (Jacobson, 1996, p. 24). Russell M. Jones also mentions Cornbread, together with Cool Ear, who both were active in late 1960s Philadelphia (Jones, 2007, p. 4). Jacobson further notes that Taki 183 got his style from Julio 204, who then would be the first New York writer (cf. Nelli, 2012). Both Jones and Jacobson thus set the beginning in Philadelphia in the late 1960s. Jacobson does, however, emphasize the importance of Taki 183 as the first to go “all city”, getting his name up all over the city (Jacobson, 1996, p. 27). This quantitative approach to writing the name is part of the practices of “getting up” and getting “fame”: i.e. getting the largest possible exposure to gain recognition among your peers (Castleman, 1982; Jacobson, 1996, p. 35).

There is a strong connection between graffiti on trains and the subway, something evident in several book titles, such as *Subway World* (Sjöstrand, 2009) and *Subway Art* (Cooper & Chalfant, 1984). *Subway World* also manifests in an interesting way the degree of “nerdiness” involved in train painting. Although framed as a book on graffiti, it mostly deals with train technicalities in different cities. Given the amount of surveillance in urban spaces today, painting trains is far from easy. It involves hours and hours of research on when and where and how it is possible to create an opportunity to paint a train. Train painting is one of the few contexts where it makes sense to read about how New York’s subway car “fleet consists of 6, 485 cars” (Sjöstrand, 2009, p. 97) or how the subway cars on lines 1, 4, 6, 11, and 14 in Paris have rubber wheels (Sjöstrand, 2009, p. 110).

Graffiti as a hip-hop element came to Sweden in the early 1980s (Kimvall, 2012, p. 64). In September 1984, the Swedish public broadcaster SVT aired the movie *Style Wars*, a New York hip-hop documentary from 1983 by Tony Silver and Henry Chalfant (also the coauthor of *Subway Art* (Cooper & Chalfant, 1984)). The documentary was one of the first pop culture presentations in Sweden of graffiti as an element of hip-hop culture. In the early 1980s Sweden had two television channels, which meant that shows reached a large audience and have a great impact on and served as inspiration for many people. This clearly points to how these practices, which in many respects were quite analog, become fundamentally connected to kinds of media other than just spray paint. In the beginning these were television and books, and later fanzines that spread

the art forms all over the world. Photography has also always been an important medium, analog at first and later digital, all of which exists in different kinds of archives, be it photo albums or Instagram accounts, which also are used to disseminate older analog pictures (see Figure 2). Photography has, in this way, been a part of an archival practice that serves to capture ephemeral moments for several decades. Accordingly, these urban art forms show how enplaced and situated urban experiences and communications are co-created by, and co-creators of, media- interlinked spaces and places (cf. Thor, 2015).



Figure 2: Train nostalgia, Instagram screenshot. Photo credit: @Hookboy

Today, digital media are an inherent part of the global dissemination and archiving of graffiti and street art. Digital media have also made these art forms far less ephemeral. Digital media provide platforms and strategies that extend the mediations of the performances. The performances are not only connected to the product on the wall but also encompass other meditated extensions of it, such as visual artifacts on Instagram. A quick look on Instagram shows that this is very common, with countless accounts focused on images of graffiti and street art. Legendary graffiti photographer Martha Cooper (@marthacoopergram) has 160,000 followers, the account @globalstreetart 175 000, which belongs to graffiti legend Futura (@futuradosmil) has 133,000, and the Swedish-based Instagram account @tagsandthrows has 184,000 followers.

Graffiti and street art are thus not separate from other media entities. Rather, they have a *polymediated* character insofar as they are fundamentally connected to different media technologies and mediations. According to Mirca Madianou

and Daniel Miller, polymedia “is an emerging environment of communicative opportunities that functions as an “integrated structure” within which each individual medium is defined in relational terms in the context of all other media” (2013, p. 170). Accordingly, polymedia conceptualize the *interconnectedness of media* in the contemporary media environment, where different media, taken together, sustain, shape, and are shaped by social relationships. Taking this into consideration, graffiti and street art can be considered not only performances mediated through other media—such as photography, newspapers, and SNS platforms—but also as entirely *interconnected* with them. This polymediated status of graffiti and street art is thus part of their performative repertoire.

Under these conditions, platforms such as Instagram are not intangible, “virtual,” or immaterial environments but rather a material part of the process of place-making. Instagram becomes an archive that is

an electronic site of memory is both material and immaterial, and it is often both national and transnational (Lagerkvist, 2014, p. 358).

Furthermore, these digital modalities create spaces that reach much farther than the immediate physical environment and its discursive spaces. As Amit Pinchevski notes,

[A]rchiving can now be viewed as a form of social intervention, a participatory social practice, which turns the archive as a whole into a collective project. [] Moreover, the interactive archive presents new opportunities for the construction of collective memory, away from and beyond national or genealogical constraints. (Pinchevski, 2011, p. 256)

Posting images on Instagram and using hashtags so they can be more easily found becomes part of a practice that extends the physical environment and exposes it to others. It becomes part of creating a global discourse of graffiti and street art. Platforms such as Instagram then present new opportunities for the construction of collective memories of graffiti and street art that extend beyond not only geographical locations but also the discursive spaces connected to those locations, which are negotiated in the encounter with other discursive spaces and articulated places.

These interrelations are given yet another dimension of complexity in the particular locality explored here: Stockholm. Swedish has an additional term alongside the multifaceted mix of various names for such performances—a term regularly used in everyday Swedish discourse when referencing graffiti practice that adds another dimension to the articulation of graffiti as both art and crime. This discursive complexity is what I will turn to now.

“Graffiti is Art, *Klotter* is *Klotter*”: A Swedish Dilemma

This quote is from a news article describing a debate about a legal graffiti wall in Stockholm. This politician from the Swedish Left party states, “[U]nlike the [right wing coalition], we can see the difference between *klotter* and graffiti” (Kamgren, 2017). *Klotter* [noun] is a Swedish word defined in the National Encyclopedia as “sloppy and hasty writing or drawing with or without content” (Nationalencyklopedin, n.d.-b), with the associated verb form *klottra*.¹ In Stockholm, and especially in relation to debates on zero tolerance, this distinction has become rather important. Sociologist Björn Jonsson notes, “[C]hoosing one above the other is an expression of values, or interpretation, which constructs the meaning of graffiti in different directions” (Jonsson 2016:4, author’s translation). I would argue that this normative choice also enables a language where it is possible to talk about *graffiti* as something potentially desirable, perhaps even art, while *klotter* is articulated as the illegal and undesirable form of the practice. This distinction and “discursive possibility” becomes significant in political discussions on graffiti/*klotter*. The distinction makes it possible for city politicians to note that they are not encouraging any kind of illegal activities. The term *klotter* therefore functions as a discursive marker to maintain that illegal activities are unacceptable. At the same time, it provides political “graffiti liberals” with the possibility of speaking about the phenomena—sometimes precisely the same practice—as *graffiti*, thus signaling that it is not vandalism but rather artistic expression. In a 2004 article, one social democratic politician stated that “there is a clear and distinct demarcation between *klotter*/vandalism and graffiti, which is technique within the field of visual arts performed under legal circumstances” (Nilsson, 2004b).

The *klotter* vs. graffiti distinction is thus entangled with the illegal/legal dimension. In mainstream media discourse, *klotter* is almost exclusively articulated as illegal, while the word *graffiti* is more easily connected to a broader art discourse, articulated as something more attractive and connected to legal painting, such as in the case of media reporting on legal graffiti walls (Kihlström, 2015). Legal *klotter* walls are completely unheard of. One news article from 2004 uses the word “*klotter* artist” (Nilsson, 2004a). It can also be noted that a Google search for the term *graffitikonstnär* (graffiti artist) results in 19,200 hits while a search for *klotterkonstnär* (klotter artist) results in 174 hits (search conducted on February 27, 2017). This further shows how *klotter* is not a word used in relation to

¹In Kimvall, *klotter* is translated into “graffiti vandalism” while *klottrare*, the person doing klotter, is translated into “graffiti vandal” (Kimvall, 2014, p. 108). I have however chosen to use the Swedish words here.

art. Rather, when discussing these phenomena as art, they are articulated as *graffiti*.

This distinction is, however, far from simple and obvious. News reports commonly use the terms *klotter* and *graffiti* used interchangeably. For example, Justin Bieber was reported as being suspected of making “*klotter*” when he was photographed making “graffiti” on a hotel wall in Rio de Janeiro (Daham, 2013). Another, rarer, example from the news is from an interview with a graffiti artist, where the interviewer asks about the difference between graffiti and vandalism. The interviewee responded that the distinction does not exist: “graffiti is art, and art is always art” (Rothenborg, 2002). The interviewee thus does not accept the distinction and instead argues that graffiti always is art and that vandalism instead is something like destroying property with a baseball bat (*ibid.*).

This shows a discrepancy in how these phenomena are articulated. Phenomena that politicians and others articulate as *klotter* in mainstream discourse are described as *graffiti* by others—in particular by the people making/writing it. The word *klotter* usually refers to expressions such as words/names/statements, what Alison Young calls “slogans” (Young, 2005, p. 52) (cf. also *la-trinialia/bathroom graffiti*). *Klotter* however, does also often refer to tags: i.e. the writing of the artist’s name. Tags are, as noted in the previous section, part of graffiti culture following the classic TTP definition. Distinguishing between *klotter* and graffiti as two different phenomena is therefore problematic. These phenomena are more complex and are discursively formed in different spatio-temporal situations. That different *signs* are articulated differently in different situations is not in any way unique for this case, but it is important to note this discrepancy, which results in a blurring of the actual subject of the debate. Since there is a discrepancy at such a basic level, it is very likely that this has consequences for nearly everything else discussed in relation to the phenomena. For example, what kind of visuals do people expect to appear on a legal graffiti wall? If someone paints a tag on a legal graffiti wall that could be described as *graffiti* by its writer but as *klotter* by the mainstream media, does the tag belong there, or is it vandalism? The *klotter*/graffiti distinction thus presents a peculiar and local specific dilemma in the Stockholm context.

In his dissertation, art historian Jacob Kimvall explores the conflictual discursive constructions of graffiti as either an influential contemporary art movement or as connected to vandalism, crime, and slums (cf. Young, 2014), or in Kimvall’s words, discursive practices of either disavowal or consent (Kimvall, 2014, p. 155), which in turn are connected to the statements “graffiti is art” and “graffiti is crime,” respectively. Through the investigation of three different cases—the development of subcultural graffiti in New York, framings of graffiti on the Berlin Wall in Anglo-Saxon news media, and the adaption of zero

tolerance in Stockholm—Kimvall shows how “the G-word” is constructed with different meanings located at different points along the art/crime scale depending on the cultural context. In Stockholm, I would emphasize that the *klotter*/graffiti discussion adds even more complexity to how graffiti/*klotter* moves along the art/crime scale. In his discursive mapping, Kimvall also notes how street art is a practice that both coincides with and differs from the objects, statements, and logics of graffiti. I will thus now turn my attention to street art.

A History of Street Art²

The history of street art is more difficult to tell and, I would argue, is in many ways a consequence of difficulties in defining what street art is. As Peter Bengtson (2014) points out, the concept of *street art* is ambiguous, and there is a constant renegotiation of what the concept entails within street art culture. The literature on graffiti and street art has generated many functional terms for understanding graffiti and street art practice, such as spray-can art (Jacobson, 1996), stencil graffiti/visual street art/political stencils (Philipps, 2015), stencil graffiti (Manco, 2002), stencil graffiti and slogans (Young, 2005), post-subway graffiti (Snyder, 2011) and so on. This by itself points to the ambiguity of the field.

English Wikipedia defines street art as:

visual art created in public locations, usually unsanctioned artwork executed outside of the context of traditional art venues. Other terms for this type of art can be “urban art,” “guerrilla art,” “independent public art,” “post-graffiti,” and “neo-graffiti.” Common forms and media can include spray paint graffiti, stencil graffiti, wheatpasted poster art, sticker art, street installations, and sculpture. Video projection and yarn bombing have also gained some popularity near the turn of the 21st century. (“Street art,” 2017)

The varied terms and concepts in this definition show the potential breadth of the concept: it can concern stencils, stickers, spray painting, or installations in different forms (analog or digital), Street art is, in this sense, a term that encompasses many different kinds of expressions. As a result, I have previously suggested that the *street art* concept is a very hospitable term, more so than graf-

² A similar account of the subject can be found in Thor, T. (2018) “Anonymous Urban Disruptions – Exploring Banksy as Artistic Activist and Social Critic,” in Ponzanesi, S. & Habed, A. (eds.) Postcolonial Intellectuals in Europe: Portraits, Networks and Connections. Rowman and Littlefield International.

fiti, It is more hospitable in the sense that it inhabits many different aesthetics and, importantly, techniques (Thor, 2018). The Wikipedia definition also points to at least three other aspects of street art: first, that it is related to graffiti in some way (“post-graffiti,” “neo-graffiti”); second, it is a form of subversive art (“guerilla art”); and third, it is articulated as institutionally independent (“un-sanctioned” and “independent public art”).

Although separated from graffiti, street art is still related to it. For one thing, the two art forms are connected spatially, by appearing as illegal/unsanctioned urban arts in the same spaces. In that sense they are similar kinds of urban performances. Swedish Wikipedia’s definition similarly states that street art is “a form of public, often illegal art in the urban environment, [that] emerged as a *further development of graffiti art*” (my italics). There is also a potential connection in terms of the artists themselves: .e. artists who engage in both genres. Some of the world’s most prominent street artists today have a connection to graffiti culture. Banksy, to name perhaps the most famous example, started out as a graffiti writer in the early 1990s (Ross, 2016, p. 481). A few years later he turned to street art, and today he has become a true “poster child” for street art in general and stenciling specifically (see Figure 3, p. 35). As English Wikipedia mentions, stencils are strongly associated with the street art genre.

The street art genre of stenciling first appeared long before Banksy. French street artist Blek le Rat, and dubbed “the Godfather of Street Art” started doing stencils in the early 1980s (Battersby, 2012). In an interview, the artist described how he became interested in graffiti after a trip to New York in the early 1970s. He tried out “American graffiti” but described the result as “absolutely terrible” (ibid.). He then remembered seeing fascist propaganda stencils of Mussolini as a child in Italy, which led him to try a mashup between “the American and the Fascisti” (ibid.). In a way, the artist thus took the idea of writing names on walls from North American graffiti and the aesthetics of stenciling from Italian fascist propaganda. Street art stenciling thus carries a political legacy in the aesthetics itself.

This political-connectedness is hinted at in the English Wikipedia definition, which references “guerrilla art” as an example of street art. It can be considered as a form of guerrilla (a “little war”), both in the sense that it intervenes in urban space and in the sense that it presents other political narratives, tells other stories, and is driven by a logic other than that of sanctioned art in public spaces.



Figure 3: Stencil by Mogul. Årsta, December 2014. Photo: Tindra Thor

Swedish Wikipedia also states, “Street art can be seen as a postmodern artistic movement. Its main idea is that the citizens of the city themselves take responsibility for public decoration” (“Gatukonst,” 2017). Most obvious here is perhaps the connection between street art and public space. The definition of street art consequently taps into the idea of the “right to the city” (Lefebvre, 1996). The definition of street art thus inhabits the idea that the city is the responsibility, and perhaps also the right, of the people living in it. There will always be people who do not have “the right to the city,” or at least those who have less right to it than others. Referencing geographer David Harvey, urban sociologist Mark Hutter notes that urban space is scarce, and the distribution of this space among its inhabitants is not a “natural” process; rather it is an “[outcome] based on economic and political conflict”, leading to social conflict and class-based struggle (Hutter, 2016, p. 144). Asking who has the right to the city, and when and in what way, accordingly entails critical analysis of the power relations that constitute the city: the political economy of the urban (see also Christensen & Thor, 2017).

Street art can thus be described as related to graffiti in terms of space, performance, and potentially also specific artists who bridge the two practices. It also

has strong political connotations, both in terms of its aesthetic legacy and in terms of suggested rationale.

Stockholm mainstream media discourse also articulates the political dimension of street art. To start with, it almost always describes street art as *art*. For example, street artists are described as having evolved away from the letter-based format of “traditional graffiti,” “making interventions in the urban space that are very thought through” in a way that is accessible, witty, “but also self reflecting” (Nordström, 2012). Another article states that “good street art wants something more” (Rubin, 2011)—something more elaborated than graffiti (and even more than “tagging”), an art form that has some kind of deeper meaning that invites looking at, playing with, and reflecting on the art itself and its environment. Graffiti, on the one hand, is described as calligraphy, while street art is more reflective and artistically developed.

Although street art often is assigned a political intent or artistic ambition, it is also noteworthy that discourse on street art is far less infected and polemic than the debate over *klotter*. In reporting on a 2012 street art festival in Stockholm, a journalist wonders whether “street art is perhaps not what it once was,” referring to the question of what happens to these (low) arts when they are transferred to “high art” contexts, as in the case of Banksy (Edgren, 2012). The author asks whether it might even be the case that street art stops being street art when taken out of context in this way, or rather, changed in terms of context? (ibid.) I have previously argued that street art, and graffiti to some extent, does risk losing its power when taken out of their position of exteriority (Thor, 2017). There is a tension here between the ascribed purposes and messages of street art and the cultural emplacement of the phenomena. In the same way that the graffiti/*klotter* distinction creates ambiguity in the Stockholm discourse, the cultural location of street art carries a similar ambiguity.

The level of acceptance of visual expressions ties in closely to the art/crime scale discussed by both Kimvall (2014) and Young (2005, 2014). Before unpacking the *crime* part of graffiti and street art, I shall first address the *art* dimension.

Graffiti and Street Art as Art

This question whether graffiti and street art are art always lurks in the background and could potentially be answered normatively, theoretically, or empirically. As several previous studies have pointed out, articulations of graffiti and street art as art, vandalism, criminal, etc. are entirely connected to discourse (see, for example, Kimvall, 2014; Young, 2005).

Street art can, in several respects, be considered more clearly within art discourse. For one thing, it is called street *art*. This might appear an obvious observation, but it does not lack significance, since it discursively connotes the connection to art more clearly than does the term *graffiti*. Nevertheless, graffiti can also be considered from the lens of art history. For example, Jacobson (1996), has situated the style known as *wildstyle* as graffiti's most original and important contribution to art history.

The most obvious ethnographic approach to answering the question of whether graffiti and street art are art would be to ask the people making them. This strategy, however, does not yield a homogeneous answer. *Artist* is a rather broad term encompassing different kinds of embodied creative performances; we have terms such as *circus artist*, *comic book artist*, and *makeup artist*, for example. The word *art* stems from the Latin word *ars*, meaning art/skill or technique/craft. The root of the word accordingly refers to a rather broad range of activities. *Artist* has thus been considered a broad enough term to encompass graffiti and street art performances.

Furthermore, there are links between graffiti and street art and other movements in art history, as well as contributions between them. While doing research in London, one thing that stuck out as different from street art discourse in Stockholm was how street art was explicitly situated in art historical terms, specifically in relation to pop art. For example, street artist Nathan (27) said, "I also think street art is mainly derived from, like art historically, from pop art [] it's re-hashing of pop art." Another street artist, Aaron (27), also stated that "basically [street art is] an extension of pop art."

Daniel Feral also notes this relationship in a flow chart he created as curator for a street art exhibition in 2011. In it, graffiti, street art, and pop art not only appear in close relation to each other but are given equal visual status in terms of their size and central placement in the chart, visually establishing the genres as equivalent (see *Figure 5*, p. 40). The chart paraphrases Alfred Hamilton Barr Jr.'s famous flow chart of Cubism and Abstract Art, made in 1936 for an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York (The Museum of Modern Art, n.d.). As Kimvall notes, Feral's chart provokes reflection by putting graffiti and street art both in the center of the chart in relation to "some of the most established, not to say canonized, elements of modern and contemporary art" (Kimvall, 2014, p. 46). By paraphrasing the famous Barr original, the chart ascribes a kind of discursive credential to graffiti and street art by situating them visually, and thus historically, with art history.

The connection to pop art—the genre that is probably most closely related to street art and to some extent graffiti—materializes at both an aesthetic and ideological level. Graffiti often uses comic book aesthetics, the same aesthetics

also used frequently in pop art, as in Roy Lichtenstein's "Whaaam!" from 1963. Street art aesthetics is equally recognizable in pop art aesthetics. The iconic 1968 Campbell soup cans by Andy Warhol—one of the foremost figures of pop art— form an aesthetically interesting link between both Dada and street art. The link to Dada is through the aesthetics of readymade, often associated with Dadaism and perhaps most famously recognized in Marcel Duchamp's "The Fountain." At the same time, the cans manifest the aesthetic connection to street art in the repetitive form of paste-ups or stencils, for example (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: "Can Aesthetic." London, November 2015. Photo: Tindra Thor

The connection to pop art is, however, not only aesthetic: there is also a connection in terms of their critical functions. Pop art is ideologically interesting in that the genre hosts a critical ambivalence. On the one hand, it embraces popular aesthetics, as with readymades, comic book aesthetics, or faces from pop culture such as Warhol's iconic Marilyn Diptych from 1962. As such, pop art partly embraces popular culture, the "cultural industry," and the consumer excess that became available for people in the post-war era. On the other hand, pop art critiques exactly that same condition. Herein we also find a connection to the Situationists International (SI), a revolutionary collective of intellectuals, avant-garde artists, and academics that was especially prominent in the 1968 uprisings in France. Bengtsen noted this connection specifically between street art and SI (2014), a connection also noted by several of my fieldwork participants in London. When I asked Tariq, one of the participants, what he would call himself, he described himself as an "urban interventionist." Urban interventions, often referred to as the "construction of situations" within the SI community (Debord, 1957), was a *tactic* (de Certeau, 1984) the SI used to subvert and *détourne* the capitalist urban experience. Tariq, together with street artist Charles, also explicitly mentioned the SI term *détournement* to explain how graffiti and street art function in the urban environment. This conceptual linkage also raises interesting questions, given the fact that Situationist ideas were developed in the 1950s and 1960s in Paris. For example, what relevance do they have today? And, as I ask in my research questions (specifically questions 1 and 2), how are these kinds of critiques intertwined in the mediatized landscape of graffiti and street art? Feral's flow chart also notes the relation to SI (see Figure 5, p. 40). Both pop art and SI were movements that in part worked with subversions, by way of their intervening character in "fine art" discourse and in the urban, respectively. They are also related in terms of appropriation, as in the case of Campbell soup cans, and in terms of ideology, i.e. the (sometimes ambivalent) anti-capitalist traits of both movements.

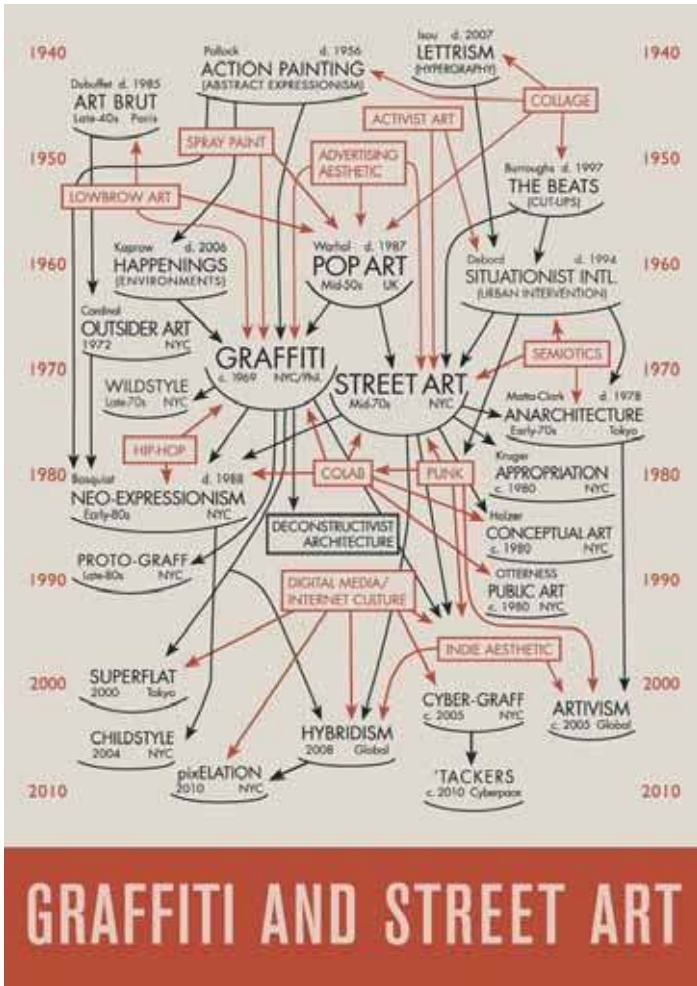


Figure 5: Graffiti and Street Art Poster. Daniel Feral (2011)

As mentioned above, there is also a connection to Dada, an avant-garde art genre characterized as a critique of the modern art world that was “anti-bourgeoisie,” “anti (fine)-art,” “nonsensical,” and ideologically radically Left (Tate, n.d.-a). Here Dada connects to graffiti and street art in that they are all, in some way, “anti-art” genres that present an aesthetization distinct from that of institutionalized art and “economically appropriated” art, as well as all very much anti-bourgeoisie. Aesthetically, street art also connects to Dadaism through the use of collage and photomontage in both genres (see Figure 6, p. 41).



Figure 6: Street Art Collage. London, November 2015. Photo: Tindra Thor

Dada influences several other art genres alongside pop art, such as surrealism and Fluxus, a collective of different artists working in various forms, such as visual art, performance, and music. Similar to Dadaism, Fluxus questioned the norms of art society and was an “anti-elitist and anarchistic movement” (Nationalencyklopedin, n.d.-a). It aimed to depart from “conventional” and institutional art forms in order to decrease the threshold between everyday life and the art world (ibid.). As such, Fluxus worked with both performance art and “happenings,” which were mashups of music, theater, and visual arts. Happening came out of both Dada and surrealism and “were the forerunners of performance art” (Tate, n.d.-b). Allan Kaprow coined the term “happening” in a 1959 piece called *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, an artwork that Wilfried Rausert described as signifying “the idea of world as global village” by way of the

work's spatial transgressions (2011, p. 263). As such, this particular happening can also be described as a materialization of cosmopolitanism. Although this relationship is noted to a specific work of art, the happening as an art form can also be thought of in cosmopolitan terms—a hospitable art form that aims to *create spaces hospitable to different forms of expression*.

As already mentioned, happenings reflect yet another connection to performance art, an art form that encompasses various media, including the body (“body art”), as a rejection of conventional materials and techniques. Similarly to Fluxus and the happening, performance art “was seen as reducing the alienation between performer and viewer” (Goldberg, 1988, p. 152).

Through this all-too-short description of selected parts of the art world I have intended to show how graffiti and street art are situated within art history and point to their aesthetic legacy and interconnections. From pop art (and comic books), graffiti and street art have inherited an aesthetic, the use of appropriation, political incentives, and a connection to performance in everyday life. This is also where pop art, graffiti, and street art connect to SI: as anti-consumerist, subversive, and movements of everyday intervention. In relation to Dada, there are overlaps in terms of appropriation, an anti-bourgeois ideology, and anti-institutional art sentiments. The “anti” character also connects graffiti and street art to Fluxus, to the happening and performance art. All these genres consequently show overlaps in aesthetics (see examples in figures 4–6), in their status as genres and movements of critique that in various ways intervene in different cultural institutions, technical conventions, art spaces, and so on. SI specifically connects to graffiti and street art in that they all extricate art from the institutions they critique in order to break down the divide between art and everyday urban experience.

Graffiti and Street Art as Crime and Vandalism

As both Young and Kimvall note, graffiti and street art in many respects move along a crime/art axis. After having attended to the art dimension, we shall now turn to the crime one. The articulation of graffiti and street art as crime or vandalism is very common in Stockholm, especially in discussions on *klotter*. The production of unsolicited graffiti and street art in Sweden is regulated in chapter 12 of the Swedish penal code (“On Crimes Inflicting Damage”). The first section states, “A person who destroys or damages property, real or movable, to the detriment of another's right thereto, shall be sentenced for inflicting

damage to a fine or imprisonment for at most [twelve]³ months. Law (2003:857).”⁴

Because this chapter of the penal code regulates crimes inflicting damage as a whole, statistics on this crime include other forms of “damage” than graffiti specifically. The two most common crimes covered by this chapter are, however, graffiti and vandalism of cars. In 2004 it became an offense to attempt to inflict damage or engage in vandalism. This change in the law also led to changes in policing laws, as the police were given extended authority to search people who were *suspected* of attempting to vandalize something. Prior to the implementation of the law, the police were obliged to release a person after they had identified the person in question. The maximum penalty was raised from 6 months in prison to a year. If the crime is considered especially severe, the sentence could be increased to up to four years. Sentences might also include monetary fines.

Klotter/graffiti/street art made without permission is therefore always a crime and considered to be vandalism in the eyes of the law. The discourse is, however, not black and white, which becomes evident in both previous studies of graffiti and street art and in the discourse of Stockholm’s media. The words *klotter*, *graffiti*, and *street art* bear different connotations, as discussed above, and the different signs discursively relate to crime and vandalism in different ways. In general, it is more common for the sign *klotter* to be used in relation to crime and vandalism in mainstream media discourse (see, for example, Fagerström, 2015; Jennebrink, 2014; Sjölund, 2013).

A common articulation in mainstream media is how *klotter*—articulated as crime—is a gateway to more serious crimes. One article from *Dagens Nyheter* (DN), Sweden’s largest morning newspaper, states, “Experiences from, for example, Stockholm and Copenhagen show that the *klotter* culture and its associated networks are a gateway to theft and other more serious crimes” (Rothenborg, 2002). Similar arguments can be found in other news articles that describe how the police, in particular, argue for a correlation between *klotter* and more serious crimes and drug problems (Fagerström, 2015; Gustafsson, 2008). As support for the claim that *klotter* is a gateway to more serious crimes, one opinion piece in a local Stockholm newspaper states that the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik initially was arrested for *klotter*, “although that was not his mode of expression in 2012” (Pettersson, 2013), the year that he shot 77 politically engaged young Norwegians at Utøya (E. Berger, 2016). There is, however, no research that unilaterally supports the claim that graffiti is a gate-

³ The change in the law is not included in the available translation.

⁴ Brottsbalken/The Swedish Penal Code, chapter 12, § 1

way to more serious crime. According to criminologist David Shannon, whose dissertation focuses on the graffiti/crime relationship among young Swedish graffiti writers, there is a group with longstanding engagement in the culture “whose levels of involvement in non-graffiti delinquency remain low” (Shannon, 2003, p. 175). At the same time, Shannon points to how there is another group of both longstanding and short-term writers who are involved in “other forms of crime” (ibid.). There is, accordingly, nothing that shows a strong relationship between graffiti writing and crime. However, graffiti/*klotter* and crime are nonetheless discursively linked, a fact that has very tangible effects. In referring to a graffiti and street art festival, police and politicians claimed there had been an increase in the number of vandalism arrests in relation to the festival. This, however, proved to be mere rumor (Brandel, 2012; Kimvall, 2012). Considering the harsh tone against graffiti and street art under zero tolerance, one might even call it propaganda, in what appears to be a war on graffiti/*klotter* and street art.

The Dirty, the Threatening, and the War

Another element of the “graffiti as crime” discourse is how *klotter* often is articulated as dirty or dangerous. With reference to Joe Austin (2001), cultural scientist Catharina Thörn notes how people have been “taught” that the presence of graffiti in a neighborhood signifies a kind of general decay of the area, which in turn is connected to crime and social unrest (Thörn, 2005, p. 175). In a similar way, anthropologist Mary Douglas has discussed dirt as a signifier of disorder (Douglas, 2002, p. 2). Dirt is the reminder of dysfunctional social environments that challenge or threaten the social order. Threats to the social order are, likewise, potentially dirty (Thor, 2017). In media reporting, *klotter* is often used in sentences together with other signs that are articulated as dirt/dirty. One local Stockholm paper reports that “bad roads, *klotter*, broken or missing signs and lighting, and garbage trucks” make people file reports to the city (Schalk, 2015). The Stockholm-based morning newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* (Sweden’s third largest) also reports that “[t]rash, *klotter*, and exhaust are among the most serious environmental problems in Stockholm” (Bengtsson, 2004). In this discourse, *klotter* becomes articulated as part of an overall garbage or dirt problem in Stockholm that “uglifies” the city and is juxtaposed with slums, dirt, littering, dog waste, and even rats (Castwall & Billström, 2002; Nilsson, 2006). The interdiscursive connection to dogs can also be seen in relation to Young’s point on how writers sometimes are described in terms of “urinating animals” (Young, 2005, p. 53). Considering dirt as social disorder, sanitizing and cleaning conversely becomes not just a matter of picking up trash or sanitizing *klotter*. Keep-

ing Douglas's argument in mind, cleaning is an act that orders society and removes something that is articulated as a threat to the whole social order.

In a local paper, an anonymous artist asked what harm existed in putting up beautiful pictures or conveying a message to one's fellow city residents. A couple of weeks later the paper published this reply:

The answer is that this is what good society requires. Public space in a well-ordered society is designed to suit everyone and can therefore not stand too much individual initiative. It is part of maintaining public order that the public environment is designed for, according to the guidelines of elected representatives.

A good society is characterized by clean and cleanly public areas, people who throw their trash in bins, and even picking up dog poop.

In other parts of the world there are societies characterized by violence and crime. Where the streets are littered and walls filled with *klotter*. Lots are walled off, doors locked, and windows barred.

Let us preserve good society by maintaining its external features, even if it costs us certain aesthetic experiences. (Jennebrink, 2014)

This statement shows that dirt is not merely a matter of dirty vs. clean—it is a threat to the social order and “good society.” *Good* is discursively linked to clean and well ordered. *Bad* is, consequently, that which is dirty and disorderly. As such, it becomes a threat and something that, according to anti-graffiti discourse, creates a sense of insecurity. “Darkness and *klotter* create insecurity,” one journalist wrote (Nyberg, 2014b). Another article reports that “the slum is expanding” and mentions *klotter* as a problem in the area (Luthander, 2008), which also connects a class perspective to the phenomena.

“Sanitation”⁵, i.e. cleaning graffiti, is business in Stockholm. Jacobson describes how sanitation companies started “popping up like mushrooms” in Sweden in the late 1980s (Jacobson, 1996, p. 190). Kimvall has suggested there might be an interdependence between graffiti and street art and sanitation services, since the making of graffiti and street art supports a whole economy of cleaning (Kimvall, 2012). An interesting example of how that might materialize was reported in a local paper in 2013. The article described how a 16-year-old was caught for *klotter*, using white shoe polish on a window on a commuter train. The child's father came to get his son and noticed that the shoe polish could easily be washed off with water and therefore offered the child to do so. Stockholm Public Transport (SL) did, however, not allow him to. Instead, the boy was sentenced to pay fines and cleaning costs (Eriksson, 2013). Initially it might

⁵ Sanitation is the word used in the City of Stockholm's policy on cleaning of graffiti.

seem odd that the parent was not allowed to clean what seemed to be easily cleaned, but the economic lens makes the outcome more logical: if people start cleaning graffiti themselves, the economic interdependence will be disrupted.



Figure 7: “Boo!!” Photo: Tindra Thor

The polemic debate on cleaning and graffiti, especially *klotter*, contains a notable degree of connotations of war, using generally conflictual and distressing language. The media frequently speak of the “fight against *klotter*” (Leveby, 2015), in other instances the “war against *klotter*” (Wadendal, 2008). Words with war-like connotations are also often used in media reporting on graffiti, such as “drones” (TT, 2013), “weapons” (Sundström, 2008), “informers” (Gyllenberg, 2007b), and “spies” (Gyllenberg, 2007a), all of which feed into the narrative of graffiti as something that must be fought.

Another common Stockholm media trope that feeds into the general idea of graffiti as something threatening is “the dramatic increase” in *klotter*. This dramatic increase was reported on back in 2004, when *klotter* was cited as having increased over the previous five years (Optiz, 2004). Additional headlines about dramatic or vast increases are noted in 2008 (Gustafsson, 2008), 2014 (Nyberg, 2014), 2015 (Lund, 2015), 2016 (Martinsson, 2016), and 2018 (Matikka, 2018). Although several news articles discuss whether an increase in reports suggests an actual increase in occurrence, it is easy to get the impression that *klotter* has increased dramatically since 1999. I have been unable to find statistics supporting that claim. The actual figures are, however, not the primary emphasis here.

The relevance is, rather, the fact that this trope in anti-graffiti- and street art discourse fuels the idea that graffiti and street art are growing threats to municipal budgets, ticket prices for commuters, and social functions overall. The point is that *klotter* is consistently reported as a growing problem, adding to the understanding in the mainstream media of *klotter* and graffiti as threats against society.

This is the ambiguous milieu of Stockholm graffiti and street art. As bearers of clearly articulated histories, graffiti and street art move in different directions along an art/crime axis, giving them different functions in different spaces and times. Before moving on to how graffiti and street art are articulated by their creators in contemporary Stockholm, I will briefly outline how the rest of the text will unfold.

Structure of the Dissertation

After this introduction to graffiti and street art in Stockholm, I will now unpack the central theoretical concepts of the study. The chapter on theory starts with contemporary challenges, which was partly addressed in the introduction, then situates graffiti and street art in a theoretical milieu that joins aesthetic cosmopolitanism, mediatization, and performance.

I then bring the performance dimension on to my chapter on methods. This chapter discusses the methodological location of the study, especially as it relates to critical performance ethnography. I will then explain the ethnographic methods used to collect the material, specifically participant observation, which I discuss in terms of “co-performative witnessing”, interviews, “tag-alongs” (Thor, 2017), and photography. I then discuss the discourse theory I use to analyze my material. Finally, I bring up ethical consideration and possible limitations of the study.

Three empirical chapters follow the chapter on methods, structured following my three research questions. The first chapter focuses on how contemporary Stockholm graffiti and street art culture are articulated and performed by their creators, and the ways in which this culture become entwined with media other than writing/painting. The second chapter turns to the social critiques of, and in, the field of Stockholm graffiti and street art, while the third and final empirical chapter explores graffiti and street art practices in terms of aesthetic cosmopolitan potentials and deficits. Each empirical chapter is followed by a short summary of the analytical points brought up in it.

The empirical chapters are then followed by an overall summary of the results and some concluding reflections on the implications of my findings.

Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism, Mediatization, and Urban Interventions: A Theoretical Milieu for Graffiti and Street Art

I once attended a conference where a presenter was given the question of whether he thought it possible for people to be cosmopolitan without having faced difference? The presenter answered that it was absolutely possible. The presenter eloquently continued, “Consider Kant; he basically never left Königsberg in his whole life, but he produced one of the most well-articulated theories ever of cosmopolitan thought.” I found the answer very well stated. It did, however, make me think: what if that was exactly the reason? What if Kant’s geographical stability was precisely the reason he formulated such a well-articulated theory of cosmopolitanism? What if it is easier to formulate eloquent theories on how people should treat all others equally if you have never yourself faced or had to cope with difference? I would not dare to claim that Kant lived in utter isolation his whole life; still, the conversation did lead me to wonder: is it easier to treat people equally if you do not actually have to deal with them?

The basic condition of graffiti and street art as materialized difference says something about encounters of difference that occur in the urban milieu, sometimes even forceful ones. The conference experience made me wonder: what would cosmopolitanism—a theoretical approach with interest in such encounters—have to say about graffiti? Conversely, in what ways could a critical and creative practice such as graffiti and street art culture inform questions and dilemmas addressed in cosmopolitan studies?

Given the global interconnectedness of graffiti and street art cultures, their local performances are interconnected with others in other localities across the globe. Given the spatiotemporal travel of zero tolerance, from 1980s New York to Stockholm, Stockholm anti-graffiti and –street art discourse could also be considered as a locality connected to another. These different local performances can be considered connected to different “globalities” that challenge each other both on a local and a global level. An exploration of Stockholm

graffiti and street art is, in that sense, an exploration of the same dynamics and tensions that inform cosmopolitan studies.

The word *cosmopolitanism* comes from the Greek word *kosmopolitês*, which joins the words *kosmos* ‘world/cosmos’ and *politês* ‘citizen.’ On a basic semantic level, cosmopolitanism thus signifies an *affiliation* to the world rather than the city/region/nation, encompassing all human beings as equals. Cosmopolitan inquiries can thus be described as concerned with situations where senses of belonging become extended, but also renegotiated or put in question. Stockholm graffiti and street art, as illegalized practices, are by default un-belonging in the city (of Stockholm). But what affiliations and critiques do materialize in graffiti and street art culture? These are questions I will unpack later in the analysis.

These processes, interwoven with, and intensified by, an increased momentum of mobilities—human, visual, imaginary—are equally entanglements of the digital and analog that come without clear direction. Intensified media practice might lead either to a more insular media landscape or a more diversified one. As Christensen and Jansson (2015) note, the possibilities provided by newer media practice do not necessarily facilitate a more cosmopolitan outlook. What can be said, however, is that contemporary social and cultural processes cannot be separated from media practice, whether analog or digital. The conflictual and interventional character of graffiti and street art performance can accordingly not be separated from its polymediated milieu and its mobilities.

The following theoretical discussion addresses these theoretical enigmas—the entanglements of different media in graffiti and street art practice, the challenges and possibilities of encounters of difference, affiliation, and belonging, and urban interventions.

The Mobilities and Mediatization of Graffiti and Street Art

On a basic level, one inherent dynamic of interest for cosmopolitan studies is mobilities. Mobilities can concern physical mobility (people moving) or mobility on an imaginative level: the ability to imagine yourself somewhere else or in someone else’s situation. Mobility can also be connected to cultural movements in the form of ideologies, products, or ideas.

As Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) note, mobility has been linked to cosmopolitanism in a number of ways: first as a characteristic of “elite travelers” whose mobility was credited as a basis for the emergence of a “world culture,”

and later, with reference to Vertovec and Cohen (2002) and Werbner (2006), as a mobility somewhat independent of travelers' economic or symbolic capital. Glick Schiller and Salazar note that many studies have maintained a binary between stasis and mobility, as well as between sameness and difference. In contrast, they argue that there is a simultaneity between these "binaries" (cf. Christensen, Jansson, & Christensen, 2011; Georgiou, 2011). Graffiti and street art are not locally fixed, although they are performed in a specific locality. They are simultaneously locally and globally mobile. The replacing of either/or with both thus has a temporal dimension. I would also suggest that this simultaneity is not everything at the same time (though it could be, potentially) but rather that given the temporal dimension, there is a specific space and time in a both/and. Again connecting to Massey (2005), place is space *and* time, making place an "event" (Massey, 2005, pp. 138–139). Considering the temporal dimension of place-as-event, places are products of movements across, and of the relations in, different space-times. Consequently, place is not only rooted, but also a product of movements or mobilities that materialize in different ways in different spaces *and* times.

To address the tensions between the sedentary and the mobile, in order to consider the power dynamics at work between and in the two, Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) present the concept of *regimes of mobility*. They coin this term to question and acknowledge the power relations embedded in mobility and sedentarism and the "constant struggles to understand, query, embody, celebrate and transform categories of similarity, difference, belonging and strangeness" (2013, p. 189). Questions of mobility, sameness and difference, cosmopolitanism and non-cosmopolitanism accordingly must be understood and recognized as "situations of unequal power" (ibid., p. 188). They must be analyzed and recognized as different *situations* embedded in power relations.

In graffiti and street art practices, these mobility dynamics are entangled with different media practices. A visual artifact can intertextually connect to another space-time, giving the visual itself an interdiscursive mobility. The *pixação* style of graffiti, for example, is specifically associated with São Paulo, Brazil, where it was initially used for political messages in 1940s and 1950s and later became a common style for tagging in the 1980s. A *pixação* tag could be considered to carry a spatiotemporal mobility in its imagery. Should someone take a picture of a *pixação* tag in Stockholm and post it on Instagram, its technological and spatial mobility also become entangled in that visual artifact.

Mobilities through digital media have become an inherent part of graffiti and street art performative repertoires. Less attention has been paid, however, to how this development might have changed the conditions and context for graffiti and street art. Graffiti and street art have, over the decades, become entan-

gled first with analog media (in the form of fanzines for example) and later also with digital media, especially in terms of archiving and visual dissemination. These are the processes that the concept of *mediatization* turns its attention to.

Jansson's (2013) socio-spatial conceptualization of mediatization gives it three dimensions: material indispensability and adaptation, premediation of experience, and normalization of social practice (ibid., pp. 284-85). The first dimension has to do with the social acceptance of certain media in everyday life and how everyday life is adapted to certain media. In graffiti and street art cultures, this would refer to the ways in which the practices become adapted to the format and technologies of digital platforms, and how these platforms uncritically become an inherent part of the performance. The second dimension, following Grusin (2010), points to how "media not only shape our expectations and anticipations of future events and experiences, but also generate particular forms of action and interaction that are performed, or staged, in order to become mediated within a certain representational register" (Jansson, 2013, pp. 284–285).

For graffiti and street art, this means that the fact that a painting is intended to be posted on Instagram shapes how the painting is made. The third dimension has to do with how "the appropriation of media changes social norms, conventions, and expectations at the level of everyday practice" (ibid.). In terms of graffiti and street art culture, such changes mean that the cultural norms and conventions of the practice change through entanglement with other media.

These dynamics are at work at several levels in graffiti and street art. They can materialize in the actual making of an image, when a graffiti "chronicler"⁶ posts images on Instagram, or in the social relations within or outside the culture, the sum of which creates the "graffiti and street art world" (see also Bengtson, 2014). Before moving on to discuss world-making in and through creative practice, I will first address the challenges and frictions of these processes and the dynamics within them.

The Challenges of Getting Along

Approximately 54% of the world's populations live in urban areas, and by 2050 this number is expected to increase to 66%. In 2015 the number of "mega cities" (cities with a population over 10 million) had increased to 34. Given the immense numbers of people who move into and through cities, the contempo-

⁶ People documenting graffiti and street art (see Kimvall, 2014)

rary urban experience is one of diversity and unpredictability. Alongside the increasing momentum of urbanization processes, the momentum of change and flow within the cities is in a constant upsurge. Living in cities means living in a flux of experiences and different modes of communication. These differences are also what pose challenges to contemporary urbanity.

Although the city provides possibilities for seeing “*self* and *others* as part of the urban story” (Georgiou, 2013, p. 2), these encounters of difference are not always painless. Encountering difference and acknowledging it can be a challenge. Today people do face difference every day, and many are not too happy about it either. In what became sociologist Zygmunt Bauman’s last book, he noted that,

Densely populated urban areas inevitably generate the contradictory impulses of “mixophilia” (attraction to variegated, heteronymous surroundings auguring unknowns and unexplored experiences, and for that reason promising the pleasures of adventure and discovery), and “mixophobia” (fear of the unmanageable, off-putting and uncontrollable) (Bauman, 2016, p. 9).

Heterogeneous spaces come with the challenge of people having to face and cope with difference. Women have been burned at the stake, and people have been thrown in jail or even executed because of their political views. People from different religions or tribes have been and are being persecuted all over the world. They have been and are being hunted and persecuted for their differences. Deviation from the norm often runs the risk of being perceived as a threat. With glitches and difference comes the unknown, and in the unknown lurks a potential danger. For centuries and even millennia people have witnessed or been involved in such witch hunts and the persecution of otherness. What Bauman poignantly points to is how the fear of the unknown also might be accompanied by an attraction towards that same thing. Although illegal graffiti and street art often occupy a discursively threatening position, they also function as attractions in certain times and spaces. That is the case in certain parts of London’s East End or in New York City’s Williamsburg neighborhood. In these places, graffiti and street art give a certain atmosphere to the area, something that quite paradoxically makes them commercially attractive and leads to gentrification. Graffiti and street art are not always “othered” and do not always have an oppositional function. In the space-time of contemporary Stockholm, graffiti and street art have been discursively othered for a long time, an outsider status might be described as rather fixed across time. There is, however, always the potential for change.

It is “in the encounter of difference that, the not always easy process of, change and transformations materializes” (Thor, 2015, p. 26). These transformative

processes materialize the process in which the urban is constantly exposed to difference through “mediated and interpersonal communication” (Georgiou, 2013, p. 4). It is in these unpredictable and open-ended processes that the urban is both transformed and transforming. Such transformative and *paradoxical* processes—where the known and the unknown encounter and sometimes clash—can be regarded as characteristic of the contemporary urban condition.

According to political theorist Garret Wallace Brown, cosmopolitanism’s “main premise is that the world is becoming increasingly interconnected and that this increased interconnectedness has created a need to consider political issues from a broader and more universally human standpoint” (Brown, 2009, pp. 2–3). Contemporary cosmopolitanism is therefore, according to sociologist Ulrich Beck (2004, 2006), a necessary response to the challenges of contemporary society, in which people live codependent on one another and face mutual risks stemming from the globalized condition of the world. There are two ideas at work in the idea of cosmopolitanism, according to philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah. The first is that people have a responsibility towards others on a global level and not just to people in their immediate proximity; the second is taking an interest in other people’s lives. Cosmopolitanism thus, in this view, entails *both* “universal concern *and* respect for legitimate difference” (Appiah, 2010, p. xv, my italics). As Appiah points out, there is often a clash between the two, and herein lies the friction.

The controversies and polemics of graffiti and street art discourse are a materialization of the tensions and challenges that “living with difference” poses. The case of Stockholm graffiti and street art also shows that the tensions of global interconnectedness can be just as present at the local level. Difference is not always embodied in a clash between global and local, but also between local and local. Graffiti and street art form a different narrative of the urban and perform it differently—and illegally. Once again reconnecting to a Situationist concept—*situation*—meaning a momentary, active, and systematic intervention in, and transformation of, the urban (Debord, 1957, p. 12; Knabb, 2006; Souzis, 2015), there is always *a potential for change in that situation*. Although practices may become increasingly stagnant, they might also change. As well, conflict is not necessarily a bad thing; it can be the start of a positive transformation process where there exists a potential for change. Frictional encounters thus do not always lead to conflict; things might just well work out.

It Might Well Work Out: Solidarity and Hospitality

The antagonistic conditions of the social are simultaneously a challenge and a possibility. They can, for example, give rise to new solidarities aside from, or

exceeding, the conflictual situation. According to Florian Pichler, “cosmopolitans...declare solidarity with other people despite differences in nationality, cultures, or lifestyles” (2009, p. 4). This solidarity should not be confused with sameness. As Craig Calhoun points out, “we should take care not to reduce social solidarity to common identity” (2002, p. 155). Solidarity, in cosmopolitanism, is instead solidarity despite differences in ethnicity, religion, and so on. The stress on difference is clearly made in order to distance cosmopolitan solidarity from, for example, patriotic solidarity (Pichler, 2009). In the possibilities of the social there are seeds for new and other alliances and solidarities to emerge: alliances, which—if they are inclusive—can be explored in cosmopolitan terms.

I would suggest that a cosmopolitan solidarity is not solidarity *in spite of* differences. Rather, cosmopolitan solidarity consists of solidarity *with* difference, especially bearing the ideal of respectful acknowledgment of difference in mind. When speaking of difference or solidarity with someone who is “other,” there is a risk of dichotomizing sameness and difference (cmp, Schiller & Salazar, 2013). Difference is relational and moves along a proximity/distance axis, where each relation becomes specific in time and space. Difference can thus be understood as a scale that moves along a proximity/distance axis at the same time that it ranges along a spatiotemporal axis. Emphasizing difference as a scale allows us to move beyond the dichotomy of different versus same, which also opens up the possibility of solidarity *with* rather than *in spite of*. Moving beyond this dichotomy means acknowledging various kinds of difference and sameness, which opens up a cosmopolitan space for solidarity with other similar or dissimilar subjects. Such a space would accordingly be *hospitable* towards difference.

“Hospitality towards strangers is central to a cosmopolitan ethics of openness,” write Høy-Petersen, Woodward, & Skrbis (2016). On a similar line Papastergiadis observed, “Without hospitality, there is no hint of cosmopolitanism” (2007, p. 149). Sociologist Gerard Delanty notes that hospitality was, for Kant, not only a human right that could be exercised against states but also a necessity under conditions where people become increasingly interconnected (2009, p. 34). On a similar line, Seyla Benhabib suggests that the idea of hospitality is not to be understood as an “act of kindness” or something done out of people’s generosity. The cosmopolitan idea of hospitality is rather a basic human right that “belongs to all human beings insofar as we view them as potential participants in a world republic” (2006, p. 22). The difficult part lies in the “viewing”: that is, actually recognizing others as equals.

Papastergiadis discusses cosmopolitan hospitality in relation to Homer (2012, pp. 57–58; 2013). For Homer, hospitality—*philoxenia*—was a principle “meant to be done blind.”

The host receives the guest without asking who or what you are. I add the term ‘what’, because the guest could be a God in disguise. And we should not forget that Zeus was the God of hospitality. [...] the principle means that justice is done before you ask the question: who are you, or more to the point, are you worthy of my hospitality? In a country that supports a principle called mandatory detention it is hard to see how it can be reconciled with *philoxenia*. What sort of cannibalism does this tension evoke? I also stress the word cannibalism because remember in Homer there is also the barbarian Cyclops. The barbarian is someone who does not offer hospitality and tries to eat his guests. What sort of barbarian hospitality is that we offer to refugees? (Papastergiadis, 2013, p. 396)

Philoxenia is a principle where a stranger is taken into a space, not conditioned on where that person comes from or who they are. The analogy of the Cyclops also brings to the fore the issue of reciprocity. Being “eaten” is how the *étranger* pays for its entrance. The reciprocal act of *les étrangers* to be allowed into the barbarians’ home means providing their own corpus as food for the Cyclops. Although this is quite a macabre example, asking for payment functions in the same way. The payment does not have to consist of allowing someone to eat you in a literal sense, but it could, as in the example of people who sell their bodies for others’ pleasure. It could also be a less macabre situation, where *l’étranger* is expected to give something less corporal in return, such as other kinds of material or intellectual property. This hospitality is not hospitality in the strict sense. Rather, it is a matter of trade. I trade something of mine for something of yours.

This brings us to a curious tension, which is also found in Derrida (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000), which is the entanglement of hospitality and ownership. In order for someone to be hospitable towards someone else, they are required to be in possession of something into which they can allow *l’étranger* to enter. The very idea of hospitality presupposes ownership, or at least that there are gated spaces into which others can be granted or denied access. The city government of Stockholm can decide to be hospitable towards graffiti and street art because they are in the position to be hospitable, for example.

As Papastergiadis notes, Derrida renegotiates the rather unconditional *philoxenia* principle. Through the Derridian theorization (2000), hospitality is understood as culturally conditioned: “the answer to the stranger’s request for entry into the host’s house is never determined in advance of the encounter” (2012, p. 58). Here hospitality again becomes a spatially and temporally conditioned

situation. In this sense hospitality is not a matter of unconditional entry in any space. Rather, hospitality materializes in spatiotemporal situations. I will return to the kinds of situations in my third empirical chapter. To extend the idea of situationally determined hospitality, I also suggest that this situation, in turn, could be considered a meshwork of situations. An encounter can consist of two subjects who share something, or who do not. They share, or do not share, not identity, but situation. Identity then—etymologically stemming from the Latin word for *same*—could, depending on one’s perspective, be regarded as *in the same situation*. Hospitality then would extend to phenomena other than people to encompass other situations. For a visual practice such as graffiti and street art, this could recognizing mean recognizing a visual expression and not a person making the image.

Making Sense of the World Through Creative and Curious Practice: Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism.

According to Papastergiadis, “the most vivid signs of the aesthetic dimension of cosmopolitan imaginary can be found in the world-making process of contemporary art” (Papastergiadis, 2012, p. 90). Aesthetics is here understood as a way of “making sense of the world” through “perception of the senses” (Dikeç, 2015, p. 1). This does not have to be connected to aesthetics in terms of art (*ibid.*), although the case at hand does explore a creative practice that is ambivalently and occasionally articulated as art. Investigating these practices through the lens of cosmopolitanism is also particularly interesting insofar as it can point to the tensions between the insular and the global within contemporary culture. Artistic practices can have a certain potential in empirically bridging such gaps, or perhaps rather in opening up another space *in-between* for creation and connection. As Papastergiadis notes, art works through both “suspending the existing order of things” and “envisioning alternatives” (2012, p. 13). Art can thus work subversively against ordering, such as the global order, and simultaneously present alternative views of the world. This is not only a matter of presenting alternatives but also of opening up a critical space where something *in-between* can emerge. This will be explored through a creative practice that resides particularly in an empirical space that holds the traits of that theoretical tension.

Sociologist Motti Regev (2007) suggests that aesthetic cosmopolitanism is structurally located at a collective level and that it is always connected to what is perceived as ethnic uniqueness in a specific place, in contrast to an individual practice driven by openness and broad interest towards other cultural conditions. For Regev, this is ultimately a consequence of the modern cultural indus-

try and the late modern condition, where people participate in local cultural expressions of “the good life” (ibid.). Cosmopolitanism is explained as something ordinary and as part of everyday life and, similar to Beck’s concept of cosmopolitanization (2006), something that happens in late modernity due to the logics of the cultural industry. Papastergiadis has a somewhat different focus, not on the field of cultural production but on the cosmopolitan imaginaries produced in, through, and by aesthetic practices (2012, p. 90). This is key here, as focus is directed towards cosmopolitan potentials in a specific creative environment.

The imaginary is central in this respect, as Benedict Anderson (1991) famously pointed out. It is the possibilities of the imagination that enable possibilities for communities and “comingtogetherness” (Thor, 2015) across time and space. Even geographical referents are collections of spatiotemporal events, with movements and stories running across them. Further, as Papastergiadis notes, aesthetic cosmopolitanism does not refer simply to the “aesthetic representations of cosmopolitanism, but to a cosmopolitan worldview that is produced through aesthetics” (2012, p. 90). This process refers to a sensuous creation of a worldview (cf. Dikeç, 2015). In other words, it is a worldview that emerges from “sensing” the world, and in this case specifically through creative practice. This can materialize as a sensation of connecting to someone else through a piece of art, or a curiosity sparked by it.

Curiosity is intimately connected to cosmopolitan encounters. In order for a cosmopolitan sensibility to emerge, there needs to be a curiosity in the encounter, “a *curiosity* about many places, peoples, and cultures and at least a rudimentary ability to locate such places and cultures historically, geographically and anthropologically” (Szczeszyński & Urry, 2002, p. 470).

As Appiah notes,

The cosmopolitan curiosity about other peoples does not have to begin by seeking in each encounter those traits that all humans share. In some encounters, what we start with is some small thing we two singular people share. (2010, p. 97)

A cosmopolitan moment thus does not have to be about what humans potentially share universally, or traits that everyone who walks the earth have in common. Instead, it can be about something, even a small something, that two people share a curiosity about. It could be a curiosity about each other, but also a curiosity about something else, such as a playground, which through children’s (or grownups’) curious interactions with it become a space that enables meetings between people.

In curiosity, cosmopolitanism and art encounter each other. Indeed, “art begins in curiosity” (Papastergiadis, 2012, p. 13). As such, art can be argued to have a capacity to open up a space for curiosity, a space for cosmopolitan potentials. So to do graffiti and street art, as urban arts that might begin in a curiosity about an “urban aesthetic,” about graffiti and street art performance, or perhaps curiosity about the city.

Such curious practices open up spaces of in-betweenness, in-between the perceived, the perceiver, and the various spaces and discourses that collide in such encounters. In such encounters there are potentials for change, but in order for change to transpire there needs to be an element of tension, or perhaps even provocation or discomfort. It is not in encounters of sameness that the Self or social structures are negotiated. Rather, it is in the “interplay between the rise of new subjects and the emergence of new forms of knowledge” (Papastergiadis, 2012, p. 98). Following Rancière, it is this interplay that art and politics become entangled with each other (ibid.). Papastergiadis notes that the emancipatory function of art comes from its paradoxical location, since it is “both alienated from the hegemonic structures of power and constituted in the flux and interstices of everyday life” (2012, p. 162). It should however be noted that all art is not alienated from hegemonic structures. Art, and sometimes also graffiti and street art, is a business with a lot of money involved in it. This means that art, in order for it to have an intervening function rather *should*, emanate from an alienated situation. As I have previously argued, there is a political power that comes from graffiti and street art when it is in a position of exteriority (Thor, 2017). This can also be considered a materialization of the tensions of cosmopolitanism as a theoretical field addressing the challenges between the (post)universal and the specific.

However, it is important to consider that discursive shifts stemming from interventions are not always intentional. A shift or break might just as well take place unintentionally. That is also why art can be considered to possess an emancipatory function, since art and the artistic process potentially allow never-before conceptualized thoughts and ideas, and more importantly feelings, to come to life. In this respect, subcultural expressions could be considered even more so to have such potentials, since the practice in itself dwells on the outside.

Creative Practice as Mediation and Translation

People doing graffiti and street art are ordinary people. They have lives where they do not do graffiti or street art. They have jobs and families, they ride the subway, and they have a creative interest. They move in and out of their writ-

er/artist *situation*, in and out of “becoming-writer” (Thor, 2017). Graffiti and street art communicate differently to different people; some people like it, while some do not. Some people understand it, and some do not. In the same way that a writer/artist moves in and out of graffiti and street art performance, their visual artifacts move in and out of their communicative potentials. This situates both graffiti and street art and the people doing it as in-between spaces. Graffiti and street art “is in-between through its; simultaneous invisible/visible non-/communicative character; ephemeral, fluid, and mobile placemakings; renegotiations of urban aesthetic; and situationally determined becomings” (Thor, 2017).

As such, graffiti and street art can also be considered mediators between spaces where there are also potentials for translating between such spaces. Translation is, according to García Canclini, a characteristic of contemporary society, where everyone always is subject to different encounters in the flux of the everyday (García Canclini, in Papastergiadis, 2012, p. 85). In that sense, translation becomes a necessary function in the contemporary condition, understood as one of constant encounters with the unknown, known, and everything in between. This is addressed in aesthetic cosmopolitan thought. According to Papastergiadis, “[C]ultural translation is a central force in the formation of aesthetic cosmopolitanism” (2012, p. 135). It functions as an enabler and prerequisite for cosmopolitan encounters, but also as an essential quality within the cosmopolitan condition. I would like to single out a few dimensions of translation practices. As Papastergiadis notes, “[T]ranslation is conventionally understood as the process by which the meaning in one language is conveyed in another” (2012, p. 141). This dimension is linguistically oriented. It concerns translating one language to another, with a renegotiation of both sides in such practices (*ibid.*). In relation to creative practice, which is the subject at hand, language does not necessarily mean words or text in their most conventional sense. Translation can be a matter of translating between modalities. In other words, translation can be understood as translating image to text, architecture to sound, or idea to performance. It involves interpreting meaning and renegotiating it. In terms of graffiti and street art, translation can, accordingly, refer to the space between urban hegemony and the challenging performance, a space opened up by creative intervention, where graffiti and street art assumes the function of mediator between spaces.

Translation also transforms. According to Delanty, “one of the features of cosmopolitanism of self-transformation is its communicative dimension” (2012, p. 42). Cosmopolitanism can therefore be considered—as a transformative process and moment—and a conversation between things. This dialog not only concerns an exchange with others or with exterior things. Equally important is reflexive deliberation with the self. In a cosmopolitan encounter with differ-

ence, the self needs to be renegotiated. Accordingly, critical engagement and transformation with the self, and respectful engagement with otherness, are equally important. In an encounter between an artwork and a viewer, the artwork could potentially open up a space of negotiation between the viewer and the artwork. In the same way that the artwork is negotiated in the different milieus it appears in, the viewing subject of the artwork is potentially negotiated or displaced. In this space, there is translation.

Performative Cosmopolitanism and Urban Critique

Before moving on, I wish to carve out another dimension of “the cosmopolitan,” based in aesthetic cosmopolitanism: the performative. By adding performance in relation to the aesthetic cosmopolitan, I want to emphasize the important function of *doing*. As I discuss above, Papastergiadis emphasizes the imaginative function. I stress the performative in order to draw attention to how imagination can be performed. When authors speak of a “cosmopolitan vision” (Beck, 2006) or a “cosmopolitan imaginary” (Delanty, 2006), cosmopolitanism might sound like something that only goes on inside peoples’ heads. Indeed, the imagination is powerful and has material consequences, but by situating cosmopolitan as, and in, performativity, I highlight how the imagination of other worlds or ways of living can start in doing—in acts of performance.

I draw this idea of cosmopolitanism as a performative act from the earliest strands of cosmopolitan thought. When asked where he came from, the Cynic philosopher Diogenes of Sinope (412–323 BC) replied, “I am a citizen of the world,” a quote considered to be one of the first on cosmopolitanism and often mentioned in studies on the subject (see, for example, Delanty, 2006; Nussbaum, 2010; Pichler, 2009).

Diogenes was not just a Cynic philosopher but also somewhat of a rebel. There are many stories of him acting in any way but the conventional. His cosmopolitan thought embraced the whole world, and he imagined a complete and harmonious unity of people, animals, gods, and all of the natural world (Howatson, 2011). He is even said to have been malodorous (although ironically, he slept in a bathtub), and he once scolded Alexander the Great for standing in the way of his sun. Diogenes’ extremely ascetic lifestyle earned him the nickname “*κῆϋν*,” “the dog,” and allegedly his total refutation of conventional society let Plato to call him a “mad Socrates” (ibid.). In short, Diogenes was a man who put his rebellious preaching into practice, almost obsessively. The Cynics never organized themselves into an academy or philosophical movement, presumably because organization and institutionalization did not mesh well with their anar-

chistic refutation of customs, *nomos* (law) and their overall “disturbing presence in society” (Desmond, 2013, p. 184). The Cynics searched for wisdom in the “marketplace” rather than in institutions of learning (Howatson, 2011). Philosopher William Desmond describes them as anarchists, democrats, “kings,” and cosmopolitans who lived “wild among their urban peers” (Desmond, 2013, p. 184).

To describe the Cynics and Diogenes as anarchists is perhaps the closest at hand due to their rejection of social, cultural, and economic conventions. In Diogenes’ utopia there would be no “lawed temples, law courts, gymnasia, weapons, money (perhaps to be replaced by knucklebones), difference in clothes between men and women”; they would even completely rid themselves of clothes altogether (Desmond, 2013, p. 186). Hence, utopia is described as a society fairly similar to the modern conception of anarchy. Society was only to be ruled by friendship and love. If that were possible it might seem rather appealing but there is, of course, a “but.” As Desmond notes, the reign of free love might even be extended to “incest and public sex with strangers” (ibid.). Incest clearly seems like anything but utopic for most people, and “public sex with strangers” sounds more like possible rape than free love. This might indicate that the Cynics promoted a life directed only by basic needs such as food, sleep, water, and sex, no matter whom those basic needs were satisfied by. Philosopher Terence Irwin does, however, note that the early Cynics, Diogenes together with Antisthenes, seem to have believed that a life of virtue and not pleasure was the recipe for happiness (Irwin, 2007, p. 57). Taking both free love and virtue into account and considering the Cynics’ ascetic lifestyle, one might guess that the pleasure mainly critiqued is pleasure as an abundance of consumption. Sexual pleasure seems to not be included as a negative form of pleasure, as Diogenes critiqued sexual modesty and apparently masturbated in public as a subversive act against such conventions (Irwin, 2007, p. 57). With regard to “free love,” we still confront the question of who is free to love, and consequently regulate social relations through their love. The Cynic utopia makes room for basically the Cynics themselves. Since the Cynics often rejected citizenship, this is not a matter of inclusion in the *polis* sense, as in Aristotle. Rather it is a matter of inclusion in and exclusion from a fragmented, unorganized philosophical community without clear borders.

Because of its anarchist character, the Cynics’ cosmopolitanism can definitely be criticized for standing *against* something rather than being *for* something. According to Gerard Delanty, the Cynic belief in cosmopolitanism was, in fact, a limited and individualistic pursuit of an ascetic ideal that had no real substance beyond the rejection of that which is conventional (2009, p. 21).

Indeed, Delanty's point is a relevant and justified critique. Given the rather unorthodox way of life of Diogenes and the Cynics, it is easy to dismiss them as simply insane and their Cynicism as pure anti-teaching. Following my account of Cynic philosophy above, I would add that although the Cynic philosophical pursuit can be considered both individualistic and anarchistic, the "real substance beyond rejection of the conventional" can be considered a wish and hope for an ordering of society different from the one they were living under. "It's not that I'm out of my mind. It's that I don't have the same mind as you," Diogenes once said when accused of being a crazy person (Stobaeus 3.3.51; G427, in Diogenes, 2012, p. 22). However dystopian certain Cynic quotes may sound, Diogenes held hope to be the "most precious in life" (Diogenes, 2012, p. 68). I therefore argue that the Cynics, although cynical, did also stand for something and did not only stand against. They were urban dwellers searching for wisdom in everyday public spaces and sought a different ordering of society through a strong belief in humanity.

Furthermore, as Delanty notes, Cynicism gave cosmopolitanism "*critical sensibility*" (2009, p. 21, my italics). This can be observed both on an individual level, thought their "concern with self-scrutiny and self-problematization [which] can be related to the cosmopolitan spirit to relativize one's own culture in light of the encounter with others" (ibid., p. 23) and on a structural level, through their opposition to the ordering of the polis. This has given a critical strand to cosmopolitan thought—no matter the extent of its normativity—in the sense that it questions the political and/or social status quo (Delanty, 2012, p. 2). Critical cosmopolitanism "as a political imaginary is best seen as a critique of both nationalism and globalization: it rejects the limits of nationalism without embracing the capitalist vision of a globalized world" (Delanty, 2013, p. 270). This makes cosmopolitanism fundamentally transformational. It is transformative in both its empirical and theoretical foci. Cosmopolitanism's empirical focus aims towards understanding and analyzing a contemporary globalized condition and the challenges and opportunities of that condition. Likewise, cosmopolitanism's theoretical focus aims towards envisioning alternative structurings of the social world and moral outlooks. As such, there is always a transformative and critical focus in cosmopolitan thought that questions the status quo.

As Delanty further notes, a "stronger claim for critical cosmopolitanism [is] as an account of social and political reality that seeks to identify transformational possibilities within the present" (2012, p. 38). Connecting to my third research question, such transformative possibilities and potentials are absolutely crucial.

Importantly, the Cynics and their early strands of cosmopolitanism were very much performative, and thus contributed a *performative approach to philosophy*. They *practiced* philosophy and *performed* a certain way of life in the public sphere.

In these respects, graffiti and street art performance share several traits with this early cosmopolitan though. For one, both view the urban space as an arena for performance. Also, their performances function as critical interventions in that urban space. Both Diogenes and graffiti and street artists can therefore be described as engaging in *urban rituals* situated in everyday life and public spaces.

Everywhere in cities in Sweden and other parts of the world you can witness a variety of peculiar or provoking events [] At such events, [people] act jointly according to schemes of action, which in other cases would be unthinkable (Klein, 1995, p. 7, my translation)

This is how (now sadly late) folklorist and ethnologist Barbro Klein starts her edited volume on rituals. Wall writing can definitely be both peculiar and provoking, but graffiti and street art also have a ritualistic element to them in the performance of culture. As with most cultural practices, graffiti and street art form a cultural cluster to which access is gained through the use of “rules and exact ritual” (Campos, 2013, p. 162). They require some kind of knowledge of how things “should be done”: how the culture should be performed. This kind of repetition becomes an urban ritual that performs culture, its histories, and its environment. These urban rituals do not only repeat and perform culture; these repetitions also constitute cultural doxa. Ritualistic repetition is an interesting trait in graffiti and street art, as it is tangled up with “getting fame” in quantitative terms: i.e., the repetitive act of writing one’s name numerous times to maximize exposure and recognition. Exposure is not only a quantitative matter. Given the numerous modalities of expression, graffiti and street art can also gain recognition and exposure through conspicuous colors and techniques, or eye-catching placement. The variety and multiplicity of ritualistic expressions “redefine places and transform them into scenes of performance [and] show alternate possibilities for action by establishing temporary ways of action” (Klein, 1995, pp. 23, 24, my translation). Ritualistic performances thus have both *assembling* and *transformative* functions. They function as assemblers for a group in a specific space-time that coalesces in a performance. This could potentially also extend to images. An image could be regarded as a performance that in itself connect to other images, histories, and contexts. These images perform a collective history through their appearance in public space, in the same way that graffiti and street artists/writers perform alternative and critical interpretations of the urban.

Finding Something Cosmopolitan

How do you recognize someone or something as cosmopolitan? This question is very close to the focus of my third research question, but before moving on I would like to clarify my inquiry. I am not asking if someone “is” a cosmopolitan, for two reasons. For one, I am not exploring people so much as I am exploring practices. Clearly there are acting subjects behind performances, but I do not focus on the individuals so much as their actions. Second, “being” something is not possible when speaking of cosmopolitanism as performative. Becoming materializes in performance. Therefore, given this philosophical perspective, no one can “be a cosmopolitan.” One can only become so in a spatiotemporal moment. When that moment is gone there are new possibilities of becoming. This does not mean there are no regularities in those becomings, and the power of habit—“path dependency”—should not be underestimated. Although there is always a potential for another becoming, the key word is *potential*. Certain orientations are cultivated in certain social contexts. The place is a consequence of performances in certain time-spaces. Just as much as placemaking is dependent on the performance of an acting subject, it is also dependent on the space and time of the performance. There is, in that sense, a *spatiotemporal locality* in the process of becoming, a context that affects what becomes. This means that cosmopolitan worldviews are more likely to be performed at a United Nations conference than at a right-wing nationalist rally.

These continuities exist equally in the mediated extensions of urban communications, in both analog and digital spaces. Although graffiti and street art are constantly reinterpreted in such spaces, they continue to carry a historicity that becomes embedded in the repetition and renegotiation of that moment. Consequently, although each spatiotemporal moment presents a new and endless number of possibilities, not all of them become realized. Becoming a woman (cf. Beauvoir, 1949), for example, is not a different process every day or every second. Not only are there consistencies, but these consistencies are powerful and have great effect on people’s actions. By theorizing cosmopolitanism as spatiotemporal becoming, I emphasize cosmopolitanism as bound up with performative acts and placemaking that encompasses subject, space, and time. Cosmopolitanism then *becomes* through spatiotemporal moments: i.e. through the collapsing of space and time through performance. The question I ask is therefore this: how do we notice a cosmopolitan becoming?

The only way to find something is to have an idea of what you are looking for. In order to find a cosmopolitan becoming such a becoming needs to be must qualified. Given the account of cosmopolitanism I have set out in these pages, this means looking for everyday situations characterized by performed subversion and some kind of institutional critique. These situations must also be char-

acterized by hospitality and sensuous experiences of interconnectedness to other situations and experiences. This understanding of cosmopolitanism is entirely spatiotemporally situated. Although I qualify what I mean by cosmopolitanism, “it” does not exceed space and time. Having qualified this initial understanding, asking *what* becomes less important in this case than asking *when* and *where*: In other words, I am concerned with the spatiotemporal conditions of cosmopolitan performances. These moments materialize in the spaces in and of the artwork—analogue or digital—but potentially in *different components* of those spaces. A cosmopolitan moment can thus emerge in an artwork or an image itself, but also in the surrounding practices: of observing the artwork, of making the artwork, of circulating its image, or of responding to the artwork. Cosmopolitan moments can therefore materialize in different parts of the production, giving the created space a cosmopolitan temperament.

Performative Critical Ethnography

Situating the Study Methodologically

This ethnography can best be positioned as a performance ethnography drawing on methodological insights from postcolonial feminism, visual ethnography, and critical studies. The intended outcome of this strategy is to arrive at an internal understanding of a cultural cluster and its performances and how these are embedded in, and reproducing of, power structures. In selecting the literature I draw on for purpose of this study, I have emphasized the theorization of action and making (*poiesis*): in other words, performances. I draw on artists' stories, but it is important to note that the focal point is on actions rather than the artists' "life worlds," although I mainly access these actions through the artists. The study is therefore not a study of identity formation. My performative approach draws on several performance theorists who, in different ways, relate to the Nietzschean claim that "there is no 'being' behind doing, acting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction imposed on the doing – the doing itself is everything" (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 29). This does not mean that there is no doer—there is, but not before the doing and the done (the performance and the performative).

My methodology draws heavily on performance ethnography (D. Conquergood, 1991; Dwight Conquergood, 2013; Denzin, 2003, 2013), critical ethnography (Madison, 2012), and visual and sensory ethnography (Pink, 2012, 2013, 2015).

To explore situated kinds of knowledge and actions through performative ways of finding out, I turn to performance studies and performative ethnography. Performance studies:

struggles to open the space between analysis and action, and to pull the pin on the binary opposition between theory and practice. This embrace of different ways of knowing is radical because it cuts to the root of how knowledge is organized in the academy. (Dwight Conquergood, 2002, pp. 145–146)

In this I am attempting to open up a subversive and performative space for questioning ways of knowing in terms of not only how this study is performed but also in terms of who is performing the research and what is being researched. The dominant ways of knowing within academia consider knowing from a distanced perspective: knowing *about* and knowing *that* (ibid.). In contrast, performance studies aims at a grounded and intimate kind of knowing, a knowing anchored in practice and “in the thick of things” (ibid: 146). This is what this study intends to explore.

Although I position myself in the study in contrast to positivist research traditions and their embedded values, I still want to acknowledge how this positioning is impossible without relating to, and thereby continuing to adhere to, what I am distancing myself from. This is a qualitative study situated within ontological assumptions connected to performance and discourse theory, but even so it assumes and performs a history of other research traditions.

In Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln’s (2008) description of the history of qualitative research, they identify five historical moments: the traditional; the modernist/golden age, blurred genres, the crisis of representation, and the postmodern/present moment. These moments can all be described as simultaneously operating in the present, especially given that the present is described as a moment of doubts and sensibilities regarding prior epistemological claims to knowledge and truth (ibid.). What I wish to add here is that simultaneity signifies a nonlinear history. When drawing on history, history is redrawn and created in the simultaneous present. This means that all these moments are continuously at work and being re-created. “The crisis of representation” era, for example, was thus not only a historical moment between 1986 and 1990 but also a moment that becomes—in relation to the present performative moment—performing as what I would call a Ghost of Academia Past, Present, and Future, respectively. Obviously, this is important for positioning research, not only because it explains what the researcher is doing but also the political why she is doing what she is doing.

Understanding the history of qualitative research as linear and evolutionary also draws attention away from the simultaneous processes of becomings of research paradigms. This implies that attention is also drawn away from how different paradigms stick to each other as they unfold into and become within each other. In other words, all paradigms bear sticky traces of each other. Quine (1981) once noted that truth, meaning, and belief are *sticky concepts*; they stick together creating a dogma. I would like to argue that this stickiness also comes into being in between dogmas and doctrines. All doctrines are relationally created, and therefore they discursively relate to and are constituted in contrast to other doctrines: they stick to each other. This stickiness also means that

other research paradigms become part of what I am doing in a way. I am not actively using them, merely acknowledging their presence as a way of situating this study. It is not possible for me to use the word *qualitative* without implying that there is something *quantitative* that is different, for example. The stickiness holds everything together.

Before moving on to how methods are performed in the study I will first unpack three central methodological themes that create the backdrop for how the study is performed: performance/performativity; the critical; and the reflexive.

Performance and Performativity

Using performance as a methodological concept emphasizes actions and, importantly, the active involvement and co-becomings of the researcher and the researched. Neither the researcher nor the researched is thus passive. The level of activity of different subjects clearly differs throughout the researching process. For example, the people I spoke to are less active in the process now that I am writing this chapter. However, their stories are very much part of the process and very much a part of me. Their stories and experiences, their becomings, are inscriptions on my body that I am constantly sensing and renegotiating as I am performing the study through looking, thinking, photographing, writing and so on.

The performative is critical in the way that it both emphasizes and calls for action. Denzin asks ethnographers to be part of an emancipatory discourse of performative cultural studies (Denzin, 2003, p. 3). Such an emancipatory space opens up in societal critique and through a progressive politics, societal projects in which Denzin argues ethnographers have an important role to play.

Performance ethnography is consequently a political project, similar to how performance studies professor D. Soyini Madison (2012) describes critical ethnography as an emancipatory and action-based ethnography. It is intended to open up spaces for critical inquiry and politics. The task for a performative ethnography is imagining and exploring “the multiple ways in which we can understand performance, including as imitation (mimesis); as construction (poiesis) and as motion or movement (kinesis)” (Conquergood 1998, p. 31, in *ibid.*). All these aspects of performance come into play in this study, but before exploring that further, I shall first unpack what I mean by performance.

A “performance event is the moment when *performativity* (being) brings a performance narrative alive” (Langellier 1998, p. 208, in Denzin, 2003). The performance is the act of bringing the repetitiveness of narratives alive through acting. The repetitiveness of performativity signifies all actions that have come before, and although every act is different from the ones before, to some extent

they all relate to each other. They *stick* to each other. Acting means different things, but it also means the same thing; it can mean acting as Mimì in *La Bohème* at the Metropolitan, but it also means presenting yourself when applying for a job. Understanding these different activities as performances points to their similarities: they are presentations of selves (cf. Goffman, 1990), and they are dramatizations of selves. A performance is, however, not confined to a person deciding to do something or a making of a “self.” A performance also involves making spaces, which points to how these remakings are constantly in play. As I mentioned before, although I speak of performance, I do not mean that there is a “doer” behind the “deed.” The performer becomes in the performance, which is also why my study emphasizes acts and not artistic selves. Using performance is thus first and foremost an ontological perspective that views the “doer” and the “deed” as simultaneously constituted.

A performance is an interventionist, subversive, and critical act embedded in language (Butler, 1999; Denzin, 2003, p. 25). This is part of a perspective that views the people in a study as participants whose different performances become embedded in it. This goes for both the researcher and the researched. I am studying interventionist, subversive, and critical acts in an interventionist, subversive, and critical manner, and I perform my results through an interventionist, subversive, and critical text: a performance text. In that sense, this dissertation can be considered a cosmopolitan project in itself. It performs its theory and method critically and aims to *recognize* and be *hospitable* to the tensions within its empirics. According to Denzin, performance texts can take many different forms, such as poetry, drama, transcription, and so on. In my case, it takes the form of a dissertation involving different kinds of texts (images, the making of images, words). The divide between text and image becomes redundant, as do the dividing lines between subject and object or researcher and researched, since the performative research process cuts across such divides and creates a political space of in-betweenness and action. Denzin writes,

The ways in which the world is not a stage are not easy to specify, and global capitalism is one reason this is so. Indeed, if everything is already performative, staged, commodified, and dramaturgical, [...] then the dividing lines between person and character, between performer and actor, between stage and setting, between script and text, and between performance and performativity disappear. When these divisions disappear, critical ethnography becomes pedagogical and performative, and its topics become the politics of global capitalist culture and the effects of that politics on the dramas of daily life (2003, p. 25).

The Critical

This ethnography is critical in two ways. The first aspect is related to how D. Soyini Madison (2012) describes critical ethnography as beginning “with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness within a particular lived domain” (p. 5). Such an ethical responsibility entails the “sense of duty and commitment based on principles of human freedom and well-being and, hence, a compassion for the suffering of living beings (ibid.). Madison further describes how the critical means going beyond initial appearances and scrutinizing the structures and production of power and control within a specific setting. The critical approach does not, however, end with such scrutiny and critique. It also entails moving the discussion from “what is” to “what could be” (ibid., p. 5). In Madison’s understanding of critical ethnography, the critical is thus a way of voicing the unvoiced. It is an action against power and a normative path towards emancipation and emancipatory knowledge. Boltanski took a similar tact in arguing for a *critical sociology of emancipation* (2011). In my case, this does not mean intended and purposeful action towards changing the setting. Rather, it means understanding the work of power and agency in the researched subject. In my research, this means critically approaching alternative and critical performances of the urban, and in some instances taking an active moral and ethical stance in favor of or against them. It is thus very much like what Madison calls *performing critical theory*. There are two aspects to this critical inquiry: the first entails *getting to the root*, and the second entails *envisaging alternatives*.

This understanding of ethnography emphasizes critique, performance, and action—all of which are important to this project. At the same time, however, these themes can also be critiqued. Clearly “what could be” is a question very much connected to the researcher’s own positionality. Positionality, for Madison, concerns what Charlotte Aull Davies (2008) describes as the “turning back” on ourselves. It is thus the constant renegotiation of the researcher’s position and the reflexive critique of that position. I would argue that a reflexive stance towards the ethnographic setting at hand is equally important. The researcher can take on the role of voicing the Other and critiquing Othering, but sometimes such scrutiny also needs to be turned towards what is Othered.

When I entered the field of Stockholm graffiti and street art, I did so with the critical opinion that there was something strange and unfair about certain forms of expression being totally banned from public space. It was this critical opinion that made the project interesting to me. Consequently, my project is partly a *critical project on the political and spatial marginalization of certain expressions and a performative intervention and action in that discourse*. After spending some time in the field, one of the things that became clear to me was that in some aspects these performances are heavily male-dominated, with respect to which I was then

equally critical. This also feeds into how researching a specific setting changes that setting. In other words, it points to how I was as performative in the field as the objects of my study.

When I first entered the field I wondered whether I was methodologically allowed to talk back to participants, to question what they were saying and doing, and especially whether I had to appear as though I always agreed with them. Was it possible for me to start arguing and actually tell them that I had a different opinion on some matter? At first I did not do so. But then I started asking questions that clearly implied that I actually questioned what they were saying. I thought I was very subtle, but when someone started to laugh or have some other reaction to my question, I realized I was not as subtle as I thought. I also realized I was making myself appear like I knew less than I actually did. At first I thought that was a good thing, so they could educate me in their opinions and experiences. When I started questioning things or giving them my opinion, however, something else started happening: we started discussing instead.

I would say that the different strategies of trying to be either neutral or intervening in the discourse have their strengths and weaknesses. Of course, I ran the risk of a participant adjusting their story to please me if he or she knew my opinion, but sometimes the failure to agree could be interesting. There is another risk in questioning what participants say, in that they might feel intimidated and become reluctant to speak to me. It could also be the case that I, as the interviewer, might create even more of a bias in the material by leading them to talk about things they would not normally talk about, or even think about. Questioning what people said was not something I did initially. It was a strategy that developed after I had gained some insight into and knowledge of the area. I then started considering the interviews as collaborative pedagogical events where both the interviewer and interviewee had something to bring to the table. I felt the interviews became more interesting and conversational, which, perhaps paradoxically, created more of a sense of intimacy and relaxation than when the interviews were performed in a more classical manner.

Turning Back Toward the Self

Part of the criticality in this ethnography is connected to *positionality*, which is sometimes also discussed in terms of reflexivity. Madison states, “[P]ositionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects” (2012, p. 8). A critical ethnography thus not only critiques that which is studied but also the researcher as subject, or “the self” in the research process.

When working in the field it became obvious to me that what I was sensing was a simultaneous *becoming* of my experiences from my past, present, and future. I started reflecting on how things I saw in the field made me reflect on previous experiences, and how that informed my performance in the field. As Pink (2015) describes, her own sensory values became a reference point for reflecting on the situated experiences of the participants in her study (p. 61). This self-reflecting process does not take place before the start of fieldwork. Instead, it happens during (ibid.). This is important, because although the present entails repetitions of the past, these repetitions are not identical to prior experiences. The past equally *becomes* in the present. This means that the difficulties in preparing for an interview, for example, not only have to do with the fact that the interviewer is interacting with another living creature whose desires and beliefs one knows little about. It also has to do with the fact that the interviewer's desires and beliefs are *becoming* in the same moment. The difficulties in preparing for fieldwork thus also have to do with the difficulties in preparing oneself to encounter oneself. That is also why the reflection and accounting for one's own experience is just as important as the experiences one is trying to explore.

Thinking Things Together

One thing that the methodological perspectives described above have in common is that they all invoke active presence and bodily involvement in the field of study. This goes for all participants in the study: the subjects (people, places, ideas) and the researcher. For Pink (2015) entering, being and actively participating in the field is a way of attaining: self-reflexivity, understanding, and tacit and bodily awareness of how different *becomings* emerge in the process. Sensory ethnography is not necessarily an approach for describing a sensory context but a strategy for getting at how people act in their environment (ibid., p. 53). This supplements the first descriptive research question of the study.

Actively involving yourself and participating, *seeing research as performance*, is a strategy for coming close to, understanding and experiencing a setting. According to Pink, the researcher's situated, experiencing, and knowing body is central for sensory ethnography and is what creates the ethnographic place. It is the performative moment in time and space that creates a throwtogetherness of trajectories that performs a "site for embodied knowing" (Pink, 2012). These throwtogether sites/places are moments of movement rather than collapses of time and space into a place, and the "knowing" is inherently part of the researchers' experience of these moments created by the co-performers of the event. The performances of subjects, the researcher as well as the researched, are thus simultaneously engaged in the moments of meshwork places.

Denzin comments that reflexive writing is a writing of the self “into and through the ethnographic text, isolating that space where memory, history, performance and meaning intersect” (2013, p. 22). The role of the researcher thus cannot be detached from the ethnographic moment. Emphasizing and giving primacy to the role of the researcher is also a way of accounting for the sensory experiences and the sensory dimensions of the thrown-together place. According to Pink, sensory ethnography is a way of accounting for space/place, sound, images, and tacit experiences and not just for observation. Following this argument, participant observation means experiencing, sensing, and reflecting on the performative moments of the researcher and the participants. Working with and through the senses is thus a strategy for getting at the complexities of the field. It is accounting for the moments of experience.

Performing Ethnography

After having explained the different key themes and features of my methodology I will now discuss how these themes are put into practice—operationalized, as some call it, but which I would rather call the *performing of methodology*.

The ethnographic approach developed for this study consists of a combination of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, tag-alongs, and urban walks. All of these approaches also involved photography. My data collection aimed to conduct approximately 30 interviews, produce fieldnotes from participant observation over a longer intense fieldwork period (about 9 months), make follow-up observations after 6 to 12 months, and document the fieldwork process through photography. Apart from the visual documentation of the interviews and participant observation, several urban walks were also conducted. These entailed walking around Stockholm, mostly by myself but also together with participants, taking pictures of urban artwork, both legal and illegal, in order to get a sense of the visual communication present in the city and how it changes from area to area and through the visual expressions that appear in it. These walks were an important part of my preparation for the other aspects of fieldwork and provided a connection to the field and the context in which the participants engage and create.

I used this mixed methodological approach (participant observation, interviews, tag-alongs, and urban walks) as an attempt to lend reliability to the results. In a manner similar to phenomenological approaches, I thus tried to cross-check my findings through different approaches to the field. I found it not only reasonable at first to use a mixed methodology but also useful for validating my experiences and the conclusions I drew from them.

The Ethnographic Place

Place and placemaking are central to this study. What and where the place is where the research has been conducted is, however, something that needs further unpacking.

As Lena Gemzöe (2004) notes, the ethnographic field is not necessarily a clearly defined place. Although many of my observations were carried out at the same geographical coordinates, this is not *the place* I explore in this study. Instead of delimiting a specific place, my focus lies on specific performances, which I study in different locations and virtual and material places. As I have noted previously, *place* is theorized in terms of events. Place is space *and* time, the “here *and* now” (Massey, 2005, pp. 138–139). It is a spatiotemporal collapse created by performance. Accordingly, place follows and is created in performance. It should also be noted that the places created are not singular or defined by a single materiality. The place of the performance in the urban space is interlinked with practices in electronic spaces, for example, thereby also making the urban an assemblage of the locally performed and the electronically disseminated.

These multiplicities of space and place have been discussed in a branch of ethnography specifically focusing on multiplicities of localities: multi-sited ethnography. This is a branch of anthropology initially formulated by George E. Marcus (Marcus, 1995) as a response to the traditional anthropological practice of focusing on an encapsulated locality. Multi-sited ethnography instead “moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs and to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects and identities in a diffuse time-space” (1995, p. 96).

Multi-cited ethnography has developed as an anthropological genre that aims to grasp the fragmentation of contemporary cultural flows and the displacements of cultural place. Graffiti and street art are not confined in a particular place. Neither are the people making graffiti and/or street art confined in a particular place. As Ricardo Campos notes, graffiti writers live with “constant interchanging of worlds, the taking on of divergent roles [] similar to that of a performance or theatrical play” (2013, p. 162). This creates a displacement in how place can be conceptualized in this subject. The place, following Butler, is constituted by performance. Furthermore, placemaking is a meshwork of simultaneous presences mediated in material and virtual spaces. The place researched thus follows the acts—the performances.

The problem with this approach is that it is difficult to know where to stop. What and where am I not studying? The thing that delimits this study is the choice of performances in the physical space of Stockholm and its suburbs.

The emphasis on makings and not specific makers also results in involving participants who make paintings in Stockholm but who do not necessarily come from or live in Stockholm. I did, however, follow people to places and did not random explore every suburb of Stockholm. My random walking, as a method—which I will explain in more detail in the following pages—was delimited to the inner city. When it comes to exploring the suburbs, I only followed participants, the selection of whom I will now address.

Participants

A total of 32 participants were interviewed, with 27 of these interviews taking place at cafés in Stockholm and 5 interviews taking place as part of “tag-alongs” (see *Go-Alongs/Tag-Alongs*, p. 82). Of the café interviews, three were also followed by tag-alongs in relation to the interview.

I contacted the first participants via personal connections, Instagram, and artists’ home pages. After these initial contacts, the rest of the participants were contacted through a snowball sampling technique (see, for example, O’Leary, 2004, p. 110). This meant contacting one person and then asking that person to provide contacts for other people who met the study selection criteria (*ibid.*). Since my study is focused on the act of making graffiti in Stockholm—i.e. performances—the selection was based on locality and included people living in, or with experience in painting graffiti and street art in Stockholm.

Snowball sampling does not guarantee any sort of representativeness. The risk of snowball samples is that you may only come into contact with people who tell the same stories; consequently, the data becomes saturated very quickly. In order to avoid this, the snowball samples were taken in different sets. Set 1 consisted of people contacted via Instagram and/or blogs, set 2 consisted of people contacted via personal channels, and set 3 consisted of people I encountered during the fieldwork. I used both professional and private channels, which did not overlap. After the first few interviews, I established additional criteria for selection: a specific focus on women and younger people, aged approximately 16–20. I set these criteria as it soon became obvious that women were a minority and that my snowball method was leading me to relatively established graffiti artists in their 30s and 40s. The snowball method could thus only take the study so far, after which point I had to establish other criteria (younger people and women) in order to get increase variety in the selection. None of the participants identified as a third or non-binary gender. Although this was an issue raised in some interviews, it was therefore not represented in the form of participants identifying as neither female nor male.

Although I aimed to achieve variation, the material started repeating itself after a while. I took as a sign that I had gained saturation in the material and that I could stop gathering data. Since I had taken measures in order to achieve variations by snowballing from different starting points, I could have conducted more interviews and widened the scope even more, but the saturation of the material did not only concern only repetition in the material but also a multitude of contradictions. I therefore consider the level of saturation, both in terms of repetitions and in variations, as an indication of satisfactory thoroughness in the fieldwork.

In order to keep participants as anonymous as possible, I have given them pseudonyms in the text. The pseudonyms I chose are not completely random but in some way relate to the participants' original name, gender, and age. If a participant was called Eva (a common name among Swedish women born in the 1950s), I might assign her the pseudonym Lena, another common name within that same age group.

The tables below offer a brief overview of the participants in terms of age⁷ and gender:

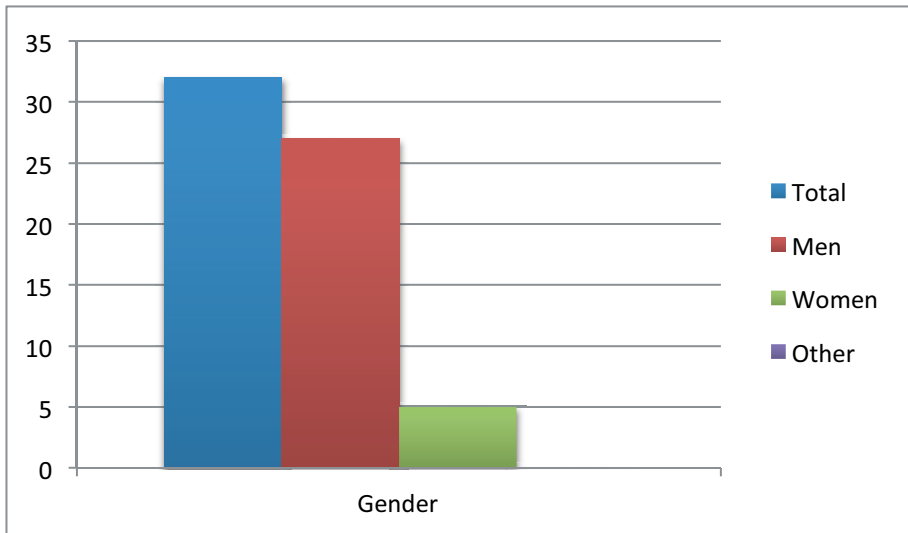


Figure 8: Participants by Gender

⁷ One participants' age was unknown to me and I did not manage to find it out afterwards. This participant has been excluded from the age table.

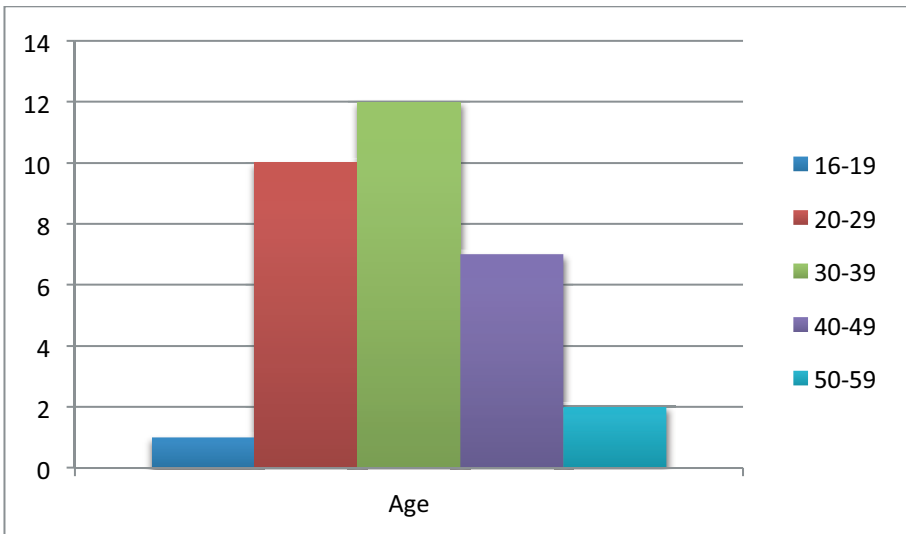


Figure 9: Participants by Age

I had some initial hope that I would also achieve a more “intersectional” account of the participants and perhaps situate them more clearly in terms of common sociological categories. There are two reasons why I did not. The first reason was that a more specified description of the participants collided with the fact that I, and several of the participants, wanted to keep them as anonymous as possible. The second reason, which from an ethnographic point of view became very important, was that they did not describe themselves in any of those terms, even though I initially tried to press them to do so. A few mentioned they had gone to university, one mentioned ethnicity, and no one mentioned religion, for example. When I asked them to tell me about themselves or their background, they said they were, for example, from Stockholm. The participants did include people of different ethnicities (white included), and people with varying levels of educational attainment. These, however, were traits that were either only mentioned in passing or things I already knew about the participants because of how I came into contact with them. When I asked them these questions, almost none of the participants used these terms or categories to describe themselves. In trying to stay true to the participants’ stories, therefore, I have omitted these categories from my description of the participants. Every women participant did, however, use gender in their self-description, and therefore I did chose to include this dimension in the graphs.

Interviews

I interviewed 27 participants at cafés, often chosen by the participants themselves. The interviews were semi-structured and focused on six clusters of questions. Cluster 1-4 was connected to research question 1 (descriptive). The question clusters concerned: the personal story; definitions; place (in Stockholm); and experiences of/in the subcultural context. Cluster 5 concerned motives for doing the arts and conceptions of political arts, aiming to answer research question 2 (ideologies and articulations of social critique). The third research question (cosmopolitanism) corresponded in part to cluster 4 (experiences of and in the subcultural context), together with question cluster 6, which concerned media use and its relation to practices.

I elaborated these clusters before the first interview, after an initial mapping of the field using articles, online discussion forums, and previous research. Later I refined the themes after the first three interviews. I did so as it became obvious to me that respondents were tending to talk about several of the clusters themselves without me pushing them in a specific direction. Hence, the interviews were reformulated to follow the respondent's "natural" order and flow of telling, which made the interview situation more relaxed and comfortable.

All the participants spoke Swedish, and the interviews and the transcriptions were done in Swedish before I translated them. This dissertation is part of a research project that provided funding for a transcriber for ten of the interviews. The participants whose interviews were transcribed by the transcriber were informed of this in advance and agreed to this procedure.

After the transcription process the interviews were organized thematically. During this process I created keywords in the transcription software connected to timestamps in the audio files. Later, a search for the keyword *graffiti* would produce all audio clips with that keyword. I created the keywords inductively from themes in the participants' stories.

That the interview as *situation* has a performative element became clear to me in the process of analyzing the material. The questions became increasingly informed by prior interviews, although my aim was to stay open towards the direction the interview might be heading in. It did, however, become clear to me that this "open" stance also became an obstacle. I got answers, but they were sometimes cursory. I thus decided to create a critical space for questioning participants' narratives. For example:

Tindra 1: Would you say there are many women painting graffiti?

Participant: (sarcastic) What do you mean? Haha!

Tindra 2: I'm under the impression that there are very few women painting graffiti. How would you describe it?

Participant: Well, sadly yes, they are few. But there are more and more coming!

Tindra 3: Why are there so few women?

Participant: (sighs) I've wondered about that a lot. I don't know. But I guess, they have more to risk. It's not always safe. Running around at night. So it's not worth the risk.

In the first example I was trying to be open, to adopt the *epoché* of phenomenology—which not surprisingly I was in the process of exploring at the time I asked the question. This approach has its good qualities, and it helped me a great deal, but after a while I felt like I was missing something and got slightly suspicious. In the second example I was definitely suspicious, but I was still trying to be open and ask an open-ended question. At the time of the last example I decided to take a departure from versions one and two, creating a critical space where I could question the order of things.

Go-Alongs/Tag-Alongs

The go-along is a combination of interview and participant observations. The researcher walks and accompanies the subjects in the environment of interest or the environment of the subjects of interest. Walking around is fundamental to the everyday. Margarethe Kusenbach writes, “[F]ieldworkers accompany individual informants on their ‘natural’ outings, and - through asking questions, listening and observing - actively explore their subjects’ stream of experiences and practices as they move through, and interact with, their physical and social environment” (2003, p. 463), adding that “go-alongs ultimately point to the fundamental reflexivity of human engagement with the world.” (ibid., p. 478).

According to Kusenbach the go-along is a suitable method when the research areas concern questions of environmental perception, spatial practices, biog-

raphies, social architecture and social realms. This is also in accordance with the sensory experiencing in Pink (2015). Kusenbach argues with regard to spatiality that “spatial practices can become powerful tools in expressing and shaping our personal identities, and go-alongs provide privileged access to this phenomenon” (ibid., p. 472) and with regard to social architecture she argues that “go-alongs are helpful in lifting to the surface the implicit web of social relationships between individuals who live in, or use, a certain area” (ibid., p. 474). Being in the area and actively participating and asking questions thus provides the opportunity to both observe and take part in the social context. It enables asking questions about what people are doing as they are doing it.

As previously hinted at, I have chosen to shift the name of the method; since “tagging” is a prominent feature in graffiti cultures it is un-resistible not to refer to this method as tag-alongs (see also Thor, 2017). I do want to make clear that when I say *tag*, in this case, I refer to the act of accompanying a person and not writing a tag (a writers’ alias). I myself did not paint or write in the process of gathering data, although I did consider participating as a potential activity during tag-alongs as a method. Given its illegality, I believed it would be problematic to participate in this way and ultimately chose not to. I tagged along with six participants whom I did not interview in any other context and tagged along with an additional three participants whom I had also interviewed at a café.

Kusenbach claims that participant observation has several strengths, but that it is difficult to grasp the participants’ experiences of the situation, or as Pink would say, the sensory dimensions of experiencing and acting in a space. On a similar line, she questions the interview as a method, since this setting takes the participants out of their context, something of concern in my specific project, which focuses on understanding the dynamics of spatial production and performances in urban space. However, it is also important to be reflective and sensitive to where people want to be interviewed or “observed.” Although the tag-along provides the opportunity for simultaneous different performances in an urban space, not all participants felt comfortable with the approach, which of course needed to be respected. Others have preferred being interviewed while they painted for several reasons: because it has made them feel more comfortable, but also because some were very busy and this was the best way to fit our conversations into their schedule.

Co-performative Witnessing: Reimagining Participant Observation

Participant observation involves trying to become part of a cultural cluster in order to understand what is happening inside it. Observation implies non-participation, which some might consider an appropriate approach, but my point of departure is that the researcher is participating by just being present.

Conquergood describes such a reimagining of participant observation as “coperformative witnessing” (2002, p. 149) and argues that for the ethnographer, the body is the privileged site of knowing (Conquergood, 1991). Understanding ethnography as an embodied practice means acknowledging ethnography as a multisensory practice (cf. Pink, 2015).

In the field the researcher creates a space for herself, or perhaps even imposes her presence on a certain environment. Johanna Dahlin (2012) notes that the space the researcher creates for herself is not a space that existed prior to the researcher entering the field. Finn Sivert Nielsen makes this clear by describing how there is no place for female Norwegian anthropologists in Zanzibar. It is, instead, a place that needs to be created through a process that entails negotiation and conflict (Nielsen, 1996, p. 185, in Dahlin, 2012, p. 27).

These negotiations are especially evident in the process of entering the field, although they continue throughout the fieldwork process to different degrees. My entrance to the field was slow until I found my “gatekeeper.” A gatekeeper is a person who is connected to the field in some way and who provides the ethnographer with access to the field. It surprised me that this turned out to be my father, who one day called me and said there were a bunch of graffiti artists painting the concrete walls in the industrial area where he was working. They were painting with the permission of the business owners inside the buildings. I asked my father to talk to one the artists to see if I could come and talk to them. Later the same day my father called me back and gave me a phone number to contact, and the next week I went to the location to conduct an interview and observe the area. The access my father gave me generated 14 of the interviews and sets of fieldnotes collected over a period of approximately nine months.

Urban Walks

Walking through the city is theoretically informed and inspired first and foremost by Michel de Certeau’s chapter “Walking in the City” (1984) and Walter Benjamin’s idea of the *flâneur*, from *The Arcades Project* (1999). De Certeau argues that walking can be a displacing tactic that creates ambiguities in the orders of urban planners, in the same way that dreaming can displace and obscure waking life (1984, p. 156). According to Jo Lee and Tim Ingold, “walking around is fundamental to the everyday practice of social life” and “to much anthropological fieldwork” (Ingold & Lee, 2006, p. 67). I spent more of my fieldwork time walking than probably any other activity. Sometimes walking meant walking

with someone, but on many other occasions I just wandered the city, taking pictures or making notes about what came to mind.

Walking without a specific beginning or endpoint is a certain kind of walking. It takes you away from designated paths and towards other places. Ingold and Vergunst describe non-destination walking as making “one’s way through a world in formation, in a movement that is both rhythmically resonant with the movements of others around us whose journeys we share or whose paths we cross and open-ended, having neither a point of origin nor any final destination” (2008, p. 2). I call this nomadic walking.

For me, practicing walking as method thus became a way for me to create my own embodied understanding of other peoples’ nomadic explorations. The method is, in that sense, both a research approach and the “object” of research, and so also a part of the results. But walking is not only walking in the sense of moving one’s legs. It is the full sensory experience of moving in a space. Ingold and Vergunst describe how the activity of walking encompasses “observing, monitoring, remembering, listening, touching, crouching, climbing” (2008, p. 5). Hence, walking encompasses many different kinds of movement in and through space. Importantly these movements are the movements of both the researched and the researcher, me. I perform the movements of and in the researched (artists in an urban space) by performing an ethnographic *mimesis* (cf. Goffman, 1990) and *kinesis* (cf. Conquergood, 1995; Denzin, 2003, p. 3) through the ambiguous activity of walking.

This is also methodological a move that can be considered in terms of creating a space that hosts both theoretical ideas and empirical practice. As I pointed to earlier, my aim was to examine a space that could be regarded as living both in and in between the abstract and concrete, through the situating of a theoretical and sometimes very abstract idea within a very concrete practice. Equally, the study exhibits the same tensions at the empirical level by examining a practice that is locally very situated and simultaneously trans-local. On a methodological level, similarly, it investigates an “idea” or an “object of study,” but bridges the “object as idea” into a *subject of recognition* through the ethnographic performance.

Photography as Skilled Vision

Photography has several functions in the study. The first is as a critical vision or critical seeing. Seeing and looking become less passive through the camera lens. The use of the camera makes one notice and pay attention to a greater extent than by “just” looking. Furthermore, there is an analytical dimension to each frame. Something prompts the photographer to take each specific photo. Each

frame involves that instant visual analysis. Every time I take a picture I make a critical analysis of how I am taking the picture (technology and body) and what I am pointing the camera towards. I thus try to apply a modified version of what Christina Grasseni calls the *skilled vision* (2004). Grasseni describes how a skilled vision is one that seeks to see the environment as it appears to the “objects” of research. In Grasseni’s case, this meant trying to understand how dairy breeders envisioned cows and their traits, such as whether a cow was beautiful or not (ibid., p. 42). The skilled vision is thus an expert vision that approaches the perspective of the “insider.” The ability to use skilled vision also signifies an embodied sense of belonging and identity. In a similar manner, I have tried to understand aesthetic qualities in graffiti and street art culture by trying to see what the participants see, using photography, among other things, to accomplish this. Taking a picture brings me closer to the environment, but it also brings me closer to *my* experience of the environment, which is the experience of the outsider. The skilled vision, in my case, is thus a vision that embraces the interiors of all participants, both the expert vision of the researched as well as the critical vision of the researcher.

“[P]hotography [...] is a spontaneous impulse which comes from perpetually looking, and which seizes the instant and its eternity” (J. Berger & Ortman, 1997, p. 81).

I thus used photography not only to create an intimate relationship to the environment but also to create distance. Photography can make the unfamiliar familiar but can also make the familiar unfamiliar (Becker, 2004). Photography becomes a strategy for coming close, and for seeing and noticing close up, but also a way of looking at things, and at yourself, from afar. It is thus a visual reflexivity from which insights both about the researcher and about the phenomena in focus can be gained. The image is, then, not a representation of something but a way of investigating and exploring phenomena. As Becker also points out, a reflexive approach to photography means that researchers show awareness of which perspectives and theories influence their actions. Even the things you know from each angle can seem different in a photograph. You know the place where you sleep, but when you take a picture of it may appear quite different from how you perceive it when you are there. This became obvious to me when I was out late one night taking pictures. It was raining, and there was hardly any light coming from street lamps or buildings.

Extract from field notes: (October 2015)

It's so dark. I see almost nothing in the darkness. But I take pictures, and when I look at the picture, I see what's in front of me. The camera sees for me. The camera can see better than I can. I suddenly realize that someone could be standing right in front of me and I wouldn't notice it until I looked at the picture I have just taken. That thought freaks me out a bit... I move to a different place.

This experience, for me, materialized the idea of making the unfamiliar familiar and the familiar unfamiliar, and how both the camera and I were active co-performers in looking at and experiencing the environment.

In this study, photography also served as a memory aid. Photographs are documents and diaries of my fieldwork and inform my analysis with the visual experiences of the fieldwork process. Yet another reason I use photography is in hopes of being able to make the reader "feel what I felt" (O'Brien, in C. S. Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 429). In the field I tried to take pictures that portrayed my thinking and experience of the moment, in order to be able to both remember it myself and to communicate this to the reader in a multimodal manner. Elisabeth Chaplin writes, "[T]he relationship between image and words, between aesthetic force and written argument," can be attained through the combined use of images and words. She stresses that "images that can make an immediate aesthetic impact on the viewer's feelings," but also that "aesthetic force cannot be allowed to overwhelm the social argument." Images can thus be used for remembering and representing experiences, although the aesthetic of the image should never take over from the argument. I would, however, argue that it is not possible to make such a distinction. The aesthetic form is part of the social argument. It is the multimodal performativity of the combined images and words that creates the argument. Form is content and content is form, and it is the combination that creates the aesthetic experience that is, consequently, form and content.

Analyzing the Material

The study will explore graffiti and street art as cultural phenomena and social critique using the concept of *articulation*. This concept comes from the discourse theory of political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2008). For Laclau and Mouffe, the social is constituted by articulations, and articulatory practices are “the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning” (Laclau & Mouffe, cited in Howarth, 2000, p. 102). The concept of articulation leans on an understanding of a sign never having a fixed meaning. A sign with partially fixed meaning within a specific discourse is a *moment*. Signs that are not articulated, or fixed, within a discourse are *elements*. Every discourse is trying to fix the meanings of its elements and thus turn them into moments: to fixate the discourse. This happens through articulatory practices (ibid., 2008. pp. 156-170).

I undertake my analysis making use of this concept. This study does, however, ask three research questions, the first of which is different in nature from the other two. The first is highly descriptive, which is why the method of analysis I use for it is different than for the other two. The basis in the concept of articulation is, however, common to both analytical techniques. The first method of analysis focuses on the descriptive, in terms of how Stockholm graffiti and street art is articulated, whereas the second method of analysis focuses on articulations of social critique and aesthetic cosmopolitanism. I will first attend to how the material (interviews, fieldnotes, and images) were analyzed in order to answer the first research question; I then move on to the analytical method I use research questions two and three.

Analyzing Articulations of Stockholm Graffiti and Street Art

Initially the analysis involved inductive coding and logging, which refers to the process of “*grouping together themes and categories that you have accumulated in the field*” (Madison, 2012, p. 43, original italics). The initial coding process aimed at working with what Phil Francis Carspecken refers to as low- and high-level coding (1996, pp. 147–148), classifying codes as high and low in terms of their level of abstraction.

As Carspecken (ibid. p. 149) describes it, the coding process involves several layers of reworking a coding scheme in order to create a hierarchy between the codes, along with additional distinctions, and to eliminate codes that appear redundant and overlapping. In my case, there were instances of both overlaps and redundancy. According to Carspecken, redundancy is an example of not having used a priori categories: “only a priori codes would lead to nonredundant categories” (1996, p. 150). What appeared as different in my case was that

there was no particular hierarchy among the codes. Instead, the codes that materialized in my material were already on a rather high level of abstraction. I have considered this to be at least partially a consequence of the fact that the interviews were semi-structured, with an emphasis on *semi*. There were themes that our conversations revolved around, and these themes already had a certain degree of abstraction. For instance, when we talked about distinctions, the participants were invited to reflect on their own and other peoples' practices and community. These reflections led to conversations that took place on a kind of meta-level, where the practice was already abstracted in a way. This meant I had basically no low-level codes: there were low-level codes, but they were too similar to the high-level codes they were linked to, and so I ended up with only high-level codes. I reworked these codes multiple times and was able to make further distinctions among them as the analysis proceeded. The codes were then chosen to form the structure for the results chapters. The subheadings in my results section are thus high-level codes. There were a few other high-level codes, but I have not included all of them in this account, since some had less substance than others. The ones I have included were the most substantial.

Analyzing Articulations of Social Critique and Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism

My second research question asks how social critique is articulated in the material (interviews, fieldnotes, and photographs) and tries to differentiate between different forms of articulations, which are the basis for the structure of this chapter. Much of the previous literature focuses on how graffiti (or street art) tells a narrative distinct from the commodified narrative of the city. Graffiti then forms a counter-discourse. My analysis explores this counter-discourse but also focuses on the tensions and contradictions within it. In other words, my analysis attends to how this counter-discourse tries to not only overthrow the hegemonic discourse but also fixate the elements in the counter-discourse to moments. Given the diversity of the subculture that several previous researchers have found, it is important to direct attention to diversity and difference within the discourse, and how all these differences are articulated in relation to hegemonic articulations of the city and of graffiti and street art culture.

Using these concepts of discourse analysis, I have formulated a collection of analytical questions that I pose to the material. I divide these questions into three clusters, which correspond to research questions two and three.

In order to answer the second research question—the scope of social critique articulated as part of the performative repertoires of Stockholm graffiti and street art discourses—I queried the material using the following sub-questions:

- What are ideological attitudes regarding the artistic performances and performers?
- What is critiqued/opposed, if anything?
- What motives are linked to these critiques and opposition?

In order to answer the third and final research question—the conditions for critical and aesthetic cosmopolitan potentials and its entanglement with digital media—I queried the material with the following sub-questions:

- What are the conditions for the emergence of cosmopolitan moments in graffiti and street art culture?
- How and when do tensions between the inviting/gated, locally emplaced/globally circulated, counter-hegemonic/re-productions of hegemony, and the coming together/the alienation materialize?
- How do digital media function in relation to cosmopolitan potentials of graffiti and street art?

Ethical Considerations

Wiles et al. (2008) point to the importance of the informed researcher and the responsibilities of being familiar with current rules and regulations. A first factor they pose is the matter of consent. In my case, I first informed participants briefly at initial contact about who I am, my purpose, the expected outcomes of my project, and the larger project I was part of. They almost always asked me further questions, which I tried to answer as best I could. If they agreed to meet with me, I told them about the ethical rules I would follow at the time of the interview. There are four such rules that I drew from the Swedish Research Council's publication *God Forsknings sed* (Hermerén, 2011): information on the project, information on usage, consent, and anonymity. All participants have been rendered anonymous, for two reasons. The first is that I do not want my text to cause any of the participants any harm. Most of them are, or have been; involved in illegal activity, and my text should not be a possible source for mapping onto certain people. This goes for both other graffiti writers and people outside the culture. Several of the people I spoke to also expressed concerns about saying anything bad about other writers if it would be the case that the targets of their commentary would be able to identify them. Anonymity is thus an ethical consideration.

The other reason is that I do not want my text to become a public relations arena for the participants. Becker (2001) discusses the name identity/topic in relation to a study on a garden allotment community. In this case, the names of the participants were shown in relation to the things they grew and created (p.

115). According to Becker, the participants did not mind having their name associated with the study, and they seemed to “appreciate the status it gives them” (ibid.). Initially in my own fieldwork it became obvious to me that some participants saw a certain potential to gain status by participating in my study. Graffiti culture is, in many ways, as previously mentioned, about “getting up,” i.e. getting your name/alias up and out there, and thereby gaining fame and recognition from peers. I felt that this pursuit of fame risked creating a strange dependency on the part of participants. I did not want to be “the wall” displaying certain names and a vehicle for people gaining credibility and “getting up.”

Wiles et al. state that “personal information should be treated confidentially and participants anonymized unless they choose to be identified.” In my case I did not give participants the option of being identified. The same goes for the pictures. I try to not have identifiable people in my photos, and if they do appear I do not show their faces and always ask permission before taking the picture.

Several of the interviews took a very personal turn. Sometimes such conversations also involve sensitive information regarding third parties. Due to the fact that all data in the study are public, and a researcher could be asked to provide transcripts for scrutiny of the study, statements of this nature were not included in the transcript. This is due to the difficulty in handling sensitive information regarding people who had not consented to take part in the study. When such situations arose, the audio sequence was not included in the transcript.

At the time of each interview I explained the ethical guidelines and either presented them in writing at that time or forwarded them after the interview. In most cases I also sent the finished transcript to the respondent, who got the chance to retract and add statements. In four cases the finished transcripts were not sent to participants. This was either because I had interviewed them impromptu and never got the chance to get their contact details or because their contact details seemed to be out of date when I tried to get in contact with them.

Initially I considered asking the informants to sign a consent form, but signing would have required them to use their real name, which I promised them they would not be required to do. Signing a consent form thus collided with the requirement for anonymity. I then considered asking them to sign with their alias. I finally decided that it was also important for their aliases to remain unknown, since it would be quite obvious that I would be able to identify the person behind the alias.

All these ethical considerations were followed with the participants’ best interests in mind. I have been completely willing to miss out on interesting details if those details would have made the participants uncomfortable. The most im-

portant thing for me was that when people devoted their time and attention to me, they should not feel exploited or taken advantage of in any way.

The last point I want to discuss is the illegal nature of my research subject. The practices I focus on are technically all illegal, but everyone I interviewed has also painted legal or commissioned artworks. I have not myself taken part in any of the practices by painting, writing, or pasting up artwork myself. Neither have I encouraged people to break the law, although I have been present when such acts took place. Even though I have not broken the law myself, I would argue that my position is nevertheless not entirely unproblematic; however, it not as problematic if had used a different research design.

I have also been asked questions about my own safety during my fieldwork. I have reflected on the fact that I made myself slightly vulnerable at times. I went to the homes of people I had never met and knew nothing about, and I lurked around at night in dark spaces. I would not have done this in my “private” life, since I would not have considered it worth the risk, but during my fieldwork I always felt safe. At certain moments I felt slightly exposed, something that occurred in-group settings where I was the only woman and others present were under the influence of some form of intoxicant. I have also heard stories about the “not-so-nice guys.” At those times there were, however, enough people around whom I knew and trusted for me to feel I did not put myself at any unnecessary risk.

Trustworthiness

According to Norman Denzin, positivist sciences and methodologies are based on five ontological and epistemological assumptions: that there is a reality that can be objectively interpreted, that the researcher must be separated from the object of study, that results should be generalizable, that all phenomena can be explained in terms of cause and effect, and that analyses are (should be) objective and “value free” (Denzin, 2001, in Madison, 2012, p. 13). As already argued I assume: there is no reality to be studied beyond representation, that I am completely entangled with the “object” of my study, that nothing can be explained in terms of cause and effect, and that my analysis is saturated with subjectivity and conceptions of value.

There is a constant battle to be fought for the choices one makes as a researcher. I have been very flexible in my methodological approach. I have made choices, and then I have remade them in order to be sensitive to the directions the process has taken me. Can you trust my study? Let me rephrase that. Can I trust myself? When it comes to trustworthiness, it is important to remember

that often you are your own worst critic. It is very easy to question one's own work, to see the flaws in it and wonder whether any of it makes sense. But it is also these questions that take you somewhere, lead you to other places, and prompt you to explore new choices. Questioning myself means questioning the study, trying to validate what I think I find and find more substance. Because of such doubts, I once asked a colleague if I was making a mountain out of a molehill as I was analyzing. I was worried that I just took a statement and misinterpreted something. My colleague told me no, that I was not exaggerating any findings, since I did not just take that statement and write something about only that one piece. I took the statement and I brought it to other people I interviewed to make sure I did not make the statement into something it was not.

I have not conducted interviews with all of Stockholm's graffiti writers, so obviously I cannot say something about everyone. I do, however, argue that another researcher would reach essentially the same conclusions as I have. In part this has to do with the material becoming saturated. It was quite obvious after a while that the material started repeating itself. I was told the same stories over and over again. Then I started widening the scope, looking for more participants who had no evident or close connections to the ones I had already interviewed. Again, their stories were very similar to the previous ones. This was to me clearly an indication that the material had both breadth and depth.

Potential Research Bias and Limitations of the Study

There is clearly a gender bias in the material. Only five of the interviewed subjects are women, which is representative of the environment. This underrepresentation also led me ask questions about gender, and I try to give as much space as possible to the stories of female participators in the study. The limitation of place (Stockholm) means that the study speaks to Stockholm and Sweden. I do not make any claims of generalizability beyond this location.

It is also the case that the study is determined by the fact that I am performing it. It is, therefore, a product of my being the researcher who endeavored on the mission to undertake it. There are two primary aspects of myself as the researcher that affected the study: I am neither a graffiti writer nor a street artist, and I am a woman. Let me start by discussing the second aspect. The fact that I am perceived as a rather feminine woman can have benefits and disadvantages. When trying to access a rather masculinized scene it has both. When I "hung out" with only males, I sometimes felt like an outsider in a double sense: as both a woman and a non-writer. This did, however, also prove to be a benefit and a way for me to gain access to the field. In some cases people seemed to

find it entertaining to have someone different around. In other cases, where there were only men around, I think some of them appreciated having a woman around. Several participants stated they would like to see more women painting, which also led me to believe that some men considered it refreshing to have someone disrupting the gender bias. Also, for some of the women participants I think I became someone who gave them a different kind of attention than they sometimes got from their peers.

There are upsides and downsides to the first aspect: the fact that I am not a graffiti writer myself. The upside is that it let me be in a position where I could ask “uneducated questions” to participants in the study. In many ways this was a good thing, since participants for the most part did not assume I knew things and most were therefore very thorough in their answers. On the other hand, asking questions that appeared too uneducated may have made me appear amateurish, which might result in loss of access or mere humiliation. Both are options I sought to avoid. The balance between appearing professional and amateurish requires constant reflection and sensitivity to the situation at hand. After spending some time in the field I realized this was not much of a problem, since the people I met proved to be some of the kindest and most nonjudgmental people I have ever met. Even when I asked the most uneducated questions, I never felt like this caused any participants to think less of me. Rather, they were careful to make sure I was following what they were saying and fully understood everything. In return, I tried to show them the same respect and consideration.

Articulating Stockholm Graffiti and Street Art

This chapter will address Question 1: How is contemporary Stockholm graffiti and street art culture articulated and performed by its creators, and in what ways does the culture become entwined with media other than writing/painting?

When I first entered the field, I started my inquiry with trying to understand how the artists themselves described their arts and what they were doing. As mentioned earlier, there are many different conceptions and labels for urban arts, such as graffiti, post-graffiti, street art, etc. The main distinction that artists themselves use, with regard to previous research, is the one between graffiti and street art. What this divide entails is, however, unclear, partly as a result of uncertainty concerning what the different practices are. Since there are so many different ideas on what graffiti and street art are and could be, or what kind of performance needs to take place in order for something to be graffiti or street art, the borders between the two practices are fluid. I will start unpacking this distinction by first turning to the definition of graffiti and then to that of street art. I will then continue with the theme of distinction, through the lens of gender in aesthetics and culture. The next section will close in on Stockholm as the specific case at hand and what this particular space meant for the performances. I will then move on to the digital dimensions of graffiti and street art and how its performances have or have not changed following the explosion of digital media. The final two sections address additional characteristics of graffiti and street art culture before I move to the second empirical chapter, which focuses on graffiti and street art as social critique.

Articulating Graffiti

I will first turn to how graffiti is articulated and the different components articulated as part of Stockholm graffiti culture, in two parts: in the first I explore graffiti in terms of historical reenactments, while in the second part I explore how these articulations account for resistance against such reenactments.

Graffiti as Historical Reenactment

When it comes to defining graffiti, most artists do relate their descriptions of graffiti to the classic TTP definition, explicitly or implicitly. Peder, for example, describes graffiti like this:

Tindra: Mm, and what is graffiti?

Peder (41): Graffiti is an aesthetic, a form language I think.

Tindra: Including...?

P: Including tags, throw-ups, pieces [] usually called the classical TTP graffiti and then it's, well, it includes tags too.

Tindra: But it's still those things that are graffiti?

P: Yes

A lot of the graffiti seen in Stockholm can be included in this aesthetic. Most people who regularly move through urban environments would recognize and be able to find a tag or a throw-up without looking for too long. Pieces are harder to find, since they take longer to make, and time is the one thing these urban artists do not have.



Figure 10: Drainpipe tags at Götgatan, Södermalm. Photo: Tindra Thor



Figure 11: Throw-up at Assessorgatan, Södermalm. Photo: Tindra Thor

In addition to classic TTP graffiti, knowledge—the sometimes-called fifth element of hip-hop—is mentioned as important for something to be called graffiti. This is definitely regarded as something different than *klotter*, which within the discourse of graffiti artists is articulated as the kind of visual communication one finds in public bathrooms, or “latrinalia” (Dundes, quoted in Phillips, 1999). This is often referred to as something that has always been around.

Fredrik (40): We’ll always have that... There’s always going to be that, this thing on the side with *klotter*. People want to put their names, it doesn’t... It doesn’t matter. Like, the Vikings did it. Like putting your stamp here and there, there’s, like... You don’t have to be a genius. Maybe even you wrote...

Tindra: That I was there (laughs)

F: Yeah, Tindra, at camp, under the bed.

Even though this is not necessarily articulated as graffiti, the phenomena of writing is articulated as something that has “always” been around. At the same time, *klotter* is labeled as something visually and culturally distinct from graffiti. As Anton (16) says:

Tindra: Do you think there [] is something that is *kelotter*?

Anton (16): Yeah, yes, I would probably say that. I'd say that someone who has just got a can, who doesn't know anything about graffiti culture, and they write "cock" in a bathroom. I would say that's *kelotter*.

T: Mm, yeah, exactly.

A: I would probably say that's *kelotter*, but someone who's actually been around for a while and knows the unwritten rules, and so on, I'd probably say that's graffiti.

Tindra: Mm, and what are those unwritten rules?

Anton: There are lots, actually, although most... The basic rules would probably be not to go over someone else if they're better than you, or if you have less fame than them. You can go over a tag with a throw-up, you can go over a throw-up with a chrome painting, which is just black and silver, and you can go over a chrome painting with a full-color piece, etc. [] And then there's... Like, you don't paint on a church. You don't paint on a kindergarten or a school, usually.

As this quote indicates, there is clearly also a frame of possible action articulated within the culture, which connects to knowledge about and within the culture. Knowledge about the culture also extends to visual communication, i.e. how the letters are formed and how the image is composed as a whole.

Simon (32): There are so very many different definitions [] I usually distinguish graffiti as... As the part that's mainly about letters, but also about characters. [] Parts of free-hand painted figures, that aren't letters, but that may be either stuck together with letters, or have some kind of aesthetic legacy from graffiti history, you know. Like there might be B-boy-like elements that makes you think of B-boy culture from hip-hop [] Even if it stands on its own and lacks letters, it's a bit more like graffiti, more, like, free-hand painted... [] But it's, like, really difficult, and there... There's really a gray area in between [] but this particular graffiti, based on letters and an interest in the typographical... Yes, that is how I define graffiti.

Simon thus explains graffiti as something that is oriented toward letters and typography, but since the practice has strong spatiotemporal connotations, visual expressions other than letters can be used in order to communicate that something is graffiti. By visually connecting to a spatiotemporally situated culture it is still read as graffiti. It is, accordingly, possible to include only some elements of graffiti writing, such as spray paint, together with a "hip-hop aesthetic" but leave letters out. Correspondingly, it could be possible to paint letters in acrylic paint with a graffiti aesthetic and still have it communicated as graffiti.



Figure 12: B-boy aesthetics, Snösättra. Photo: Tindra Thor

In the quotes above, both Anton and Simon construct graffiti as something that is intimately connected to knowledge. In order for something to be performed and read as graffiti, it needs to utilize elements that tap into the idea of graffiti: i.e., an assemblage of rules, conventions, codes, and so on.

Per articulated the same idea in relation to the functions of “halls of fame.”

[The kids] have got a completely wrong idea of what a hall of fame really is, that is, a place to take your time and do your best, but they, the kids today, they think a hall of fame...like, that it's a place where you can do whatever you want, so it's a matter of, like...different views on what a fame is, because they don't... they were not there from the beginning, like when the hall of fame tradition started [...] The kids think it's a place to practice, and to us, who're a bit older, it's not. [...] A hall of fame is a place you go to polish your skills and really do your best. (Per, 39)

Per thus articulates that “the kids” do not understand the culture and its conventions. They are inexperienced and have not been around long enough to understand “what it is about.” By not embracing the convention or history, “the kids” challenge the performative repertoire through what is interpreted as culturally deviating performances, something clearly is articulated as negative and threatening. “The kids,” in this case, challenge the spaces by making them

into something else. This is somewhat of a paradox. At the heart of graffiti culture lies a challenge against spatial hegemony in Stockholm, but when that challenge itself is challenged from within graffiti culture, the same rules do not apply. There is thus a hegemonic graffiti culture, which in turn tends to protect itself as any hegemonic position would.

I should also point out that it is not only a matter of something looking like graffiti; it is also a matter of who made it. Someone recognized as a graffiti writer most likely has greater freedom to experiment with both technique and style. At the most basic level, it is all a matter of having to know the culture in order to be part of it. Knowing the culture means knowing the history, through having been around for a while, and knowing one's peers, but especially knowing how to perform the culture in the right way. As Anton describes, there are rules to where and how to paint, which are strongly connected to and embedded within hierarchies of visual expressions. All of these dimensions of the performance become connected to the subjectivation process of "becoming-writer" (Thor, 2017).

It also becomes clear that visual expressions of graffiti have a strong spatiotemporal emplacement. Graffiti is a historically situated performance that could be considered to enact a certain place/time: New York, for example, or alternatively Philadelphia, from late 1960s to the late 1970s or early 1980s when hip-hop culture experienced its big breakthrough. The historical referencing of the "birthplace" of graffiti is always recurring, both in terms of the city and the time, but also in terms of the "original" urban canvas: the train.

Jonas (29): But graffiti is like, it's... from New York, like, the way we see it now. With tags and graffiti paintings, pieces, you know. Like the traditional, that's the way I'd like to see it.

Simon (32): But, like, New York is important since it was there [] Or New York and Philadelphia, like, it was there where it all started, so that has, like, a special, special kind of status.

César (53): Like, if you look at how graffiti was developed, it was... it was... It all started with some guy who worked as a mailman, and who was a bit bored, and he moved around in a district in New York, and he began to write his tag.

Fredrik (40): The thrill with painting trains, it all started in New York, it was getting your art up and then the art passed through a city of 9 million people. Like rolling artworks, and if you had, like, 20 cars rolling, then you could be, like, king of the city, and everyone knew who you were, and that was what everyone aimed for, getting your motif rolling the most.



Figure 13: Tags on trains, Telefonplan. Photo: Tindra Thor

As I also noted earlier, the train has a very special status, primarily connected to the idea of *getting up*—that is, gaining recognition and fame among your peers. In my conversation with Hanna (33), she also articulated how gaining recognition among peers as a graffiti artist or writer is central to the “becoming-writer” or “becoming-graffiti artist.”

Tindra: It sounds a bit like the question of whether something is graffiti or not has to do with whether a person is recognized as a graffiti artist, or like a writer, or not.

Hanna (33): Yeah, exactly.

T: But then it’s about getting access to the world.

H: Exactly, and to become part of it. And get...patted on the back. (laughs)

No, but really, that’s what it’s like... Getting access.

This also implies that qualifying as graffiti is not only a matter of creating the “right” aesthetic. It is about recognition, a trait that is also central to the cosmopolitan condition, i.e., recognizing the other (Dikec, Clark, & Barnett, 2009). The tension here is, however, that sameness is part of that recognition process. You get recognition if you perform the culture in the right way or in the same way, or potentially if you, as a subject, are perceived as similar. This also points to a perhaps obvious or banal but still-important tension within, and challenge to, cosmopolitanism: the problem that recognition is easier and more likely to materialize among peers or people who are somehow similar to each other. I do not argue that it is a coincidence that it was a woman who made the remark above. Also noteworthy, on the other hand, is that this recognition is connected to performance: what people *do* not what they “are” or how they are socially situated. Under such conditions, factors such as physical appearance or social class could at least potentially play a smaller role than what people do. Instead, people recognize each other for their performance. This, in turn, implies that people recognize each other when they perform the same thing, regardless of whether they are from the same or different backgrounds or social strata.

Returning more specifically to the articulation of graffiti: the cultural nostalgia surrounding the train—visible in both Simon’s and Fredrik’s stories above—is equally important in the present day. Painting trains is, in this respect, both a way of getting one’s name seen by as many people as possible and also a way of tapping into and reenacting a historical experience.

Considering the (historical) TTP references, the construction of graffiti as something connected to knowledge about graffiti and references to a place of “origin” (the train/New York/Philadelphia), graffiti becomes a *historically situated performance that is reenacted through each performative event*. This is not to say that the same thing is happening time and time again. There is still movement and other things happening in the cluster, but everything still relates to the “original” performative events starting in the late 1960s in New York and Philadelphia. This creates a cultural fabric tightly woven together by a high degree of conventionality, that in many ways also is very conservative in its historical reenactments.

Tindra: Mm, I get it. But there is something... because it sounds a bit like, something of a paradox in a way, because I imagine graffiti, in a way it’s always... Like, there’s something anarchic, rebellious, seditious in it, even though it’s very...

César (53): Yes, but it’s very conservative, extremely conservative.

In another conversation, one of the participants referred to some graffiti writers as “graffiti puritans” and “traditionalists” (Greger, 35).

These reenactments constitute the hierarchy within the graffiti cluster that everything else is constructed in relation to, which leads us to what “everything else” is articulated as, and also how distance is created to articulations of graffiti. Importantly, this is a matter of creating “mythologies” (cf. Appadurai, 1986), i.e., assemblages of presumptions and previous experiences that act as a frame of reference. Whether the stories of the mythology have actualized references is less important. It is the enacting of the mythology that is actualized and thereby reconstructs and consolidates the mythology.



Figure 14: Stickers and tags, Götgatan, Södermalm. Photo: Tindra Thor

Renegotiating Graffiti

Several of the participants do, however, express dissatisfaction regarding the rigid rules of graffiti. In many conversations in the field they talked about how they were trying to come up with new ideas. One said he wanted to experiment with new techniques, even though that made the painting less appealing to the viewer. Since I found the painting quite impressive I asked why he considered it to be so. He answered that he first decided on a yellow outline, but then he thought, “No, I’ve done that a million times.” So he chose not to (fieldnotes, April 22, 2015). In the painting he instead decided on a less contrasting color. As this was a very experienced artist, my interpretation was that it was less appealing, or slightly unconventional, according to the culture’s conventions. It should be stated that this was also an artist with a unique style, although clearly still graffiti (letter-based images created using spray paint). It appears, on the other hand, to be a simple matter of changing the color and level of contrast. Now, this is not to say that this is not changing the imagery. Graffiti without outlines looks quite different from graffiti with them. My point here is that the room to experiment appears to be somewhat narrow. My other point is that there are nevertheless examples where these strong rules are questioned and loosened, sometimes in a very visual way as in the case of working with looser outlines. They can be negotiated in terms of the imagery, but also in terms of rearticulating what the artists/writers call themselves or what they do, as in the case of Per:

Tindra: So what’s your opinion on [what graffiti is] then?
Per (39): Like my... I’d rather call myself a spray artist than a graffiti artist, because, like, graffiti... Graffiti can be kind of narrow, or it’s, like, a narrow concept actually. Actually, graffiti is... It’s like, from the beginning, paintings on trains, usually only texts. And it follows certain basic rules, like with filling and outlines and second outlines and then maybe third and then some background, but I use... I only use the spray can as a tool to make any kind of motif. []

T: So could it be any... Like, any kind of motif but made with spray paint?

P: Yeah, yeah exactly. That’s exactly right.

In this case graffiti is also a concept that in many ways is used as an ideal picture rather than something the artist actually identifies as his or her own practice. There could be several reasons for this. Since there are many rules and conceptions about what graffiti should be, it is not unlikely it would feel creatively inhibiting to label oneself as a graffiti artist. Again, given the number of rules, it might be easier just to say that one does not make and is not interested in making graffiti. Instead, one can choose a looser and more inclusive term, like spray can art, as in the quote above (see also Jacobson, 1996). As I indicat-

ed previously, the number of labels for these practices varies as much in theory as in the field, since clearly they are mirroring each other.

Saying that one is doing something else, or labeling oneself as something other than a graffiti artist, could also be a matter of creating distance from something one is not entirely sure one has access to, as Hanna (33) says:

No, but it's still, like, how is the whole [graffiti] concept defined? Because I can feel, like, damn, no, I do graffiti. But I feel like I'm not really deserving of that. Because I'm still new and... like, do I qualify for this sector? (Hanna, 33)

As I pointed out in the section above, graffiti culture is about becoming part of the culture, performing it in the right way, and part of that is a process of earning one's place there, showing and proving oneself. This is, however, not something that appeals to everyone. Oscar (23) expresses how that part of graffiti culture instead makes him choose not to do graffiti:

But I think that's why I haven't done so much graffiti, because I don't really have a need to be part of this, like, "cred-focused" environment, like (*imitating a macho kind of voice*) "I did that" and "it was my crew." That whole thing. I've always been a lone artist. I've never been in a group or anything like that. That hasn't meant that much to me. I've mostly done it because it looks nice. Or because it's exciting, too. Because it is exciting! (Oscar, 23)

In Oscar's imitation of other graffiti artists, he spoke in a way that imitated a kind of locker room culture, similar to Hanna, who spoke of graffiti as a sort of backslapping culture. Oscar here also touches on an interesting tension in graffiti culture. Graffiti is, in many ways, an individual act. Many of the participants in the study point to the individuality of the practice. This individuality materializes in some of the most basic characteristics of graffiti culture, such as the writing of the individual name and getting fame. Like Jonas (29) says, "It's an individual act in itself. You could consider it egotistical, if you want to." At the same time, these individual acts very much take place within a collective. The writing of the name often appears together with the crew name, for example. As such, graffiti is a combination of a highly individualistic culture where recognition of, and belonging to, a collective often is equally important.

Some also resist the act of getting individual fame. Later in my conversation with Oscar he also explained how he did not always sign his work. In a similar vein, Alexis (22) said:

All over society, there are so many demands that everyone has to [do stuff], you need to be able to measure everything, everything has to be visible. A friend of mine once took a picture of one of my stickers and tagged me on Instagram. I asked him to take it off. That is not why I do this. (Alexis, 22)

There are, accordingly, people who resist the value of fame and gaining recognition. It can also be noted that Alexis resisted “digital fame” in particular. He did not appear to have anything against his work appearing on Instagram, but he did not want to be tagged. Instead, he guarded and valued his anonymity, which allows him, and many others like him, to have another life. In many ways, graffiti- and street artists move in between different environments, into “becoming-writer” and then back into, perhaps, student, parent, teacher, and so on. Also, as some of the participants expressed, there are people who work as prosecutors, for example, or have other kinds of engagements that would be in jeopardy if it came out that they went out tagging at night. Maintaining anonymity can thus both smooth transitions between lives and protect the people doing so.

Articulating Street Art

As I pointed out earlier, street art is a broader term than graffiti and encompasses a wider variety of visual expressions and techniques. In many ways, street art is articulated as all illegal urban arts that are not graffiti, and therefore it becomes a kind of catchall term. I would suggest that this is a consequence both of street art being a more hospitable term, and graffiti being, in some ways, more exclusive.

[Street art] is a broader concept in a way. It’s more welcoming. (Hanna, 33)

There is, accordingly, a difference between these practices, although what that difference entails is not entirely clear. According to Jonas (29), street art is literally “everything else,” which would include stencils, yarn bombings, paste-ups, fusible beads, and so on. Street art is thus articulated as something much more open and unregulated, which stands in contrast to graffiti as a regulated or (as César noted) conservative practice.

Tindra: But does that mean, would you say that there is a difference? Is there a difference between graffiti and street art, then, or is graffiti also street art?

Jonas (29): Yes, there’s a difference... So. Well, there is like a [] floating range. Sometimes they, like, slide into each other. And then street art is everything

else, which can be anything. But that is, like, an unsolicited work in public space.

There are also examples of statements from the material that imply the practices are the same and that street art can function as a kind of umbrella concept, which Andersson also argued (2006). When asked about the difference between graffiti and street art, Peder says:

Oh, now we're talking definitions. That's fun! Yes. It is. My definition of street art is, after all, quite simple. It is unsanctioned art in a public space, and then it becomes a social concept, which includes graffiti. So yes, then, graffiti must be street art. (Peder, 41)

Adam shares this view:

Adam (40): [] Yeah, I mean. It's so... When most people talk about street art they talk about...they don't include graffiti. Or they're, like; graffiti is something else when they talk about street art. But to me it's always been the same.

All of these are therefore examples where the practices are articulated as basically the same thing. I should add that all of these participants have a strong relationship to street art, either because they themselves are mostly doing street art or because they work closely with people who define themselves as street artists. This would imply that street artists are less concerned with distinguishing themselves from graffiti culture. Several of them also started out doing graffiti and then moved on to doing street art for various reasons. It is also my own perception of people doing street art that they are less concerned with definitions. Both Peder and Adam are people well initiated in the street art/graffiti scene in Stockholm, and my perception was, first, that they did not care about differentiation, especially Peder, since his definition encompassed both practices, and second, that both of them have enough “symbolic capital” within the culture to allow them not to care. I consequently argue that, similar to the “Crack is Wack” case (Kimvall, 2014), accumulated symbolic capital enables certain performances. Clearly it is not controversial to claim that people who have already accumulated some kind of recognition are more able than others to break the rules. What I am pointing at is how the logics of accumulated capital are at work within the culture, and that it thereby can be considered as much an institution in itself as it is one in relation to other, more formalized, art institutions.

These articulations are related to visual images, the people making them, or the making of them. The distinction also relates to the function of the image in

parts of the material. According to Fredrik (40), street art has a different function than graffiti:

Street art is an adult mocking the system. Graffiti... The guys who paint and stuff don't really have that much political insight into society, so you just defy. You just want to get your name up. You just want to be seen and, like, exist, and well, that's the big difference I suppose.

This interview was a tag-along, and the participant made this note as we walked past a painting (see figure 15), which he then referred to as (political) street art.



Figure 15: Make Love, Not War/#FreeGaza. Photo: Tindra Thor. (See also Christensen & Thor, 2017)

To my uninitiated eye it was not clear why this would be street art and not graffiti, since it is a painting done in spray paint on an exterior wall. What could make it not graffiti was that it was painted with some kind of approval from the people owning the walls. It could be argued that graffiti has to be illegal in order for it to be graffiti, which is a fairly widespread opinion (interviews with Aleks, 27 and Daroush, 36). In Fredrik's conception, street art would, however, have a different function than graffiti. Furthermore, it also becomes clear how street art does not follow the same rules and norms about what is important. The important thing for street art here is its formulation as a social project rather than just wanting to "get up." I do want to note that the act of getting up may seem self-centered, as in getting "your name" up, but it is important to remember that this also has an intended audience: one's peers. In that sense, the seemingly self-centered practice of "getting up" is still very much a collective practice.

I also want to note that it is possible that this distinction may be connected to the artist behind the piece, who is a woman. Considering the macho aspect of graffiti culture, I argue that it is more difficult for women to get acknowledged as graffiti artists, and art made by women is instead referred to as street art or some other term. Furthermore, some of the women have been reluctant to call themselves graffiti painters/writers, since the threshold to graffiti culture or being called a graffiti artist appears too high and too exclusionary (interview with Hanna, 33). I therefore suggest that the distinction between graffiti and street art could be as gendered. I will explore the differences of gender in the culture and aesthetic later in this chapter, but before leaving my discussion of definitions, I would like to suggest another way to distinguish between graffiti and street art.

Graffiti and Street Art As the (In-)/Comprehensible

Following the previous points on the (still gendered) distinctions, I propose that the general difference between graffiti and street art is a matter of internal vs. external communication. As the previous section shows, graffiti is more regulated and more difficult to access and understand than street art. In Christensen and Thor (2017), this was compared to Stuart Hall's (1997) discussion of traffic lights, pointing to how "their placement, function and form shape how we act when encountering them and to how these acts are shaped by our 'commonly' assembled understanding of these lights and their colors" (Christensen and Thor, 2017, p. 593). As we also note in the article, many examples of graffiti in particular use the color red, a sign that is both linked to the "commonly assembled" understanding of a tag as vandalism and to the incompre-

hensibility of what it could mean (ibid.). It is simply not comprehensible to the average person walking down the street.

Graffiti is an urban communicative expression that is directed towards peers who understand its meanings and contexts. In that sense, graffiti could be described as quite insular, and perhaps also anti-cosmopolitan. I argue that this insularity is a factor that contributes to the distinction between graffiti and street art, a distinction that is fundamentally connected to their communicative potentials and functions.

Tindra: Do you think there's a difference between graffiti and street art?

Simon (32): Mm, yes I do.

T: Which? Or what?

S: And it's also, like, it's made for the in-house, for the internal group. You paint graffiti primarily for other graffiti artists. Not for, like, the general public. Also, because, you can't read it, but if you're in it you know what it says, you know who it is, you know, like, what it might mean, and you recognize the shape and color of the letters. [] There are historical references in how to design the letters, which you'd only know if you're doing graffiti yourself. While street art, that also could be messages with texts, but there the text is very clear, because it's directed to a broad audience. Then everyone should be able to read what it says. And it's often images, that are, like, clear [] It's directed to everyone. Which is a very big and important difference between them. And also in the act itself; street art is often something that is prepared in a different way, like, with stencils. You're doing most of the work on the computer, and then you sit and cut out stencils, and the work out on the street is very... Well, it's like a third of the entire job. But a graffiti painting, I mean, sure, perhaps you're sketching and thinking about colors and stuff, but there is a... a much larger part is spontaneous and, like, on location [] So there's another...another, well, like, the pattern of events, I guess.

As I pointed out earlier, and as shown in the quote above: reading and understanding graffiti is a matter of reading not only actual letters but also intentions, experiences, and history. In other words, it is about understanding and being able to access the mythologies of graffiti. Since street art is articulated as external communication, it is also articulated as more accepted than graffiti; it is something that can be understood, read, and made sense of by almost any person who encounters it. This also means that the level of acceptance for street art is higher. This taps into the cosmopolitan trait of *hospitality*. Street art could therefore be considered more cosmopolitan, in the sense that it invites more conversation and possibly even translation between the subcultural cultural cluster and the public. It is more understandable, and being understandable means it is less threatening. Consequently, it does not need to be as “hunted down” as graffiti.

Adam (40): I think, I mean, the general understanding, yeah, is something else. So that's also, like, what bugs you a lot of the time, 'cause it's, like. It's just because it's street art, a lot of the times it's, like, it's cute and it's not... It's something that people can... they have an easier time understanding it, cause it's not, like, unreadable letters or, say, it's like a poster or a... people have a relationship a lot of the time to street art, and it's...

Jonas (29): Yes, street art is way more accepted. It's not that strange, really, like, graffiti requires more knowledge in order to be appreciated. Like, you can't... If you go to the opera and don't know much about it, or the ballet or something, then it's just crap according to you. Like, you won't think it's that great. But if you understand opera or understand ballet, then you can see the originality of it. You can see it, appreciate it, the artistic quality. The same thing with tags: you can see that, like, a... a penguin, it can look nice, everyone can see that. But a tag is much harder to interpret. It's harder to see the artists in, like, what's nice about it. So it requires knowledge to appreciate it. And very few people have that. [] it's way easier to understand street art than it is graffiti.

Following these articulations, street art is more inviting, it is more *hospitable* by way of its external address. This could mean that graffiti is more insular and therefore perhaps less cosmopolitan. There is a tension here, however. As I have theorized it here, cosmopolitan can also mean a subversion against hegemony. Street art appears less subversive than graffiti, while graffiti shows many subversive traits. It is *against*. From the point of view of cosmopolitanism, both graffiti and street art can therefore be said to show traits of cosmopolitanism as critical and subversive social performances, while street art additionally shows traits of hospitality. From a communicative point of view, graffiti appears less inviting than graffiti to the broader public.

Oscar (23) Once, like 3 or 4 years ago, I painted a rather large mural at Alvik subway station, of a large group of birds that flew, and that got to stay there for like 3 years. And it was extremely visible, very open, but fairly well made and no name on it. So I guess people didn't report it because they thought it was public art or something. Because it was anonymous. No one had to take credit for it. I didn't either.

I do, however, want to contest the idea that graffiti is only directed towards peers or likeminded people. Because it is an urban public medium, graffiti by definition it is directed to people other than its writers, even if the people who encounter it do not understand it. As Phillips notes, “[t]hrough graffiti, people who would otherwise never come into contact are forced into interaction – even if it is only the walls that speak” (Phillips, 1999, p. 61). In that sense, graffiti also opens up a space for potential renegotiation of existing structures in which those other than the “graffiti literate” take part. I do argue that street art

speaks more explicitly to a broader audience, but graffiti does not fail to speak to the same audience. The walls carry communicative potential and can still scream and be heard, even if no one wants to listen.

Street art does, nevertheless, appear to have a more external address from the perspective of the artists. According to street artist Erik, his art is an individual process, even though he “of course notices how [his] audience reacts to it and adjust the next work accordingly to improve [his] communication with them” (Erik). For Erik, it is therefore a matter of strengthening his communication with the people who encounter his work. The communicative aspect is privileged for him in his practice and is furthermore articulated as a dialog. He changes what he does to improve his communication with the world around him.

A Masculinized Aesthetic?

In all my conversations with the participants, and with most people I ran into during fieldwork, we discussed why there are fewer women writing or painting. In the next section I will discuss that in terms of social context, but first I will explore graffiti aesthetics in terms of gender. After a few conversations with people (men) in the field, I sensed that there was something about the aesthetic of the paintings that made people (men) “decode” the imagery as male or female. Furthermore, it was connected to what they articulated as graffiti. In my conversation with Aleks (27), he said:

Aleks (27): Personally, I think it’s very easy to see if it’s a woman or a man who painted it.

Tindra: How so?

A: This is gonna sound like really... really wrong, but usually it’s because you can see that it’s kind of a girly motif, if you’re allowed to say that...

T: In what way?

A: [] Like often it’s not classical graffiti either. It’s almost like it’s too nice. You know? I know this sounds really bad. I went to [art institute]! They’d kick the shit out of me if I’d said that... [] (laughs)

T: You can say whatever you want.

A: I don’t know what it is. Somehow you just see that a girl did it. Usually a bit naive, a bit, like, kind of cheesy. Because they try to be like a man. And then you almost see that they’re not... It’s not honest, the painting. [] And then they are the ones that really succeed. The ones who really do their own thing. [] And often it’s like big vaginas and tits that are supposed to be like... like women. More feminist painting [] On purpose, you know? Just to provoke.

Aleks clearly feels that what he says sounds “wrong” or perhaps “politically incorrect,” and throughout the interview he was very reflective on his own position and expressed how his own desires or actions were sometimes problematic. He is thus in no way an uninformed person when it comes to gender, which he also implied where he expressed a kind of shame about what he is saying. All the same, he articulates there being something in the aesthetic, something that makes him regard it as “not honest” or “not even graffiti.” Bearing in mind the distinctiveness and conservativeness signaled in my discussions on graffiti, this further shows the difficulties in bending the rules of graffiti and renegotiating what it can encompass. In my conversation with Peder, he said that no one would question whether another renowned painter was a graffiti painter, even though he “just paints characters [figures]” (interview with Peder, 41). Thus, an artist can eliminate certain elements from graffiti painting, such as lettering in this case, and still be articulated as a graffiti artist. However, Peder’s example regards a man. I argue negotiating what graffiti can be more difficult for women.

In my conversation with Chippen (42), I tried to explore this further by asking about the relationship between graffiti and girls. I also wrote my own name, in my normal handwriting, and asked him to comment on it.

Tindra: But when you talk about this thing with the lines, it’s not only, like, the performance you say you need testosterone for, it’s also in the actual imagery?

Chippen (42): Yes, actually, I think so. I don’t know of any girls who have really raw, hardcore styles. I know of girls who are great painters []

T: Does it give you more “cred” if you have a raw style?

C: Yes, it does

[]

T: If I write my name, could you explain it to me? (*write my name on a piece of paper*)

C: Yeah, this is very graceful. Beautiful, graceful. You know? While I maybe would have... (*He writes my name in his style*) (see Figure 16, p. 114)



Figure 16: Two Different Ways of Writing "Tindra." November 2014. Photo: Tindra Thor

As the examples in the image above shows, my style (on the right) is somewhat softer. It has rounder lines, which makes it “graceful,” according to Chippen. His style is rougher. It has sharp corners, straighter lines, and almost completely lacks the roundness that I use. Also note that he does not even round the “R,” a letterform that traditionally has a rounded shape. He further explains what he meant by the “rawness” by writing the “A” to the left. It is harder, sharper, and edgier. For certain, I am not a writer and do not know how I “should” write my name in order for it to be decoded in graffiti terms. Nevertheless, this example shows how graffiti is coded as a harder, or as Chippen said, “rawer” style. Graffiti is articulated in a manner similar to the classic binary of masculine: hard and feminine: soft, where graffiti clearly is understood as hard. A similar observation was made in a comparative study of male and female jailhouse graffiti, whose authors state that the images made by women appeared “more round in form” (Yogan & Johnson, 2006, p. 45). I therefore suggest that graffiti sometimes materializes as an aesthetic demonstrating of, what appears to be, classic masculinized features.

There is, however, another traditional graffiti style that appears somewhat paradoxical here – the throw-up (see, for example, Figure 11, p. 97, and Figure 17, p. 115).



Figure 17: (Almost) Throw-ups on Trains. Stockholm, September 2017. Photo: Tindra Thor

The throw-up often uses round or “bubbly” letterforms and might, following the same logic, be coded as feminine. This does not, however, appear to be the case. As Aleks commented (see p. 112), girls usually do not even paint “classic graffiti.” The throw-up is definitely a classic graffiti form, and somehow its rounded aesthetic is perceived of as raw. The round/edgy dichotomy is thus not a simple dichotomy but entails a greater degree of complexity, which I suggest might be connected to context and the identity of the performer. Many people in Stockholm’s graffiti world know each other and are therefore likely able to determine the gender of the painter regardless of the style of the visual. There is also a dimension of place involved. Figure 17 shows train graffiti: given the difficulty involved and the traditionalism of train painting, it is possible that “rawness” could derive from its placement.

Favoring “hardness” is a graffiti characteristic that can materialize not just in the aesthetic but also as a characteristic in graffiti culture as a whole, in terms of taking place, intervening, etc. Hardness is, in that sense, connected to the con-

flictual and intervening dimension of graffiti, which in turn contrasts with that which is softer, smoother, and perhaps more consensual.

This distinction between masculine and feminine does involve hierarchization; however, it does not always privilege the masculine. In my conversation with César, he said he perceived women as freer in their thinking and creation.

T: Mm - OK, I forgot to ask you one thing about what you mentioned about girls and aesthetics; I forgot to ask in what way you consider it different?
César (53): An ability for freer associations, perhaps? There are fewer rules, and it's not only about girls; there are guys who have it too. I mean, there are guys who really have a cool, wonderful associ... But it's often... I don't know. I can compare it to another interest I have: wines and wine tasting. I have this good friend who works a lot with wine tasting, and he often claims that it is much more fun to arrange a wine tasting for girls, because they are freer in their smells and tastes, in their associations, while guys, like...they've read something and, like, "yes [], this is what I should find," and so on, and they stay kind of... not so open for what they really...the impressions, in general. I mean, and I think it is a bit like...it's just a thought that popped up, [] that perhaps guys in general sticks to the rules more, since graffiti is very, very, like, a really conservative world, you know? Terribly conservative with rules about what to do and what not to do, [] and I think girls don't give a crap about the rules and just let their free associations out, while guys are more about how things should be done and start from there, and try to create something out of that. While girls perhaps try to create based on their associations more... in general, of course...

In this quote female artists are articulated as freer thinkers and less concerned about the rules of graffiti, which César regards as a good thing. However, he does articulate them as different, which also supports my previous point. It is unclear whether these "freer creations" would be labeled graffiti or street art. Considering the earlier points, it is clear that some people would classify visual expressions that do not sufficiently adhere to the rules of graffiti as street art. At the same time, it is also possible to regard this as a new development in the art form. As in most cases, people have different and ambivalent feelings when it comes to development. Some want things to stay the way they are, and some want things to change. Changing definitions of graffiti are definitely something that would benefit women in the field, should they want to be classified as graffiti artists. However, just because something might not be labeled graffiti does not make it bad, in the eyes of graffiti artists. What I wish to show here is that understandings of graffiti are not independent of gender. I have also tried to show how gender codes appear embedded in the aesthetic itself, in somewhat paradoxical ways. In the next section I will continue with the same theme but

move on to exploring the overall gendered environment of graffiti and street art culture.

A Masculinized Culture

As noted earlier in the discussion on the nature of the participants, there are fewer women than men in graffiti culture. Also, in the immediately previous section I also suggested that the distinction between graffiti and street art is gendered. Graffiti culture and aesthetics are clearly closely linked. In this section I direct my focus more to the social aspect of the culture. In particular, I address the question of why there are fewer women, and how the participants articulate the reasons for this fact.

Several participants describe graffiti in particular as masculinized in different ways. In my conversation with Greger (35), he said that graffiti, in its hardcore form, is “fucking macho,” and furthermore articulated that street art is different in this respect.

Yeah, well, because graffiti is a bit more like high-stepping and large, and it takes up a lot of space and stuff, while street art is... guys are much more used to taking up space. And I've heard about girls doing graffiti who have been run off from walls because guys are painting there, because they don't want to paint with girls. Which is a bit like a kindergarten mentality in a way. But I think street art isn't quite like that. In street art we really scout for girls who want to be part of it. (Greger, 35)

Greger also told me about a documentary that was being made, focusing only on female street artists, commenting, “I have no idea where she's gonna find these girls... I hope she finds many more.” According to Daroush (36), graffiti is not really macho, but kind of “bro-ish,” and in my conversation with Alexis (22), he said:

It could be someone doing awesome tags and, like, everywhere, nicely done and in cool spots, and maybe funny, [] and it could be this really cool guy doing them who's super nice, but if he makes... or she, but it's like almost always a he. I will say “he” because there are like no girls doing it. We might as well realize that.

With regard to the lower representation of women within graffiti and street art culture, Jonas (29) also noted that there are limits to how heterogeneous the group is.

Yes, well, it's.... I guess the majority is men, who paint graffiti...like...on the other hand, there are... BrÅ says the graffiti-painting group is heterogeneous, like, it's not homogenous but very diverse. But I kind of question that, because it's mostly young males who paint graffiti...like...and that makes it a macho culture. (Jonas, 29)

In a similar vein, Layla (32) says:

It's really just a male-dominated culture with a lot of hustling about who's the best and stuff like that. I don't know, but I think that...like, when I just started out, I was all alone. There was only one other girl, so we went out together of course. But at the same time, now, there are more girls. But it's always scary the first time painting, when there's a bunch of men around. Usually you get compliments. But some are simply mean and comment just to bring you down, just because you're a girl. So automatically it gets harder. You don't dare, if you're gonna fail. But of course you're gonna fail the first time! It's difficult to take the step, since there are mostly men around. (Layla, 32)

Layla describes both how there were few other girls when she started, and how the low possibility of finding someone to identify with made it more difficult to start. Another woman I met had a similar story. There were many others, both men and women, who had spoken highly of this person, who had gained a lot of recognition, but when I spoke to her she said she was absolutely terrified the first time she went out (fieldnotes, April 2015). What became obvious in both conversations is the fact that the ever-present male gaze makes it more difficult for female artists to get started. As John Berger put it, "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at" (J. Berger, 1972, p. 47). These women clearly know they are being looked at, and that they are being judged in the process.

Marie (34): There was this girl who [] was standing by a wall, a legal wall, painting, and a couple of guys were sitting behind her and, like, "You can't do that. You need to do this with that one," and this and that. It's like, very, this is how you're supposed to do it and that is not how you do it. [] It's a very dudish world... where girls aren't that welcome, I would say.

Tindra: So in this context, do you think about this more? Like do you feel you shouldn't move in certain ways and stuff?

Hanna (33): Yes.

T: Than you do here [at the café]?

H: Yes. And it's really uncomfot... Like, I try to not give a shit, but it's the gazes. Like when you bend over, or like, you know, if you climb a ladder. Me, who don't even... being looked at is hard for me... Like, you can see the look... I remember we once talked about posting a picture of us in only a bi-

kini: would that get us more likes on Instagram? Like, the objectification versus what it is that you do.

Hanna says she can feel even more exposed in a painting context than at the café she and I were at the time of our conversation. Clearly she knows she is being looked at when she paints around other men, and that makes her change her how she acts; she “minds herself.” As Hanna also notes, she wonders whether it would be possible for her to get more recognition if she were to “play along” with the gaze and let people (men) look at her in just a bikini. Would she get more “likes” if she took on the role of object? Hanna clearly wants what she does to be the thing that counts, and not the way she looks. In my conversation with Zena (32), she also articulated discontent with other women who did get into what they describe as a kind of “objectification game.”

Zena (32): There are girls who start, like, who paint, and they *aren't* that good, but they get, like, really hyped just because they're girls who paint. And that kinda makes me a bit tired, that there are so many girls who... it's like posing and painting, wearing not so much. Like, that they become a brand, instead of their art. It's a lot like that on Instagram, and, like, Facebook.

Tindra: But is it like a strategy? To paint with skimpier clothes?

Z: Yeah, I think so.

Zena clearly sees a problem with this. She, like Hanna, articulates that people should be judged on their art and not their appearance or their female bodies. Zena specifically refers to Instagram and Facebook, which are platforms that host a certain “selfie aesthetic.” But Zena also points to an ambivalence in this matter. She continues,

But I also get, like, really irritated, because sometimes it's summer and really hot...so I wear shorts and a tank top when I paint, and then people are like... Like I can't hide the way I look! I am just standing there painting, but then people are commenting and, like, about your body and the way you look and stuff. And that makes me super irritated, because, like, I can't stand there in long clothes, like, what, a burka? But at the same time there are those who take pictures, like, from certain angles to make it kinda sexy and stuff. (Zena, 32)

As Zena notes, she wants to be able to paint and claim her right to choose to wear whatever she finds appropriate to wear and nothing more. She does not approve of the comments, and she does not want to make herself into an object. She just wants to paint. Zena's experience is that “men look at women” and “she watches herself being looked at.” It is, however, not only a matter of

watching oneself being looked at. When women watch themselves being looked at, they watch themselves *and other women* being looked at.

I would not claim that this is exclusive to graffiti or street art culture. As many participants noted, these cultures are not isolated from the surrounding society. The structures of the surrounding social milieu are consequently brought into the culture, which several also point to as a reason for the low representation of women. “Girls grow up faster”; “girls are not taught to claim their place,” etc. The *high representation of men* creates a kind of locker room atmosphere, however, which fosters an attitude where women become sexualized. That puts women in an exposed position within graffiti culture in particular. This also means that women are primarily determined not by their skills as writers/artists/painters, but primarily by their *female bodies*. This is not to say that skill does not count—it definitely does. It means that in a “dudish” locker room atmosphere, women can’t, as Zena says, “hide” their bodies. They are judged and evaluated both as women *and* as writers/artists/painters.

I want to emphasize that I consider this to be a structural feature of the culture. Most people I talked to—men and women—show a striking degree of self-awareness and strong desire to be nondiscriminatory and inclusive. As Maja (27) said, “A few of the best people I know are painters.” It is thus not a matter of graffiti artists being misogynists who hate women. Rather, the high representation of men forms a structure where women become sexualized, because bodies matter.

The Meanings of Place

As pointed out earlier, Stockholm is a specific place in terms of graffiti and street art politics. Places for writing and painting are completely entangled with the performances of doing so, and it is virtually impossible to take the place out of the performance. There are two dimensions to the question of place. The first is connected to the locality of Stockholm. In other words, it concerns the interactive relationship between the discursive space of Stockholm and the graffiti performances that take place there. The second dimension is connected to where these performances are carried out within that locality. Is graffiti painted on a wall or on a canvas? Is it indoors or outdoors? Is it close to ground level or high up? Both these dimensions of place also are connected to “getting up,” as previously discussed.

But a tougher environment also breeds a different kind of painter. It becomes an action sport. I guess that’s what it is now. The ones who paint now are elite-trained people who paint trains, people who go running several times a

week, who eat healthy. The mentality becomes completely twisted. People like to party and do weird stuff, but you can't be, like, a schmuck either. It's the ones with good cardio who last in the long run. It feels like half the time they have to run like hell. The one who can't run get caught. (Andreas, 40)

Writing graffiti or doing street art somewhere other than on the street simply makes it not graffiti or street art. The place becomes important both as a defining factor and as an inspiration for the people painting.

Tindra: Why can't you paint on a canvas at home then?

Marcus (29): How fucking boring could you be? [] I sound, like, super negative when I say that, but I've never made a graffiti painting on a canvas. But when I see people who do that, I feel like it's the most boring thing ever.

Tindra: What is it that makes it boring?

M: No, it's so flat, the wrong format. Graffiti is something big, like...you're, like, painting with almost your entire body [] And painting letters that are... No, I don't know, it... it (laughs)... For me it's really weird. [] And I think most people painting graffiti would agree, that it's, like.... [] It sounds, like, really strange and odd, kind of retrograde, but it's the truth.

Another painter standing beside us: It's like playing football at home in the garage, it's sort of the same thing.

M: Yeah, yeah, sort of like that.

Tindra: It's just wrong?

M: Yeah, it doesn't work.

The act of painting outside is thus a big part of what it means to paint. The sociality of being outside was also something that seemed desirable to the participants when I was in the field. Several times when I was doing fieldwork the sun was shining, and people were painting, having a beer, talking to me and each other, commenting on each other's work, asking me what I thought about it, and so on. This ephemeral placemaking also entails a social dimension that extends beyond the wall but that is primarily connected to the artworks. The wall is, in that sense, never "just" a wall. It has a spatial extension to it that involves the social setting of the creation. It is, as Massey notes, relationally constructed.

Digital Graffiti and Street Art

Graffiti and street art have, for decades, been media entangled with other media forms. The most intimate connection is perhaps found in the relationship between the analog making of graffiti and street art, and photography. Before the entrance of smartphones and digital cameras, there were analog cameras. Since the explosion of the "digital age," the momentum and volume of such entan-

gements have increased significantly. The same condition applies to the graffiti and street art world as in many other cultural settings. Through platforms such as Instagram and Flickr, the digital dissemination of graffiti and street art imagery has increased significantly, making not only this imagery more available but also the places connected to the performances.

Extending Place, Dissemination, and Enabling

Digital media have had a large impact on contemporary society, and the graffiti and street art world is no exception. I am interested in the mediatization of graffiti and street art performance: how my study participants articulate the impact of digital media, how it has affected graffiti and street art, and vice versa.

Platforms such as Instagram have greatly increased the availability of these performances. Instagram, in particular, has gained strong status in recent years as “*the*” platform people use for these purposes. Anton says:

Before it was Fotolog that was...where people were active, who were into graffiti. Then it moved to Instagram for some reason. I think there was a lot of, like, fighting and stuff on Fotolog. I have no idea why. But it's moved to Instagram now. I don't know if it's gonna stay that way, but it seems kinda stable. (Anton, 16)

Instagram has a very low technological and cultural threshold of entry. It is easy to use, widely known, and very popular, and is used to disseminate all kinds of imagery besides graffiti and street art. In April 2017 it was reported that Instagram had 700 million users (Heath, 2017). Consequently, the potential audience for graffiti and street art on the platform is large, to say the least. There are a little over 935,000 people living in the city of Stockholm (Stockholms stad, 2016). The potential outreach in the city is thus much smaller than on Instagram. Also considering active sanitation efforts in Stockholm, the potential outreach is even more limited. On Instagram, in contrast, graffiti and street art endure and become archived and preserved. For a long time these ephemeral art forms were preserved through personal photos and gained outreach through fanzines. These dissemination channels are, however, rather limited in time and space compared to Instagram or similar platforms. However, this does not necessarily mean that the potential for outreach is realized. Jonas (29) says:

It's interesting that you can follow people in a whole other way than before, so it's interesting, because it spreads, in a way. You watch, like, movies where people tag bold places, and, like, you don't see much of that otherwise. But

on the other hand... you have to actively look them up. So maybe, yeah, maybe it's not, like, public for everyone to see anyway. If you don't know who to follow, maybe you won't meet them. (Jonas, 29)

Jonas points to an important ambiguity. If you do not actively engage in the culture, you might never see it. A person moving through urban environments will certainly encounter it, but it is probable that to most people these art forms remain a kind of "urban white noise" (Macdonald, 2001, p. 1). Accordingly, their cultures might still be described as rather exclusive. Platforms like Instagram do not present all content to all users. Dissemination depends on users following other users or searching for hashtags they are interested in. In that sense, it is unclear whether a potential audience of 700 million truly equals a larger actual audience than the people particularly interested in graffiti and street art.

However, the potential should nevertheless be acknowledged. Several of the participants described how Instagram raised new interest in the practice.

And it surprises me a lot, because it's never been, like, if you told people at a party, like, "yeah, I paint graffiti." No one ever thought... I'd be like, if I met a girl who was like, "yeah, I do base jumping. I jump off bridges," I'd be like, "Shit, that's sick! You have to tell me more!" I'd be totally fascinated. But the weird thing is that if you tell people you paint graffiti, no one ever raises an eyebrow, but they do on Instagram and, like, social media. Then it's just, like, this massive interest in the opposite of what's usually interesting. (Marcus, 29)

According to Marcus, Instagram does something new in terms of interest in graffiti from people who otherwise might not be interested in it. This implies that the platforms function as a facilitator for such an interest and suggests that the barrier to entry into graffiti and street art culture is lowered by SNS use. Anton also noted that the barrier to entry into graffiti and street art is lower now because it is easier to find out where to get material.

The ones who paint actually put in the time to find out where the paint is. Now it's not that hard, really, considering like Google and Instagram. You can ask anyone, like, "where can you get paint?" Or something like that. (Anton, 16)

Today there are spray paint stores in Stockholm. In the 1980s and early 1990s, spray paint was sold in hardware stores, so that that was where people went to get paint. As Daroush (36) said in our conversation, to kids it was a matter of stealing paint ("rack", "rack up"), something that also functions as a kind of ideal within the culture (Thor, 2017). Thus, previously performers had to have

either financial means or the guts to steal, and they had to know where to obtain paint. Today spray paint is just one Google search away from anyone.

The kinds of materials posted on Instagram vary. An account like @tagsandthrows primarily shares illegal material, given the fact that the account focuses on a part of graffiti aesthetics that almost always is made illegally. Instagram is, however, a public platform and users who keep their account public and post illegal works could potentially be at risk.

Calle (33) : I have an Instagram... where I only post legal stuff.

Tindra: And the illegal stuff you do, do you take pictures of that for your own sake?

C: Yeah, so, like, when I get older, sitting in the retirement home, I can sit and browse and be like, "I did this!"

T: Show it to your buddies.

C: Yeah exactly, or the kids.

For Calle, Instagram is thus purely a platform for legal work. As he says, he takes pictures of the illegal work he does, but those pictures he keeps for himself. Painting and taking pictures does not necessarily have to be about showing the world what the artist has done; it can just as equally be about having pictures for one's own satisfaction and perhaps something to show people one is close to.

Some of the participants cite Instagram as a medium that helps them in various ways: as a source of inspiration, as a channel for networking, as a place to see things they would not otherwise be able to see.

Tindra: Do you get inspiration from there?

Per (39): Yeah, exactly, that's the main purpose, really. Like, partially I do it to post my own stuff and get feedback on it, but the rest is for pure inspiration. So that you always have, like, a stream of inspiration, not just... like, it's something to do when you don't have anything better to do, like, when you're waiting for the subway, browsing through what pops up. Like, you just don't sit down at home and be like, "now I am going to plan a painting" and then go through references and inspiration, but it's all the time. I want it around me all the time. And since I don't have it around me in the city, you can have it in your phone instead.

Instagram could thus be described as a way of moving the city space into one's phone and keeping one's interest—one's passion perhaps—close at hand at all times. Graffiti and street art are found in city spaces, and those who are particularly interested in these art forms go out and look for it (and the number of accounts on Instagram that focus on graffiti and street art bear witness to the

large number amount of people who do just that). But those who do not, due to a lack of time, for example, can be *flâneurs* of the city through their phone. The phone becomes a way of carrying the city space with one, and thereby also a way of living out one's interest, bringing it into one's life continually.

Digital media can thus be considered tools that enable an interest among people who are otherwise not familiar with graffiti and street art culture. They are also enabling in terms of availability for people engaged in the culture or practice, or for those who want to start making it, since they are a source information about materials, imagery, and techniques. Digital media are also a platform for dissemination, since they can greatly increase potential outreach. Furthermore, the smartphone has become a way to carry around the spaces of graffiti and street art—the city—and thereby keep one's interest in one's pocket. Digital media are, however, not solely viewed as unambiguously positive. There are counter-narratives and resistance, a matter I will turn to now.

Resisting Digital Graffiti and Street Art

Digital media were something that all of the participants had an opinion on, but several of them were also ambivalent on this matter. Digital media have no doubt affected graffiti and street art culture, but it is difficult to single out whether and how digital media have affected graffiti and street art specifically and not just as part of their impact on contemporary life in general. Andreas (40), for example, expressed hesitation regarding the relationship between graffiti/street art and digital media, but he also saw it in the broader context of contemporary society. He also voiced a certain distance towards digital media, noting that they were not “a thing” during his generation. Overall he felt slightly exhausted and discontent with digital media phenomena.

Tindra: Do you think social media has changed graffiti?

Andreas: Fucking yeah! It's such a fucking hustle, and new phenomena popping up all the time. Like, I had this dude here from Madrid like five years ago who said I had to go online. Who said I can't *not* post stuff and that I have to get a blog and so on. I felt it was a pain in the ass, because I'm not part of that generation who like thinks the Internet is awesome. But I understood that as soon as you start posting stuff there...you know, if you don't post stuff, people won't see it. And then the whole point is lost. Sitting there with your photos and feeling content is totally useless. So I started posting stuff on my blog for a while and started noticing that, shit, what a boost you got! That can fuck you up. [] Humans don't feel good when they get too much attention. It's like a drug... kinda scary. And you don't want to dip either. People sit there, checking, how many followers, how many people visited the page. And then Instagram came around like a year later and people just went all crazy. [] Total mania. And you think about these cool people who don't have

Instagram, and then they also pop up there, [] and maybe they haven't painted in like 10 years [] Humans are fucking dependent on attention and feel fucking satisfied when people give them fame. I don't know many people who didn't fall for that. [] I quit Instagram like a year ago, because I started posting too much and realized I was checking it all the time. Mania.

Andreas is clearly not happy about how having a blog or an Instagram account affected his life, or life in general. His resistance is founded on a resistance against what digital media did to his personal space and life, but also how he considers it to be bad for people in general, "humans don't feel good when they get too much attention." Digital dissemination becomes an obligation and triggers "mania." Adam (40) expresses something similar:

We did a project up in Kiruna, and that was, like, prepared, like, "take a picture a day that we can post on our Instagram." So it was, like, you had to think about it, and also you wanted to take a picture that didn't... say too much. So we had to do it, but normally I don't. (Adam, 40)

In the final passages of the quote from the interview with Andreas, he also hints that "internet fame" is quite seductive and more easily gained, which appeals to a lot of people. Other participants also described "Internet fame" as something less valuable than "analog fame." The argument is that newer media dissemination has become a new (and less respected) form of getting up.

And then there are the ones that aren't as skilled, but still have a lot of followers because they've been active on Instagram. And then that person's fame explodes, like, to the world, [] But then there are people who hate, like, Internet fame and don't get an account, just because it is too easy. But it's really not that easy, considering you still have to build it up over a couple of years, like, the account, and post pictures almost all the time. (Anton, 16)

According to Anton, the cultural value of skill becomes blurred in the realm of digital media. In the digital age, skill refers not only to artistry but also technical skills or SNS savviness. Also, as Anton points out, there is resistance to such fame, and a hierarchy wherein fame gained the old-school way is superior to fame gained on Instagram. One dimension of this resistance against digital media frames Internet fame as less worthy because it is easier, both in terms of easy access to a larger audience and also in terms of its permanence. Fame in urban spaces requires more work, since the work disappears so fast. There are no sanitation policies on Instagram. Digital media are thus articulated as making graffiti and street art *too* available.

Tindra: Has it meant a lot for graffiti?

Steffe (48): I think it was more fun when it wasn't as accessible.

T: Why?

S: I think it was more exciting to explore new places. I don't know, I guess I'm all about things being for real. [] Being there, experiencing it, that's a whole different ballgame. That's an experience! You're there. Not looking at some grainy image from the other side of the world. I can enjoy National Geographic and watch it, but when you've traveled, it's always a greater experience being there, in the place, than watching it at a screen.

According to Steffe, the availability that digital media provides dampens the excitement and mystery of the cultural experience. Experiencing graffiti and street art through digital media is described as a less authentic experience than the analog experience in the "real world." This also connects to the positioning of graffiti and street art as fundamentally urban media. In the same way that graffiti and street art can appear as misplaced on a canvas or in a gallery (see *The Meanings of Place*, p. 120), graffiti and street art can appear as slightly out of place on Instagram or other digital media platforms. Another dimension of this out-of-placeness on platforms like Instagram or Facebook concerns the fact that these are commercial platforms and quite mainstream. Approximately a quarter of the world's population has a Facebook account (Statista, 2017) and approximately one-tenth use Instagram. Graffiti and street art are, in contrast, situated as *outsider* institutions. It is therefore fitting to ask what happens to them when they are, piece by piece, absorbed into and appropriated by commercial platforms. Situationist theory refers to this process as *recuperation*, meaning the ways in which subversive ideas or practices are incapacitated or absorbed into the capitalist system and used in order to "strengthen bourgeois affirmation" (McDonough, 2001, p. xiii). Given that recuperation is considered a systematic process, we must not ignore the possibility that this applies to graffiti and street art when mediated through commercial platforms.

The digitalization of graffiti and street art is also articulated as having a direct impact on the analog practice and as having implications for how the city space looks.

T: But do you think that this whole social media thing has changed the practice in some way?

César: Yes, I actually... it's funny you should say that, because... I've thought a lot about it [] Like, I wonder if... since graffiti history, it starts with this mailman who writes his name, [] but people start seeing that, "yeah, but I also want people to see my name," and then you start... you start painting on trains so people will see you all across the city and you... get bigger and bigger, the desire to be seen... Now you can be seen online in a completely different way. Maybe you can find an outlet for that need online [] And then it

could change in the way that you can still paint, but online is where you're seen. I don't know, I have no idea, I'm just thinking, like... it should mean there are some changes in the behavior, and I know people who are like "yeah, yeah, but you don't earn your reputation on Instagram, you earn your reputation on the street." I know there are people who say that...so...but yes, yes, of course it affects it.

T: Exactly, so... because what you're saying now... Then it almost sounds like you might... like, if my thing is to get my name visible in as many places as possible and I can get it visible in some kind of virtual room as well, then maybe I would paint less? []

C: Yes, I also know... I know this guy who I'm in contact with who painted, he shut down his Instagram account precisely because he, he noticed that he... just like you said, when he started to get likes on his photos, he painted less, and [] he didn't like it. So then he [] took away the Instagram account, since he, he got his self-affirmation... But yeah... Absolutely, of course it matters.

T: Why was the affirmation worse than the affirmation by many...

C: Because he didn't like that he didn't paint, like, he thought [] Like, his creativity in painting suffered because he got likes of Instagram, so he thought... And I mean it's pretty... And it's true as well, of course, if you paint less because you get more likes, you... And yet creativity is what's important.

This indicates a strange paradox inherent in the mediatization of graffiti and street art. As César notes, digital media might make some people paint less and can thus be said to have a very direct impact on both the graffiti and street art practice but also the actual visual appearance of urban space. When graffiti and street art can be preserved and disseminated digitally, the need to paint in as many places as possible in order to "get up" is not as pressing. The incentive to paint in great quantities is thus not as strong in the digital age. This, in turn, can mean both that the occurrence of graffiti and street art diminishes but also that the quality might be reduced, since people practice it less. The inseparability of graffiti and street art and the mediatization of it (cf. Jansson, 2013, p. 281) is a matter of mutual impacts. Considering mediatization as hegemonic meta-process, it is also noteworthy that through their intertwinement with commercial and mainstream SNS platforms, graffiti and street art might decrease. As I argue elsewhere, graffiti and street art might also lose the edge of their criticality when they move out of their place of exteriority (Thor, 2017, 2018). In this process of recuperation, it is not only graffiti and street's position of critical exteriority that becomes blurred but even its very existence might be in the balance. In other words, when the counter-hegemonic practice becomes part of the hegemonic system as part of the mediatization process, its mere existence could be compromised. This presents a strange paradox, in which increased digital dissemination and visibility through commercial SNS platforms lead to a decrease of graffiti and street art in the analog "real world," thus serving the interests of anti-graffiti/street art forces. To paraphrase a famous Swedish song

from 1972: the state and the market interests are in the same boat together (Blå tåget, 1972).

Another aspect of the mediatization of graffiti and street art regards surveillance. Cameras in urban spaces are a fairly new phenomenon. CCTV video surveillance was first introduced in 1968 in New York as a way to fight crime (Robb, 1979). The possibilities that newer technology provides have a great impact on surveillance. In “the fight against *klotter*” (see *The Dirty, the Threatening, and the War*, p. 44) for example, there are several examples of intertwinements of digital media and surveillance in relation to graffiti and street art. In 2006, Stockholm Public Transport (SL) got permission from the Swedish Data Protection Authority (Datainspektionen) to start a register to collect pictures of *klotter* in order to be able to “fight *klotter* more efficiently” and by extension charge writers/painters for cleanup costs (Sveriges Nyheter, 2006). In 2011 the government-owned train operator, SJ (SJ AB), also got permission to establish such a register (Carp, 2011). Both cases are exceptions to the Personal Data Act, which were granted under the argument that SL has an “entitled interest” to record the digital images in order to be able to make settlement claims (Datainspektionen, 2005).

Digital archiving can thus be regarded as both a *strategy* and a *tactic* (de Certeau, 1984), a strategy being the ways of the ones in power, whereas a tactic is “an art of the weak” (ibid., p. 37). It is used as a *strategy* by SL, SJ, and the police to control insubordination, and as a *tactic* by artists who use it for personal memory but also as a form of dissemination that increases visibility for an otherwise low-visibility medium.

Surveillance is, in the digital age, not the only a tool of the authorities. In a very Foucauldian manner, through smartphones people have become their own watchers, not only watching themselves but also others. Aleks (27) says,

Before, like, in the 1980s, people did amazing paintings, since there was more time then. It was fairly new, you know? People were, like, clueless. And no cellphones. If someone was going to call the cops, they had to go to a phone booth and, like, put in coins. Not like now. People can take pictures and videos. “I’ve got you on tape, motherfucker!” You know? Instantly email it to the cops. (Aleks, 27)

As Aleks articulates, the fact that nearly everyone carries a phone with them and thereby has the instant capability of contacting the police means surveillance is more widespread, as well as more fragmented. This fragmentation also means it is more difficult for those being watched to know who is watching them, since *everyone* is potentially watching. Surveillance has also become more close up thanks to smartphone cameras. It is not only possible to instantly re-

port instances of graffiti and street art to the police; it is also possible instantly provide “hard evidence” through the camera. Anyone can “get you on tape” and in Stockholm today, that means that anyone is basically everyone. As such, the mediatization of graffiti and street art materializes in both the production of, and the fight against, graffiti and street art.

Playfulness

There are many reasons why people do graffiti or street art. No matter how political people are in their motives or how therapeutic art is for them, nothing can be disconnected from playfulness. Should you ask someone why they do graffiti or street art, do not be surprised if they answer, “I do it because of X. And because it’s fun!” Clearly there is joy in it: not only joy in terms of painting for one’s own enjoyment, but also, as many express, a desire to entertain or play with other, artists or even just other people in general.

There are others who maybe just want to entertain, make fun... or yeah, make a beautiful, pretty image, do beautiful stuff. Like all art. (César, 53)

As César says, most art is intended to do *something* for the viewer—not always something they enjoy, although many graffiti- or street artists do perform for other people’s enjoyment. Some participants also described their practice as something connected to play or childhood. Aron says,

I guess I wanted to keep playing. Have it inside me. You could consider a fence to be an obstacle, a stop. But you can see it as a game. You can see it like a possible hindrance, over or under. Or you could climb a pine tree to get over it. But I don’t know. That playfulness, somehow, makes life worth living. (Aron, 37)

In a similar manner, Alexis (22) regards his medium (stickers) as in “itself” a “childish” medium. A child gets stickers for going to the doctor or the dentist, plays with them in scrapbooks, and so on. There are definitely childhood connotations in stickers.

I always give stickers to my friends. [] People love stickers. People think it’s fun! Like, it’s childish. (Alexis, 22)

The medium of stickers accordingly contains something that invites play, that appeals to “the child within.” Here the childish or playful element appears to be an active choice, which could also be described as well thought through. hus,

somewhat paradoxically, this consciousness of the play element lends it a dash of maturity.

Peder (41), on the other hand, also talks about playing, but in terms of teasing, an act that also has a childish aura surrounding it. According to Peder, it is not important whether people other than graffiti or street artists appreciate it; he still thinks it is fun to tease these others.

And you do it to tease. Since there are so many who don't like that you're doing it. That kind of thing. (Peder, 41)

On the subject of teasing, Oscar points to an ambivalent relationship between teasing and pleasing.

I don't want people to think that it's disturbing. Usually. If I do, I focus on doing disturbing art...that makes people agonize. I do that too (*laughs*) [] But then there are also people who enjoy suffering. (Oscar, 23)

For Oscar, art is clearly about making people feel something. It could be a matter of creating something that people like, but it just as well could be a matter of creating something more agonizing. There is powerful and critical potential in this, and in this sense graffiti and street art can materialize as a kind of chafing against the urban through its mere presence, but also as a way of pointing to unpleasant issues. Being uncomfortable and teasing becomes part of its critical function. As Diogenes says, "Words spoken solely to please are like choking honey" (Diogenes Laertius 6.51; G505, in Diogenes, 2012, p. 50).

Peder (and sometimes Oscar) appear to engage in what the Situationists called the *construction of situations*, a term that refers to systematized intervention and remaking of the relationships between the "material environment" and the subjects moving in it. In Peder's description, graffiti and street art intervene in the material urban environment and subvert behaviors sustained by the same environment. According to Guy Debord, the construction of situations can potentially construct "momentary ambiances of life" and "radically transform" urban experience (1957, p. 12). The construction of situations is therefore a *revolutionary and political performance* that momentarily transforms or subverts space, connected to a spatial awareness of the interaction between the material environment and human political action. Considering play in relation to the construction of situations, playing—a *détournement* or poking of the system—can still be considered to have revolutionary potential. Although it is play, it still has seriousness to it.

The ones who paint now, like the security guards, are part of the game in a whole different way [] everyone who paints now knows exactly who the guards are, they even know their names. They're like... if they get caught, it's like, "hey, what's up?" Like that kind of thing. (Andreas, 40)

Graffiti and street art cannot be separated from play, even when they are being serious. Indeed, the serious is entangled with the playful. Play and playfulness are important and very present dimensions to the practice. Graffiti and street are *play* in creative terms, meaning that people engage in playful creation, as Aron said: "I wanted to keep playing." They are also playful in terms of artists' choice of medium, such as the stickers, which have childlike connotations. Another example of a "childish" choice of medium is perler beads (see Figure 18).



Figure 18: Super Mario Perler Beads. September 2015. Photo credit: Daniel Stengårds

The perler bead image is interesting, since it contains at least three different dimensions that connote childhood or play. It was placed low, at a level where a child could see it. It also depicts a video game character, Super Mario, that people might first encounter during childhood. It is also made using a medium many children work with. This little street art piece thus connotes play and childhood in terms of its placement, motif, and medium.

As Peder notes in his quote above, graffiti and street art are also a form of creative play with hegemony, a way to poke at the system. Such poking and teasing is not unlike a Diogenian way of critiquing through humor or teasing. Plato once defined man as a featherless biped, a comment he received much attention for. Diogenes then went to Plato's Academy with a plucked chicken and said, "Behold, Plato's man!" After this incident, Plato added "with broad, flat nails" to the definition (Diogenes Laertios, 2016, p. 256). In the same manner as Diogenes, graffiti and street art sometimes deliver their critique through teasing and humor. This does not apply to all situations, of course, but there is definitely a Diogenian trait of teasing in graffiti and street art, which is made possible through their status as outsider arts and the way their performance attempts to create situations. Playfulness and teasing must necessarily come from a position of exteriority. It needs to be free.

Freedom

Another very theme that is very present, yet quite in contrast to the previous discussion of graffiti as conservative (see *Graffiti as Historical Reenactment*, p. 96), is the stated importance of freedom in graffiti and street art as cultural practices. According to Jones, for many artists "graffiti is about freedom," which in some instances entails "a political imperative of disenfranchised youth" (Jones, 2007, p. 7). Freedom is an important value in several respects and refers to freedom of expression, freedom of art form, freedom to do as one wishes, freedom from conventions and norms, and freedom for individuals.

Graffiti to me is... To me it's a rather impulsive expression. That you do it then and there, that you leave and you know it is there. Like, partially it's also a commercial art form, but also noncommercial in every way, but, like, everyone knows what it is. Like, graffiti can mean so God damn much, but...you could look it up in Wikipedia, of course, but to me it's temporary footprints in places where you've been, with or without a signature, but, like, very impulsive. Very free. Very, very free. There are no rules. There are so many rules in other kinds of art, I think, to make it belong in certain spaces. But in graffiti-

ti, it's the artist's choice; it's going to be here. So, it's just like the artist and the space, that are the agents, then and there. (Oscar, 23).

As Oscar puts it, graffiti is a kind of uncontrollable expression that at its core is free from rules which in other contexts confine both the artist and the space that is painted. This fundamental uncontrollability is also something that increases the level of threat that street art and especially graffiti are perceived to present. This anarchical element of graffiti and street art turns them into social threats, forms of social disorder. It points to slightly scary fact: that society is dependent on people believing in it and collectively performing it. It is like children playing games. If you ever have watched children play, you know they can spend hours planning their game, what they are going to play, how they are going to play it, who plays what part, etc. But the game is fragile, because it only takes one kid who challenges something in the game for it to fall apart. The game can survive if the oppositional child does not have particularly high status in the group. However, if a high-status child opposes something in the game, then the game is dead. The oppositional child has the freedom to oppose. Every such act is potentially revolutionary. If one can revolt, so can others—and that is all it takes. The freedom that graffiti and street art embrace and perform are accordingly materializations of this condition: that if people just started doing whatever they liked there would be anarchy.

Summing Up

In discussing how Stockholm graffiti and street art are articulated, I have suggested that these phenomena should be regarded as different forms, and that the differences between them can be considered in terms of their different communicative functions. Graffiti can be considered as having a more internal address, while street art has a more external one. In terms of their communicative address, street art can be defined as more understandable than graffiti, the latter of which requires a more qualified literacy to decode. This communicative unavailability of graffiti and relative availability of street art may also affect the level of subversiveness of the different media, a potential that cuts both ways. On the one hand, street art may be less subversive than graffiti and therefore a less edgy political act. On the other hand, as noted here, street art often carries explicit messages that are more easily communicated to a larger audience. In that sense, street art might hold greater political communicative potential.

Literacy is also intimately connected to graffiti's cultural structure, where knowledge about graffiti culture and aesthetics is framed as an important value. The culture's emphasis on knowledge, and the aesthetic connotations of early

North American hip-hop graffiti, led me to suggest graffiti can be considered as *historically situated performances reenacted through each performative event*. In relation to cultural conventions and norms, the logics of accumulated capital are very much at work within the culture. The culture can therefore be understood as an institution in itself where both the creator and the created are taken into consideration when deciding what counts as graffiti. This rather rigid institutionalism is something that is more present in graffiti than in street art, which is framed as a more hospitable art form.

I have also suggested that graffiti and street art are gendered institutions. Their gendered dimensions include both social and aesthetic aspects of the culture. Although many of the men show a notable level of awareness about gender issues, several women participants spoke of a sense of exclusion, a higher threshold for being regarded as equals, and a general sense of always being looked at and judged as women first and foremost and only secondarily as artists or writers.

The graffiti and street art media have also been discussed in terms of their relation to other media. As pointed to, graffiti and street art are intertwined with several other media technologies, in particular photography (and film) and digital platforms that enable dissemination of such media. These mediations of graffiti and street art have been discussed as having a potential effect on the borders of graffiti and street art and its localities. In a way, media technologies might lower the threshold into the culture and make these communities less gated, considering many graffiti- and street art accounts on for example Instagram are public. Mediation of these spatio-temporal performances also extends them in space and time: through digital dissemination into digital places, and by way of being archived over time.

These intertwinements with other media technologies have also been discussed in terms of a mediatization of graffiti and street art. Mediatization processes materialize on several levels, for example in terms of surveillance and, potentially, also in terms of occurrence of graffiti and street art in urban spaces. As articulated by the participants, graffiti and street art performances become more difficult as everyone with a smart phone could be a potential informer. When everyone has the opportunity to catch you on tape, you might have to change the way you act. There are also some indications that media technologies might have an effect on the occurrence of graffiti- and street art in urban space. This appears as an effect of specifically the mediatization of *fame* and *getting up*. When artists can get more positive affirmation on Instagram than they do “just” painting in the city, the incentive for painting itself decreases. Gaining fame becomes possible through a combination of placement, skill, or quantity, all of which contribute to the visibility of the alias. Prior to digital media, the only

way to get up was by painting a lot, or in very visible places. In the digital age, Instagram can achieve the same visibility, reaching more people with less work. Although there is resistance to digital media and a hierarchical divide between old-school fame and Internet fame, it is possible that digital media technology such as Instagram may lead to less analog graffiti and street art in urban spaces. This is paradoxical, since the increased dissemination of the performances and momentum of that dissemination could result in an actual decrease of occurrences of graffiti and street art.

This also raises the question about what happens when graffiti and street art become intertwined with digital media and, in particular, commercial platforms. Such intertwinements can be regarded as moments of *recuperation*, i.e. the process where the avant-garde is absorbed into the hegemonic social order, which is virtually the opposite of instances of *détournement*. In other words, the entanglement of graffiti and street art with digital media might cause it to lose its critical edge and, more importantly, put its existence into question. The next chapter explicitly addresses this dilemma for the critical dimensions of graffiti and street art.

Articulating Social Critique⁸

This chapter will focus specifically on the second research question - *Question 2*: How is social critique articulated through the performative repertoires of Stockholm graffiti and street art discourses? Are there similar or different positionalities within these graffiti and street art groups?

The following chapter will discuss what is critiqued through the performance, the ideological attitudes of the performances, and also what is not critiqued (silences). The chapter will address the oppositional character of graffiti and street art, with a specific focus on the different and multiple layers of that critique.

Being Against

Before getting into more detail on specific traits of the critique, it is important to acknowledge the overall “punkness” of graffiti and street art. In many ways it is matter of just being against, saying no, and/or stating that one does not care about or will not respect social or legal rules and conventions. As Daroush (36) said, “It’s resistance!” This resistance materializes in different themes, but sometimes it is just a matter of resisting or becoming obstinate and showing other writers, other people, and society that you can say no. When I asked Marie (34) what it is she is protesting, she answered,

I wouldn’t say it’s anything specific. It’s more like general defiance against society and the way it looks. To be seen. (Marie, 34)

When asked the same question, Fredrik (40) said,

⁸ Parts of the arguments presented in this chapter have previously been elaborated and published in Thor, T. (2017). ‘The Sounds of Silence’: Writing Urban Spaces. In: Fast, K, Jansson, A., Tesfahuney, M., Ryan Bengtsson, L., Lindell, J. (eds.), *Geomedia Studies: Spaces and Mobilities in Mediatized Worlds*, London: Routledge.

Well, that you can't, that you have the guts to, that you... Like, "you can't do this," but I don't give a fuck. I'm going to do it anyway, and I have the guts and, like, I can do this. (Fredrik, 40)

In a similar vein, Andreas (40) says,

The only politics graffiti needs for me to appreciate it, is when it has a bit of "fuck you" mentality. That's enough, that's good. It should be a bit... it should be able to stand on its own and still hold up. (Andreas, 40)

According to Andreas, this is the politics of graffiti, and the only one it should have. It should not make a literal statement; in other words, one should not write "Fuck the system," for example. The point is, according to Andreas, that it stands on its own and shows the "fuck you" mentality without writing those actual words. There is also a persistence involved in this, a persistence to keep "giving the finger" to the urban hegemony, resulting in a kind of war between that urban hegemony and graffiti and street art interventions.

You have to, like, show no fear to society or the law. Like, you get caught and then two days later you're out painting again, and you get caught again. And then after a while they're just like, "no no no, this is not working, you're going back." But then it's like for the sake of stating an example, to kind of scare other people off. (Adam, 40)

As Adam puts it, one needs to keep going, keep trying, and stay at it. One part is not showing fear and not respecting laws and conventions, but the other part is to keep trying to poke at norms and conventions, or perhaps even wear them down. Given that graffiti and street art are fundamentally oppositional, the artist has to keep going. There is a drive behind it that is, as Daroush said, "resistance." As with Diogenes and the Cynics, there is a criticality in such performances. Although they might appear to be, and sometimes even are, pure acts of resistance and perhaps lacking in motives other than resistance, they are indeed critical acts that intervene in and poke hegemony. The example Daroush mentions—someone just painting a line with a fat cap⁹ across a wall—might appear both meaningless and crazy, but there is the potential that it is not. It could be, as Diogenes noted, not an act of a madman but an act of someone who just has a different mind than the norm. In the next section I close in on one dimension of how graffiti and street art are articulated as presenting a different perspective.

⁹ A nozzle that widens the area of spray

Graffiti and Street Art as Critique of Neoliberalism

Although graffiti and street art can be understood as resistance for the sake of resistance, there are instances where they are articulated more explicitly as critiquing specific social, cultural, and political conditions. The most prominent critique and overarching theme in this discussion is graffiti and street art as critiques against neoliberalism and capitalism. In this discourse, graffiti and street art become oppositional acts against commercialized and commodified urban space, and the artworks shape an alternative urban space not saturated by advertising and billboards. This critique is situated within a sense of injustice regarding the city as a space that must be bought in order for people to gain access to it. A wall is someone's property, and painting on it questions that order. As such, graffiti and street art tap into the idea of "the right to the city," an idea that entails an understanding of city spaces as belonging to the people living it and champions access to urban life and transformation (Harvey, 2008; Lefebvre, 1996).

Several participants clearly expressed a strong sense of injustice in the fact that it is possible to buy space for advertising but not to write about political injustices or aestheticize urban spaces in other ways. In other words, there is a sense that shaping the city is a matter that should be the right of the people who live in it and not of a company that happens to have the monetary means to access urban space.

It's just so fucking twisted that multinational companies from the other side of the Atlantic have more access to the public space than I have, as a citizen. I live here, but I have no right, no right at all to any space, to public space here. But Coca-Cola or Mediamarkt, who have ads around the corner, they color, like, the whole square with their... That screen up there is huge. Like, the whole square becomes red from the color. Well, that's fine, no one says anything, because they can buy that space. (Jonas, 29)

Yes, if you are to find any ideology within... like, in common for graffiti and street art, then...a lot is about access to the public space. Who has the right to the public space? Advertisements have the right to the public space, and big companies pay heaps of money to... while we in Stockholm with the zero-tolerance policy—art has no... free art has no right to the public space. In other cities, other countries, it looks different, it is more permissive, it is just not quite... you don't have to travel far to find beautiful wall paintings—and... where it is allowed, but... yeah, it's really a lot about the right to be visible in the public space. (César, 53)

In a similar vein, Hanna says,

And who owns the space when it's supposed to be our place? Like, the people who actually should have this space together. Hanna (33)

Both Hanna and Jonas question ownership and exclusive access to urban spaces that companies have—or rather, that economic capital has. The issue does not necessarily oppose the existence of commercial expressions in the urban milieu, although some of the participants might prefer that. The main issue the participants mentioned was the lack of no access to the urban space for those without the financial means to buy space, which essentially means that the average person living in the city lacks true access to its formation. Although there might be a potential for commercial expressions to occur in the urban context, graffiti and street art culture's idea of the right to the city is mainly an anti-capitalist critique.

It's, like, the alienated man trying to make the urban environment a little bit like...fuck, I sound so theoretical now (laughs... I'm talking about Marxism here! No, but, like, it's a little bit like that. It's kind of like the alienated man trying to, like, make the environment he lives in his own. When he feels like, "I own nothing, I have nothing, but this will become mine if I paint it." You know? And at the same time, it's also like channeling something that is there that he wants to say. So, maybe not, I don't mean every fucking graffiti artist in the world is like some Marxist theorist who sits and thinks; "now I'm going to make the city my own." But there is still something there. (Daroush, 36)

For Daroush, making graffiti is thus very political in and of itself: an expression and consequence of people feeling alienated from society or a symptom of that alienation process. Here the writer occupies a position similar to that of Benjamin's *flâneur*, an outside spectator of the commodified urban experience who is also an urban interventionist and creator of situations. He continues,

Sometimes I get happy, you know, when you see someone's grabbed a spray can with, like, a fat cap and has just gone, like, up and down, up and down, up and down. You can see that he's just been, like (makes "punk" noise). And I get, like, so happy when I see that. I'm just, like, "Yes. Good." It's, like, a big fat "fuck you. We live here." (Daroush, 36)

As noted earlier, Daroush invokes the "fuck you" mentality, but he also connects to the right to the city: "We live here." Graffiti, as in the example here, is a "fuck you" to the commercialized urban setting and to the ones who occupy spaces without having the right to them by living there. When he says, "We live here," it implies an other who does not: the people who have not earned their right to the city. As Harvey notes, the right to the city is not only a matter of realizing the self but should rather be considered a human right, since the urban

“transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization” (2008, p. 23; see also Christensen & Jansson, 2015; Christensen & Thor, 2017).

Steffe’s vision of the political dimension of what he does is similar to Daroush’s views:

But I try to keep the murals and the public space alive so that they can see it, the counter-pressure. (Steffe, 48)

Steffe articulates graffiti as “counter-pressure,” which is also what makes the public space come alive. In this narrative, the counter-pressure comes from those who have not caved in to hegemony, and who use graffiti or street art not only as tactics to intervene in hegemony but also as phenomena that *remind of and highlight social dysfunctions* (see Figure 19, p. 141). The text in Figure 19 reads, “you are the disease, we are the symptoms.”



Figure 19: “You are the disease, we are the symptoms” (*Ni är sjukdomen, vi är symptomen*). Stockholm, September 2017. Photo: Embla Thor

Considering that statement as a reminder of social dysfunction, such reminders could point to different dimensions. When conceptualizing graffiti or street art as situated within a specific class (see the section on Class, p. 147), the phenomena can be considered an indication of social inequality, and, as Daroush comments above, a consequence of a process of alienation. With regard to place, and Stockholm in particular, this counter-pressure can be considered a critique of a space understood as over-regulated, something I will elaborate on this more in the section Critiquing Stockholm (p. 143). It could also be a critical

stance against everyone who buys into the urban hegemony, in which case the symptom would be the manifestation of the “constitutive outside” (cf. Laclau & Mouffe, 2001), i.e. the always-existing counter-narrative or counter-pressure. The kind of articulation as presented in the image, are entangled in the dimensions of social and spatial critique to different extent and degrees, but in a way they are also interlinked. Place cannot be taken out of the equation. Nor can the articulated sensations of being outside or even alienated be disregarded when talking about place. The statement in Figure 19, for example, might concern all these dimensions, in the same way that many of the critical articulations fold into each other. Articulating graffiti and street art as an anti-neoliberal or anti-capitalist critique also has consequences for where people paint.

I usually think graffiti writers stick to a fairly decent policy. Like, I think.... graffiti writers in general, all over the world, have in common that you.... You don't paint on people's private property. (Marcus, 29)

Graffiti and street art thus do not necessarily question ownership in general. People's private property is usually off limits. There are, of course, shades of grey here, but the principle appears to materialize as a stance against corporate ownership and buying of spaces in public, which are framed in opposition to other forms of expressions. As Hutter (2016) notes, urban space is “scarce” (p. 144), and getting access to it is therefore a matter of claiming space when there is not enough to go around. This necessarily means there will be some kind of fight over the formation of that space. It also means that people residing in such scarce spaces will either have to learn to share it by accepting the hegemonic formation of the space, or try to take it, something that, in a way, could be considered an act of violence.

If you did something illegal, then you still took your place in the public. Forcefully, if you want to see it that way. And that's the thing, really. (Aleks, 27)

This condition goes both ways. Graffiti and street art could be considered a forceful claiming of space, as Aleks notes. On the other hand, if graffiti and street art are viewed as urban interventions, that scarce space has already been forcefully taken and closed off by hegemonic powers. The perhaps forceful act of taking space through graffiti and street art performance should, according to this narrative, instead be considered responses to an earlier act of spatial violence that are fundamentally a spatial critique. In the following section I shall turn more specifically to how the Stockholm space, in particular, is critiqued by the participants.

Critiquing Stockholm

The social relationships involved in the spaces of graffiti and street art are not only relationships between the people making graffiti and street art. They also relate to the urban space—a space that generally does not allow such creations. Here the political dimension of space and place, as Massey (2005) notes, become tangible. The urban space is not hospitable to everyone or everything. Some things are excluded from it.

Fredrik (40): Everyone has an oasis somewhere where they can breathe inspiration. But we don't.

An important part of place-making is when it becomes a matter of *place-claiming*, as noted in the previous section. This is also where the subversion and politics of space and place lie. The questions of how/when/if graffiti and street art are political is entirely connected to place-making.

T: Do you think, is graffiti political according to you?

Jonas (29): Oh, yeah, fundamentally political.

T: Mm. How so?

J: Well, because it questions ownership. Right now, every day. Ownership is seen as a very important construct in our society. It's also deeply unfair. We don't all have the same rights, or the same access to ownership. And what graffiti does is challenge that injustice, so to speak. So, it takes the right to say: Even if you own something, I live here as well, and I have the right to write or express myself in the same way you do. So, in a way, it corrects an injustice. And that's political as hell. (see also Christensen & Thor, 2017)

Conceptualizing illegal arts as “fundamentally political” is connected to the hegemonic making of places. In Jonas's conceptualization, there are no non-political urban art forms, regardless of the artist's intent. Through their illegality, these art forms question ownership and thereby make claims on a different kind of public space organized around different kinds of values. This is in line with Mouffe's argument that all art is political (2007). Both views entail an understanding of art that is detached from intention. The non-intention to write something political, or the intention to write something apolitical, is as political as explicitly political practices.

Stockholm also constitutes a special case because of its strict regulations, which creates even more withdraws space from graffiti and street art. It should be noted that most people who paint graffiti or make street art in Stockholm have regular jobs and are part of mainstream society. Artists and writers also have a strong sense of what constitutes quality in graffiti or street art. Several partici-

pants did not want graffiti or street art everywhere, and the graffiti or street art they did want they expected to exhibit a certain level of quality.

- T: Do you think it would be different without zero tolerance in Stockholm?
Fredrik (40): Well, I understand that subways and trains should be kept clean, because I remember, looking back on when I grew up, it looked like shit. Do you remember what it used to look like?
T: Well, yeah...
F: *Klotter* everywhere, yeah, it looked like shi...
T: In the subway cars.
F: Yes, and I'm an adult today. I like it nice and clean.

Considering the quote above, graffiti and street artists do grow up. This participant clearly appreciates cleanliness and some kind of social order. Most of the participants in this study were between the ages of 30 and 40 (see Figure 9, p. 80); several of them pointed out that growing older means someone has more to lose. Artists with families simply cannot risk fines equal to several years' income. This could also imply that graffiti and street art lose a bit of their edge when people who do it grow older and choose not to take as many risks—which is precisely what “the system” hopes for. At the same time there, some participants, such as 37-year-old Aron, express an ambivalence about how they “never grew up” or kept playing. This confirms the point that graffiti and street art are acts of *not becoming* part of the system, of staying outside and continuing to play (see Playfulness, p. 130). Yet this point also shows to how graffiti writers and street artists *are* part of the system, to some extent.

It feels like Sweden wants to prove something to, like, other countries. Like, it can't be any smirching here. Everyone is straight and nice here. But then, like, every tenth teenager is walking around all depressed, which is just, like, so sick. Then that happens. “You're too drunk. You have a beer in a park on a nice summer day. Dump it out!” You know? That thing. There is nothing to do. That's why. They remove the graffiti [] because you should just be. You are supposed to work and then go home and then retire. Then you're supposed to die. [] That's why I paint. So I can feel that I have something just for myself, that's not controlled by some norm. [] I can break away, jump out of the system, look at it from above and do my thing, and then jump back in again and like, I've felt free for a couple of minutes. (Aleks, 27)

For Aleks, writing graffiti serves to create what Deleuze and Guattari (1986) describe as a “line of flight” out of the system, an escape from “control” and from the “norm,” and in that moment he feels free. In this manner, graffiti writers and street artists become urban nomads that move in between the hegemonic urban setting and the breaks they create in it. As Greger (35) said when

I asked him to tell me about himself, “I kind of have two personalities, [] but they overlap.” This is most likely true for many of the participants. They lead dual lives, one where they have a job, family, etc. and then the other where they paint. They move in between these spaces, these two lives, but they are not equal. One is “normal,” and the other is a rebellious life that opens the line of flight from the norm. As Aleks said, painting makes him feel free for a couple of minutes, free from the norm, free from the system.

The space Aleks wants to break free from, the space of Stockholm, is also articulated as very clean, which for Aleks makes the city both boring and depressing. Again, there is an intertextual connection to neoliberal discourse in his critique of work as the highest value and most worthy project in life. “You are supposed to work and then go home and then retire. Then you’re supposed to die.” As noted by Toby Miller (2007), neoliberalism is driven with the purpose of maximizing individual “utility”, which further blends “consumerism with citizenship” (p. 55). For Aleks, there is clearly something else, something more to life, and in painting he seems to be able to access that. Painting creates his line of flight from Stockholm, articulated as a lifeless place where you are just supposed to “be.” In a similar vein, Andreas says,

They have succeeded quite well in Stockholm in creating a sterile city. [...] Stockholm in general has become a rather cold and depressing city. (Andreas, 40)

Andreas also articulates Stockholm as something cold, sterile, and lifeless. I have suggested elsewhere (Thor, 2017) that this is a critique of what could be described as a *zombification of society*. In this zombieified and lifeless context, graffiti serves to create lines of flight away from the sterile, away from the zombieified and toward life. It is there to create a break in the urban hegemony, both for the people doing it and also for the urban dwellers experiencing it. Graffiti and street art accordingly create something else, something alive, or as Peder calls it, a more interesting city:

But I think [the city] is changed for the better, because I think it [graffiti and street art] makes a more interesting city to walk around in and look at. And it’s also a counterweight to all the advertising you see all the time. And I think art is way more exciting to walk around and look at. (Peder, 41)

In a similar vein, Patrik (35) says,

Tags are something that... when I get from one point to another, like, not going out just to stroll... If there’s something that lights up your day, it’s

looking at new stuff. That something happens, that it changes, that there's life in the city.

Tindra: Do you think that's a sign of life?

P: Yes, definitely.

For Peder and Patrik, graffiti and street art are phenomena that wake the city up: both the urban space itself and perhaps also the people in it. Graffiti and street art can create counterweights, as Steffe (48) notes. Writing and painting are

articulated as the deterritorializing event aimed to shake people out of dormancy. This does not mean that graffiti aims to get people in general to appreciate or like it. The aim of 'waking' people might rather be reached by painting something controversial or ugly. The point is to get people to think and thereby *awaken a spatial and aesthetical potential*, to deterritorialize space that can, potentially, be reterritorialized. (Thor, 2017)

The critique of Stockholm clearly concerns the specific locality, a space of zero tolerance, but it also extends beyond that space. Although situated in Stockholm, the spatial critique extends to a neoliberal order that prioritizes work and productivity. The critique materializes in thoughts about "sterility" and "cleanliness" and hegemonic strategies that almost appear to be understood as strategies for keeping people in check. In order to have a productive society, there is no room for rebellion against the order, and what is more unproductive in a neoliberal context than unpaid work that dirties up an urban space that hegemons need to be commercially attractive in order to achieve their increased productivity (cf. *ibid.*).

The spatial critique is thus directed to the rules and norms of Stockholm as a space. The norms are considered too strict and rigid and viewed as strategies for keeping people in line, suppressing opposition, and opposing life, or perhaps opposing that which makes life worth living, feel alive and not as a part of the system.

Here we have so many rules that are supposed to regulate the public space. Like the "Council for Protection of Ecological and Aesthetic Matters"¹⁰ and political rules; "we're just politicians but we think green is ugly." But please, would you just make up your minds? In the art schools there is an academic invitation, the upper class decides on the gallery business. Shouldn't the in-

¹⁰ A municipal body mainly concerned with inspecting submitted detail plans and building permit matters from the Stockholm City Planning Committee.

habitants in the millions of program areas be able to decide how they want their art to look? That's, like... I don't think so much, I just do. My opinion is that I do. Aron (37)

As do Aleks and Andreas, Aron critiques the norms and rules of society and connects graffiti and street art to the right to the city. He also conceptualizes resistance as doing and not thinking: "My opinion is that I do." His opinion is graffiti performance. Aron explicitly brings in a class dimension and voices how upper-class or academic elites have more access and influence over urban space, art institutions, and so on, even though these groups are not the only ones living in the city. In the next section I will attend more closely to this class dimension.

Class

Following the idea of graffiti and street art as critique of neoliberalism (see *Graffiti and Street Art as Critique of Neoliberalism*, p. 139) comes the question of class. There are several dimensions to the question of class. One is connected to contemporary graffiti and street arts' cultural and historical emplacement within hip-hop culture. As education professor Janice Rahn notes, hip-hop culture started in North American "low income Black and Hispanic inner-city neighborhoods [...] and eventually, like jazz and blues, spread into middle-class urban and suburban regions" (2002, p. 2). Hip-hop culture and hip-hop graffiti are historically, spatially, and culturally situated within working-class and low-income areas. This also becomes evident in the way that hip-hop and rap music often voice senses of alienation. In the song *Fight the Power* from 1989, Public Enemy raps, "Most of my heroes don't appear on no stamps. Sample a look back you look and find nothing but rednecks for 400 years if you check." In 1993 Tupac Shakur rapped, "While the rich kids is drivin' Benz I'm still tryin' to hold on to surviving friends." The lyrics to the 2013 song "Underklassmusik" [Working-class Music], by the Swedish group Kartellen, states "This is working-class music for you who were left outside, and for the privileged things just keep getting it better [...] in plain Swedish we can say they were born lucky." Although this specifically regards music, graffiti is also part of this situating as a consequence of its relationship to hip-hop culture. These expressions are important, both in terms of voicing stories and experiences that in other ways are silenced. As Rebecca Solnit (2017) notes, silences are consequences of power relations, and those usually kept in silence are the ones without access to, or who are excluded from, the means of power. Consequently, telling these stories is important for the people who tell them as a way to break that silence. Again, there is a gender issue here; women are especially vulnerable when it comes to

being silenced (see Solnit, *ibid.*). I would argue that hip-hop and/or graffiti culture potentially form a social and political voice in terms of class and ethnicity, but to a lesser extent in terms of gender. Sociologist Kalle Berggren notes, in relation to Swedish hip-hop and rap music, that hip-hop culture is very heteronormative, and the scene is dominated by male artists (2014, pp. 36–39). Berggren notes that class and race are the issues that male artists highlight, and while these questions cannot be separated from gender, female artists are the ones who bring the issue of gender to the forefront. Although these studies are focused on Swedish rap, I would argue there is no reason to expect things to be different elsewhere. It can however be noted that this study also confirms the emphasis on class, which is articulated by the male participants, which confirms Berggren’s point. Several participants situated these urban art forms, especially graffiti, as situated within working-class culture. Calle, for example, says:

Like, at the start, when it all began, I guess it was kind of working class. I don’t know. I wouldn’t say like social outcasts, but, like, working class. Kids from the working class started it. I can’t remember; we used to hang out with someone, like, where I grew up, the kids from the villas¹¹, that they were doing it. They were more into sports. Like football and hockey. But we lived on the concrete. (Calle, 33)

As Calle says, graffiti was something that belonged to the “concrete.” He does not situate graffiti in the darkest spaces of Stockholm society in any way, but he still notes that “the kids in the villas” did sports while he and his friends who lived on the concrete did graffiti. Daroush (36) confirms this point but is less modest in his description of the class dimension:

Daroush (36): [Y]ou know Karl Marx’s base-superstructure theory? The material base and, like, the superstructure?
Tindra: Mmm
D: Graffiti’s material base is poor people. You won’t see, like, some snob from Östermalm painting graffiti. It’s working-class culture. It’s even lumpenproletariat.

According to Daroush, this is also the reason why graffiti is so controversial, and why there is a need for it to be stopped. He continues,

When a class that’s not the upper class tries to spread out, like, usually working class, when they try to spread out in some way, then it’s like “Ay, what the

¹¹ Kids not living in “the concrete”, typically from middle or upper-middle class families.

fuck is going on? Why are you people spreading out here?” And then immediately, there’s a conflict!

Following this logic, working-class people need to be kept in their place and preferably kept silent. Another participant also explicitly names the culture’s socioeconomic emplacement as the reason it is regarded as controversial or provoking.

You’re, like, censoring the art form, because it’s a youth culture and a working-class culture. (Jonas, 29)

According to Jonas, the reason why people want to censor graffiti and street art is because it bears a working-class legacy. Furthermore, Jonas articulates it as a youth culture, which also has been noted in other studies (see, for example, Shannon, 2003). Young people, in many ways, also are a group that lacks a social and political voice. Minors do not have the right to vote or the right to decide for themselves. I am not suggesting that minors should be able to vote. I am simply noting that minors lack certain rights that are later gained as adults. In that respect, minors are a group that similarly runs the risk of being silenced.

Following these arguments, the culture’s socioeconomic emplacement is part of the explanation for its controversial status. As the participants put it, graffiti and street art stand for the untamed, the threat against the social order, the witnessing of the fact that a social order exists, and the “social dirt” no one wants to see. Through those articulations, embracing the untamed, threatening, and dirty becomes an oppositional act. The question of dirt is what I will turn to in the next section.

Embracing Dirt

Connected to both the critique of Stockholm as a space and the question of class is an embracing of dirtiness or messiness. According to Young, advocates against graffiti often link graffiti writing or writers to dirt or disease. This also includes connecting graffiti to “bodily waste fluids, especially urine,” with the writer sometimes referred to as a “urinating animal”: like a dog marking its territory (Young, 2005, p. 53). It might also be interesting to note the connection to Diogenes’ nickname, which was *kyôn* (the dog), the root of the name given to his philosophical school the Cynics. Such connotations were also discussed earlier in relation to graffiti and street art as dirt and threat (see *The Dirty, the Threatening, and the War*, p. 44).

Such stories are not unusual among the participants, either. In my conversation with Gabriel (33) he spoke about “territory” as the space where you paint, and as a source of conflict if one artist paints over another. This connotation also materializes in the title of the artist NUG’s performance and video installation *Territorial Pissing* mentioned in the introduction. There is, accordingly, an element of dirt or messiness associated with these performances. According to anthropologist Mary Douglas, dirt connotes danger and becomes a signifier of the disorderly and social malfunctioning (Douglas, 2002; see also Thor, 2017). Dirt represents something threatening: not only against the clean but also against what the clean signifies, the ordered and systematic. Dirt is, however, not only used to label graffiti and street artists but also functions as something familiar and pleasant for people doing it. Dirt is, accordingly, an ambivalent feature of graffiti and street art. When used as a label, it is a hegemonic strategy against graffiti and street art; but when it is embraced, it functions as an oppositional and subversive tactic.

Hanna says,

Graffiti is more... hardcore (laughs). But it’s more fun also. It’s dirtier. I like that! (Hanna, 33)

For Hanna, dirt is an attractive trait of the activity of painting. Dirt makes it fun. There appears to be something about dirt that appeals to her, which makes her want to embrace that. Fine arts scholar and ecologist Tom Baugh gives a similar account when presented the idea of an “aesthetics of mud” (Baugh, 2017). For Baugh, mud is a kind of beauty in itself, and “an enabler... [perhaps even] the original enabler, the primordial ooze in which the beauty of life evolved and from which it spread out across Earth” (ibid.). Baugh explains his intimate relationship to mud in connection with his work as an ecologist. For Baugh, and for Hanna, the sensory experience of a particular environment and its modalities lead them to develop a particularly intimate relationship to those modalities, even though they might be considered dirt in the eyes of others. Graffiti and street art could, in that sense, be considered to embrace an “aesthetics of dirt.” When I asked Maja how she would like the city to look, she thought for a few seconds and said: “... not really dirtier, but, like, more alive” (Maja, 27). Maja did say she did not exactly want it to be dirtier, but dirtier was nevertheless the first adjective she used.

Oscar articulates something similar to Hanna and Baugh:

I usually think things are too nice. I like messiness and stuff. I don’t like it when things are too perfect. (Oscar, 23)

Oscar thus also put dirt and messiness in opposition to things that are “too nice” or “perfect.” There is something disturbing to him about the undisturbed. Tage also actively aims for imperfection in his photos:

But now when everything is so fucking neat, it’s nicer to have more worn photos. Everything is so perfect. There are no bad pictures anymore. It’s the same way with people; if you take an ugly picture of yourself, you take another one. I think it’s fun failing with a photo and still keeping it. I try to take slightly poorer photos. (Tage, 43)

All these stories are clearly told in opposition to the orderly. They are subversions of hegemonic perceptions of “perfection”: the perfect city, the perfect picture, or perhaps even the perfect life. Considering this “uglified” photography practice in relation to mediatization, this could also be regarded as a form of “muddying up” and “muddy infiltration” of hegemonic media or narratives. It is not a matter of presenting something cleaner or more tidied up on Instagram. Rather, it is a matter of “aesthetic muddying up” of Instagram, an infiltration of mud in Instagram.

Again there is a degree of ambivalence here, which also is connected to space. In my conversation with Andreas, we spoke about how standards can change depending on the context of location. When someone travels, they might accept a lower standard than they would expect while at home in Stockholm.

The shower doesn’t work, and everything is kind of crooked and dirty. And then you come home to Sweden and you’re just like, “wow, this is really fresh!” Everything is whole and clean. Everything works. You get irritated if you go to the bathroom at some bar and they’re out of toilet paper. Then you’re like, “What the fuck?!” Or no soap. Then you’re all like, “Come on!!!” But you don’t expect that when you’re abroad. Then you’re like happy. “Shit, there’s toilet paper! There’s even a seat on the toilet!” I guess it’s some kind of manic need to control stuff. Productivity panic. (Andreas, 40)

Andreas thus articulates how he also expects things to be clean here and how dirtiness where you do not expect it becomes a source of frustration. At the same time, when he is somewhere else, something as simple as toilet paper being present can make him happy and satisfied. In that sense, Andreas articulates traveling to other spaces as something that create similar lines of flight out of Stockholm and what Stockholm signifies. Stockholm needs control, and Andreas expects control while in Stockholm. At the same time, he describes that need as both “manic” and as “productivity panic.” Again, this taps into the conceptualization of Stockholm as a space of productivity, an urban space focused on order and of production, which contrasts to the (most often) lack of

monetary value in graffiti and street art mentioned previously. Graffiti and street art produce something, but that something is not money. Rather, in terms of cleaning it, it costs money. Furthermore, it costs money for the people doing it, who buy supplies but do not get paid for their labors. The logic of graffiti and street art thus fundamentally contradicts the logic of the hegemonic space of Stockholm and the values it privileges.

It's interesting, since graffiti, which is dirty and doesn't have any value in itself, in terms of money. But it has a hermeneutic value. (Alexis, 22)

Graffiti and street art might not have much economic value, which makes it even more incomprehensible in a discourse that privileges productivity, but it might have other values. As Alexis suggests, it can be considered having a hermeneutic value. It might appear worthless, or even expensive, but to the participants it is valuable in other terms. As Diogenes said, "It's not that I'm out of my mind. It's that I don't have the same mind as you" (Stobaeus 3.3.51; G427, in Diogenes, 2012, p. 22). Embracing the worthless, dirty, and messy might appear crazy, but from the spatially critical perspective of the participants, it makes perfect sense. Furthermore, embracing the unwanted or the dirty can become an even more significant standpoint, since it constitutes a minoritarian positioning.

Defacing

Another part of graffiti and street art as specifically a critique against neoliberalism and capitalism is its concrete subversion of commercial expressions in public spaces. Such acts are usually referred to as *defacing*. These performances of defacing—removing or changing advertising in public spaces—are also sometimes described as *subvertising* within street art discourse (Hogre, 2017, p. 17), a portmanteau of *subverting advertising*. This is also a form of *culture jamming*, "the act of resisting and re-creating commercial culture in order to transform society" (Sandlin & Milam, 2008, p. 323). Media activists use this tactic to make use of and subvert commercial expressions in everyday life as a critique of consumerism. According to Christine Harold, "the most promising forms of media activism may resist less through negation and opposition than by playfully appropriating commercial rhetoric both by folding it over on itself and exaggerating its tropes" (2004, p. 189). Culture jamming and the idea of *pranking*, again link defacing to the idea of playfulness (see p. 130). As Harold argues, pranking becomes "an augmentation of dominant modes of communication that interrupts their conventional patterns" (2004, p. 196). As Peder (41) put it, it is a

matter of teasing (see p. 131). Put in relation to culture and pranking, playfulness, teasing, subvertising, and defacing work together as performances against commercialism.

Subvertising has various aims that materialize in different ways. It can be a tactic for recycling materials in order to save money or the environment. In my conversation with Alexis (22), he described how recycling catalogs and flyers taps into the ideal of freedom and the idea that making these artworks should be free of costs (see Freedom, p. 133). He showed me an example of a DHL address form remade into a sticker (see Figure 20, p. 155). In a similar manner, artists can take catalogs and similar freely available materials and remake them into stickers. This use of free and readily available materials aligns with the ideal of freedom in graffiti and street art culture.

This is a DHL-sticker... So poor kids took these stickers and started drawing on them. So then a whole tradition of postal stickers was formed. Like, in the States it was U.S. mail, and there are people who do, like, insane stuff with these. So that's a tradition in itself. I've been to meetings in Berlin where people show off their DHL stickers. It's the only thing you're allowed to do [there] (Alexis, 22)

For Greger (35), the use of advertising posters as material combines pragmatism and certain aesthetic or political ideals.

Greger (35): When I need materials for stencils I take down the ad posters in the subway and use them. And then it happens that people, middle-aged men, run after me and try to steal them back, since I am obviously not allowed to take them, which I think is weird. Like, who wants to look at those posters anyway?

Tindra: So you take them and use them to cut out stuff?

G: Yeah. I think it's great material, and also, maybe, it doesn't hurt to take ads and use them for something that isn't advertising. And I really don't get why people get all, like, "PRESERVE THE ADVERTISING!" Like to the extent that they get all aggressive towards people who take it down. But it happens.

Greger seems to be motivated primarily by pragmatism in using ad posters. He thinks they are functional as material, and therefore he takes them and uses them for stencils. At the same time, he expresses a lack of understanding as to why anyway would want to keep them, and even less as to why anyone would take aggressive or hostile measures to preserve the ads. There is accordingly an ideal behind his taking of posters, both aesthetic and political.

In my conversation with Alexis (22), he mentioned yet another tactic and political ideal for defacing and subvertising.

This one for example (*Shows a sticker*, see Figure 20, p. 155) This one's nice. (*Points to the text in German on the sticker that reads "Sexistische Kackescheiße"*) It means a shit shit. "Kacke" means shit, "scheiße" also means shit. And the point is to put this over advertising, that is, like H&M or American Apparel, like, advertising that objectifies women. Because if I walk on the street, like, with my girlfriend or my sister or any woman. And a company with a lot of money can spread, like, these misogynous shit images, like, of women as animals and as objects, then they have power in society. They can sort of present this discourse that all of us have to see, and [the sticker] is like hatred against that. Because that still comes across if you put this up and destroy their advertising. (Alexis, 22)

For Alexis, defacing can also be a matter of subverting the message of the advertisement or the discourse it produces. Defacing is a way to show resistance and opposition: in this case, against misogynistic discourse. Young distinguishes between stencils and slogans as different kinds of expressions: the stencil being the kind of cutout that Greger refers to and the slogan being the kind of political statement that Alexis describes (cf. Young, 2005, p. 52). According to Young, these visuals show the ambiguity of the art/crime dichotomy. Indeed, this distinction is ambiguous, but I would also emphasize that acts of defacing are very political and controversial, and therefore border on being regarded as criminal. It is difficult to label these acts as either art or crime, although the men chasing Greger in the subway might disagree.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in Greger's case, it is the attaining of the physical material that is the most controversial aspect (although much of the work that made from the material could also be regarded as controversial). Part of what limits the utility of these concepts in this case is that they do not explain anything about how stickers and stencils function, or about the social setting they appear in: a setting that entirely determines them. In this case, it is the social setting that is challenged, defaced, and détourned. It is, of course, possible to label different forms of expressions, but this does not explain how they are operating or what it is that is at stake in the act of defacing—something that is a fundamentally critical and subversive performance. This distinction, although fluid, tends to overlook the complexities of not only the visual expressions themselves but also the logics, motifs, and ideologies inherent in them. It should however also be noted that there is a risk in these kinds of cultural jams and pranking of commercialism. As Sandlin and Milam note, there is a risk of cultural jamming "becoming co-opted by the very market forces of capitalism it opposes" (Sandlin & Milam, 2008, p. 323). These are the same kind of paradoxical tendencies observed in the use of digital media, as discussed in terms of mediatization.



Figure 20: "Sexistische kacksbeisse." Stockholm, September 2014. Photo: Tindra Thör

Adam (40) also described an incident of defacing and subvertising directed against an entire event and concept that was introduced in cities all over the world over the course of more than a decade: the Cow Parade.¹²

Adam (40): Do you know what Cow Parade is? []

T: Oh, yeah, that's right. They paint [fiberglass] cows in like, well artists get to paint them...

A: Yeah, and call it, like, a charity project, because 35% of the benefit goes to charity. But there's, like, super big costs in the project [] There's, like, a sponsor for the project that pays, like, 80,000, and then half of the money goes to the artists and the rest to expenses. Like it's this global company that does this all over the world. And there's, like, a super ton of merchandise with cows and books and bla bla bla. But that they totally live off that; it's charity, right? So we've done stuff to them, several times. Like kidnapped cows and stuff. Bunched up the cows together and did different stuff to them []

T: Why is it important to kidnap the cows?

A: Like, we've done a press [thing]. Like, what it really is and how it works, or what their real goal is. And that just feels like societal information. [] Also,

¹² <http://www.cowparade.com>

that Stockholm City so easily said yes to this, and then all these fiberglass cows were everywhere, and that's really... But then there was a debate here, like, "well, maybe we couldn't have said yes to this, maybe we should've taken another look and maybe we should have checked what this is really about." Like, if you want to put up a sign or something on your house, you need permission, but this thing completely takes over a city for several, like, six weeks or two months. Like, really tangible in the city space. [] And also, like, how they immediately were like, "Oh no, they stole a cow! Now we can't get any money for this good cause" That you did give them the opportunity, you gave back the cow's head. But they're just like, "No, we can't do anything," like, in the media and stuff. That you make them act in a way they didn't want to. So it feels, it just feels like it's...not important in the big wide world, there are a lot of worse things happening, but then and there it felt...

T: But what you're describing is also this kind of 'multinational companies inscribe themselves in this "we help the world" kind of thing.

A: Definitely. It just feels like there so much of that right now. It has become marketing. And when it's based on, like, these fake premises, you want to poke it. And when it's happening in your neighborhood, even more.

T: But did you return the head?

A: Yeah, in Sweden we did.

T: That's very funny.

A: With the Swedish one we did, and then they had to, like, sell it. [] We left it in a gunnysack. So now it's in a showcase at some bank.

In this case, defacing was accordingly about subverting an event, the purpose, and the businesses of a multinational company, and to inform society about the other side of the coin. As Adam also notes, defacing became part of subverting and circumscribing a company's actions and forcing them into acting in a different way than they (probably) wanted or intended to.

Both defacing and subvertising align with, and may even directly derive from, the idea of *détournement*, the "deliberate reusing of different elements—like images or text—to form something new out of the existing parts" (Souzis, 2015, p. 194). The examples here can be understood as what Debord and Wolman labeled deceptive *détournement*, the major form of *détournement* that takes an "intrinsically significant element, which derives a different scope from the new context" (1956, p. 2). The cow from Cow Parade, for example, was a significant object that was re-inscribed by the street artists, which then gained a whole new meaning. As Debord and Wolman further note, *détournement* relies on the subversion not changing the subverted too much, since "the main impact of a *détournement* is directly related to the conscious or semiconscious recollection of the original contexts of the elements" (ibid.). *Détournement* depends on a collective memory that still reads the subversion in relation to the subverted (see Figure 21, p. 157).



Figure 21: "Detoured" Match Box. Stockholm. August, 2016. Photo: Tindra Thor

In the Cow Parade case, both returning the head and the gunnysack can be regarded as artifacts used for tapping into collective memories. A sack could be regarded as a typical kidnapping artifact ("Bag of Kidnapping," 2017), and in general the idea of handing back body parts could be regarded as an interdisciplinary tapping into a cultural collective memory of kidnappings portrayed in movies where victims' body parts are sent in order to blackmail families for ransoms ("Finger in the Mail," 2017).

Defacing performances are connected in an interesting way to Diogenes and the Cynics, whose maxim was *parakratein to nomismata*, “deface the currency” (Sirois, 2014, p. 4), a critical motto that, according to Roland Stade, is inherent in cosmopolitan thought (Stade, 2007, pp. 283, 285). Although Diogenes’ motto extended to encompassing all kinds of defacing practices, meaning polis-subverting practices, graffiti and street art deface contemporary currency in a very direct way as a means to subvert the economic system. Here the sticker targets the economic system by actually defacing—destroying—the advertising of multinational companies in positions of financial power.

Ideologies

There are a few basic and slightly contradictory traits that can be identified in the participants’ ideological attitudes. Their ideology can be described as simultaneously individualistic, solidary and anti-institutional. It is appealing to label it anarchistic, in the Diogenian sense, but as I have pointed out earlier, there are also strong principles of structure and tradition within the culture. The culture can also be described as having leftist tendencies, something articulated by a few participants both in relation to their own political convictions and in relation to the art forms.

I’m a socialist, always have been. Been a bit more to the left side, and I like an open society. I don’t want to be conservative. (Marcus, 29)

In general I’d say painters are kind of leftist. (Tage, 43)

Hip-hop in itself is, like, leftist, almost always. (Jonas, 29)

Street art that has a political message usually has a humanistic end, or is slightly to the left. (César, 53)

Pretty often the political messages are, like, more, I don’t know if there’s research on it, but, like, usually more to the left than to the right. (Simon, 32)

The ideological position of graffiti and street art materializes in different dimensions of the culture. For Marcus, it is connected to himself and his own political conviction. Jonas articulates the ideology by situating graffiti and street art within hip-hop culture and its historical legacy. Both César and Simon note that the imagery and messages conveyed in it tend to be slightly to the left. During some of my conversations we discussed the possibility of being conservative or politically to the right. According to Marcus, this was absolutely

possible, but he also said that he only knew of one such painter. According to Jonas, the idea of a fascist or right-wing painter seemed slightly off.

Jonas (29): But there could be individuals who [] are right-wing extremists. [] But I still think they're very few [] It's an American, black culture, and I think that's kind of the opposite of what Nazis would adopt.

T: Ok, but something less extreme than Nazis. Like right-wing politicians.

J: In Botkyrka there is a Moderat¹³ politician... [] He was part of starting the open wall there. When it was inaugurated he sprayed "Greed is good" on the wall. [] I thought that was kind of funny. []

T: But say I went to a wall and wrote "Greed is good" or "*kapitalist, javisst*" [Capitalist, of course]. Would that be, like, "OMG, that's weird!"?

J: It'd be kinda weird. But it'd be fun! It's not so common, I guess. It's not their expression, like those groups of people. Well, in general, not their culture. It's, first and foremost a working-class culture. So I guess that makes the messages mostly, like, anti-capitalist and stuff.

The ideological positioning is, in Jonas' view, connected to the class dimension (see *Class*, p. 147). As I note in the section on class, this can be a matter of alienation: "The alienated man trying to make the city his own," as Daroush put it. Alienation or a working-class position do not necessarily result in ideological leftist leanings, though. In 2015, a Swedish poll showed that a majority of Sweden's working class voted for the Sweden Democrats (*Dagens Industri*, 2015), Sweden's most conservative national party. Furthermore, there are far-right taggers and stencilers.

After having spent about a year doing fieldwork on Stockholm graffiti and street art, I nonetheless argue that these people are *not* part of graffiti or street art culture, even if they use the same methods, but are rather a distinct Nazi or fascist culture. Technique, I argue, is only one dimension of the performance of graffiti and street art culture. Just as other parts of graffiti and street art culture overlap with other cultures or institutions in terms of technique, ideology, gender structures, and so on, the art form sometimes overlaps with the visual methods used by right-wing extremists. And as I note in my history of street art (see p. 33), street art imagery has a visual heritage that includes fascist stenciling.

¹³ A Swedish party that, according to their ideological statement, is a combination of "conservative views of society and liberal ideas." <https://moderaterna.se/partihistorik>. Accessed 2017-11-09, 15:51.



Figure 22: "Nordfront," right extremist stencil. Stockholm. January 2017. Photo: Tindra Thor

As I read the culture, fascist and Nazi graffiti or street art are something different that does not have a place within contemporary graffiti and street art culture in Stockholm. The fact that the same techniques are used does not make them the same. Instead, as Alexis noted, they fight over the same spaces and at times place stickers on top of each other's. People who identify as graffiti or street artists rarely espouse Nazi or fascist ideologies, and I have never personally encountered such a person. On one occasion, when I was talking to two writers who were painting, they mentioned they had met someone with far-right political views. However, this was the only instance when this came up. When it comes to ideology, the participants largely adhere to working-class and left-leaning politics. The same ideological tendency has also been noted in London graffiti and street art culture (Christensen & Thor, 2017). Two graffiti and street art artists in London had this to say on the matter of xenophobic or fascist graffiti and street art:

It would not be accepted. It would get painted over. There's a real anti-fascist movement. Anti-racist. People will actually take offense to that... You know if you did a stencil saying, "I like Hitler. He's a really great guy" it wouldn't last very long. It would definitely end up getting defaced and probably changed into something else. You know, *détournement*. It would detour the actual meaning of that and change it. You'd probably find it quite hard to get

back to just painting nice pictures if people knew you had those views. (Edward, London)

And there are certainly things like, you know things like any kind of racism is not tolerated. That's just not acceptable... You might say it's left-wing or whatever but at the end of the day it's just people doing the right thing. I think that's the thing. I think there's certainly a big kind of slightly anti-establishment thing about it. (Eamon, London) (Christensen & Thor, 2017, p. 605)

As touched on earlier (for example, the sections Freedom, p. 133, and Being Against, p. 137), there is a punkness in graffiti and street art, and an ideal of freedom that lends an anarchistic dimension to the practices.

It's kind of anarchistic, rebellious....Maybe that's the conviction people already had before. I think it's shaped through painting. That you're against rules. Since you have to break rules to paint. (Tage, 43)

Whether it is train paintings or stickers, it is about claiming public space. And I don't think there is one single train painter, sticker guy or girl, or tagger who isn't...who doesn't have anarchistic tendencies. (Alexis, 22)

Ideologically, it is not necessarily about being or identifying as an anarchist, but there is a touch of anarchism inherent in the practices, as Alexis notes, and of being against rules and regulations, as Tage states. Anarchism in this sense, is of the Diogenian sort, meaning there is a political point in being against (cf. Being Against, p. 137) and in embracing an oppositional stance against norms and institutions.

In both street art and graffiti, and for Diogenes as well, anarchism is partly opposing and being against but also encompasses envisioning another kind of world that is structured according to different values, such as humanism, freedom, or love. The critique of existing social norms encompasses a desire for something else, whether implicit or explicit. The participants articulated this "something else" as a social space characterized by little or no commercial messaging in the city that would belong to the people living in it, a city that is aesthetically freer and more "alive" (see, for example, Critiquing Stockholm, p. 143). Things viewed as hindering that objective are critiqued through critical performances that bear a certain anarchistic stamp.



Figure 23: "Anarki är fred" (Anarchy is Peace). Stockholm, December 2016. Photo: Tindra Thor

The Gendered Urban Space

In the past chapters I have discussed how graffiti and street art performances challenge different norms, such as cleanliness, commercialism, and law and order. Another structural dimension is less explicitly articulated by the participants but equally important and present: gendered spatial norms. For at least 40 years, feminist urban theorists have critiqued urban planners and theory for creating “gendered environments that are predominantly suited to the needs of men and the heteronormative family” (Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 323). In other words, there is a gendered dimension and hierarchy in the structuring of urban space that privileges male and heteronormative needs. With this in mind, it is important to examine the dimension of gender, both in terms of the gendering

of spatial hegemony in Stockholm, and how that might relate to the gendering of spatial interventions such as graffiti and street art.

In my conversation with Greger (35), he suggested that the economic and commodified structure of urban space is gendered and argued that it is not reasonable that only “men [working in PR] between 20 and 35” decide how the city looks, and—in keeping with the argument presented above—he cited this as a reason other kinds of imagery should also be given space.

Greger also theorized that since middle-aged white men are constituted as the societal norm, such middle-aged white men also feel obligated to intervene when something seems off, such as when they see someone painting graffiti.

Greger: Middle-aged men are the ones in all kinds of positions of power and stuff, so they feel they have some sort of obligation to they keep everything as it should be, that fair is fair. So no one, like, breaks a rule or does something they or their peers did not agree on. So if they see something that hasn't been sanctioned by other middle-aged men, they have to go there, put things in order. The guardians of order are middle-aged men. []

Tindra: So the norm becomes the guardian of the norm?

G: Yes, and they see something that makes them go, like, “That’s not right, there must be something wrong there,” and then they have to go there and object. While some average person, or someone else would be, like, “That may not be right, but it’s none of my business. And it might look nice.” Or like, they just don’t worry about it. [Once] a bunch of middle-aged men who were, like, going around drinking beer and a being slightly pissed [] started throwing bottles at me, shouting insults like, “FUCKING IDIOT, get the fuck away from here!” And I was standing there putting up a small tile on a wall, which I spent a lot of time coloring. But they saw that I didn’t have the right. “You can’t do this, we haven’t sanctioned it.” While the vast majority are positive. []

T: Why do you think this feels so wrong for these people?

G: I guess it’s because they haven’t approved it. And they are used to being the ones who approve things. Maybe not they themselves, but they know that, “Me or some other white middle-aged man needs to approve this in order for it to be ok.” You can disarm that by saying, “But this is advertising. This is an ad poster. They’ve employed me to do it.” Then they’re like, “Ah, okay.” And then they go away.

According to Greger, urban space is not only structured in line with, and according to, a masculinized norm, but the norm is also protected by those who fit the norm. This is clearly not a new idea, but the structural idea of those who fit the norm acting as guardians of that norm materializes in a tangible and telling way in Greger’s experience. Following this, and using the extensive feminist critique of urban planning, urban space can be viewed as both formed by a heteronormative male norm and guarded by those who fit it. Greger’s experi-

ences of making art in public are also interesting when we contrast them to Marie's, another street artist. When I asked her about her tactics for doing street art she said:

Marie (34): I can put up stuff in daylight, too. No one really cares.

Tindra: Ok, so people see you?

M: Oh, yes! Super often!

T: So what are their reactions?

M: Only positive reactions, if people even react. Often it's during at night that people react. It's, like, drunken people who think it's awesome and "Oh! You're making the city more beautiful! We love this!" (*laughs*) You know, drunk, happy people. That's the only reaction I've gotten. I've never gotten a negative reaction. Sometimes people stop and look, and then they move on without saying anything. That's very common. I can do stuff in the middle of the day.

When I asked Marie why she believed it was possible for her to do so, she said it might be because she does street art, which generally is articulated as less threatening (see for example *Graffiti and Street Art as the (In-)Comprehensible*, p. 109). In my conversation with Hanna, she said the same thing: that street art is less controversial than tagging, for example. But Greger does street art as well and has had an experience quite dissimilar from Marie's. They are roughly the same age, do similar types of work, and give off a quite similar overall impression. Both of them also mention encounters with drunk people in the night, but one of them gets hunted while the other gets praise. Why? Because women are perceived as less of a threat against the heteronormative and masculinized urban norm than men are. The only thing that clearly differs between these two artists is their gender. The controversial aspect of graffiti and street art is, I argue, closely linked with masculinity and struggles between different spheres of masculine performance. A male street artist is an embodied threat against the masculinized urban norm, but a woman "makes the city more beautiful." What does that mean for the struggles over urban space as a scarce resource?

I specifically emphasize these struggles as plural. There is not a single struggle between urban hegemony and marginalized practices or expressions; there is instead a hierarchy of marginalized phenomena. Urban space is gendered in many ways, and so are the subversions of that space. Resistance against hegemonic perceptions of the urban can function as feminist interventions in a masculinized space, but we also have different forms of masculinity contending against the hegemonic one. In the case of graffiti, which I suggest is a masculinized culture and aesthetic, the struggle over urban space is primarily a struggle

among men, what we can think of as a spatial “cockfight.” The struggle over urban space is therefore a gendered struggle on multiple levels.

Shades of Grey

Graffiti and street art culture contains a punk ethic that is countering, critical, and somewhat anarchist. However, the participants also voiced other stories and other perspectives, some of which are hardly critical at all and others of which direct their critique against other painters or the culture itself rather than normative society. Some participants frame their involvement as mostly about having fun (see *Playfulness*, p. 130) and almost nothing else. Others are not concerned with critiquing advertising, multinational corporations, digital media, or capitalism. For Mark (26), for example, advertising (one’s own name) is the most important aspect.

I have painted illegally too. Today I don’t give a shit about it. We do this to grow, to make a name for ourselves and for the sake of advertising. It’s good advertising for us. (Mark, 26)

[...]

Tindra: Is marketing yourself important?

M: It’s the most important. There is nothing more important

For Mark, painting means making a name for himself; it’s a way of getting up. However, in order to do so he paints legally, which could be considered slightly outside of the getting up logic. In this part of our conversation he did talk about marketing himself among his peers in order to become part of renowned crews, but he was most concerned with marketing himself in order to get paid to paint, to travel, to get invited to festivals and so on, aspects that are clearly linked. Artists need to make a name for themselves within the culture to get invited to festivals; once they are invited, they garner a larger audience and may be commissioned for other kinds of work. “It’s like any other company,” Mark noted.

Digital media play a big role here, since they provide the opportunity for people to reach bigger audiences. Some artists look down on this kind of fame, but others are more pragmatic about it, viewing digital media as a platform where successful self-marketing can even mean turning one’s art into a successful career.

The legal aspect, that's mostly for myself. To make money, like, making something out of it. And perhaps to fulfill my true talent. Because when I paint outside, you don't have time to do your best. (Aleks, 27)

Aleks comments that legal aspect is more for himself, as a way to fulfill his talent, and so on. The other side of the argument implies that the illegal side is done for more than just himself. In our conversation he added that it is important to paint illegally in order to maintain contact with the culture. Illegality is interwoven into the fabric of the culture, and so painting legally turns the practice into something slightly different. Painting legally allows an artist to explore creatively, but it also allows exploring opportunities to make a living by doing art. In such situations, graffiti and street art become similar to advertising as conventionally understood.

Yeah, like, doing it in as many places as possible, that's, like, advertising. But you take it, instead of paying for it. Because you don't have the money to pay for it. Like, an ad spot can cost, like, tens and thousands a week, and, like, not everyone has that kind of money. As an individual person (Anton, 16)

Oscar has a similar view on the relationship between graffiti and advertising, but he also considers the aesthetic to be part of a commercial aesthetic.

Oscar (23): It's commercial in the way that it has become a style. Just like a font. It's big enough for big institutions to buy into the whole thing. It's so good and effective, even SL themselves paint their trains instead of graffiti writers doing it, but they paint them with advertising instead. It's a bit like graffiti to me, if you run into it on the street, like, it's in your face. Like, "Shit, a painting!" And I think advertising appropriated that. That's also supposed to be "in your face." It's like the same thing. It's just, they fight each other, graffiti and advertising. And no one is right. Maybe this sounds a bit out there, but.... A telling example is the trains today, the subway, like, it's completely covered in advertising. On the outside too! And that's straight from graffiti. Because before, there was no advertising in the subway, and now there is. Before it was just graffiti writers advertising themselves in the subway. Because [the subway] was dirty and ugly, and like, "Yeah, we can paint there." But now it's like, they do it themselves to fill up that space. So it's like a war between.... Everything is a billboard, to writers and to people in advertising.

Tindra: But do you mean graffiti is like advertising?

O: Yeah, sometimes it feels like it. It feels like it doesn't serve any other purpose that advertising your crew or, like, your group. And when they're famous enough, everyone knows about them and they start having smaller exhibitions and can start selling their art, too. It's just another way. But that doesn't mean everything is commercialized. Like, I don't have anything against commercialization. Everyone wants to make a living, so I don't see

anything wrong with that. Like, it's just similar. How you work, as a company, like, placement.

According to Oscar, the aesthetic is not intrinsically commercial, but in specific situations it becomes commercial. From one point of view this may be a matter of aesthetic appropriation. I have argued elsewhere (Thor, 2017, 2018) that appropriating graffiti and street art aesthetics or culture can be an effective way for hegemonic forces to disarm them as spatial critiques and interventions. In addition, following Oscar's comments, it is not only the aesthetics that are appropriated but also the spaces and tactics of graffiti, which are then turned into hegemonic strategies. Still, graffiti and street art at the same time bear similarities to commercial media. Furthermore, they now appear on commercial platforms, such as Instagram. One might ask whether it is possible to be subversive on Facebook, for example. I argue that graffiti and street art change when they appear in or through commercial media, and they lose their critical edge. However, my point here is that graffiti and street art are not always *intended* to have a critical point, and even when the intent is to have such an edge, it does not always succeed. Graffiti and street art are not intrinsically critical, even if in many situations they are. Nor are graffiti and street art intrinsically anti-commercial, even if in many situations they are. Indeed, in certain situations and in aspects, graffiti and street art are anything but critical. They become merely a way to make money or to achieve fame for the artist. Likewise, graffiti (and to a lesser extent street art) shares a commercial logic with advertising practices. This is, as always, not black and white but rather different shades of grey.

Summing Up

This chapter teases out different dimensions of the critical aspect of graffiti and street art culture. The main feature of their critique is that it *is* critical: it simply stands against (something). On a fundamental level, these performances are critical and are intended to be so, but there is not always an explicit target or object of that critique. They merely stand against a general something, which makes graffiti and street art a kind of “anti-performance”.

The clearest target of critique that graffiti and street artists articulate is seen in their “right to the city” discourse. This discourse questions who has access to a scarce urban space, the volume of commercial imagery in the city, and who can claim ownership through graffiti and street art performance. Graffiti and street art are often framed as anti-commercial expressions and appropriations of the city, something that materialized both in the participants' statements but also in

their performances: for example, acts of defacing that subvert or alter commercial messages.

Graffiti and street art also function according to a logic similar to that of commercial advertising. From a performative point of view, and also an aesthetic one, advertising is coming to coincide with graffiti and street art. Few participants voiced a critique of the use of commercial SNS platforms. This does not necessarily mean that users uncritically “buy into” these platforms, however. Indeed, the presence of illegal creative performances on these platforms may have counterhegemonic and interventionist potential.

Graffiti and street art manifest particular ideological tendencies and class dimensions. The culture is situated in relation to working-class culture in general and hip-hop in particular. Participants’ political beliefs and performances appear to lean towards the left. In light of their fundamental criticalness and basic characteristic of “being against,” these artistic performances can be considered to have anarchistic features of a Diogenian sort.

Graffiti and street art direct a spatial critique against the Stockholm city space, which is described as a dead, sterile, and controlled space that is contrasted to the ideal of freedom that characterizes graffiti and street art (see Freedom, p. 133). Graffiti and street art also intervene in the city’s ideal of cleanliness by embracing or being a form of “dirt,” both culturally and physically. When we consider graffiti and street art’s anarchic character, its dimension as “dirt,” and its ideal of freedom in relation to the urban space of Stockholm, we note a fundamental schism. In relation to this schism, participants describe graffiti and street art as serving to awaken a spatial and aesthetic potential in what they describe as a zombified city space and society.

I have also suggested that this city space which problematizes graffiti and street art as subversive interventions when considering their gendered dimension. The spatial struggle between graffiti and street art culture and the normative Stockholm city space could in that sense be described as a struggle primarily between different forms of masculinity.

Cosmopolitan Moments

This last empirical chapter will focus on the third research question—*Question 3*: Under which conditions do critical and aesthetic cosmopolitan potentials or deficits materialize in Stockholm graffiti and street art culture, and how are digital media entangled in such conditions? How can the empirical findings of this study be linked to a broader consideration of urban artistic interventions as performative cosmopolitanism?

By narrowing in on moments where cosmopolitan characteristics materialize, I will explore how different media (paint, photography, electronic, and so on) function as creators of spatiality where people are able to come together. I also explore the social structures and hierarchies that saturate these spaces.

Extending Space: Encountering Others

In this chapter I focus on the creating of common spaces. Building on stories from the artists regarding what being part of this culture means to them and how the culture extends across the world, I explore how shared imaginaries are created among a heterogeneous group of people and how this cultural cluster is molded into a space of “comingtogetherness” (Thor, 2015).

Several of the participants commented that graffiti and street art culture is a space that allows one to meet other people—people one probably would never meet were it not for a shared interest in graffiti or street art. In that sense, graffiti and street art become a channel for encounters with others who are both like and unlike the self.

According to Marcus (29), graffiti as an art form is accessible and appealing to different kinds of people who are “thrown together” by doing graffiti.

Anyone can do graffiti. I've been painting with people who have severe addictions, who, like, spend their days just jacking off, [] and then I've been painting with people who, like, work as lawyers and stuff. I got this friend, a girl, who works as a prosecutor who paints [illegal] graffiti [] She is very careful... And real estate agents, people who have their own businesses. Like, ordinary

people. People who work in retail. And you meet all kinds, from all over the social ladder who do graffiti. And you have that in common. (Marcus, 29)

As Marcus observes, making graffiti—performing the culture—is something that transcends or deemphasizes social status. In the same vein, Aron says:

But there are lots of exiting people. I've painted with a guy from Vårbygård who's done time, and after that he made a long journey to getting clean. And then he focused on his art, and he has been painting a lot. (Aron, 37)

For Aron, painting is not only something that brings people from different social backgrounds together; he understands creating graffiti as something almost therapeutic, that can help or function as a support for people in difficult situations.

As Marcus continued to articulate, national borders can be transcended for the benefit of performing graffiti culture:

And there are people from all kinds of different social backgrounds and it... graffiti is really something global. It exists all over the world, like, everywhere, today. (Marcus, 29)

“Coming together” might start with the creation of graffiti or street art, but it extends to other social situations. This becomes clear in a quote from Andreas (40):

But traveling, those who are nicest to meet, they're the ones who don't give a fuck about (painting in Stockholm) and want to do other stuff. Those who are not as autistic about talking graffiti and painting and who might think it's great to cook something at home, have some beer and walk around and do something else. Those are the ones I want to meet when I travel. (Andreas, 40)

For Andreas, it is not only about painting. He meets people through painting, but painting is just the starting point. There is clearly a social milieu that surrounds making graffiti or street art, which is as important or even more important than the art itself, according to Andreas.

In the context of encountering others, digital media also play an important role, in at least two respects. One, it becomes a disseminator of artwork that then is encountered by people who otherwise would never have encountered it. Digital media allows transcendence, or rather *extension*, of place. Second, it helps people come into contact with each other. Prior to digital media, artists needed to have

a phone number in order to come in contact with other painters. Andreas (40) recalls:

It's a very gated, secret world where you call someone and, like, "I'm going there, do you have a number for someone? A contact?" And then there are some who know tons of people. Like, before, you called *UP*¹⁴, the magazine, because they knew, like, everyone all over the world. So you called them. Like, "Hey, I'm going to Paris, do you have so-and-so's number?"

Digital media like Instagram change this situation. Anyone with an Instagram account can send messages to another user. This lowers the threshold for getting in touch with other artists, which potentially makes the culture more accessible. In my own experience, it was easier to contact people if I had a gatekeeper who opened the door for me. However, I did also find participants via Instagram and through their home pages, something that I would not have been able to do 25 years ago. As Simon (32) says, digital media have come to play a big role in the extension of place and the community.

And there is really this, like, international community, too, with the Internet, it's really happened. And Instagram. Like, everyone can follow everyone. (Simon, 32)

As Simon notes, "everyone can follow everyone." Digital media thus mean it is not only something for a chosen few but something that both visually and socially has become increasingly accessible to more people.

The participants speak of graffiti culture as a space that not only enables people to encounter others but also brings different people together in their common performance of the culture, which they articulate as a structure that is different in nature from surrounding social situations. Similar to its transcending other social situations, participants also articulated how the practice is something almost therapeutic for people in difficult social situations. Graffiti and street art culture were described as global, both in terms of visual expressions that are disseminated across the globe and also in terms of human mobility and the comingtogetherness of people. Several participants pointed to the many upsides to Instagram and other social networking platforms. They enable meetings, narrow the distance between people, and lower the threshold for entry into the culture.

¹⁴ Underground Productions

However, it should be noted that a commercialized medium is used for this purpose, a fact that few participants reflected on. Indeed, was a rather widespread silence regarding the use of digital platforms. If we again consider this in relation to SI and *recuperation* (see *Resisting Digital Graffiti and Street Art*, p. 125), paradoxical tendencies materialize in the mediatization of graffiti and street art. How does something that appears to be a pragmatic use of available means affect the practice itself? What happens with it when it becomes part of the mainstream through the use of mainstream media? Digital media make it more accessible to more people, but the practice might also find itself critically neutered. *Recuperation* is part of “the society of the spectacle” (Debord, 1987), “a world which insists that every moment of life must be mediated by the commodity form” (Plant, 1992, p. 10), a process which coincides with mediatization as a hegemonic meta-process. In such a society, commodification as a capitalist and bourgeois process becomes part of every aspect of life. This process, following Mars, becomes entwined with *alienation* (Plant, 1992, p. 11), which in turn implies a potential paradox in coming together through processes of commodification. Following the same line of thinking, SI has always considered resistance a possible strategy. Here the connections between SI and graffiti and street art become less clear. Resistance against the commodification of the urban space is very present, but resistance against the use of commercial SNS platforms exists yet is far less evident.

Exploring Space: Curiosity

Given the fact that graffiti and street art are usually illegal, the people doing it have to find spaces where they will not get caught or in other ways closely calculate how they can complete their performances without getting caught. This circumstance means that spatial exploration becomes part of the performance. Having to hide means having to find spaces where one does not have to hide, or inventing another form of “invisibility” in plain sight. Consequently, artists need to have spatial curiosity or inventiveness in order to do graffiti or street art. In my conversation with Marcus (29), I noted that it sounded a bit like graffiti had certain parallels to urban exploration. He replied,

Yeah, I think [urban exploration] goes hand-in-hand with graffiti. Graffiti is always found in the most peculiar places. Just thinking about the weird places I've been in...

In my conversation with Aron (37), he spoke about how he started painting and mentioned something similar,

Aron (37): You painted on electrical boxes and on the back of factories. And then you got curious and wanted to see other parts of the city. And then I just started painting. []

Tindra: When you say it is important, that it is a game, finding a house, do you feel it's important to be able to paint there, or is it more important to find different places?

A: They are equally important. They kind of overlap. I have friends in Stockholm who just find stuff. They are, like, full-on history detectives, like, "Here's a well. Let's go into it." And when they're there, they paint. But it feels like it's more about exploration.

Both Aron and Marcus comment on how in their cases, graffiti has brought them to unexpected places. Aron even named spatial curiosity as an avenue into graffiti for him. In his case, art indeed began "in curiosity" (Papastergiadis, 2012, p. 13). He wanted to see other parts of the city, and then he started painting there. Aron finds the exploration to be equally important as the painting. The painting is, in that sense, a both/and experience of painting and spatial exploring. Oscar (23) said something similar when I asked him if he did graffiti in order to conquer something, such as a space:

No, I think I'm more of an observer. I like being in that space, being able to give something to it. I've always been into urban exploring, too. And those things have always been side by side. To me it's been more like a voyage of discovery. Like an adventure. A bit like.... Well, more like being a kid. Everyone knows what it was like being a kid and going to some farm or something, and everything is all new and you want to explore every corner of it and everything is so exciting. It's really an adventure! () But when I grew up I kind of lost that, that sense of adventure. But you can easily find it again by going to these spaces. (Oscar, 23)

For Oscar, graffiti thus also becomes a spatial adventure, as well as making a connection between it and play. The dimension of playfulness (see *Playfulness*, p. 130), as Oscar frames it, is connected to the spatial dimension. It is the curious spaces that bring out and evoke the desire to play and explore. This aligns with what Aron said, when he pointed to how exploration and spatial curiosity led him to unexpected places and how that is what led him to start painting.

In my conversation with Lucas (24), he noted how this spatial curiosity also brings people together. We talked about how he sometimes would run into people and encounter others in strange places.

It could be people with the same interest as you, who just want to have a look around. Because you're curious. (Lucas, 24)

In this formulation, curiosity is another thing that brings people together. The curiosity about painting or about spaces to paint brings the artist to places he or she would not have gone if it weren't for that interest, and in those spaces the artist can meet others who share a similar curiosity. This not only applies to people who paint but can also extend to other people moving through the city.

When I was out the first couple of years, people asked me all the time, some older gentleman or some elderly lady who got curious: "Why are you taking pictures of this sign? What's so exciting about that?" So I told them why and what it is I take pictures of, and usually I got really positive responses. Since they hadn't seen it. [] So then people started looking for it themselves, too. Since they hadn't discovered that before. That was nice. (Peder, 41)

In this way, curiosity enables meetings and unexpected encounters. This is the same kind of "curiosity about many places, peoples and cultures" that Szerszynski & Urry (2002, p. 470) describe as the prerequisite for a cosmopolitan sensibility to emerge. It also ties into Appiah's claim that "the cosmopolitan curiosity about other peoples does not have to begin by seeking in each encounter those traits that all humans share. In some encounters, what we start with is some small thing we two singular people share" (2010, p. 97). It is interesting how, in this case, such a curiosity seems to be exactly what happens. These people might have absolutely nothing in common, but there is something, an interest, which leads them to a shared space where they encounter each other. It might be something small and seemingly insignificant, but in this small moment there is still something there. The *curious space* brings them together.

Curiosity is not only connected to spatial exploration but also to explorations of craft. Several participants described how they are driven in their art by a certain kind of curiosity. In a conversation I had with someone I encountered in the field, he described how he always tried to reinvent himself and what he does, even though he was a graffiti writer and felt inhibited by the restrictive graffiti aesthetic to some extent. Hanna similarly commented, when asked why she started doing what she does, "I'm fucking curious and restless." In these comments, curiosity thus materializes as both connected to aesthetics and the craft, but also as a kind of fundamental personality trait.

Curiosity also drives graffiti and street art culture in terms of created myths. Part of the interest and the atmosphere surrounding the culture are the myths and the mystery connected to it. There are people going around at night painting all over the city, but who are they? The anonymity of the artists inherently imbues the culture with a sense of myth and mystery. This is anonymous mythos and mystery is even true among artists themselves. As several participants

said, members of the culture generally know who most artists are, but then all of a sudden one may see something new and wonder, “Who did that?” Then the hunt begins.

Adam (40): There are two guys here in Stockholm who write Honey & Gimp. [] They’re twins, and are always together. So you know that they’ve been in all these places together, all the time. But it’s also, like, they’ve been in so many unexpected places. If you’re biking out in Kungsängen you can pass some sandbox or something, and it’ll be, like, Honey & Gimp. [] I don’t know anything about these twins: who they are, what they look like, or how old they are. But still, they build a myth. You get, like, real curious about how they’ve done all this so fast. []

T: Do you want to know who they are?

A: Yes and no. It would probably be like what usually happens, that you would get disappointed (laughs) [] Now you can just enjoy it, like, “What? They’ve been here in Västerhaninge out in this forest! What were they doing here?” So that’s nice.

T: You know something about them, though. You know they’re twins.

A: Yeah, but that, I don’t know, maybe that’s not even true. Maybe it’s just a rumor. It’s like when you ask, “Do you know who Honey & Gimp are?” Like in the spray can stores, like Highlights. “Yeah, I think so. They’re twins” And then you embrace that. Because it sounded nice, that they’re twins.

Artists want to find out who other artists are, and when they see something done by an unknown artist they ask around to find out their identity. But as Adam notes here, there is a certain ambivalence to this hunt. Once the identity is known, the mystery is gone. This ambivalence is particularly evident in the case of Banksy. I have previously argued even if Banksy’s identity were revealed, people would still want to cling to the mystery (Thor, 2015). Indeed, when Banksy’s identity was revealed, the information was never confirmed. When we look at the Banksy case, it appears that people do not truly want to know. They want the mystery to endure and want to be able to keep trying to figure out who he is. This is the same thing that Adam describes, even though he is part of the culture himself and therefore is in a better position to find out who artists actually are. He nevertheless describes the myth and mystery as having some kind of allure. He knows perfectly well that Honey & Gimp might not be twins, but it makes for a nice story, and so part of him wants to maintain the fantasy, the mystery, because it makes everything so much more *curious*.

Culture scientist Thomas Ziehe has also cited curiosity as a precondition for openness towards difference, a curiosity encouraged by aesthetic practice and popular culture (Ziehe, 2011). Ziehe finds something specific in aesthetic practice and popular culture that sparks such curiosity. This is similar to Papastergiadis’s claim that “art begins in curiosity.” According to these arguments, there

is a particularly strong relation between aesthetic practice and curiosity, a claim that the experiences and statement of the participants—in describing how curiosity brought them to the art form or how art makes them even more curious—endorses.

Sharing Space: Hospitality

Another dimension framed as part of graffiti and street art cultures is that of generosity or hospitality. These cultures could be regarded as gated and secretive, something I have touched on already. However, several participants described the culture as very hospitable, at least from the inside. Again, we should note that there is a discrepancy here between graffiti and street art. Graffiti is, in many ways, more gated, as it is more secretive, masculinized, and often uses a formal language that is more highly coded than street art. Thus, the dimension of hospitality towards outsiders or the surrounding society is different for each practice. People inside these cultures expressed a sense of belonging to part of a group with whom they shared an interest. They also noted that after proving oneself as a writer or artist, it no longer mattered who one was in order to be welcomed. Several participants touched on this from different points of view. For example, Aron comments:

It's a forgiving culture. A lot of people with social problems got accepted, as long as you paint. In a way I guess you could say that all the scum gets together and does graffiti, for better or worse, but it's also a lot of very nice people. (Aron, 37)

Aron thus sees graffiti and street art as a kind of melting pot for people from different backgrounds. Furthermore, he describes it as a space that is able to accommodate people who in other respects are social outcasts. Graffiti and street art culture accommodate and are hospitable towards difference, and within the community such difference is made less visible or tangible. The important thing is just the fact that someone paints. Their socioeconomic or geographical background is less important. This is similar to what cultural scientist Ove Sernhede (2002) notes, in a book with the illustrative title *Alienation is My Nation*. Sernehede points to how young men who experience a sense of social alienation find a sense of belonging in transnational rap and hip-hop culture. Their religion, ethnicity, or social background becomes secondary to their shared interest in hip-hop and the international ties they form across national boundaries with people from around the world with similar experiences. In a similar manner, people with an interest in graffiti or street art who are alienated

in terms their aesthetic preferences or social background are able to find other kinds of belonging with others with whom they share a creative interest.

One thing that came up in several conversations was the idea that membership in the graffiti artist community meant you could sleep on any other graffiti writer's couch, anywhere in the world.

And there is this kind of undefined rule that states that if you are a graffiti painter and go somewhere, you can crash at another writer's, like, on their couch. [] So, like, when I went to Australia, I just checked with some people and was like, "I'm coming and, like, can I stay with anyone?" (Simon, 32)

I wondered whether there could be a gendered dimension to this: did women feel that such a welcome would be more difficult for them? However, they mentioned having the same experiences as the men.

Tindra: Would you do that?

Hanna (33): Yeah, for sure. I've done that. You just check with someone.

The similarity to Benhabib's discussion of hospitality is notable. Benhabib describes hospitality as a basic human right that "belongs to all human beings insofar as we view them as potential participants in a world republic" (2006, p. 22). Given the particular status of graffiti and street art culture, one could claim, following these stories, that hospitality belongs to all graffiti/street artists insofar as they are viewed as potential participants in the cultural collective. From one point of view this might be considered exclusionary. However, I believe that the emphasis here lies on including those with whom you share this interest rather than excluding those outside the cultural cluster, recalling how Aron said that graffiti gathers together a lot of differences. If graffiti artists let others into their homes, there is a good chance that the guest will be different from them in some ways. The important thing, however, is that these differences do not really matter.

During the fall and winter people hang out a lot. You make a big pot of soup, talk some crap, and drink a beer. It's a very social activity in that way. That's always been the fun part of graffiti. That you've always thought it's nice to hang out, sketch, eat cinnamon rolls, and drink milk. It's a lot like that. Kind of like a sewing circle. It's a lot like that for guys. The same kind of coziness. You hang out, and a lot of people are interested in food and music. But the bottom line is that you like to draw. (Andreas, 40)

Digital media also play a role here, both in terms of networking between people who do graffiti or street art, but also in creating connections into a fan culture that reduces the distance from others outside the artist community.

It's insane. I get emails every day from...on Instagram, from girls who just, like, send pictures of themselves, sometimes without almost anything on, who are just like, "Hey, how are you doing? Would you like to come visit me in New York sometime?" or like, "I live in Karlstad." Like, it's insane. [] Especially from Värmland. It's like Karlstad. I don't know what's going on there in Karlstad. Maybe I should go check it out (laughs) (Marcus, 29)

Although none of the people I met said anything about meeting people outside the artist community, it can be noted that a certain sense of intimacy seems to be established through SNS platforms, which draws fans to contact writers or artists to invite them into their home. Also, these artists are ordinary people we are talking about, not George Clooney or someone else with a lot of media exposure who fans might develop a sense of intimacy to duet to frequent exposure or something similar. Instead, this sense of intimacy between fans and artists appears to be established in relation to the artwork, which is posted in a way that is usually disconnected from the individual artist. In Marcus's case, it should be noted that he does not post pictures of himself. Instead, fans appear to want to be close to what he does and to his work.

As noted earlier (see *It Might Well Work Out: Solidarity and Hospitality*, p. 56), hospitality is not a matter of unconditional access. Hospitality is not unconditional in these cases, and indeed it materializes in specific spatiotemporal situations. As Andreas said, it involves a lot of hanging out, but "the bottom line is that you like to draw." Clearly the culture is thus hospitable towards those who share this interest. But as Andreas also notes, "it's a lot like that for guys," which points to a countering dimension of inhospitality.

Tindra: How is it inhospitable?

Marie (34): Partially it's a mirroring of the society at large. As a girl you have to prove yourself a thousand times more in order to get to be part of the gang. Like, it's never enough. You have to prove so much all the time that you're worthy of your sport, while a guy can just join and do whatever crap he wants to do. That's my experience. [] And you're not always invited or get to be part of that world. [] A friend of mine, like, both of them are street artists, but she is always "his girlfriend." She's never called...like, everything goes through him.

As discussed earlier, graffiti and street art are in several respects masculinized cultures. Although several male participants stated that they do want to see

more women and find it sad that there are so few of them, the female participants nevertheless comment that it is more difficult for them and that they are not always welcome. Women have to prove themselves “a thousand times more,” while “a guy can just join,” as Marie said. Being a guy thus is thus equivalent to being human, as Benhabib’s puts it. Papastergiadis notes there is no expectation of reciprocity in the “true,” Homeric sense of hospitality. But here it is completely the reverse. Women have to prove themselves a thousand times more while men can just join. Women are not invited in thanks to their fundamental value as people or as artists—because they are not considered normative people or artists. They are, first and foremost, women, and if the prerequisite for being invited in is to be a graffiti writer or street artist, they have to earn that title. This does not sound entirely unreasonable. There are many institutions where one has to prove one’s qualifications in order to gain access. But there is a difference here. The men, in Marie’s description, appear to only have to do what other men are doing. They qualify through the act of doing, and the performance determines their status. If a man starts tagging, he is a tagger. If a woman tags, she is a female tagger. The difference becomes even clearer and more puzzling when translating *artist/writer* into, for example, *human*, which is an interesting word both for thinking about hospitality and for thinking about the cosmopolitan, and for thinking about graffiti and street art as articulators of humanistic values (see *Ideologies*, p. 158). What does it take in order to become qualified as a human: being born, or being born with a certain color of skin, in a certain part of the world? Is it enough to just perform the act of being born, which one could argue is a performance where humans are created, or does one have to do something more than that in order to be called human? Likewise, is it enough to tag an electric box in order to be a writer, or does one have to do something else in order to gain that epithet? These are rhetorical questions. My argument is that *for some* it suffices to be born in order to become human, with all the rights that adhere, or should adhere, to that. For others, it is not. For some it is enough to tag an electric box in order to become a tagger, while for others it is not. Rohingya people have to appeal to those in power to be given the status of human beings since they are not treated as such by default. I am not trying to say that female graffiti writers or street artists experience the same kind of persecutions as Rohingya people. I am simply noting that there are both different degrees of hell, and all people are not treated equally. This has consequences for the idea of hospitality in other contexts.

There are cosmopolitan moments in graffiti and street art culture, particularly of the performative and subversive Diogenian kind. As well, these cultures (and possibly other creative cultures) nurture a view of the world and of humanity that can be considered cosmopolitan. As I have pointed to in the previous two sections, graffiti and street art materialize encounters of otherness and spatial

curiosity. Both of these dimensions are important and characteristic of the cosmopolitan condition. When it comes to hospitality, however, the association is problematic. “Hospitality towards strangers is central to a cosmopolitan ethics of openness,” write Høy-Petersen et al. (2016), while Papstergiasis comments, “Without hospitality, there is no hint of cosmopolitanism” (2007, p. 149). What happens, however when this hospitality is conditional?

The Derridian discussion of hospitality entails a presumption of ownership: one must be in possession of some space in order invite another into it and be hospitable towards that other person. If we consider graffiti and street art as masculinized cultures, men are in possession of the cultural space and have ownership over it. This puts men in a position to say, “We would like to have more women,” because they are in the position of *being able to invite*—to be hospitable.

This becomes clear when Marie describes the friend who is always determined by her (male) partner, always described as “his girlfriend” and where “everything goes through him.” The boyfriend gives her access, and she gets in through him, possibly not because her partner wants to be, or even acts like her agent or guardian, but because the surrounding community classifies the male partner as a street artist and her as his girlfriend. If a man is standing next to a woman, one invites the man, who then may or may not invite the woman in. This is not, we must note, a matter of owning *people* but a matter of owning *space*. Furthermore, it is not an actual person owning that space but the coded will of the collective. The collective is coded as male, and therefore bodies coded in accordance with that occupy a privileged position that could be described as ownership over that space.

Can one be hospitable without ownership? Considering Benhabib, the condition is set as a minimum: it is a human right and therefore something that belongs to human beings. As I have paraphrased this statement, graffiti and street art culture are hospitable to those who are graffiti artists and street artists. As I have shown, however, this seemingly basic requirement is neither so basic nor simple. Graffiti and street art culture are largely hospitable: it is a melting pot for people who come from different religious, national, and socioeconomic backgrounds. But when it comes to gender, the threshold is higher. I do not rule out the possibility that there is a similar threshold along the dimensions as well. If we consider the ideological discussion (p. 158) for example, it could be argued that Nazis would experience a similar bar to entry should they wish to become part of the culture. However, as Marie said, “a guy can just join and do whatever crap he wants to do.” It is possible that is true. I have not encountered stories from men who have experienced any sense of exclusion. To the contrary: men’s stories are filled with a sense of belonging, including for people who felt they had nowhere else to belong. This leads me to suggest that the

male-coded collective specifically puts women in a position where they do not experience the same sense of belonging and hospitality.

Blurring Borders: Mobility

The previous sections have touched on the theme of mobility from different points of view, such as artists' mobility between different social and institutional spheres and visual mobility through digital media. In this section I will unpack these dimension a bit more closely.

The first dimension of mobility is human mobility. Several participants expressed a desire to travel, both in terms of “just” seeing other places and in terms of going places to paint.

I own extremely little stuff. I think it's more important to travel somewhere every other month and do whatever I want. Or go away on some longer trip once in a while. (Andreas, 40)

For Andreas, traveling is not only about painting but also being in and experiencing the social context. In our conversation he expressed a more general desire to travel and experience other places. Although painting might function as a kind of core activity, the sociality was more important for him. For many others, travel was more exclusively about painting.

I rarely drink alcohol. I'd rather spend my money on paint. I don't travel so I can waste three weeks drinking. Graffiti is mainly what makes me travel, because I want to experience the culture in other places. In some countries, graffiti is more accepted and bigger than in Sweden. So it's a totally different feeling. Like in Germany... Before I couldn't see the point in traveling. I bought stuff instead. Now I travel because of graffiti, just because you get invited to stuff and get new contacts. (Mark, 26)

Although Andreas and Mark have different objectives when it comes to traveling, both of them also say that traveling is more important than owning possessions. They want to spend their money on paint or travel. This is a matter of priorities, primarily, but in the conversations—especially with Andreas—not owning a lot of stuff seems to give them a sense of freedom to move, which taps into the ideal of *freedom* (see p. 133). These articulations are also therefore connected to the critique of ownership (see p. 139). In addition, as Mark articulates, mobility is driven by a sense of *curiosity* (see p. 172).

Other participants are somewhere in between Andreas and Mark's objectives and describe travel as something where aesthetic performance and networking are equally important: it is both a question of painting and of meeting others.

Travel is something I try to do as much as I can. I've been around quite a lot. Every time you get to know new people. It becomes this great network of painters, so that's awesome. (Victor, 26)

Availability and ease are also mentioned in connection with traveling and mobility. As noted earlier, a writer can always crash on another writer's couch (see *Sharing Space: Hospitality*, p. 176). In order to do so, one has to be able to contact other writers or artists. Here, digital media are cited as playing a big role. According to Tage, for example, traveling has become easier as "making friends" and building networks across the world has become easier.

Now it's so easy to travel too, now that people can make friends all over the place. It becomes so much more and so much bigger. (Tage, 43)

Anton expresses a similar point:

Anton (16): Yeah, like, the first contacts I got were in Sweden of course, but via Instagram I got into contact with people all over the world.

T: Would you say it's an international thing?

A: Yeah because of the Internet it is.

As noted earlier, graffiti and street art culture has been international since the beginning of hip-hop graffiti culture, but prior to digital media, such as SNS platforms, international connections required additional steps in the process of contacting with people. As Andreas said, you called *UP* and asked for contact information (see p. 171). With Instagram, people are less depended on others to put them into contact with others and can make connections by themselves. The age difference between Tage and Anton can also be noted. Tage says it has become easier, but for Anton, who is 16, the Internet is the obvious reason for the international character of graffiti and street art. Given the experiences of the people who have been around longer, it is reasonable to assume that these cultures were international even before digital media and SNS. People networked in the 1980s, but it was less immediate. What has changed since then is the momentum. The borders that separate people have, in that sense, become less tangible.

It is also possible that, more than the amount, networking itself has changed. It is possible that the vast dissemination of graffiti and street art through digital

media inspires more people to start doing graffiti or street art themselves. Although none of the participants mentioned Instagram (for example) as a reason they started to do graffiti or street art, it is still something that may inspire some artists. In it Per found “pure inspiration” for his art, and he notes that he can carry his passion around with him in his pocket (see p. 124). In that sense the borders between the material urban space and the digital mediation of it have also become less evident, giving a material dimension to platforms like Instagram and a digital dimension to the material artwork. Instagram becomes a part in the process of place-making that is, as Lagerkvist notes, “both material and immaterial” and “national and transnational” (2014, p. 358).

Today everything is so open, with the Internet. You don't have to travel across the globe to see something. Now you can sit in your room and pick up music and paintings from all over the world. You couldn't do that before, then it was limited... If you travel to certain countries they have their own specific tone and style. Now everything is available online and people can pick and choose from everywhere. (Steffe, 48)

As both Per and Steffe articulate, SNS and digital technology bring the world closer. You can move without moving, you can explore without going somewhere, and you can meet people without being in the same room. This is clearly not specific for graffiti or street art culture, nor is it revolutionary in any way, but it is nevertheless worth noting how something as connected to urban space as graffiti and street art blur the borders of the material and immaterial in urban settings. One can ask, what does this mean for graffiti and street art? If a medium intrinsically associated with certain places, such as material urban art, starts moving into other places, such as Instagram, do the borders of graffiti and street art become blurred in the same way that media technologies blur the material and the immaterial? In a way, yes, they do become blurred. The mobility of graffiti and street art in between the digital and the digitalized, within its mediatized condition, appears in the resistance against that condition that participants articulated (see *Resisting Digital Graffiti and Street Art*, p. 125). This resistance stems from a sense that graffiti and street art are moving in a potentially unwanted direction. Accordingly, the borders of graffiti and street art, both conceptually and spatially, become blurred as the mobility of these media increases. This goes in both directions. The digital can become material in the sense that performances are altered because of the digital, as I note in the section *Digital Graffiti and Street Art* (p. 121). But the digital can also become visible or move into the urban milieu in a very material way (see Figure 24, p. 184).



Figure 24: Analog Facebook Status, Hötorget. Photo: Tindra Thor

Figure 24 shows an analog Facebook status I found in a tunnel in Stockholm. There were several taped to the wall, and a few lying on the ground that had probably been torn down. Another example of digital media linking into urban space is the use of QR codes on stickers (see Figure 25, p. 185). When the code is scanned the viewer is taken to a YouTube clip that shows a 30 second sequence of different videos. Banksy also used this technique in a stencil that appearing across from the French Embassy in London in January 2017. The stencil was a reimagining of the iconic title image from the musical *Les Misérables*. The original image pictures one of the main characters, Cosette, in a mist or fog. In Banksy's reimagining, the fog looked like it came up from a teargas cannister. There are at least two things that to note in the use of this technique. For one, it blurs the borders between urban space and virtual space (YouTube) and links them together, making the urban setting digital and giving YouTube a material presence in the urban.

Furthermore, these works blur the emplacement of the work. The *place-as-event* is a collapsing of *and in* both digital and material places. In the case of the Banksy stencil, it is unclear whether its emplacement is YouTube, Calais, or London. Place is multiple and taps into different spaces, such as migrant spaces, street art spaces, French politics, human rights and so on. The mediation of the image and the use of a multimedia format create a polymediated performance that can be viewed as a mediatization of media: what I suggest might be called a *hyper-mediatization*. The different media and media technologies involved in the Banksy performance—stenciling, video, street art, smartphones, spray cans, and cut-outs—are all created to meet each other, thereby also mutually shaping one another. And in the case of QR stickers (Figure 25), the medium is itself interdependent with another medium in order to be fully experienced. In this *hyper-mediatized* environment, different media practices are not only shaped by each other; the media themselves and the media technologies are altered, infiltrated, inspired by, and sometimes even entirely interdependent with each other.



Figure 25: QR Code Sticker. Stockholm, September 2014. Photo: Tindra Thor

Graffiti and street art do, however, also move visually into other places without the use of digital media. There is kind of curious desire for movement into other places that makes people go other places and experience other spaces to do graffiti and street art, or to experience the spatiality of these media in other locations. Several participants mentioned how they would bring things when they go somewhere.

If you travel, you usually bring something. Or buy paint there. You bring your hobby wherever you go. (Peder, 41)

In a similar vein, Gabriel says,

If I die someday, which I will, I want to be able to look back and say that I painted in most of the countries that I visited. That would be a great feeling. (Gabriel, 33)

In Gabriel's case it is also interesting how the objective of getting fame is extended to the entire world basically. Getting fame is, in his view, not only limited to one's own or national urban space; the potential places for achieving fame extend beyond the locality where he lives. In relation to the quote in the introduction about "sticking a flag" in places to mark them as yours, the objective might be merely egotistical, just a matter of making your mark in as many places as possible. The concept of "the right to the city" also becomes slightly blurred here, because which city does one have the right to? The critique discussed in the section Graffiti and Street Art as Critique of Neoliberalism (p. 139) is mainly directed towards companies or conglomerates that buy their access to cities. Following that critique, it should be taken into consideration that Gabriel, wants to paint all over the world, including cities that are not *bis*. There are at least three dimensions to an interpretation of this situation. One is that money appears to be the issue. "The right to the city" is something one cannot buy, but something that is or should be given to people who move about in a city. Being or existing in a city, but not specifically living in a city, would then be a prerequisite for claiming this right. However, when we consider the international and mobile nature of graffiti and street art, "the city" extends beyond the local city where one lives. It is as if the space of graffiti and street art creates a local place or a global city, a "global village" if you will, all over the world. That makes the "graffiti and street art city" a global place. A third dimension is that Gabriel simply takes the right to paint wherever he likes. It is a matter of making a mark, and the justification might be no more than that.

Considering this in relation to Schiller and Salazar's concept of *regimes of mobility* (see p. 53), I emphasize that there are clearly power structures embedded in these mobilities, as in sedentarism. The locality of Stockholm graffiti and street art is in no way free of the power structures of the surrounding society, nor is it free from power structures inherent in itself. When it comes to mobility within graffiti and street art, women are less mobile and more determined by the fact that they are women. On the other hand, women could also be considered more mobile. In my conversation with Hanna, she mentioned one of her friends who has been on TV frequently talking about her street art:

Hanna (33): What she does is illegal, but she still gets away with it. Why?

Tindra: Why do you think?

H: Yeah, that... Why... Shit, we talked about that. I don't know. It's super weird. And then I'm thinking like, ok, so is it because she doesn't do so much harm? But at the same time, what she does is illegal! And she posts on Instagram and did an interview on TV.

Hanna's friend is quite mobile, which I would like to reconnect to the discussion in the section 'The Gendered Urban Space' (p. 162) where Greger said people threw bottles at him when he tried to put up a piece of tile, while Marie can do what she does in broad daylight without anyone caring. Hanna articulates, and Marie experiences, mobility in this sense. Someone under the radar, who seemingly is not a threat, is not treated as a threat. This enables other choices and movements for such "harmless" people, such as women or children, for example. On the other hand, "harmless" persons are also deprived of their agency, which makes them less able to move into spheres of power. These situations therefore have to be analyzed as such: situations, since they are what Schiller and Salazar describe as "situations of unequal power" (2013, p. 188).

In this discussion on a cosmopolitan dimension such as mobility, I would like to reconnect to Schiller and Salazar's concept of "regimes of mobility." Mobility can be a choice for some, and a demand for others. In this empirical case, mobility is more possible for some and less possible for others, and differently possible depending on the situation at hand. Another reconnection to the aesthetic regime links together the idea of regimes of mobility and cosmopolitanism, leading us to think of the cosmopolitan condition as a *regime of cosmopolitanism*. In other words, cosmopolitanism, and the mobility of subjects and imaginaries connected to it, is a situationally contingent condition of power relations that needs to be analyzed while bearing the unequal distribution of power in mind. There is a regime at work within the cosmopolitan, although this does not necessarily make a cosmopolitan situation less cosmopolitan. The results indicate, rather, that different subjects are mobile in different situations, and that the situational context needs to be taken into account.

The participants identified strategies for making spatial imprints across the world using not physical human mobility or digital image mobility, but rather material image mobility. This is from my conversation with Adam (40):

T: Is that common? That you send stuff to others?

Adam: Yeah, exactly. It felt like, when was that... maybe like 97–98, when posters and stuff started to really become a thing, then it was really, like, that we sent stuff to each other. Like, sent something to someone in L.A. and someone in Paris....So there was this connection, like, you were in contact with people who did the same stuff as you. (see also Christensen & Thor, 2017)

As Adam also noted, it was not always that you pasted other people's work or asked them to paste yours; rather, there was a trade. Some of the work you put up, and others you did not. This quote also points to how this extended city materializes. Adam also noted that these exchanges were "personal" and commented that he stopped making them when he felt that they started to become less personal. There is some sense of intimacy and proximity in these exchanges, which might be different from looking at images from all over the world on Instagram. Adam said he himself was unsure whether people still sent things to each other, like stickers and posters, since he himself didn't do that anymore. According to Alexis (22), the practice is still ongoing. I myself have been given stickers by a participant in this study and by participants in other related studies (Christensen & Thor, 2017). None of the people who gave me stickers asked me to put them up, although I asked if they wanted me to. My sense was that they just wanted to share something with me, or—as a girl in London said—"Your kids might like them." I also asked Alexis about the objective behind sending and exchanging:

Tindra: But if you send a sticker to Rio, is that for your own sake?

Alexis (22): It's for me, but also for the whole scene. And it's really nice when you find them, mostly on the Internet. And sometimes I find friends, and then I'll send my stickers. It's nice to give something away. I like giving things away.

As Alexis articulates, there is something in it for himself, but equally important is the community. I believe this is rather representative of graffiti and street art. In many ways these are very individualistic practices, something many of the participants also comment on. At the same time, they are also very collective and oriented toward communities that create a sense of belonging and solidarity. These solidarities sometimes also extend the immediate physical community. Such solidarities are what I will turn to in the next section.

We on the Outside: Solidarity¹⁵

Several of the participants expressed a strong bond to other people involved in graffiti and street art in one way or another. Although many consider themselves “lone artists,” as Oscar (23) said (see p. 105), they still consider themselves as belonging to a community. The most obvious reason for this connection is because they share an interest. As Maja (27) said, “If you have an interest in something, that ties you together.” There is a duality in the culture here. Graffiti and street art (particularly graffiti) are articulated as an individual practice, as noted previously in *Renegotiating Graffiti* (p. 104), with much emphasis on the individual artist “getting up.” At the same time, people feel connected to each other, and value and become part of a community (Christensen & Thor, 2017, p. 603).

You want the same thing, whether you're good or not [...] You don't have to be so skilled, you can be super skilled, but you can still meet within it. (César, 53)

The duality of the individual versus the collective also extends to the painting process. Several participants talked about how they become absorbed in painting and shut out the outside world in that process. At the same time, many paint together with others.

It's like a mix. I have company, almost always. But not to stand there and chat all the time. More for when you get stuck...for pepping each other. Then I can just stand there and paint on my own and listen to music and disappear into my own world. (Layla, 32)

The community is, in that sense, important. Since graffiti and street art also involve artistic improvement through feedback, and the community plays a big role in that as well. Within that community ties of solidarity are cultivated, in a process also linked to the use of digital media (Christensen & Thor, 2017). Solidarity a value that is connected to both individual and collective cultural performance, and also connects to democratic values of availability that extend to everyone moving in the city. “[I]n the creation and sharing of the art [which] is linked to the fundamental notion that there are no pre-requisites for either production or consumption” (ibid., p. 603).

¹⁵ Parts of the points presented in this section have previously been published in Miyase Christensen & Tindra Thor (2017) “The reciprocal city: Performing solidarity – Mediating space through street art and graffiti”, *International Communication Gazette*, Vol. 79, Issue 6-7, pp. 584 - 612

Sharing art is only one dimension of solidarity, however. The democratic value of availability, which is connected to the idea of graffiti and street art as “free” and as “nonprofit” art forms, is another dimension. Creating graffiti and street art is an act of loyalty towards other urban dwellers to whom the artist provides “free art,” which no one should have to pay for. One such example is from London, where one artist came up with the idea of “Free Art Friday,” in which graffiti and street art artists leave artworks in the street for other people to pick up (*ibid.*, p. 602).

It is not just common interest that fosters connections and solidarities. Graffiti and street art are articulated as an act of loyalty to others with whom the artwork shares place. As noted in earlier discussions, including class (p. 147), dirt (p. 149), and ideology (p. 158), the graffiti and street art worlds tend to embrace or express solidarity with other phenomena and people who are in some way outsiders in society. The places that graffiti and street art become loyal to may thus be geographical, political, socioeconomic, or cultural.

The notion of solidarity extends beyond in-group respect for the work of fellow artists, and includes a much broader respect for, and celebration of, cultural difference, as well as a shared rejection of the politics of hate, discrimination, and exclusion (Christensen & Thor, 2017, p. 605).

In Hannerz’s discussion on cultural cosmopolitanism, he asks “whether a strong involvement in one more or less divergent cultural orientation could possibly lead to greater tolerance, curiosity or appreciation vis-à-vis cultural diversity more generally” (2005, p. 208). My findings appear to support that claim.

Steffe alludes to solidarity and connection to the surrounding world when he says,

I want to spread joy and color and happiness to people, definitely; that’s one side. Then there is the destructive, that you paint a lot of dark images. It’s like I said, people have to process these things and express themselves....Children in times of war, or maybe you used to be the black sheep or something, and you paint that....And that has to be allowed to exist too...It’s a lot like that when you get old and gray, you get more aware of injustices and how society works. You see through things, you call them out...I think a lot of these things give you a drive to paint. (Steffe, 48)

Tage (43) points to a similar sense of solidarity when he describes how painting graffiti puts you in contact with other parts of society and the “darker” sides of urban life, since these are the spaces you move in or through in order to be able

to do graffiti or street art in Stockholm. As he notes, it is not only writers and artists who move in these spaces.

You get to see a lot of the downsides of the city when you're out at night, if you get chased. Sometimes you see security guards and police who are really shitty towards people, and to us. And then something kind of awakens, what's really going on in the city. Usually you meet a lot of homeless people. Since we move in the same places, hidden places where they live, where we pass through to paint. So you see everything. People who act like shit in general. And that shapes everything, like how you view society. Usually it's negative. I get kind of depressed sometimes when I think about how society works. That's kind of sad, but at the same time it's nice that you understand what's going on. That I don't think everything is all peachy if it isn't. (Tage, 43)

Tage thus expresses a kind of *spatial solidarity* with other people who move in or dwell in these darker spaces of the city. Thörn (2005) writes, “[T]he shadow marks the sleeping place of a homeless man” (ibid., p. 175). What is hidden and kept invisible is something that is equally home to some, even though that place is both visible and not, both present and absent. These solidarities are tied to these shared spaces of the geographical outside, the spaces or the shadows, such as places cut off from illuminated public spaces, but also places of the socioeconomic, political, and cultural outsider.

Summing Up

In this chapter I have discussed the critical and aesthetic cosmopolitan potentials or deficits that abide in this graffiti and street art culture and under which conditions they materialize. In particular I focus on moments where cosmopolitan themes materialize in graffiti and street art culture, as articulated by the participants. There are several moments that emerge in the material that can be described in terms of cosmopolitanism. I identify primarily five cosmopolitan dimensions that materialize in graffiti and street art culture: encountering others, curiosity, hospitality, mobility, and solidarity.

When it comes to encountering others, graffiti and street art appear to function as a “melting pot” for people coming from different backgrounds and social positions, and these positions become secondary to the act of painting. Graffiti and street art are envisaged as a milieu that enables socioeconomic transcendence. In terms of encounters, digital media plays a role by both disseminating artworks and by extending places. There is a potential tension here, though, between subversive graffiti and street art and commercial SNS platforms.

Curiosity was discussed in terms of both spatial and creative curiosity, and further connected to playfulness (Playfulness, p. 130). Painting thus entails a both/and experience of painting and spatial exploration. Spatial curiosity was also connected to encountering others, since it tends to bring people to places they otherwise would not have gone. Curiosity accordingly serves to enable meetings and unexpected encounters. It was also noted that curiosity drives graffiti and street art culture in terms of created myths.

I have also discussed graffiti and street art as milieus that potentially transcend difference through hospitality, i.e. hospitableness towards difference. At the same time, this hospitality might be conditional, since men appear to be in a position where they are *able to invite*—to be hospitable—while women have to prove themselves “a thousand times more” and earn an invitation to have a place.

The mobility dimension was noted in relation to human, visual and cultural mobility. Mobility was also discussed as connected to both the ideal of freedom (see p. 133) and the aspect of curiosity (see p. 172). Digital media and SNS platforms play a big role here and for the mediatized condition of graffiti and street art. The conceptual and physical borders of graffiti and street art are becoming blurred by the increasing mobility that digital media enables. Here I also introduced the idea of *hyper mediatization* as a way to describe how media practices not only affect each other and become normalized in everyday life, but also how the media and their respective technologies become infiltrated and inspired and thereby also altered by and/or interdependent of each other. Spatial mobility was also discussed in terms of gender and re-connected to the discussion in the section The Gendered Urban Space (p. 162) where the differences between a male and a female articulated experience of creating graffiti and street art in the city was discussed. Here it was noted that the woman experienced a higher degree of mobility, which may be explained by the construction of women as less threatening.

These different mobilities can be connected to Schiller and Salazar’s concept of regimes of mobility, given the apparent power structures embedded in both mobilities and sedentarism. I suggest an elaboration of the concept in terms of cosmopolitanism and introduce the idea of *regimes of cosmopolitanism*, that is, how cosmopolitan situations are entangled with power structures and hierarchies, something that must be accounted for.

Graffiti and street art was also discussed in terms of senses of belonging and solidarity. There appears to be a duality within graffiti and street art, which are articulated as individual practices that at the same time are avenues for people to feel connected to each other. The participants value the graffiti/street art communities and many express a sense of solidarity with it. Solidarity can also

be connected to the democratic value of availability, which in turn connects to the idea of graffiti and street art as “free” and “non-profit” arts. Some participants expressed graffiti and street art as acts of loyalty towards other urban dwellers, to whom they provide “free art.”

Finally, I introduced the idea of *spatial solidarity*, which materializes as solidarities with spaces that artists share with other socioeconomic, political, and cultural outsiders.

Conclusions

Having addressed each of the research questions in their respective empirical chapter, the time has come to conclude this study and evaluate its findings. In the following I will go through the findings to the questions consecutively.

Articulations of Stockholm Graffiti- and Street Art Culture

The first question aimed to unpack the contemporary conditions of Stockholm graffiti and street art culture and asked:

Question 1: How is contemporary Stockholm graffiti and street art culture articulated and performed by its creators, and in what ways does the culture become entwined with media other than writing/painting?

The first chapter focused on unpacking the first research question and drew out several dimensions of contemporary Stockholm graffiti and street art culture. In line with previous research on the subject (see, for example, Castleman, 1982), the chapter briefly discussed values within the culture, such as getting up and gaining fame and how these performances are entangled with other factors, in particular, placement, skill, and quantity.

The question of definitions between graffiti and street art was also unpacked and situated in relation to a communicative dimension. The analysis showed that the phenomena are both similar and different. Taking off from the articulations of the participants, I suggest that although several participants treat street art as an umbrella concept, a pragmatic and aesthetic difference between the practices still materializes. Speaking of street art as an umbrella concept therefore becomes reasonable on a conceptual level, but on the pragmatic and aesthetic levels, it becomes apparent that different visual elements are associated with each concept.

These differences can also be considered in terms of their different *communicative functions*. Graffiti is articulated as having a more internal mode of address (writ-

ers speak to other writers), while street art has a more external mode of address and is (often) intended to speak to a wider audience.

This led me to suggest that street art can be defined as more understandable than graffiti, an understandability that becomes embedded in its communicative function. Graffiti, in particular, was discussed as a generally more gated medium and culture. There is a higher threshold into graffiti culture, and this also extends to its communicative function. In order to decode graffiti, one needs to be graffiti-literate. Street art, on the other hand, tends to speak in a more understandable and recognizable visual language, something that also extends to the use of “ready-mades” in *defacing* and *subvertising* (cf. *Defacing*, p. 152).

The subversive dimension of graffiti with respect to street art was also discussed in relation to their communicative functions. Feeding into question number two, several participants described graffiti and street art as political “anti” acts. An articulated difference materializes in this respect, which is connected both to the critical dimensions discussed in relation to research question two and in relation to the question of distinctions discussed with regard to the first research question. Furthermore, subversiveness can also be discussed in relation to the use of digital media. As shown in the chapter, there is resistance against digital media among the participants, but also an uncritical embracing of it. This does not have to be a problem, but I would like to highlight at least two sides to the mediatization of graffiti and street art. On the one hand, using digital media technologies and SNS platforms can be considered a way of creating a channel and outlet for ideas and imagery that would not otherwise be seen. In that sense, digital media practices in graffiti and street art can be considered a *tactic* for subverting public politics on graffiti and street art. On the other hand, the digitalization of graffiti and street art contains a possible paradox that concerns the potential commercialization of these art forms, a process that by extension can be considered a *strategy* for disarming their critical edge. As I have suggested elsewhere (Thor, 2017, 2018), there is a potential paradox in the intertwinement of commercial platforms and the subversiveness of graffiti and street art, since such processes tend to draw graffiti and street art away from its political emplacement in exteriority. In other words, the art becomes part of the system it seeks to contest. At the same time, being immersed in a system can also be thought of in terms of infiltration, an aspect that previously was discussed in relation to mud and what I called “muddy infiltration”. The mediatization of graffiti and street art is thus not one-sided. On the one hand it might lose some of its edge, but on the other hand ideas and imagery gain visibility, durability, and audiences to an extent that never would have been possible without digital media and SNS.

Mediatization was also discussed in relation to surveillance. As noted, in contemporary society, everyone with a smartphone is a potential informer. Public spaces have, in that way, become a kind of extended “Panopticon”. Taking that into account, writers and artists might internalize this supervisory role and become self-monitors of their behaviors and themselves.

It was also suggested that digital technologies might have an effect on the occurrence of graffiti and street art in urban spaces. This was discussed as connected to the mediatization of *fame* and *getting up* practices in particular. Prior to the possibilities of digital media dissemination, getting up and gaining fame were only possible by increasing the visibility of the name/alias through a combination of placement, skill, and quantity. The space for such performances was confined to the analog dimension of the city. Today, Instagram can provide dissemination and a perhaps even greater visibility in the digital city. This could potentially decrease the occurrence of graffiti and street art in the analog city, something there are already signs of happening. As noted, there is resistance against digital media, and some articulate a hierarchical divide between *fame* and *Internet fame*. Still, a potential paradox materializes between increased digital visibility and possibly fewer performances in analog city spaces.

Such a potential condition should be connected to the discussion of the possible recuperation of graffiti and street art. I have previously (Thor, 2017) pointed to how graffiti and street art can be regarded in terms of what Deleuze and Guattari (1986) refer to as a “war machine”; the war machine is understood as a force inherently exterior to the state. According to Deleuze and Guattari, a war machine can never entirely become part of the state. The state does, however have a twofold interest in the war machine: it needs it, in the form of an army, for example, and by appropriating a war machine the state takes away part of the war machine’s exteriority. In other words, appropriating a war machine makes it less of a threat. As discussed in the introduction, it is quite clear that there is a strong political resistance against illegal and sometimes even legal graffiti and street art. Should digital dissemination actually decrease graffiti and street art occurrences in analog city spaces, it would be relevant that almost all commercial SNS platforms appear to be functioning in a way that serves the interests of the state. In that sense, the mediatization of graffiti and street art could result in both the politically desired decrease of such performances in the city and the defusing of their power to critique.

In connection with their communicative functions, I also discussed whether street art could be regarded as less subversive than graffiti and therefore a less edgy political act. Street art is generally articulated as less threatening, which was pointed to by both the participants and also discussed in the introduction. Following that, street art can be considered to be less spatially subversive. In

this respect, graffiti appears as more “anti,” in spatial, aesthetic, and content terms. On the other hand, as the participants indicate, street art often presents explicit political messages. Street art thus mediates a critical and politically subversive message. The power of images should also be related to their communicative potential. Given the more accessible language and communicative potential of street art, this art form has the potential of communicating its messages more easily to a larger audience. In that sense, street art might carry more potential as a form of political communication. The degree of genre-specific literacy required to decode graffiti, on the other hand, appears to be higher.

Literacy was brought up as important factor connected to graffiti’s cultural doxa, where knowledge about graffiti culture and aesthetics is valued. The cultural emphasis on knowledge and the aesthetic connotations to early North American hip-hop graffiti led me to suggest that graffiti can be regarded as *historically situated performances reenacted through each performative event*. I also pointed to how the logics of accumulated capital are at as much work within the culture, and that it thereby can be considered an institution in itself, where both the creator and the created are taken into consideration in the process of assessing what counts as graffiti especially, and to a lesser extent street art. This rather rigid institutionalism can be considered more prominent in graffiti than in street art. Street artists describe their work as a more hospitable form that embodies a multiplicity of visual expressions. Through this articulation of street art we can see a materialization of the cosmopolitan value of *hospitality*, which was also discussed in social terms in the chapter *Sharing Space: Hospitality* (p. 176)

Hospitality does not, however, permeate all dimensions of graffiti and street art culture. There is a communicative barrier to entry for graffiti culture, and in social terms the barrier is set higher for women. The overall sense that women give in their descriptions of the cultural setting and their cultural and social experiences appears to be intimately bound up with a gendered coding of their bodies. Women in the study frequently described their experiences as watching themselves being looked at and also witnessing other women being looked at, something that appears to produce emotional ambivalence. Many of the male participants were reflective on these issues, and their experiences—unlike those of women—were not characterized by feelings of exclusion but rather the opposite. Several stated that they have been welcomed, respected, and gained powerful friendships through graffiti and street art. This is, accordingly, anything but black and white. There is an ongoing discussion within graffiti and street art culture about gender, as well as a notable degree of awareness about the issues. At the same time, women have a harder journey to achieving a status where they are judged primarily by their art and not their gender. The reason for this longer journey appears to be connected to skill, although I would argue that this is not entirely true. This connects back to Hermele’s point that what

counts as “good art” is an institution in itself that tends to disfavor women (Hermele, 2009). As I have shown, graffiti in particular has a strong degree of institutionalism, and when we consider the experiences of the women there is reason to believe that graffiti’s institutionalism in particular suffers from gender biases similar to those in the art institutions that Hermele studied.

In combination with the discussion on hospitality and cosmopolitanism, I would suggest that even in a setting that actively opposes certain borders, norms, and institutions, gender still appears to be an issue. This implies, in turn, that a cosmopolitan value such as hospitality can be both powered and obstructed by gender structures.

Articulations of Social Critique

The second question addressed the scope of social critique articulated by the participants and asked:

Question 2: How is social critique articulated through the performative repertoires of Stockholm graffiti and street art discourses? Are there similar or different positionalities within these graffiti and street art groups?

The chapter on social critique teased out different dimensions from the material. The first section addressed one of the most important traits of graffiti and street art culture: that they are *against*. It is not always clear what the performances oppose, and their opposition is not always directed at any clear target. On a fundamental level, the performances are merely against. This “anti-mission” is similar to the Cynics’ urban performances. The critique against both Diogenes and the Cynics was that they were mad and simply oppositional in a not-always-defined direction. As Delanty argues, the Cynic philosophy was in many ways a mere rejection of the conventional (Delanty, 2009, p. 21). However, Delanty also notes that the criticality such opposition lends to its acts should be recognized. In that sense, there is a criticality in the act of being against. Resistance does not need to be directed against something specific in order for it to constitute resistance. It can be—as it is with both graffiti street art and Diogenes—a matter of the *critical act of being against*.

Graffiti and street art do, however, also have targets for their critiques, as did Diogenes and the Cynics (see p. 63). These critiques to some extent also coincide. The most prominent target of articulated graffiti and street art critique is to a large extent based on the idea of “right to the city.” One such articulation is connected to the idea of the right to the city, a concern over who has access to scarce urban space (Harvey, 2008; Hutter, 2016). Here the critique questions the structure of the city and of access to it on a very basic level. These critical

stances take up the normative claim that the city should belong to the people who live in and move through it, and hold that this is not the case in contemporary society. Instead of belonging to the city's inhabitants, they argue, the city has been appropriated by companies and multinational conglomerates that buy their place in the city. Urban dwellers and corporations wind up in a conflict here, with the corporations envisaged as a kind of "thieves of space" who steal the city dwellers' rightful place. This critique does not necessarily target all commercial expressions in the city or envision a "Cidade Limpa." It mainly views the city as a space to which no one without economic capital can get access. It is, in that sense, not a matter of either/or but rather a call for balance between the two. At the same time, we should acknowledge that some participants are more dogmatic and do critique all commercial expression. This was also a touchpoint for the Cynics, who critiqued the use of money and advocated other kinds of "payments," such as barter or the exchange of symbolic artifacts such as bones.

I linked resistance against commercial expression to the practice of *defacing*: subverting or altering commercial expressions. These are performances rather strongly situated within graffiti and street art culture. Defacing also becomes a characteristic of street art in particular, through its relationship to pop art and to some extent Dada. In Dada the use of readymades was a central motif, as was the use of commercial imagery in pop art. There is thus an aesthetic connection between pop art and graffiti in particular, as well as to street art, that connects them through stylistic choices such as the use of comic book aesthetics (cf. Roy Lichtenstein). Performatively, they can also be related in terms of using and altering existing imagery, such as Andy Warhol's soup cans and the various artworks discussed by the participants. This provides another connection to Diogenes, who in his early years defaced currency. Diogenes' performance thus connects to graffiti and street art through the act of critiquing the economic system by way of defacing its representations.

The anti-commercialism of graffiti and street art is, however, not one-sided. From a performative point of view, and to some extent also an aesthetic one, I have discussed how graffiti/street art and advertising also coincide. Getting up is central to graffiti culture and bears many similarities to advertising, as both practices seek to "get a name up" and plant it in people's consciousness. As one participant noted, graffiti's aesthetics are also sometimes used as a visual language in commercial advertising.

The limited critique against the use of commercial SNS platforms can also be noted. While some participants did critique "Internet fame" specifically, and Instagram or "social media" in general, the critique is not widespread. For example, few participants did not themselves use SNS platforms or even know of

someone else who did so. There are those who provided a critique of the platforms, but it tended to be more concerned with social media's general effect on society or life. This does not mean that artists uncritically "buy into" these platforms, but the absence of critique, in light of the more widespread critique of commercialism, is noteworthy. Graffiti and street art's existence on SNS platforms can be interpreted in different ways. From one point of view, use of commercial media conflicts with a critique of commercialism. From another point of view, posting creative illegal performances on such platforms may have interventionist potential. From the latter point of view, anticommercial graffiti and street art posted on commercial platforms can be thought of as an act of defacing the platform itself.

Graffiti and street art share certain ideological tendencies and are situated in specific class positions. This positioning bears a relationship to their historical roots in hip-hop culture, which has a particularly strong historical connection to the working class and to the voicing of feelings of exclusion and alienation. Ideologically speaking, graffiti and street art culture can be characterized as holding a generally left-wing political agenda, and possibly an anarchist one. Its anarchistic traits are similar to the Diogenian refusal of borders, authorities, and norms. This can be connected to the ideal of freedom as voiced within graffiti and street art culture (see p. 133). The cultures embrace a general refusal of norms and a "punk" ethic that challenges norms, rules, and conventions and embraces a free society, freedom to expression, and the freedom to paint.

I also discussed graffiti and street art in terms of a *spatial critique* mainly directed against the Stockholm city space. Participants describe Stockholm as dead, sterile, and controlled. Again, this ultimately conflicts with the ideal of freedom. Participants also discussed graffiti and street art as embracing or being "dirt(y)" in both cultural and social senses. As Young notes, writers are referred to as "urinating animals," like dogs marking their territory (2005, p. 53) a discourse taken up or internalized by graffiti and street artists themselves. One such example is the artist NUG's video installation mentioned in the introduction. This work embraces or appropriates the critique against graffiti and street art and also appears to widen the schism between the city space of Stockholm and graffiti and street art. Graffiti and street art are critiqued as being dirt(y), but in turn the artists appropriate that epithet and in turn it into of a critique of the city for being too clean.

Following the critique of cleanliness also comes the articulated function of graffiti and street art in city spaces. I have previously noted how graffiti and street art are described as serving to awaken what the participants describe as a "zombified" city space and society, both spatially and aesthetically (Thor,

2017). Thus, graffiti and street artists describe themselves as the representing the living, while Stockholm is framed as a kind of undead space.

One participant's interesting suggestion led me to explore the city space as gendered. The claim resonates with feminist critiques against urban planning and raises an interesting point. Again connecting back to graffiti and street art as *threats*, this threat also appears to be gendered.

Bearing in mind the gendering of graffiti- and street art culture, and the gendering of Stockholm's urban space, I suggest that the spatial struggle between the two can be seen as a struggle between different forms of masculinity.

Cosmopolitan Moments

The third research question aimed to explore possibilities and impossibilities for cosmopolitanism in graffiti and street art culture and was formulated as follows:

Question 3: Under which conditions do critical and aesthetic cosmopolitan potentials or deficits materialize in Stockholm graffiti and street art culture, and how are digital media entangled in such conditions? How can the empirical findings of this study be linked to a broader consideration of urban artistic interventions as performative cosmopolitanism?

The third chapter dealt with this third and last research question and pointed to several cosmopolitan traits or moments that materialized in my material. Several of the previous sections touched on the critical cosmopolitan potential: for example in terms of defacing (p. 152), which was connected to the critical Cynic motto *parakratein to nomismata* (deface the currency), as well as in terms of being against (p. 137), consumer critique (p. 139), and ideologies (anarchistic traits) (p. 158). I discussed these critical elements in particular in the chapter *Articulating Social Critique* (p. 137).

Moving on from the critical values of early Greek thought, I discussed several further contemporary cosmopolitan themes in this third empirical chapter. In particular, these traits were featured in the themes I identified in the material regarding encountering others, curiosity, hospitality, mobility, and solidarity, several of which featured very prominently in the material. I therefore suggest that there is something in graffiti and street art culture that promotes these values and characteristics. I discuss these traits below, and also attempt to narrow in on the conditions for such cosmopolitan potential to emerge, as the material demonstrates.

Graffiti and street art can function as a melting pot. Several participants mention graffiti and street art as an important social forum and a community to which they express feelings of belonging. This duality was also identified in terms of the individual versus the community. Graffiti and street art are cultural settings where individual acts are given great importance and authority, while at the same time participants cherish a sense of belonging to a community and taking an active part in it.

Painting and creating are clearly the core activities of graffiti and street art. They allow people to transcend their other social position. Several participants commented that graffiti and street art led them to encounter a wide variety of people from different backgrounds. Graffiti and street art are described as spaces for unexpected encounters and as spaces with a potential for social transcendence. Their core activity creates commonality, but the social situation less so. Having said that, the gender dimension must be recognized. As with the second research question, in graffiti and street art women often find themselves stuck in a double bind, where their position is often determined by their gender.

These issues were also discussed in terms of hospitality. Graffiti and street art appears as rather hospitable towards differences, which in many ways are rendered invisible or less tangible when creating graffiti and street art. Women, however, expressed the sense that they needed to prove themselves “a thousand times more,” while “a guy can just join in.” The true meaning of hospitality, according to Papastergiadis—as something without the expectation of reciprocity—thus does not apply in the same way to women. Women here confront a challenge in being recognized as artists and thus as true members of the group. This puts men in a position where they can say, “we would like to have more women,” because they are in the position of being able to invite women—to be hospitable. For women, in contrast, hospitality is conditional. Graffiti and street art thus seem to simultaneously be very gated and conservative, while at the same time they demonstrate a significant degree of hospitality towards difference.

Although perhaps insular in nature, graffiti and street art collectives and communities foster strong senses of belonging and solidarity. I also emphasize that although several of the women expressed a sense of inequality, they also felt connected to the graffiti and street art communities in general, and especially but not only other women artists (see also Christensen & Thor, 2017). There are strong bonds within the graffiti and street art communities, which can be characterized by notable degrees of *both* individualism *and* collectivism. These bonds may be a consequence of the common sensation of being outsiders.” Considering the number of statements regarding the diversity of people doing graffiti and street art, and how the community functions as a melting pot, it is

more likely that the practice and performance of graffiti and street art itself that ties these people together. The results thus seem to indicate that by *creating* things together, people also come together.

Comingtogetherness thus seems to be a result of people who may have nothing more in common beyond a specific interest, creating something. This might, in turn and in line with Hannerz (2005, p. 208), indicate that creative practices have a particular potential for creating shared spaces of comingtogetherness, processes that appear to be simplified by but not entirely independent of digital media. As I note in this chapter (see, for example, Andreas, p. 171), networking is not new within the culture, but rather is something that was handled by phone and through magazines prior to the advent of digital media. Digital media does, however, lower the threshold, which increases comingtogetherness in terms of both momentum and degree.

I have discussed the mobility dimension in terms of both human and image mobility. Mobility connects to graffiti and street art, at least partially, via the ideal of freedom (see p. 133). Many participants put forth the idea that graffiti and street art should be free from various kinds of boundaries and norms, such as aesthetic and economic norms. At the same time graffiti in particular is constrained by aesthetic norms. There are thus paradoxical forces at work here, which strive to fix the art form and achieve a more cosmopolitan mobility. One can also note these paradoxical tendencies in the movement between the digital and the digitalized. On the one hand, the mobility of graffiti and street art images increases through digital media. This mobility makes digital media a channel for dissemination of artwork, where it is encountered by people who otherwise never would have come across it. This, in turn, creates an *extension of place*, which also can be regarded in terms of a spatiotemporal extension of graffiti and street art. The places where graffiti and street art are created become extended, and negotiated, and the conditions for graffiti and street art encounters are significantly altered through such dissemination.

At the same time, there is also a significant number of articulations resisting and critiquing this mediatized condition of graffiti and street art (see *Resisting Digital Graffiti and Street Art*, p. 125). The resistance they spoke of comes from a sense of graffiti and street art as moving in a potentially unwanted direction, as well as their concern for the increasingly nebulous borders of graffiti and street art, both as concepts and as spatially bounded performances. Graffiti and street art become mobile, both as spatiotemporal places and as cultural and aesthetic phenomena. This mobility shows the tendencies toward delimitation versus cosmopolitanism at several levels.

In response to media as a mobilizer, I introduce the idea of *hyper-mediatization*. My findings indicate that mediatization not only concerns social acceptance,

adaption, and staging in relation to digital formats and technologies or how the cultural norms and conventions of the practice become changed in their entanglement with other media. My findings also show that the mediums of graffiti and street art, in the process of inspiration of and infiltration in other (social) media and their respective technologies, are altered by, and become interdependent on, each other. Street art becomes a Facebook status, an analog QR-code sticker puts YouTube on a lamppost, and QR codes become an urban image that cannot be fully experienced without the simultaneous use of another media technology, such as a smartphone with a QR reader. Hypermediatization describes two new dimensions of mediatization, which I regard as “mediatizations of media”. The first concerns how media technologies not only relate or adapt to each other but also sometimes become each other—which can involve modifications of the technologies themselves. The second dimension regards the interdependency of media technologies—how one medium cannot be fully experienced or accessed without using or accessing another.

With regard to the use of digital media, I note the potential tension here between graffiti and street art as subversive art forms and their leaking into commercial media. This points to a potential paradox in the “shrinking of the world” through commercial SNS platforms. It is possible that through the globalization of cultural, economic and political markets, people simultaneously come closer to one another and become more and more alienated from one other, and from themselves. In my findings, alienation materialized as an incentive for the creation of graffiti and street art (see *Graffiti and Street Art as Critique of Neoliberalism*, p. 139). This implies that the incentives for making graffiti and street art, as critiques of neoliberalism, increase alongside a growing sense of alienation. I also note that it appears that the use of SNS platforms might decrease the incentives for creating graffiti and street art. As I have discussed elsewhere (Thor, 2017, 2018), graffiti and street art might lose some of their critical potential for recuperation. I find several paradoxical trends in the mediatization of graffiti and street art that also affect its cosmopolitan potential, in terms of both its criticality and its potential as a creator of cosmoeses.

Another paradox connected to spatial mobility concern gender; the gendered impact on mobility appears to cut both ways. On the one hand, women have a higher threshold for gaining access to the culture. On the other hand, my findings show that women might be more mobile in the city. These findings are not entirely conclusive, but I have suggested that women might be seen as less of a threat, which could increase their mobility; this is specific to the city as a space, however, and not specific to graffiti and street art as cultural spaces.

As both the articulated experiences of women and the mediatized condition of graffiti and street art show, mobilities are entangled with power structures,

within and outside of graffiti and street art, that promote or hinder both mobility and sedentarism. Inspired by Schiller and Salazar's concept *regimes of mobility*, I have introduced the idea of *regimes of cosmopolitanism* to emphasize the power structures and hierarchies embedded in a cosmopolitan condition. The concept is intended to capture the dynamics of unequal access and the contradictory and simultaneous processes of hospitality and encapsulation.

Can a situation be considered cosmopolitan if people do not have equal access to it based on their status or condition? By introducing the concept of *regimes of cosmopolitanism*, I intend to show that people *do* have unequal access to different situations and contexts based on their own status or condition. When I consider my results in connection with hospitality, I find a dimension of being capable of inviting that is part of the cosmopolitan regime. This norm, entangled in the construction of the regime, has a role that is tied to one's position of power. I suggest that a cosmopolitan project requires not only recognizing and respecting differences, but also equal recognition of, attention to, and respect for needs within cultural, social, and economic inequalities.

I connected mobility to the cosmopolitan trait of curiosity, which also is connected to the dimension of playfulness (see *Playfulness*, p. 130). Curiosity is a characteristic that appears on several levels, including the aesthetic and spatial levels. Graffiti and street art can be described as adventures in both the spatial and creative sense. I discuss spatial curiosity as an incentive that drives the creation of graffiti and street art. Conversely, I note how creative curiosity appears to bring people to new spaces and places where they would not have gone without an interest in graffiti or street art. These spaces serve as melting pots, not only for people who do graffiti and street art but also for other people who move through the city. Curiosity also drives graffiti and street art culture in terms of their myths. Graffiti and street art can be considered as mythical, especially considering the central status of aliases, which serve to obscure the identity of the creator and which insider viewers attempt to decipher. Graffiti and street art is secretive thanks to its illegality, which adds to its mythical dimension. Graffiti and street art are accordingly characterized by a "*curiosity* about many places, peoples and cultures" (Szerszynski & Urry, 2002, p. 470), a curiosity that potentially sparks unexpected encounters. This further resonates with the suggestion discussed in a press review, where one of the authors suggests that "legal walls can spark creativity" and a sense of community (Melin, 2016)

At times, these encounters are entangled with outside spaces in the city, which seem to foster a spatial solidarity with other people who move through or dwell in these spaces. These solidarities are tied to the shared spaces of the geographical outside, such as places cut off from the illuminated public spaces, but also places occupied by socioeconomic, political, and cultural outsiders.

Solidarity also materializes in graffiti and street art in terms of sharing art with other “urban dwellers” to whom you provide “free art”. This further appeared as connected to the democratic value of availability and “free” and “non-profit” arts. The community and the sentiments of belonging accordingly exceeds the graffiti and street art collective and does, at times, encompass other people who move in the same geographic, political, and cultural spaces as graffiti and street art.

Democratic values can be related to my final conclusion in this study. Although it might appear as mundane, its political implications are anything but banal. As I suggest throughout the study, people come together when they create things together. It might seem obvious that people come closer to those they do things together with, but when reflecting on the number of opportunities that people have to do things together with others unlike themselves, these opportunities are quite slim. In other words, there are not many opportunities for people everyday life to connect with those whose experiences are unlike their own in everyday life. This fact tends to increase the sense of societal alienation, something that drives people further apart. I thus suggest that at least one of the political implications of my study are that if a functioning society is built upon a sense of community and not alienation, social spaces and structures need to be created where people, who otherwise might never meet can come together. I am not suggesting that everyone should do graffiti or street art. Graffiti and street art are just examples of creative practices, and other creative practices such as music or other visual arts have that same potential. At the same time, I hope to emphasize the challenges posed by creative collectives, which are not at all separate from the power structures of their surrounding societies. Indeed, these power structures seep into settings that otherwise can be described as having cosmopolitan potential. The regimes of cosmopolitanism are continuously at work in settings that in other respects are characterized by hospitality, curiosity, and respect towards difference.

I have learned that respectful, curious encounters are possible in creative environments where people can shift out of their socioeconomic position, even just a little. I have also learned that this is a shift that some make more readily than others. Notably, both these processes often operate parallel and simultaneously.

Final Remarks

Graffiti and street art can be inflammatory and are often intended to be so. They are annoying to politicians, to everyone who does not understand them, and even to people who do understand them, due to their aesthetic and political intent to provoke and escape control. They exude and take over places without

asking, thus becoming a manifestation of the uncontrollability of the contemporary urban milieu. This dissertation addresses graffiti and street art, but one thing these art forms tell us is that humans cannot be entirely controlled. Creativity cannot and will not be entirely controlled. The social cannot be entirely controlled. This uncontrollability makes the social both unpredictable and difficult but nevertheless something that must be accepted and dealt with. People can, of course, acknowledge each other's differences, and then leave it at that: "we're just different." A more frightening scenario, however—one too often played out—is to acknowledge difference, to create a hierarchy, and then persecute and hunt down those who are different. Cosmopolitanism places inherent value on respecting difference. What this small project has shown me, however, is that in the grand scheme of things it is possible for people to respectfully encounter others unlike themselves, not because they choose to tolerate each other but because they find some small point of commonality where they can meet. Papastergiadis understands cosmopolitanism as something "not only pushed forward by the great transformations of globalization but also [occurring] in subtle ways during the small moments of transition" (Papastergiadis, 2012, p. 89). I believe creative practice is key here. In creating something together with someone else, one builds common ground, something to share. I would suggest that imagery holds central importance. Everyone speaks in images. They are differently encoded and decoded, yes, but when people try to communicate universally it is images, sounds, and mathematics that they turn to. The space probes Pioneer 10 and Pioneer 11 carry plaques inscribed with images of human beings, while the more sophisticated messages on Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 carry a "Golden Record," each inscribed with music and images that aim to portray life on Planet Earth (NASA, 2017). The threshold to communication is significantly lowered through the use of imagery and audio. I would therefore suggest that images and audio might have potential to create communicative spaces that can overcome not only galactic boundaries but also the borders of the people who coexist on the same planet. Small moments of creating something together may accomplish great things. They may also do absolutely nothing, but it might be worth a shot.

Sammanfattning

Situerad i en förståelse av det urbana rummet som performativt, politiskt och potentiellt transformativt utforskar den här avhandlingen hur graffiti och gatukonst använder, undergräver och, via olika medier, utvidgar Stockholm som urbant rum. Genom performativ etnografi undersöker studien både graffiti och gatukonst som urban praktik samt de olika former av social kritik som artikuleras i och genom denna praktik. Studien målar en bild av ett diversifierat kulturellt sammanhang och framhåller framför allt kulturernas paradoxer, motsägelser och spänningar. Med utgångspunkt i den starka transnationella prägeln på graffiti- och gatukonstkultur lägger studien även fokus vid kulturens kosmopolitiska potentialer i skapandet av gemensamma visuella världar, föreställda rumsligheter och tillhörighet. Studien baserar sig på djupintervjuer med 32 deltagare, fotografi, nio månaders fältarbete som har innefattat både vad författaren benämner som "tag-alongs", dvs. intervjuer som utförts i fält, samt deltagarobservationer, vilka författaren diskuterar i termer av "med-performativt bevittnande".

Studien utgår från följande frågeställningar: (1) hur artikuleras och utförs nutida graffiti- och gatukonstkultur i Stockholm och på vilka sätt sammanflätas målning med andra medier såsom digitala "sociala medie"-plattformar?; (2) vilka typer av social kritik artikuleras inom Stockholms graffiti- och gatukonstdiskurser?; och (3) hur ser graffiti- och gatukonstkulturs kritiska och estetiskt kosmopolitiska potentialer och/eller brister ut och under vilka förhållanden verkar de materialiseras?

Teoretiskt använder sig studien av begreppet *estetisk kosmopolitism* som fungerar som ett begrepp för att förstå "världsskapande" genom kreativ praktik. Genom att placera estetisk kosmopolitism i relation till antik cynisk filosofi introducerar författaren begreppet *performativ kosmopolitism*. Performativ kosmopolitism används som ett begrepp för att teoretisera rumsligheter som öppnas upp av kritiska, sensoriska och transformativa interventioner i det urbana rummet. För att teoretisera graffiti- och gatukonsts mediala sammanflätningar används även begreppet *medialisering*. I relation till kulturernas medialisering noterar författaren att spridning och synlighet ökat markant i digitala rum, men även tendenser till minskad analog synlighet i stadsrummet, vilket gör medialiseringen av graffiti och gatukonst till en ganska paradoxal process. Författaren noterar även hur

graffiti- och gatukonstmedierna ibland även sammanflätas med andra medier på så vis att andra mediers närvaro inte bara påverkar, eller blir normaliserade inom, kulturerna, men även att själva medierna eller teknologierna förändras i denna sammanflätning. Dessutom diskuterar författaren hur denna sammanflätning i vissa fall leder till att det inte ens är möjligt att till fullo uppleva eller ta del av ett medium utan att använda sig av ett annat medium. För att teoretisera sådana processer introducerar författaren begreppet *hyper-medialisering*. Hypermedialisering är således tänkt som ett begrepp som fångar hur medier och medieteknologier blir infiltrerade, eventuellt inspirerade och därmed också förändrade av, eller till och med beroende av, varandra.

Sammanfattningsvis målar studien en bild av en omtvistad, och till viss del kontroversiell, subversiv urban kultur och dess nutida medialiserade tillstånd. Författaren visar hur graffiti och gatukonst, kulturellt och politiskt, kan förstås som en kritisk, lekfull och alternativ estetisering av stadsrummet. I förhållande till frågan om graffiti och gatukonst som social kritik menar författaren att graffiti och gatukonstkulturen i stor utsträckning artikuleras som primärt anti-kapitalistiska praktiker som på olika sätt intervenerar i vad som artikuleras som ett kommersialiserat urbant rum. Författaren lyfter även fram kosmopolitiska möjligheter och svårigheter i och genom kreativ praktik och diskuterar särskilt svårigheterna såsom kopplade till kön. Sådana spänningar noteras både i förhållande till den sociala aspekten av kulturen men författaren ställer sig även frågan om det finns föreställningar om kön inbäddade i själva estetiken. Dessutom för författaren ett resonemang kring kön i förhållande till det urbana rummet och utvecklar en tankegång om ”kampen mot graffiti” som en kamp mellan olika maskuliniteter. I förhållande till sådana spänningar och maktrelationer introducerar författaren även tanken om *kosmopolitiska regimer* för att fånga samtidigheten mellan gästfrihet och exklusivitet, samt dynamiken i ojämlik tillgång till det kosmopolitiska. Genom att introducera begreppet kosmopolitiska regimer, argumenterar därmed författaren för att det kosmopolitiska behöver förstås som en situation genomsyrad av makthierarkier vilka både behöver erkännas och hanteras.

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List of Participants

Name	Age	Name	Age
Anton	16	Peder	41
Adam	40	Tage	43
Fredrik	40	Andreas	40
Jonas	29	Maja	27
Simon	32	Steffe	48
Marcus	29	Greger	35
César	53	Chippen	42
Calle	33	Aron	37
Per	39	Marie	34
Alexis	22	Gabriel	33
Daroush	36	Mark	26
Oscar	23	Erik	unknown
Aleks	27	Lucas	24
Layla	32	Patrik	35
Hanna	33	Emil	27
Victor	26	Zena	32

