INOPINATUM

The unexpected impertinence of urban creativity

Edited by Luca Borriello and Christian Ruggiero

INOPINATUM
The unexpected impertinence of urban creativity

Edited by: Luca Borriello and Christian Ruggiero

Texts by: Mario Morcellini, Luca Borriello, Christian Ruggiero, Moira Bernardoni, Caitlin Bruce, Daniela V. de Freitas Simões, Jakob Kimvall, Fabio La Rocca, Néstor García Lázaro, Lachlan MacDowall, Thomas Northoff, Axel Philipps, Christoph Pilz, Pedro Soares Neves, Simona Stano, Angela Tinwell, Myrto Tsilimpounidi and Alison Young.

Graphic layout: Salvatore Pope Velotti
Graphic illustration: Giuseppe Ragone

On the cover, graphics processing with the photos of the tombstone of Gaius Iulius Pudens, preserved at the Museum Het Valkhof Nijmegen (Netherlands), and of the work on the "Deitch Wall", performed by Barry TWIST McGee in collaboration with Josh AMAZE Lazcano (New York City, NY, USA, 2010).

*"Che alcuno non ardisca dipingere e scrivere coi carboni,
lapis, gesso et altri instrumenti nelli muri, porte, capitelli,
finestre, colonne, cornici, cattedre o banchi figure,
massime disoneste, lettere, segni, caratteri e versi, motti,
lineamenti, armi, insegne et in qualsivoglia modo imbrattarli,
etiam che si pingessero o scrivessero cose buone"*

*"None paints and writes with charcoals, pencils, chalks
and other tools figures, vulgar expressions, letters, signs,
characters and verses, sayings, arms, coats of arms on walls,
doors, capitals, windows, columns, frames, chairs or benches;
and none smears, even painting or writing good things"*

(prohibitive decree by the Rector of Sapienza University of Rome, 1689)

INOPINATUM
Study Center on Urban Creativity

INOPINATUM - Study Center on Urban Creativity is instituted by the Department of Communication and Social Research of Sapienza University in Rome on proposal of INWARD Observatory on Urban Creativity.

To deal with such a prismatic subject of study, the Study Center is structured in an Italian academic network, which includes several scholars from many Universities, and in an international research network, which includes many members coming from all the world, scholars and professionals in the field of Urban Creativity.

The Study Center's aim is triple: to construct and encourage the first international network of experts in Urban Creativity; to constitute a reference point for competences and practices of academics and researchers; to establish an organization suitable to offer consultancy and action research for public, private and no-profit institutions, involved in urban creativity projects.

Scientific Direction Mario Morcellini and Luciano D'Amico

Coordination Luca Borriello

Organisation office Christian Ruggiero

uniroma1.academia.edu/INOPINATUMStudyCenteronUrbanCreativity

centrostudi@inward.it

INDEX

Signs of Impertinence… Graffiti Art and Mural Re-writing[1]

Simona Stano

Spatial discontinuity is crucial to build up any topological identity (cf. Marrone, 2005, p. 4): the division of space into spheres that require different behaviours and impose limits and rules of conduct makes people aware not only of their bodies and their faculty to act in the surrounding environment (cf. Cervelli and Sedda, 2006, p. 172), but also of the parameters that underlie the attribution of meanings and values.

Moreover, according to Lotman (1987), space has a double semiotic life: on the one hand, it shapes the universe according to its own image, projecting its internal forms to the outside world; on the other hand, it is itself modelled depending on the image of the universe that is typical of a certain culture.

The same idea is supported by Hammad (2003), who states that space confers significance to the society that lives in it, while shaping it: it is the case of processes of mutual signification in which space, culture and identity reciprocally *inter*-define themselves.

1   This article is based on the paper "Graffiti e pratiche di ri-scrittura murale. La *EastSideGallery* di Berlino", presented at the congress "Scrivere la città. Dal segno metropolitano al muralismo artistico", Turin, January 25-26, 2011.

In such dynamics, walls are particularly important, as they are material artefacts generally intended to serve as borders and boundaries, to defend territories and separate and isolate people, expressing identities and constructing systems of rules of conduct and movement.

For a definition of walls

In the *Oxford Dictionary*, the wall is described as: a long vertical solid structure, made of stone, brick or concrete, that surrounds, divides or protects an area of land (Wehmeier 2005, p. 1714).

This description is very close to the definition proposed by the Italian *Devoto-Oli*: *"struttura muraria verticale, con funzione portante o divisoria. Il pl.f. mura indica una cinta difensiva cittadina o anche un ambito circoscritto o isolato per ragioni di ordine domestico o collettivo"* (Devoto e Oli 2009), as well as to the explanation suggested by the French *Petit Robert*: *"ouvrage de maçonnerie qui s'élève verticalement ou obliquement sur une certaine longueur et qui sert à enclore, à séparer des espaces ou à supporter une poussée"* (Robert 2006, p. 1457), and that of the Spanish *Diccionario de uso del español* by María Moliner: *"1. obra de albañilería hecha de piedra, ladrillo, adobes, etc., formando una placa vertical, que se construye para cerrar un espacio, sostener una techumbre, etc. 2. obstáculo que impide la comunicación y el entendimiento entre las personas"* (Moliner 2002, p. 944).

Beyond the various classifications that distinguish walls according to the materials or techniques adopted to construct

them or other possible distinctions based on the relationship between walls and the architectural complexes of which they are part, starting from the previously mentioned definitions it is possible to identify some basic ideas related to the functions they can assume and the meanings they can be related to.

As Andrea Mubi Brighenti states in *The wall and the city*, "walls are material artefacts designed to attain some goals" (2008, p. 7): in particular, the objectives promoted by such material artefacts generally seem to associate them with ideas such as *limit, defence, isolation, security, power, and lack of communication*. In the above-mentioned definitions, this is primarily revealed by the verbal and adjectival forms used to describe walls: "that surrounds, protects or divides an area of land"; "con funzione […] *divisoria*", "cinta *difensiva*", "ambito *circoscritto* o *isolato*"; "qui sert à *enclore*, à *séparer* des espaces"; "para *cerrar* un espacio", "obstáculo que *impide* la comunicación y el entendimiento".

Several scholars also pointed out the links existing between walls and Foucault's theory of *governmentality*: using a Foucaultian terminology, walls can be described as governmental objects. This means they are part of the larger activity known as government of the population, and – as Foucault (1978/1991: 95) remarked – "with government it is a question not of imposing law on men, but of disposing things". Governmentality works by defining positions inside a relational field, which is essentially a territorial field (Brighenti 2008, p. 7).

In this sense, the wall can be conceived as part of a precise political strategy, as it: "not only offers the possibility of

a tangent way, but works as a framework within which civilisation and barbarism, the human and the non-human, safety and risk find a clear line of demarcation" (Coletta, Gabbi and Sonda 2008, p. 44, TdA).

From a strategic point of view, walls work as separating elements or limits that introduce boundaries in a previously continuous space, establishing semantic oppositions such as "inside" vs. "outside" (walls as physical barriers of separation and isolation), "visible" vs. "invisible" (perceptual barriers that prevent contact and communication), "continuous" vs. "discontinuous" (with checkpoints as the only – strictly monitored and controlled – points which break the impenetrable continuity of the wall), etc.. They are "surface-boundaries" (Mattiucci, 2008, p. 37, TdA) that symbolise social control (cf. Campesi, 2008, p. 42), expressing on the level of expression contrasts existing on the level of content: ethnic, cultural and social differences.

Artificial barriers vs. natural barriers: from "Nature" to "Culture"

A further consideration about walls comes from the comparison between artificial barriers and the so-called "green walls": the hedges.

A hedge is "a fence or boundary formed by closely growing bushes or shrubs" (Word Reference 2010). Again, therefore, it is the case of an element that works as border and separation edge, but which differs from the common artificial walls for its "natural" conformation: even if the hedges require

human intervention not to perish, they are made of natural ecosystems.

This is a key difference, which refers to the opposition between *Nature* and *Culture*, that is further associated, in this case, with other oppositions such as "continuous" vs. "discontinuous" and "penetrable" vs. "impenetrable".

If in the hedges, in fact, among the branches of the shrubs, there are cracks and empty spaces that ensure a certain permeability and penetrability of the barrier, in the case of artificial walls the gaps are minimized, and they totally disappear with the use of concrete. On the other hand, it should be noticed that the continuity of conventional walls (at least if we refer to modern separation barriers between people and states) is generally interrupted by checkpoints. Nevertheless, the systems of strict surveillance that normally characterise these points make this discontinuity unperceived. Thus the impression of impenetrability of walls becomes even stronger. Finally, the lack of colours typical of artificial barriers, whose uniform and unrelieved grey contrasts with the iridescent green of leaves and the nuances of any flowers or berries in the hedges, further helps to mark the contrast between natural and artificial elements.

The wall represents therefore a strong rift with the surrounding environment, which however tends to be perceived less and less as time goes by.

Walls impact directly on bodies. Not simply this: as walls set up specific and selective perceptual limitations into the here-and-now of a given locale, they also tend to become part of

the unquestioned, naturalised background of that locale. If the wall exists in-between people and their free movement, that in-betweenness tends to constantly shift towards the lifeworld's horizon, thus becoming invisible (Brighenti 2008, p. 7).

Through such processes of normalisation, a visible element is slowly converted into an invisible one, what is unusual into something normal and usual.

Tactical and strategic uses

Walls separate, divide, isolate. Besides their strategical uses, however, there are *tactical uses*: "this is where resistance and its transformative capacity comes in. Situational interaction constantly modifies and reshapes the significance, impact and meaning of walls. Whereas [...] strategy aims at naturalising walls pushing them to the background, making them recede into invisibility, tactics constantly re-thematise walls, pulling them towards new social foregrounds. Tactics are enacted by actors who have no power on the governmental planning of space, but who nonetheless concur actively in the collective shaping of social territories. Walls are built by day and painted by night. Not simply do people live in walled environments, they make things with walls. Such uses of walls are material-and-semiotic just as walls themselves" (ibid., pp. 7–8).

In such dynamics of *re*-definition and *re*-thematisation of artificial barriers, it is essential to point out the importance of *graffiti*.

Graffiti and "artistic" walls

Derived from the Italian verb *graffiare*, "to scratch", and related to the Latin *graphium*, "stylus", the word *graffiti*: "is the name for images or lettering scratched, scrawled, painted or marked in any manner on property. Graffiti is any type of public markings that may appear in the forms of simple written words to elaborate wall painting" (Wehmeier 2005, p. 634).

It is very interesting to compare this definition with the one proposed by the *Real Academia Española*: "marca o inscripción hecha rascando o rayando un muro; letrero o dibujo circunstanciales, generalmente agresivos y de protesta, trazados sobre una pared u otra superficie resistente" (2010).

In the first case, the emphasis is put on the public nature ("public markings") of graffiti, a characteristic that is very important in relation to tactical uses of walls: if, on the one hand, walls represent power and social control that limit the individuals, on the other hand, through graffiti art, the same individuals may claim their right to use public space and to express themselves. Prohibited by the same law that promoted the wall, graffiti represent an instrument of disobedience and protest, as highlighted by the definition of the *Real Academia Española* ("generalmente agresivos y de protesta").

It is also very interesting to notice the closeness of this type of art to common people and everyday life, an element which becomes evident in the expressions that are commonly used to refer to it: *urban* or *street* art.

Leaving out the discussion about the evolution of the techniques and styles[1] of mural art, we will deal about social, political and semiotic aspects related to graffiti, analysing how they intervene in the processes of signification of walls and in the dynamics of definition and *re*-definition of public and social space.

Graffiti and practices of mural *re*-writing: the *East Side Gallery* of Berlin.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, hundreds of artists from all over the world gathered in Berlin and transformed with their works the eastern side of the barrier – that was untouchable until then –, giving it a new face. This is the *East Side Gallery*, a section of wall of 1300m in length and 360 cm in height located at Mühlenstrasse. Its 106 graffiti express the euphoria and great hopes for a better future, denouncing at the same time the story of Berlin, Germany and the entire world in the years immediately preceding the fall of the barrier.

The corpus

The corpus consists of some of the most representative and evocative graffiti of the *East Side Gallery*[2].

---

1   It is not possible to deepen the question here, but it should be noticed that mural art includes both *tags* (and writings of different nature) and figurative representations. In the following analysis we will make reference to this second category.
2   Some pictures were taken in Berlin in 2009. Some others from the website www.eastsidegallery.com.

Figure 1 – *La Buerlinica* by Stephan Cacciatore (East Side Gallery)

Figure 2 – *The Mortal Kiss* by Dimitrij Vrubel (East Side Gallery; on the left: 1989; on the right: 2009, before restoration)

Figure 3 – *Dancing to Freedom* by Jolly Kunjappu (East Side Gallery)

Figure 4 – *Ohne Titel* by Thierry Noir (East Side Gallery)

Figure 5 – *Sea of Humanity* by Kani Alavi (East Side Gallery)

Figure 6 – *Test the Best* by Birgit Kinder (East Side Gallery)

Figurative and plastic analysis

La Buerlinica by Stephan Cacciatore (figure 1) is a quotation of the famous *Guernica*[1] (1937) by Pablo Picasso, whose title refers to the bombing of Guernica, which occurred during the Spanish Civil War.

The masterpiece realised by the Spanish painter represented an attempt to attract the public to the Republican cause, denouncing at the same time the terrible sufferings inflicted by war on all human beings. Following the example of Picasso, Cacciatore wanted to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall with a symbolic painting that could express the atrocities that the barrier symbolised. The result is a highly articulated composition that represents the pain of a death perpetuated by a perverse and violent humanity. A terrible reality, that in the Spanish painter's work found expression in the use of monochrome, but that, in the *East Side Gallery*, assumes the colours of the German flag to denounce the tragedy of a country where, more than anywhere else, the atrocities of the Cold War and the division of the world into two antagonistic blocs were noticeable.

It is also very interesting the choice of decomposing the original scheme of the painting by Picasso: if before war and violence caused the break-up of figures, that were highly geometrical and fragmented in differently oriented sections, now the division of the scene into six adjacent panels, as well as the mutilation of most of the represented figures, visually express the collapse of a world view based on a strict separation and

---

1   To this end, note the inclusion of the vowel "u" (which refers to Spanish phonetics) in the title chosen by Cacciatore.

an apparent balance between two superpowers (whose most evident manifestation was the wall itself).

With reference to the *figurative* level, it is relevant the presence of the *horse*, a key figure in *Guernica*, whose tensivity alludes, as in Picasso's masterpiece, to a catastrophe in respect to which no thinking person can manage to stop suffering. However, some differences strongly emerge: first, the cry of pain ("No") of the animal, whose despair is so deep that it can no longer be simply represented by sharp and hard forms, necessitating the use of the linguistic code. Secondly, the lower part of the group of figures that compose the horse has a phallic configuration that refers to a sexual metaphor used to denounce, once again, the perverse violence of war and the struggle for power.

Another figure taken from the painting by Picasso is the *mother with the dead child*, which is characterised, in the graffiti of the Berlin Wall, by the death of the child, with the creation of a sort of visual paradox for which the observer witnesses the scene of a desperate Mary mourning the death of her son even without having a body over which she can express her despair. Once again, tragedy is extreme, despair is maximum, pain is unbearable.

Concerning the figurative level, then, there are other very significant elements: the *light bulb*, symbol of a destructive science, is replaced by a figure whose shape resembles that of a submarine or missile (the reference is to nuclear weapons, the quintessential symbol of the Cold War), which in turn draws the attention to the other two components of the image, that are placed slightly downwards: a helpless man at the centre of a viewfinder and a machine gun lying at his feet.

Other elements that are missing are the *dove*, already barely visible in the work by Picasso, and the *flower* in the hand of the dead soldier, symbol of peace and hope. To replace the bird, there is a black figure that looks like a fish: on the one hand, there might be a reference to the image of Christ[2]; on the other hand, the chromatic dimension suggests a dysphorical axiology, for which it seems to refer again to the submarine – a sort of *mechanical fish*, with a clear reference to the opposition between natural and cultural objects – and to war.

With regard to the opposition Nature vs. Culture, then, it is particularly interesting the figure of the *omnivorous plant*, symbol of a nature that, being "infected" by the violence and brutality of humanity, has become destructive. Next to the plant, it is located a further representation of despair: the female figure, symbol of sorrow and resignation, is merged with the – female – face who holds the lamp in *Guernica*, an element that Picasso himself had significantly recovered from the *Massacre of the Innocents* by Guido Reni.

The result is a work that does not evoke anymore a world vacillating between darkness and light, as it was in the painting by Picasso, but the portrait of an inhuman and violent humanity that is condemned to destruction and death.

The Mortal Kiss by Dimitrji Vrubel (figure 2) depicts one of the most famous kisses in modern history, the one between the communist leaders Erich Honecker (East Germany) and Leonid Brežhnev (Soviet Union) during the thirtieth anniversary of the German Democratic Republic in June 1979.

---

2   According to early Christian iconography.

The reference is to a relationship of mutual dependence that Vrubel visually represents as one of those kisses with which lovers compromise too much themselves, despite knowing that there is no future for their desperate relationship. To this end, it is relevant the thin black line that marks the division but at the same time the link between the two faces, as well as the verbal text, that explicitly denounces the menace of this union: the Cyrillic caption accompanying the image ("God, help me to survive to this deadly love") refers to the title – and especially to the adjectival form (mortal, "lethal") chosen to describe the kiss between the two characters.

"No more wars. No more walls. A united world". This is the message contained in the caption of *Dancing to Freedom* (figure 3) by Jolly Kunjappu. A hymn to peace and concord, expressed not only by the linguistic code, but also on the plastic level, with the choice of polychromy for the letters that form the sentence. The same polychromy invades even the iconic dimension, where the eidetic component is predominant, with sinuous black and coloured lines contributing to the realisation of the final scene: a harmonious dance (hence the title) between two figures placed one in front of the other, almost symmetrically with respect to the three concentric circles (with a double reference to the value of perfection) in the middle, whose chromatic configuration refers, again, to the German flag. But there is a key difference in respect to the graffiti by Stephan Cacciatore: here the allusion to the German context does not seem to be used to emphasize the tragedy of a state in which, more than in any other, the atrocities of the Cold War were noticeable, but rather to send a message of hope and faith in the future, first for Germany and, by extension, for the whole world. A future without *wars* or *walls*... a future characterized by the existence of a *united* and *free* world.

Ohne Titel (*Some heads*, figure 4) depicts 16 big heads (each 360 x 240 cm) painted on the east side of the Berlin Wall by Thierry Noir.

It is an immense work, whose aim is "to do something against the wall" (Noir), leaving a witness and a warning to future generations. It is important for the young generations that they see this long part of the Berlin Wall, just like it is, to realize how horrible that border was, to make them taking conscious, to think about not to do the same mistake one more time. [...] The ESG stands to say to everybody "Please: NOT AGAIN THE SAME ERROR". It is also important to show that every wall is not built forever (*ibid.*).

A message that is clearly expressed even on the visual level: the chromatic variety derives not only from the intention to provide brightness and vividness to the wall, but it is also a tribute to difference, a cry against the standardisation typical of the regime represented by the barrier (whose memory remains in the terrified expression of the third and eleventh faces). Moreover, the various sections that compose the work show 16 differently oriented heads, so that some of them seem to communicate with the others. It is the triumph of encounter on isolation, the victory of peaceful dialogue on separations and conflicts. Thus Noir[3] metaphorically re-destroys the wall, with an act that he defined as simple but extremely important.

Sea of humanity (figure 5) by Kani Alavi is another very evocative work of the *East Side Gallery*: a series of faces, drawn

---

3   Whose artistic interventions on the wall – it should be pointed out – began well before its fall, on the western side.

with blurred and fuzzy lines and without specific traits or determined gender, occupy the space between two walls. It is an indistinct mass of individuals who are restricted within limits that give no room for the expression of personal identity and create a strong sensation of loss, chaos and terror. Which, on the visual level, primarily finds expression on the chromatic level, with cold and dull colours that create a gloomy and sinister atmosphere.

The author's complaint is evident: the wall annihilates the individual, it deprives him of his identity, reducing him to a few confused lines and to sad colours that gradually fade out in the background. Nevertheless, a glimmer of hopes remains: lost in the crowd, two faces kiss each other. Love thus lives on violence and obligations; fraternity triumphs on annihilation.

Test the Best (figure 6) by Birgit Kinder depicts a *Trabant* that "holes" the wall, as if it had broken it from the other side.

The choice of the car is not accidental: the *Trabant* – whose German name means "travelling companion" – has remained in the collective imaginary as one of the symbols of the former East Germany. It is also relevant the number of the licence plate depicted by Kinder, "November · 9 – 89", the date of the fall of the Wall, that is thus immortalised by both the verbal text (the date) and the iconic language (the hole in the wall, with the car coming out from it and the cracks that surround the vehicle). Through the *trompe l'oeil* technique, the artist depicts a kind of *meta*-wall that speaks of itself, or rather, of its own demolition.

Conclusions

As mentioned above, walls can be strategically or tactically used. In the first case, they symbolise social and political power as well as the intention to divide people, isolate communities, draw boundaries and borders and preclude all contact and communication. In the second one, through graffiti art, the barriers can communicate and express the voices of those that the social power would like to divide and make silent.

Tactically speaking, the most remarkable fact about walls is that they offer a visible surface, which becomes a surface of inscription for stratified, criss-crossing and overlapping traces. Because of the very territorial nature of walls, such traces are highly visible interventions that define new forms of social interaction, even at a distance. Each wall creates a public, insofar as it defines a public focus of attention for a number of viewers and actors. Walls in urban environments are located at the convergence of a number of forces. Such convergence is precisely the domain of the public. Hence, walls often offer a playground to the struggle for public attention and the definition of visibility regimes, which ultimately are political regimes (Brighenti, 2008, p. 8).

If, on the one hand, we assist to normalisation processes that try to incorporate artificial barriers to the surrounding context – so that, over time, we tend not to be aware of their presence –, on the other hand, graffiti try to break the "grey" silence of walls, giving back to them that visibility that normalisation tries to hide.

To this end, it is very interesting the definition of *graffiti*

proposed by Ella Chmielewska in *The wall as witness-surface*: "assertion of a personal voice against the rules of the public place" (2008, p. 26).

In this sense, it is possible to consider graffiti as a form of *inopinatum* or "unexpected impertinence": with their bright and vivid colours, graffiti launch a cry against the "silent" uniform grey of walls, giving them visibility.

A presence inscribed into a public place, a graphic witness to an event, a trace of an expressive gesture, graffiti is there to be noticed (*ibid.*).

This intercedes in a number of semantic oppositions that, as discussed in the previous sections, are very important with respect to the processes of semantisation of walls: with the bright colours that generally characterize them, *graffiti* contrast the chromatic uniformity that is typical of the construction materials (mostly concrete) for artificial barriers, intervening in oppositions such as "to hinder the sight" *vs.* "to attract the eye", "normalisation" *vs.* "visibility", "continuous" *vs.* "discontinuous", etc…

The wall thus ceases to be an instrument of impenetrable isolation and becomes a real means of communication that offers anyone the opportunity to express himself and to play an active role: "another meaning of the vandalized wall is the idea of "being there", of leaving a sign of our presence: I sign, therefore I am" (Dogheria 2008, p. 18).

The same enunciative act ("to scratch" the wall) gives to the *enunciator* – the individual, whose voice the wall would like

to silence, relegating him to the role of *enunciatee* – an active role. From *objects* of policies and ideologies whose visible and tangible manifestation is the wall itself, individuals are then converted into active political *subjects* able to regain their right to use public space to express themselves and communicate with other people.

Moreover, beyond the strictly functional and conceptual level, graffiti promote processes of *re*-semantisation of walls for the contents they represent and the forms they use to do so.

Both the verbal text and the iconic code, as well as the figurative (use of metaphors and inclusion of key figures) and the plastic (chromatic rhymes and contrasts, certain topological or eidetic configurations, etc.) levels, contribute to redefine walls and the meanings they are related to from time to time.

Thus, for example, the Berlin Wall ceases, in the *EastSide*, to uniquely represent the symbol of the Cold War, the Iron Curtain that divided the world into two blocs after the Second World War, and also becomes a reminder of a rediscovered brotherhood, a hymn to cooperation and peaceful coexistence. It is even converted into an open-air art gallery – the largest in the world –, becoming a tourist attraction.

What once divided, isolated and prevented communication, now draws the attention of thousands of people who visit the ESG, give lectures on it, write or read articles or books about its *graffiti*.

It is in this sense that *graffiti* become *signs of impertinence*: as they are practices of mural *re*-writing which use walls as

inscription surfaces, they are able to *re*-semantise them, that is to *re*-write their meanings and functions, intervening in oppositions such as "lack of communication" *vs.* "dialogue", "isolation" *vs.* "communication", "euphoria" *vs.* "dysphoria", "life" *vs.* "death", "continuity" *vs.* "discontinuity", etc.

From both the strategical and the tactical perspective, the wall is an object that constitutively calls into play the interweaving of space and social relations. Walls are inherently material and semiotic, material-and-immaterial. They manage space and define mobility fluxes that impose conduct and restrain freedom of movement, but they are also constantly challenged because of the symbolic meanings they assume: they can be reassuring as well as oppressive, they can be irritating as well as inspiring. Most interestingly, they can be built for an aim but deflected to many another (Brighenti, 2008, p. 8).

Even before physical destruction of barriers, graffiti make it possible to undermine their existence: the fall of the wall is just the final and less relevant act of its demolition. First of all, walls lend themselves to practices of desertion and elution that re-encode and progressively erode them (cf. Coletta, Gabbi and Sonda 2008, p. 44).

As pointed out, in such dynamics of *re*-encoding and *re*-semantisation, graffiti, with their *unexpected impertinence*, play a very important role.

References

ALTARES P. (2009), *Muros o fronteras artificiales, Tiempo de paz*, 95: 93-94.

BRIGHENTI A. M. (2008), *The wall and the city.* "Lo squaderno 08 – Usi dei muri / Uses of walls", 8: 7-9.

CAMPESI G. (2008), *Città e controllo,* "Lo squaderno 08 – Usi dei muri / Uses of walls", 8: 41-43.

CERVELLI P., SEDDA F. (2006), "Zone, frontiere, confini: la città come spazio culturale", in Marrone G., Pezzini I. (eds.), *Senso e metropoli. Per una semiotica posturbana*, Meltemi, Roma: 171-192.

CHMIELEWSKA E. (2008), *The wall as fitness-surface.* "Lo squaderno 08 – Usi dei muri / Uses of walls", 8: 24-29.

CODELUPPI E., DUSI N., GRANELLI T. (2008, eds.), *EC - Riscrivere lo spazio. Pratiche e performance urbane*.

COLETTI C., GABBI F., SONDA G. (2008, eds.), *Enclosures urbane.* "Lo squaderno 08 – Usi dei muri / Uses of walls", 8: 44-45.

CORRAIN L., VALENTI M. (1991, eds.), *Leggere l'opera d'arte. Dal figurativo all'astratto*, Progetto Leonardo, Bologna.

DE MARIA C., POZZATO M. P. (2006), "Etnografia urbana: modi d'uso e pratiche dello spazio", in Marrone, G., Pezzini I. (eds.), S*enso e metropoli: per una semiotica posturbana*, Meltemi, Roma.

DEVOTO G., G. C. OLI (2008), *Il Devoto-Oli 2009*, Le Monnier, Firenze.

DOGHERIA D. (2008), *Il muro come galleria*, "Lo squaderno 08 – Usi dei muri / Uses of walls", 8: 15–21.

DOGHERIA D., BRIGHENTI A. M. (2008, eds.), "Lo squaderno 08 – Usi dei muri / Uses of walls", www.losquaderno.net (last access: 23/11/2012).

FINOKI B. (2007), "Border to Border, Wall to Wall, Fence to Fence". *Subtopia, a field guide to military urbanism*, subtopia.blogspot.com/2007/04/border-to-border-wall-to-wall-fence-to.html (last access: 21/11/2012).

FLOCH J. M. (1995), *Identités visuelles*, PUF, Paris.

FOUCAULT M. (1978), "Governmentality" in Burchell G., Gordon C., Miller P. (1991), *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, London.

FOUCAULT M. (2004), *Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au Collège de France 1977/1978*, Gallimard, Paris.

GIMENO BLAY F. M., M. L. MANDINGORRA LLAVATA (eds.), (1997) *Los muros tienen la palabra: Materiales para una historia de los graffiti*, Universidad de Valencia, Valencia.

GOETHE INSTITUT (2009), "Il muro di Berlino: numeri e fatti", www.goethe.de/mmo/priv/4852473-STANDARD.pdf (last access: 11/10/2012).

GREIMAS A. J. (1976), "Pour une sémiotique topologique". *Sémiotique et sciences sociales*, Seuil, Paris.

GREIMAS A. J., COURTES J. (1979), *Sémiotique raisonné de la théorie du langage*, Hachette, Paris.

HAMMAD M. (2003), *Leggere lo spazio, comprendere l'architettura*, Meltemi, Roma.

IPAZUD (2004), "Tomarse los muros. Una mirada transformadora" – presentation of the project *Arte en los muros*, IPADUZ, Bogotá.

LANDOWSKI E., MARRONE G. (eds.), (2002) *La società degli oggetti*, Meltemi, Roma.

LOTMAN J. M. (1985), *La semiosfera: l'asimmetria e il dialogo nelle strutture pensanti*, Marsilio, Venezia.

LOTMAN J. M. (1987), "Architektura v kontekste kul'tury", in *Architecture and Society / Architektura i ob__estvo* 6, Sofia.

LOTMAN J. M. (2006), *Tesi per una semiotica delle culture*, Meltemi, Roma.

MARRONE G. (2005), *Dieci tesi per uno Studio semiotico della città. Appunti, osservazioni, risposte*, "EC", www.ec-aiss.it/archivio/tematico/spazialita/spazialita.php (last access: 27/12/2011).

MARRONE G., PEZZINI I. (2006, eds.), S*enso e metropoli. Per una semiotica*

posturbana, Meltemi, Roma.

MATTIUCCI C. (2008), *La dematerializzazione contemporanea delle superfici: da elementi di delimitazione a membrane di commutazione*, "Lo squaderno 08 – Usi dei muri / Uses of walls", 8: 36–39.

MOLINER M. (2002), *Diccionario de uso del español*, Gredos, Madrid.

NOIR T., *About the Berlin Wall and the East Side Gallery*, www.galerie-noir. de/ArchivesEnglish/FAQ-Noir.html (last access: 23/09/2012).

RADICE F. (2001), *Il muro di Berlino*, Sistema Editoriale SE–NO, Roma.

RAGONESE R. (2005), S*emiotica dello spazio e trasformazioni: proposte, analisi, conclusioni*, "EC", www.ec-aiss.it/archivio/tematico/spazialita/ spazialita.php (last access: 19/10/2012).

ROBERT P. (2006), *Le Petit Robert*, Dictionnaires Le Robert, Paris.

SOTELO I. (2009), *20 años desde la caída del Muro de Berlín. Tiempo de paz*. (95): 14–22.

VOLLI U. (2005), *Per una semiotica della città*, "EC", www. e c - a i s s . i t / i n c l u d e s / t n g / p u b / t N G _ d o w n l o a d 4 . p h p ? K T _ download1=9e4b8dd2ceb5ef44b49b28b6183c0ba3 (last access: 21/09/2012).

WEHMEIER S. (2005), *Oxford Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

BIOGRAPHIES

Mario Morcellini

Director of the Department of Communication and Social Research of Sapienza University in Rome, where he is, together with Luciano D'Amico, Rector of the University of Teramo, scientific director of INOPINATUM Study Center on Urban Creativity.

Luca Borriello

Degree in Cultural Anthropology and Art History, PhD in Promotion of Cultural Heritage, he coordinates INWARD Observatory on Urban Creativity, Territorial Center for Urban Creativity and INOPINATUM Study Center on Urban Creativity. He was ANCI consultant for street art in the Italian cities and Secretary of the National Table on Urban Creativity for CNEL.

Christian Ruggiero

Researcher in Sociology of Cultural and Communicative Processes, Department of Communication and Social Research, Sapienza University in Rome. Referring person for INOPINATUM Study Center on Urban Creativity at the same University.

Moira Bernardoni

PhD student at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara. From 2010 until 2013 she has been an Early Stage Researcher in the Marie Curie Initial Training Network 'Englobe' ('Enlightenment & Global History'). Her ongoing interdisciplinary research aims at historicizing graffiti and detecting the global in the city of Istanbul by focusing on the notion of strategic value of urban walls. The classic treaty *The Production of Space* (1974) by Henri Lefebvre provides her main theoretical framework to engage graffiti as practice of socio-spatial resistance with a political significance in the theoretical conceptualization of the 'right to the city'. She is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Caitlin Bruce

PhD Candidate in the Program in Rhetoric and Public Culture in the Communication Studies Department at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She is completing a dissertation on public art, urban space, and civic participation. She is a writer for the Chicago art collective, Sixty Inches From Center, and shares her ongoing research on her blog, Kinesthetic Urban Rhetoric. She would like to thank the Leónese writers who made her piece possible: Kif, Wes, Nikkis, Juan, Rubén Jasso, Back, Dermy, Spoke, Truko, Asme, Nukleo, Nose, Zanko, Sic, Dano, Jhard and Bote. She is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Daniela V. de Freitas Simões

PhD candidate at FCSH – University NOVA of Lisbon, in Contemporary Art History and holds a Master Degree in Architecture from IST – Technical University of Lisbon. She conducts research as a collaborating member in the line of Contemporary Art Studies from the Art History Institute and is also a member of the international networks INOPINATUM and EAHN. Although Street Art and Graffiti aren't her main investigation subjects, as a citizen and researcher, as a city inhabitant and user, she regards its impact and importance as exceptional and mesmerizing.

Jakob Kimvall

Swedish writer, art critic and lecturer on visual culture. He is specialized in art in the public spheres and has a particular interest in graffiti- and street art. The interest in the subject started as a teenaged graffiti writer in the 1980-ties. In 1992 he co-founded the international graffiti magazine Underground Productions (UP), and worked as its editor throughout the 1990-ties. As a lecturer he have had long term affiliations with Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, and Berghs School of Communication. He is currently working on a PhD thesis in Art History at Stockholm University regarding the historiography of graffiti and street art, and has an interest on graffiti and hip-hop culture as part of Cold War cultural exchange and confrontation. He is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Fabio La Rocca

Maître de conférences in sociology at University of Montpellier and member of IRSA. Researcher at CeaQ (Centre d'Étude sur l'Actuel et le Quotidien) Sorbonne University of Paris where he founded and directs the GRIS (Groupe de Recherche sur l'Image en Sociologie). Visiting Professor at USP – University of Sao Paulo (Brazil). He is the author of *La ville dans tous ses états* (CNRS Éditions, 2013). He is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Néstor García Lázaro

Néstor García Lázaro is a PhD student in History at the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain). Now, is carrying out his Phd Thesis about the illegal political propaganda (press, leaflets, banners, posters, graffiti) on Canary Islands in the late period of Dictatorship Franco Regimen and the after transition to Democracy (1959 – 1982). Besides political propaganda, he has been researching about graffiti in the university contexts, or public writings (monuments or plaques) like a practice of governmentality. He is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Lachlan MacDowall

An artist and cultural researcher at the University of Melbourne, where he holds the position of Coordinator, Graduate Studies and Research in the Centre for Cultural Partnerships, Faculty of the VCA and Music. His areas of research include the history and aesthetics of graffiti, the creative city and community-based art-making. He has published widely on graffiti, street art and urban creativity, including as a contributor to the two book-length studies of Australian graffiti: Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer's King's Way: The Beginnings of Australian Graffiti: Melbourne 1983-1993 (2010) and Christine Dew's Uncommissioned Art (2007), which includes 60 of his photographs. In 2005 he published "In Praise of 70K: Cultural Heritage and Graffiti Style," a much-cited article on the relationship between graffiti as an aesthetic object and a form of cultural heritage. He is currently writing a book on the contemporary policy, architectural and new media contexts of graffiti and street art, titled *The End of Graffiti*. He is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Thomas Northoff

Born 1947 in Vienna, living there as a writer and cultural scientist. Main subject: Graffiti Research. Dissertation: "Word graffiti: Textures of unofficial messages in the public area. Identity repertoire and means of transport of the ethnic demarcation". He has been establishing the "Austrian graffiti archive for literature, art and research" since 1983, which represents probably the largest collection of text graffiti from numerous countries, with approx. 80,000 proofs. International lecture activities, teaching and several book publications. Conception and organization of several graffiti symposiums ("The language at the walls I, II and III", 1992, 1993, 1998), with which for the first time in Austria Graffiti Research was presented to a broad audience as an independent branch of science. He is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Axel Philipps

PhD, is researcher at the Leibniz University of Hanover (Germany) with research interests in visual sociology, periphery, resistance and science studies. He is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Christoph Pilz

B. A. in social sciences, is currently studying sociology (M.A.) at the University of Bremen (Germany). His research interests are sociology of education, urban studies, street art, graffiti, social inequality and youth culture. He is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Pedro Soares Neves

Multidisciplinary and post graduate academic training in design and architecture (Barcelona and Rome), and Lisbon Faculty of Fine Arts research Centre CIEBA scholar. Specialised in participatory methodologies and informal and spontaneous pictorial appropriation of public space (eg, Graffiti). PhD (student) in Architecture at Engineering Institute of Lisbon, lecturer and urban designer / consultant at metropolitan (eg: road infrastructure IC19, 17) and municipal scale (eg, project CRONO), co-responsible for adapting to Lisbon's exhibition "The Street Belongs to all of us" (IVM, Françoise Asher) and winner of the first prize for the "No Rules Great Spot" Oporto. Also founder of the AP2 (Portuguese chapter of IAP2, International Association for Public Participation) and APAURB (Portuguese Urban Art association). He is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Simona Stano

PhD student in Sciences of Language and Communication at the University of Turin (Italy) and in Science of Communication at the "Università della Svizzera Italiana" (Switzerland). Since February 2013 she has also been spending a period of time as visiting research student at the University of Toronto (Canada). She graduated in Communication Studies at Turin University and she holds a postgraduate degree in Intercultural Studies from the "Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona" (UAB), Spain. She is currently writing a doctoral thesis on semiotics of food and cultural identity and has several (forthcoming and published) articles on the topic, many of which presented as papers at international symposia. She has also published several articles and some chapters in books on urban and visual studies, semiotics of culture, food studies, media studies and narratology. She is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Angela Tinwell

Programme Leader for the BA (hons) Animation and Illustration course at the University of Bolton. With research interests in the areas of animation, illustration, character design, video games art and design, human computer interaction, cyberpsychology and research methods and practice, much of Angela's research to date has centred on the Uncanny Valley phenomenon in realistic, human-like characters featured in animation and video games. Recent works include 'Facial expression of emotion and perception of the Uncanny Valley in virtual characters' for the journal Computers in Human Behavior, and 'The Uncanny Wall' published in 2011 by the International Journal of Arts and Technology. She is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Myrto Tsilimpounidi

Social researcher and photographer. Her research focuses on the interface between urbanism, culture and innovative methodologies. Post-doctoral fellow at the University of East London and the executive director of Ministry of Untold Stories. She is also co-editing *Remapping Crisis: A Guide to Athens*, a new book on crisis and its urban manifestations. She is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Alison Young

Teaches and researches in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Melbourne and is also an Honorary Professor in the School of Law at City University, London. She has an LL.B (Hons) from Edinburgh University and a Masters and PhD in Criminology from Cambridge University. She has been researching on graffiti and street art since 1997 and works in the areas of street art and graffiti, law, crime and culture; and law and image studies generally. She is the author of *Street Art/ Public City* (forthcoming), *The Scene of Violence* (2010), *Street/Studio* (2010), *Judging the Image* (2005), and *Imagining Crime* (1996). From 2012-2014, she is carrying out an ARC Discovery Project examining the reception of street art in the cultural field, focusing upon its transformative potential in urban space; its reception and interpretation in the domain of fine arts; and its impact upon the socio-legal regulation of public spaces. She has served as consultant in the provision of policy advice to numerous municipal organisations, including the City of Melbourne and the Victorian Law Reform Commission. She is a member of the Study Center INOPINATUM.

Photo credits

P. 201: Kurt Wenner

P. 203: Edgar Mueller

P. 206: Kurt Wenner

P. 208: Edgar Mueller

P. 221: Myrto Tsilimpounidi

P. 245 (Mario Morcellini): Sandra Onofri/adnkronos

P. 245 (Luca Borriello): Andrey Veselov

P. 245 (Christian Ruggiero): Giada Fioravanti

P. 253 (Angela Tinwell): Daniel Robin Rowles

The editor is available to beneficiaries with whom it has not been possible to communicate, as well as for any omissions or inaccuracies in the citation of sources.