

Art and Vandalism. CrossBreeding of Street Art (re)interpretation of street art from a sociological, aesthetical and interactivity perspective

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Abstract: *The goal of this paper is to approach the concept of street art from different perspectives: sociological, aesthetical and from the perspective of interactivity. From the huge variety of street art, I would choose a section - graffiti. The paper will raise more questions than will provide answers. This is due to the fact that the researched phenomenon is undergoing a process of identification and change at the same time making it difficult to be labeled. As a method of research, in the context of the qualitative research I will use the scientific and spontaneous observation, the analyses of some articles and documents that are dealing with this topic as well as some case studies that are mainly exposed in the media.*

Keywords: *graffiti, street art, social disorganization, anomie, aesthetical perspective.*

Preliminaries

Graffiti is a general term referring to calligraphically inscriptions or drawn images, engraved on walls, private or public buildings.¹ When it is not done with the approval of the owner it may be considered vandalism (which is illegal). Graffiti was used also in the Ancient Greek and in the Roman Empire.²

1 There are different techniques. We mention the most famous ones: Spray painting, Wheatpaste, Sticker art, Stencil graffiti, Reverse graffiti, Tagging, Woodblock graffiti, Stamp graffiti.

2 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graffiti>

I would try to analyze this phenomenon by answering some questions from sociology, art and the interactivity perspective considering that graffiti is at the intersection of these three directions of research.

From the **social disorganization** theory perspective my questions will tackle on the the debate regarding the way in which the street art (graffiti) is undermining authority and the social control system, as well as influencing the culture (emerging from subculture to counter culture).

Regarding the **anomie** theory I will try to discover if this type of movement violates or not the norms and expectations of society. I attempt to answer the question: to what extend is street art a deviant behavior that transforms the “authentically aliens” (if we consider the retreatism, the third deviant individual social adaptation described by Merton).³

From an **aesthetical perspective** I will operate with the distinctions regarding art as a chosen or open system, the questions regarding the autonomy of the aesthetical work of art and the non-referential language. What are the new tendencies in street art and what are the possible differences in street art in the West and in the East?

Regarding the **interactivity**, I will refer to the changes that occur in our “microwave community”⁴ with the possibility to connect between street artists and erase their anonymous status. I will also refer to the new trends in street art that are using new technologies (e.g. Graffiti 3D).

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Social disorganization

At the beginning of the 20th century, American sociologists (University of Chicago) were analyzing empirically the relation between the individual and the society. They accepted as causes of some behaviours that do not fit the social norms the following: the urbanism and industrialization, the migration from village to the city, the immigration of the Europeans, the development of the urban concentration.

3 Merton, R. (1957), „Social Theory and Social Structure”, Glencoe: The Free Press, p. 132, apud Marshall, Clinard, (1964), *Anomie și comportament deviant*, p. 10-21.

4 A term introduced by Ted Bolsinger when talking about blogging in the chapter *Blog as Microwave Community* in the book *New Media Frontier*, edited by John Mark Reynolds and Roger Overtone, Crossway Books, Wheaton Illinois, 2008, p. 113.

These new transformations caused rapid and major changes in society and some individuals had problems to adapt and to cope with these changes. „Habits can be formed only in a relatively stable environment”.⁵ Due to the rapid changes and alienation of the individuals under the false safety of anonymity, all that is new becomes a destruction factor that changes the *status quo* and challenges the agresivity of the individuals.

There are different views on this issue. The violent behaviours appeared after the new order in society and that can be seen more as a social desorganization characterized by lack of norms and rules that can unleash negative reactions from the population. „Delinquency is, in fact, in some sense the measure of failure of our community organizations to function”.⁶ As an opposite argument, some people claim that we cannot use stereotypes to define identity: „the notion of agresivity cannot always be translated with the antisocial, offensive behavior, and it cannot be always interpreted as a manifestation of a neuropsychiatric affection.”⁷

If we consider the theory of social disorganization, the street art reflects more the next step of it. Also called the art of delinquency, street art is mainly mirroring the crisis of urbanism. The anonymous individuals try to regroup in a gang and they are searching for their group identity rather than the individual one. This can be their way of fighting against the alienation imposed by living in a big city, still keeping their anonymity advantages as they are rebelling against the existing order. We can observe here an uprising by immitation as the street art is by its nature a perishable art, reflecting the rapid changes in society. Thus, street art should be approached from a social perspective, taking into consideration the changes happened there, as well as from the perspective of the changes that ocured in art and in the new technologies. From this point of view street art reflects best the interference of the three domains regarding the influences and the reactions.

In accordance with the social disorganization, the normative consensus of society appears and dissapears; so that the short term disorganization translates into deviance and on the long term implies a normative re-organization. From this point

5 Park, R. (2003), *Social Change and Social Disorganization*, in *The Study of Social Problems – Seven Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, p. 63.

6 Park, R. (2003), *Social Change and Social Disorganization*, in *The Study of Social Problems – Seven Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, p. 63.

7 „From a sociological and psichyatric point of view, agresivity is considered an esential, normal segment of the personality; it can be channeled, oppossed or redirected till the moment it escapes the control of reason... Hostility is a negative value, while agresivity can have a dialogue value, also positive and constructive”. (Virgil Dragomirescu (1976), *The Psychosociology of the Deviant Behaviour*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, p. 77, 88.

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Romanian to English are done by the author.

of view, street art is representative for the process. It was born as a vivid reaction to some norms, violating them and criticizing them explicitly, but implicitly it becomes a new way of reorganizing a community (especially a community of young people or teen agers) as it becomes a recognized and accepted movement. Böhringer would put it this way: "art reflects the religious and metaphysical meanings of the civilizations it belongs to [...] the forms of our art are the natural consequence of the mentality' structure."⁸ We will see in what way the transfer from one civilization to another is influencing street art due to the new tendencies, but also due to the new technologies and globalization.

Anomie

The French sociologist Emile Durkheim, the father of the modern sociology stated in the *The Rules of Sociological Method*: „the cause that determines a social act have to be searched for in the social acts that came before it, and not in the conscience case of the individual”.⁹ The accent moves from the individual to the relationship between the individual and the environment around him. Analyzing the suicide, Durkheim identifies four distinct conditions connected to the environment that are responsible for the cause of the alarming rate of suicide: egocentry, altruism, anomie and fatalism. Anomie refers to that state of society that is failing to offer order or constraint regarding the purposes and desires of the individuals from society.¹⁰

We wrote already about the gang that is the outcome of a massive urbanism. These gangs are marking the walls or the public buildings using the name of the band – as a *tag*. It can be seen as marking the territory. At the end of the 20th century there are more and more tags that cannot be traced back to a gang. The street artists started to have their individual tag „in order to build their reputation as artists or „writers”. The first researched cases of illegal tags were created with the spray or painting by an artist named *Cornbread* from Philadelphia. The spray became an important characteristic of the different styles that followed.”¹¹

A major contribution in the anomie tradition belongs to Robert Merton and his book *Social Structure and Anomie*. In his view there is a gap between the cultural purposes and the opportunities of the social structure. The individuals have different reactions when they are under social or cultural pressures: conformity, innovation, ritualism, isolation or revolt. Different from Durkheim, who would see the people

8 Aurel Codoban, forward to Hannes Böhringer, (2001), *În căutarea simplității: o poetică*, [Searching for Simplicity: Poetics], Idea

9 Durkheim, E. (1938), "The Rules of Sociological Method", University of Chicago Press, p. 110.

10 Durkheim, E. (1951), „Suicide”, New York: Free Press, p. 241-276.

11 <http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graffiti>

aspirations limited by the social constraints, Merton considers that it can be exactly the norms that can make people aspire for more.

Aspirations are cultural products and they are learnt in the family, at school or in the church and they are transmitted by the mass-media or the cultural life of the society. Innovation is the mark of the people who accepted the dominant culture purpose of success, but who are choosing illegitimate ways to reach success. In many cases, the gangs from the outskirts belong to this category. When the young people realize that they do not have any chance to succeed legally in society, they are looking for alternatives. The desire to have power or authority can bring to the violation of rules. In this way innovation is born, but it can be a deviant innovation. Merton offers the example of the gangs who are into organized crime and who, by pushing back the capitalist entrepreneurship are imitating the economical prosperity modeled in society by breaking the rules.

The street artists validate this theory, but using graffiti they convey a critical message towards society and the social conventions. Beyond breaking the rules, the street art has also a message as a reaction to these conventions. Also, their



role of a manifest is underlined by the fact that these messages appear on public buildings most of the times or in public squares. Dave the Chimp (one of the first artist who introduced the brush into the street art) published a series of monographers entitled *Art of Rebellion*, first published in 2004. In this way, illegal acts of urban art become the content of an accepted legal book.

According to Merton, those who belong to reatreatism can be considered members of society “only in a fictitious way: they are part of society, but they do not belong to society.”¹² They escape from society and give up the social purposes or the major normative acts. They try to caricaturize some aspects of the social life and they are pushing the limits. Breaking the rules – because most of the times graffiti is seen in forbidden places – is also an attempt to give a colorful and a playful touch that contrast the serious and rigorous appearance of the institutions/public buildings and they are questioning the norms that they represent. The image is a catalyst that produces a symbolic reduction, a sequestration of the bigger image on which it appears as “printed”. The ontological foundation of the graffiti image is society. These drawings are framed in buildings, public transportation or other

12 Merton, R. (1957), „Social Theory and Social Structure”, Glencoe: The Free Press, page 132, apud Marhall, Clinard, (1964), *Anomie and Deviant Behaviour*, p. 10-21.

public spaces, and at the same time they address the masses, not the individual. They are starting and ending in the social, cutting the artist outside, giving him the role of an observer entitled to criticize.

Different from Durkheim, Merton believes that the biological side of man can explain the deviant behavior. He is dividing the social reality in culture and society. Some men have disadvantages in their strive for success. He considers that there is more likely to find crime and delinquency on the edge of society where individuals have difficulties to access conventional and legitimate means to reach success. But not all of those who rebel are delinquents. Some are "future heroes" that raise against the *status quo* of society and who can be later on glorified for their contribution to the progress or change. Today we meet street artists who are creating exclusively for exhibitions and organized competitions. We can talk now about redefining street art as it is not the mark of the gangs anymore.

East and West

The gangs were formed mainly in the slums. But similar to hip-hop, street art succeeded in launching some individuals and it was for them the only chance they could get. The street art produces iconographical codes with cultural connotations. The drawings become photos. Their realism offers them credibility and power and this power is transferred to their author that is tagged in the created image. In this way they step out of their anonymous status, but they stay anonymous, they enter the public and center arena, though they are peripheral. I remember Miklos Peter-nác's words: "any photography is only a part of a bigger picture that does not exist. It gives frame only to the singular and repetitive second of the exterior world, the 'now and here', 'anywhere', 'anytime'. The viewer is 'anybody' ... there is no image in general terms, what exists is only the concrete image."¹³

In the States the deviant behaviour cannot be explained solely by lack of chance, but it is also based on the popular belief that everybody has to reach a certain welfare. The gap is formed between this belief and the real means to live it out and that leads to a certain level of frustration that can unleash the deviant behaviour. Robert E.L. Faris și H. Warren Dunham in *Ecology of Urban Deorganization* consider that the social desorganization is found mostly in the „zone in transition”¹⁴ where people lack social relationships, social control or where there are phenomena of transition and migration. The emigrant districts are in this specific category. The

13 Miklos Peter-nác, "About Photography with no Purpose", (from his speech at the opening of the photo-compositions exhibition of Christian Schad, on the 6th of November in Budapest, in Mai Manó Ház), quoted in *Balkon* no 8, 2001

14 Robert E. L. Faris și H. Warren Dunham, (1965), „The Ecology of Urban Deorganization”, in *Mental Disorders in Urban Areas*, The University of Chicago Press, p. 66.

social control is functional in the first generation, but the next generations are actually „men without a culture“¹⁵ who are separated from their parents' culture but they have not assimilated the new one. Shaw and Mckay consider also that a cause of the social dezorganization can be the trasformations in the composition of the populations, regarding nationality and natality.¹⁶ One of the most famous street artists from Romania is Omar. He was born in Bagdad in 1985 and moved to Bucharest in his childhood, where, together with the Romanian-Iranian called Saint founded the *Oilers' Crew*, a prolific duo of graffiti artists. He started to paint at 15 and he became shortly one of the most appreciated street artists in Romania. In his imagery, Batman, Robin and other super-heroes are transformed into offenders escaped from prison.¹⁷

Considered one of the fathers of graffiti, Jean-Michel Basquiat is the first American painter whose paintings appeared as graffiti on the streets, metros and the trains on New-York. Basquiat was the most successful street artist. His artistic works made it to the New York galleries in the '80s. His father was from Haiti and his mother from Puerto Rico. If we take into consideration his birth date – 1960 – we can easily correlate the main points of this theory. In the '80s he becomes successful as a painter, also confirming the theory regarding the possibility of social recognition and success. He was using the spray for the first exhibitions as well as the brush. He collaborated with the American artist Andy Warhol and the Italian artist Francesco Clemente.

The delinquent subculture is „non-utilitarian, malicious and negativist.“¹⁸ Katherine Williams considers that this subculture was overrated. The individual person takes the decision to commit the crime based on the individual motifs, not on the gang.¹⁹ „The social explanation of antisocial acts aimed to annalize two distinct situations: on the one hand the necessity to offer an overall, global understanding of some specific cases that had to do with visible disfunctions in the behaviour of the offenders, as well as in the areas that were frequented by them, and, on the other hand, it aimed to find as much as it was possible, the causes and the elements that triggered the specific antisocial acts.“²⁰

In CBS News from November 2000 we can read that 40% of the private buildings from Paris were marked by graffiti. The police declared war to those who were doing this. There is an interesting and hard to make distinction between the “real

15 Ibidem, p. 72.

16 Shaw și Mckay, *Social Dezorganization*, in Radzinowicz and Wolfgang, *Crime and Justice*, vol. I, p. 415.

17 http://www.icr.ro/streetart_ro_ny

18 Cohen, Albert, *The Delinquent Subculture*, in Wolfgang, Savitz and Johnson, *The Sociology of Crime and Deliquency*, p. 286.

19 Wiliams, Katherine, (1997), *Manual of Criminology*, Blackstone Press Ltd, p. 364.

20 Elena Bărbulescu, Velemir Radovan, (1987), *Education and Social Re-integration*, Scrisul românesc, Craiova, p. 98.

urban artists” and the ugly scribbling that are considered “symbol of delinquency and boredom”.²¹

I mention here that many acts of vandalizing the public and private buildings are offences that have nothing to do with art and have to be punished as such. I consider that the time period in which the street art developed also imposed a certain labeling. “Contextualizing is another major function that represents a constant interpretative pressure on the events. Including a certain topic in a certain context and associating it with other events having a negative or a positive connotation would lead to a total manipulation of the entire informational situation.”²² At the beginning of the 70s, the sociologist Hugo Martinez, professor at the City College in New York had an intuition about the potential of these „street artists” and he founded the Graffiti Artists Union with the purpose to promote the talented artists by organizing exhibitions. “Deviance, as well as beauty dwells in the eyes of the seer. There is nothing inherent deviant in a human act; but something is considered deviant because some people labelled it as such.”²³ The article entitled „Graffiti Parade” from the New York magazine (1973) written by Richard Goldstein was a public recognition of these „street artists”.²⁴ Also, the artist Keith Haring, interested in graffiti became friend with Jean-Michel Basquiat. He used graffiti in different parts of the world, including the States, Europe and Australia. He was even arrested many times for different collages with famous newspaper titles (a well-known one is “Regan killed by a hero policeman”). He made these collages using chalk or marker. The fact that a famous artist showed interest in graffiti contributed to the visibility of this movement, but at the same time imposed a certain intentionality, a direction and a more aware engagement with the protest from the graffiti message.

In the 80s, the American society faced an increased drug addiction and weapon traffic. In this context, the streets became dangerous, and by association, any gang activity was easier to be considered delinquency. Many times the artistic manifestation – music or graffiti – were mainly a recovery, transforming the creative energies and channeling them. At the same time it is difficult to find the line between the two sides.²⁵ There were many attempts to stop this phenomenon. It was forbidden by law to sell painting to kids and the shopkeepers were demanded to keep the painting in special places in order to avoid theft.

21 *Paris tries to scrub out street art* - <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2000/05/12/graffitiparis000512.html>

22 Doru Pop, *Mass media și politica, [Mass-Media and Politics]*, (Institutul European, 2000), p. 29.

23 J. L. Simmons, (1969), *Deviants*, p. 4.

24 <http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graffiti>

25 Jean-Michel Basquiat died because of an overdose in his studio from Manhattan, in 1988, when he was 27.

The fact that this is a perishable art, allows it to react to the current events. Also, few artists were known individually and that gave the possibility to anybody to have a graffiti experience. Sometimes this impulse comes also from the desire to change the roles. Lately it became a trendy experience, appealing to any teen ager. It does not belong necessarily to the gang. Baudrillard would put it in this way: "realism does not have an objective reality. After removing the illusion, realism is not real anymore."²⁶

Beyond these challenges of street art regarding the rebound between art and vandalism, even more difficult to label is street art from Easter Europe. In this part of the world, street art did not cover all the distinct steps of the Western street art. The Easter European street art is rather a hybrid product, trying to copy the Western tendencies, echoing the same revolt. But the globalization is altering the differences and homogenizes graffiti around the world.

The cultural and artistic context is struggling between two tendencies: trying to recuperate the art from the communist times as a national inheritance and lining up for the new tendencies of the international art. After a transitional neurosis and the attempt to find moral justification for reviving the art from communist times and creating a new reference, a war began against the new tendencies that seemed to be too aggressive for the short period of freedom.

Culture is often received according to the other socio-political realities. We identify a political, a geographical and a socio-cultural map. The inter-relationships between them create new debates, new spaces and new challenges. It is similar to the game of censorship that artists need in order to create something that will break this censorship. Without this game the art does not exist. The journey of Romanian contemporary art is a search for identity, trying to find reference points and new representations of the concept „national”. We face exactly an event in two steps: disorder and re-organizing. "The cultural identity (Western Identity) was conceived both from an ethnocentric and anti-ethnocentric point of view."²⁷ There are different debates regarding the role of mass-media in molding the public opinion: "It is true that we do not find the meaning in things, but, on the contrary, freedom is the element that gives value to the circumstances through our deeds."²⁸

Lately, between *identity* and *alterity* a third concept slowly steals in, *multiple* or *random identity* [...] Culturally speaking, *multiple identity*, as an element of the so-

26 Jean Baudrillard, (2001), *Paroxistul indiferent [The Indifferent Paroxist]*, colecția Panaptikon, Idea, p. 93.

27 "Europe: An Epilogue?" in Brian Nelson, David Roberts and Walter Veit, ed, "The Idea of Europe: Problems of National and Transnational Identity", Berg, New York și Oxford, 1992, page 14, apud Maria Todorova, "Balcanii și balcanismul", Humanitas, 2000, p. 294.

28 Christine Le Bihan, *Marile probleme ale eticii, [The Great Issues of Ethics]*, (Institutul European, 1999), p. 39.

much discussed *Balkan mentality* could be still possible if we take it into consideration as a product of the so-called 'civic culture' and which - Predrag Matvejevitich has drawn our attention to lately – it is harder to reach to than one might think. And this is so because a certain type of discourse oriented to the past manipulates us, marked by theological visions and stereotypes.²⁹ Professor Muthu underlines the difference between the identity of being (*identité de l'être*) and the identity of the things done (*identité du faire*). We can notice the role stereotypes play in defining identity: between to *be* and to *do*.

The Aesthetic Perspective

The implications of street art – from the protest against the urban consumerism/commercialization to the feeling of delight regarding space, from innocent messages such as "Tom loves Jane," or „Class of '73" to the aggressive tags of some gangs or messages of racial hatred – led to the communication with a large public. The modern graffiti is divided in three categories: *junk graffiti*, *gang graffiti*, and *tagging*. The last two categories are more difficult to separate lately. Tagging implies fame, artistic touch and revolt. There is also another division: *political graffiti*, *gang graffiti*, *art graffiti*.



To what extent do we encounter the urban passivity being challenged by these visual shocks? Could we consider street art as a reverberation of the urban spirit directly in the streets, with no pretensions? Could we talk about the purity of street art as it is not done for money? The street art, as well as the pop-art claims a public space for an aesthetic purpose.

On the other hand, we notice the other side, the invading side of street art that is besieging the city. In an article of a New York newspaper, on the 8th of January 1992, Q. Wilson, a UCLA criminologist states that some of the signs of the disorder in society is: graffiti, the abandoned cars, the broken windows, the waste that is not disposed – all these determine the isolation of some areas. In this way some islands are formed where the crimes increase and there is a vicious circle of offence. The fact that graffiti is making its way into the museum can raise other questions. Is graffiti still considered graffiti even if it becomes legal? We undergo now the reversed journey of the postmodern art that made its way from the museum into the public space. The street art journey is a crossbred.

29 Mircea Muthu, *Circumscrieri V, [Circumferences V]*, quoted in *Apostrof [Apostrophe]*, (no. 12, 2002), p. 14.

The artist Evol draws the attention towards the collective memory of the places, an open memory that is always in the process of decoding. This continuous changing does not rule out the imminence of death. The urban exploration has in the background the “passing by”, that continuous noise in a graffiti transcription. And though is a part of the collective memory, it still has that very personal mark. This is another paradox of the street art: the collective/personal rhythm, similar to that of central/ peripheral. Dave Warnke, creator of “stickers”, created a program called *Street Styles* – a program that incorporates theories about the history, the techniques and the styles of street art (in connection to its background). For Warnke, the difference between art and vandalism is made by the possibility of selling and communication. His motto is: “Be creative. Work hard. Be nice. Have fun.”

Interactivity

As we recall the key moments in the modern art history, from the flux art to the minimalist art (Duchamp), the anarchitecture (the riot of Iu Gordon-Matta Clark in 1976 against the urban order³⁰), the deconstructivism etc we can notice the process in which art is assuming the functions of philosophy and religion. Art denies the concept of *beauty* and becomes art against art.

A similar transformation occurred in the mass-media if we consider the process towards the citizen journalism.³¹

We are continuously exposed to new information and the transformation of the public/ receiver in author/ transmitter. Some of the roles are not only for entertainment, but are replacing the old written papers (e.g. online applications such as: e-Government, e-Petition). In the era of the new technologies, the simple person captures the power that mass-media owns. The internet became a medium that facilitates the spread of information and opinions. It is well known the case of the Romanian journalist Cornel Nistorescu, that wrote “Ode to America” on the 24th of September and he started a global phenomenon (it was after the 9/11). Also the phenomenon “Numa-Numa Dance”, that was a clip created by Gary Brolsma after the song “Dragostea din Tei” of the band O-Zone and which went world wide, having more that two million visitors in less than three months.³²

The challenges that come together with the postmodern capitalism, dominated by virtual experiences make it very unclear what is the difference between reality and fantasy and the distinction is impossible: „We deal here with the postmodern

30 It would be interesting to study more the revolt against urban planning in contrast with the revolt against urban dezorganization

31 Bowman, S. and Willis (2003), C. *We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information, The Media Center at the American Press Institute*

32 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numa_Numa

capitalism, which is less dominated by cultural engagements, but rather by a nihilistic game between what is fascinating and what is fearful.”³³

Some artist started to use more and more computer programs in order to create art against art. In 1997, the American artist Peter Halley installed a computer in the Museum of Modern Art from New York and the public could alter the images or the colours of his works of art. The art of our century is recreating. The image is a computer program, the author is the public. We are confronted with a different language – the infralanguage that is capable to alter the margins and to unfall as a continuous process of adapting, as a vortex. (Paul Virilio used the concept of “technological time-space”).³⁴

An interesting example is Geko, a 32 years old artist from New-York who is manipulating the ads during the night. He is using a mixture of graffiti, cubism and surrealism, influenced by Basquiat, Picasso and Dali. By manipulating the advertisements he is in fact criticizing the extreme materialism and his illegal action is underlined by the fact that he is operating during the night. Due to the fact that the ads he is operating upon are lighted during the night, his intervention could not be easily noticed during the day. He is also working as a designer for famous urban fashion agencies. These super positions of live urban art and industrial urban art represent the transgression of street art in a legitimate accepted territory.

The internet is a powerful tool and it is also enabling street artists from all over the world to connect and network. Via internet, graffiti, that is by definition addressing a small public and is perishable due to the weather, becomes a “visible” piece of art, for which the witness is no longer a “betrayers” in Lyotard terms.³⁵ The gang is moving now on the social media platforms and it does not belong to a certain area anymore. Street artists form a community online (sorted by different styles or interests) and often change the public buildings for the screen and the virtual protest. From this point of view the vandalism side of street art is reducing, at the same time loosing something from the initial identity. At the same time it gains on the artistic side as we encounter nowadays 3D Graffiti which requires different skills and a total different environment for the display.

Conclusions

Beyond clasifications and stereotypes, the supremacy is taken by identity. Culture is often received according to the other socio-political realities. We identify a political,

33 Pfohl, Stephen (1994), *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, New York: McGraw Hill, p. 289.

34 Paul Virilio,(2001), *Spațiul critic [Critical Space]*, colecția Panaptikon, Idea

35 A very good case study, with all the implications regarding the organization of this event as well as the media reactions would be the exhibition organized by the Romanian Cultural Insitute from New York, “Freedom for Lazy People” (18th of June – 15th of August 2008)

a geographical and a socio-cultural map. The inter-relationships between them create new debates, new spaces and new challenges.

The cross breeding of street art can convince us that each culture is able to decode itself as a formative and ritualic act. We tried to analyze the aspects of street art that are at the border between art and delinquency. The message of street art is that of revolt, but the degrees of this revolt can help us classify it in a category or in the other. Starting as a sub-culture, street art transformed in counter-culture. Trying to undermine the social authority, this phenomenon is doomed on the one hand, but on the other hand it started to criticize in an original manner exactly the instances which can stop it. The „authentic aliens“ are the former delinquents that are invited nowadays to different competitions. The social deorganization theory has its own limits. As we noticed, some artists are going against the social organization, against different institutions, against political doctrines. Still, even if it is true only for a small number, street art offers the access to culture and even to success for some individuals. We can differentiate those destructive tendencies in which the authors are vandalizing the buildings without any art, without transmitting any message besides violence. The reaction of society is double, as street art is. Some would accept the term „art“ to define graffiti, some would condemn it and declare it as delinquency. In any case, the society reaction starts a chain reaction from the authors of graffiti.

The limits of the sociological theories that intersect street art have to do with this duality. They approach street art as a social problem, ignoring the artistic aspects that might be involved.

The methodological limits have to do with the fact that there are few scientific works that would approach street art from both perspectives: art and delinquency. The materials about street art are clearly divided in two: those which are found on the internet and that support this movement (we could interpret that this means of communication is more used by young people that are promoting this trend using different multimedia tools), and those that are read in the traditional press dealing with the illegal aspects of this manifestations. These two perspectives are distinct and vehement, but the perspective that incorporates both angles is rarely found.

Street art undergoes the journey from being peripheral to becoming central, from community (gang) to the person. Maybe that what Paul Ricoeur said defines best the experience of creating street art. This experience can be seen as an event. Trying to define the event, Paul Ricoeur proposes in *Event and Meaning* a model in two steps. The first moment marks the occurrence of the event and that is producing a gap, a disorder in the existing order. The second moment, dependent on the first, requires the re-establishment of order and meaning; the event ought to be “recognized, honored and exalted as the pick of meaning”.³⁶ This happens when

36 Paul Ricoeur, “Evenement et sens” in *L'événement en perspective*, (sous la dir de Jean-Luc Petit, Editions de L'EHESS, Paris, 1991), 52, quoted in Ciprian Mihali, *Anarhia sensului – o*

graffiti was produced, and historically, when this movement of the street art reached the museum. The Western experiences of street art are different from the Eastern ones. Yet, the borders are altered because of the new tendencies of the street art, but definitely because the new technologies and the globalization.

The use of internet changes the dynamics of street art. The gangs are translated now into virtual communities, the street artists replace the buildings with the online display of artistic and computer skills. Also, they organize exhibitions and take the street art from outdoor indoor and use the new technologies to create content for their protest.

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