

THE ROLE OF STREET ART IN URBAN SPACE RECOGNITION

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ABSTRACT: *Street (urban) art is an art form that consists of graffiti, murals, mosaics in urban space. As the process of globalization increasingly affects the form of the city, urban identities have become less noticeable. At the same time, different social forces are trying to create an urban space. In the formation of urban identity, the appearance of the city plays a key role in creating specific spaces inscribed in material artifacts. One of these practices of creating, defending and expanding the free space of social everyday life are works of street art. As a symbolic and moral challenge to the dominant role of the city government, works of street art can be an indicator of changing urban space, as they represent a conflict over the use of public space. Placing art in a public urban space can serve as a means of separating the physical and social characteristics of a place. Street art participates in creating the uniqueness of the location and thus the identity of the city.*

Keywords: *Street art, urban space, city, graffiti, identity*

INTRODUCTION

Street (urban) art is a comprehensive and diverse artistic expression in the urban environment, which derives directly from the art of graffiti in two-dimensional or three-dimensional form (Lewisohn, 2008). When street art became an integral part of the city during the 1960s, its role in public space gained in importance. Street art should also be viewed outside of aesthetic frameworks in order to determine its role in areas of public space.

In this paper, different types of creative, artistic and cultural activities that are separated in public spaces of cities are studied. Street (urban, urban, public) art is a contemporary art form that has developed in cities. The city has always been an environment where cultural manifestations of each historical period met and its image was transformed due to different social, political and economic situations (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016). The focus is on the way in which public spaces represent opportunities for art and culture, as well as how citizens, artists and other urban actors can participate in the creation and development of urban environments. Man and the physical environment he created himself maintain a relationship of reciprocity and interaction, which is why the environment is a reflection of the man who created it, and in modern times it has influenced him to some extent. The research consists of a theoretical framework within which definitions and historical development of graffiti, murals in urban areas are elaborated. Art has always been associated with the political, economic and religious aspects of the time in which it was created. Street art has deep historical roots in

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many cultures (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016). The perception of street art and the moment of the evolution of graffiti into an art movement are taken into consideration.

It is important to know the characteristics of the observer as well as how street art finds inspiration in urban space and becomes a form of community communication. Street art is art integrated into public space. All spaces except those that are strictly private can be considered public spaces (Hilde, 1996). Public street art throughout the world's cities points to contemporary artistic and aesthetic tendencies. The paper also discussed the issue of regulatory and legislative street art as well as the political aspect of creation.

DEFINITION OF STREET VISUAL IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Art in public spaces, known as “street art” or “public art”, usually means any kind of art, different techniques and motifs, but always realized in a public place, in an appropriate urban environment (Read, 1980). In public spaces, we encounter various types of artistic interventions, permanent or temporary - time-limited - characters, such as graffiti, murals on facades integrated into the architecture of the building (Hristić & Lazar, 2012).

Graffiti precedes street art, and street art draws its inspiration from graffiti (Lu, 2018). The word *graffiti* comes from the Italian word *graffare*, meaning scratching on the surface (Hunter, 2018), which comes from the term *sgraffito*, which refers to the sgraffito technique - or scratched pattern on the facades of Renaissance houses (Gutierrez & Marcos, 2020). The term “graffiti” was first coined in the mid-19th century (Champion, 2017), while the idea of graffiti has always coexisted with other artistic achievements and has been widely used throughout art history to print murals with political, sexual and ghost messages (Gleaton, 2012).

Today, the term graffiti, a relative of street art, is associated with a certain form of graffiti called stylistic writing or contemporary graffiti. This “American graffiti” that has spread beyond the United States has become quantitatively the most dominant in the Western world since the late 1960s. *Style writing* is writing labels in related urban areas, usually by spray. Street art studies deal with historical or traditional graffiti, and when the term graffiti is used, it mainly refers to graffiti (*Style Writing*) for writing labels (*tags*). Murals (painted graffiti) are works of art painted directly on the walls (derived from the Spanish word for wall) (Awad & Wagoner, 2017). Also, the term mural is synonymous with graffiti. The term mural is considered to be a depiction of artistic elements, made with different painting techniques, which have different themes on public surfaces. Graphite is a broader term than the term mural, but graphite can also be a mural (Turajlić, 2018).

PERCEPTION OF STREET ART

Graffiti is perceived not only visually, but with multiple senses (Awad & Wagoner, 2017). Graffiti is considered a highly autonomous and democratic mode of communication. Being in a public space, works of street art are intended for a wide range of people who would not be able to communicate directly with each other. If legal powers are not used, it is a form of communication that circumvents censorship and is used to convey political ideas (Hunter, 2018). This can happen openly through text or more subtly through drawing. In cities congested with advertising (Banksy, 2005), street art is an important forum for free expression (Manco, 2004). Graffiti has power in terms of its ability to send a clear message and get people's attention, because it appears as original. Opposite the graffiti are corporate ads that are already recognizable.

Another important aspect of graffiti is where it is placed. Graffiti removal is an attempt to eliminate and prevent further graffiti formation in the settlement. Removing graphics is called “the buff”. Therefore, discussions about graffiti are often fierce, as they reflect the larger struggles over urban space policy, especially controlling public space. Street art is a complex social issue, in which there is a wide range of perspectives

and conflicting interests between different parts of the community about their value (White, 2001). Part of the problem comes with graffiti status, aesthetic practice, and criminal activity, with the line between art and vandalism constantly changing (Halsey & Young, 2002). Based on a case study in Western Australia, a distinction was made between graffiti (urban) art and graffiti as an act of vandalism (Morgan, 2009). Urban art refers to the legal version of graffiti, to the extent that it is done with the consent of the property owner. It is an art form that requires skill, includes a strong aesthetic dimension and is a legitimate form of contemporary art (White, 2001). Other types of graffiti have no purpose other than marking or destroying public property (Morgan, 2009).

The ways in which people view graffiti are uneven (Cresswell, 1996). Graffiti and murals in “legal, permitted” places are considered acceptable, while graffiti and murals in “illegal” places are considered unacceptable, although we are talking about the same form of graffiti. The creation of street art is also associated with resistance during certain events such as riots, protests, totalitarianism and government repression. As such, it can be understood as a form of appropriation, representation and restitution of urban space. Creating urban street art can be one of the ways to express the creative activity of citizens. Art enables (self) identification and (self) promotion among other artists and passers-by who evaluate and criticize the work of others.

In order to better perceive street art, the processes by which spatial forms are created and changed in space must be understood. Urban spaces can be viewed in terms of cognition that focuses on the attributes of the physical space of the city and conscious beliefs about how a particular place is used or what its purpose is. The physical environment has the length, width and height of objects, which plays an important role in the perception of street art. The architectural features of cities and their parts are a reflection of the conflict between different groups in society. In other words, urban environments represent symbolic and spatial manifestations of wider social forces. From this relationship, the observer’s perception of space and subjective mental image of the city is formed. What is being created is urban aesthetics on the city streets, which are used as a space for displaying art.

Thus, negative perception and negative attitude towards graffiti, or the absence of graffiti in urban space as such, can be an indicator of the crisis of urban identity, because they reflect the absence of rebel space as humanistic-emancipatory potential (Đukić, 2020). Street art tends to be intriguing to passers-by, to question the meaning and who could be the creator of the work. Street art is fascinating, it carries a wealth of social and political values that influenced its creation. As a consequence, art is a product of current circumstances in a community, city, state or world. With the spread of the influence of street art, the streets become more ornate, more decorative, which implies that passers-by will experience a better end. Also, it can make their trip very curious, as street art is fleeting, and what has been at a given location for months will probably disappear after a short period of time. The appearance of the graffiti is constantly changing and will be damaged by external exposure. Unlike works of art that are in museums to be carefully preserved, works of street art have a shelf life from the moment they are painted on an existing surface, sooner or later their appearance will be impaired (Gutierrez & Marcos, 2020). When that happens, residents and passers-by will notice the difference between the space before and after the graffiti disappeared.

Analyzing Gustafson’s model of the meaning of a place (Fig. 1), “person” is one of the objects around which the processes of meaning are formed, and through experience it connects with another object, physical space, e.g. identification of a particular physical space that part of the city. Community (others) is the third object, which many scientists have proposed as a source of collective identification of physical space (Gustafson, 1982).

The research of urban space laid the foundation for the construction of mental maps as a tool for recognizing urban structures (Szostak, 2010). The city can be presented as a mental map consisting of a large number of parts with pronounced socio-economic characteristics. The method of mental mapping revealed the role of works of art in recognizing urban space. People need a tool for recognizing space in order to get to know and orient themselves in space (Szostak, 2010). Young generations of artists have realized the importance of collaborating with urban planners and museums (Roberts, 1998). The concept of “art coming out of the museum on the streets of the city” has gained momentum in all world cities, with the aim of bringing artistic master-

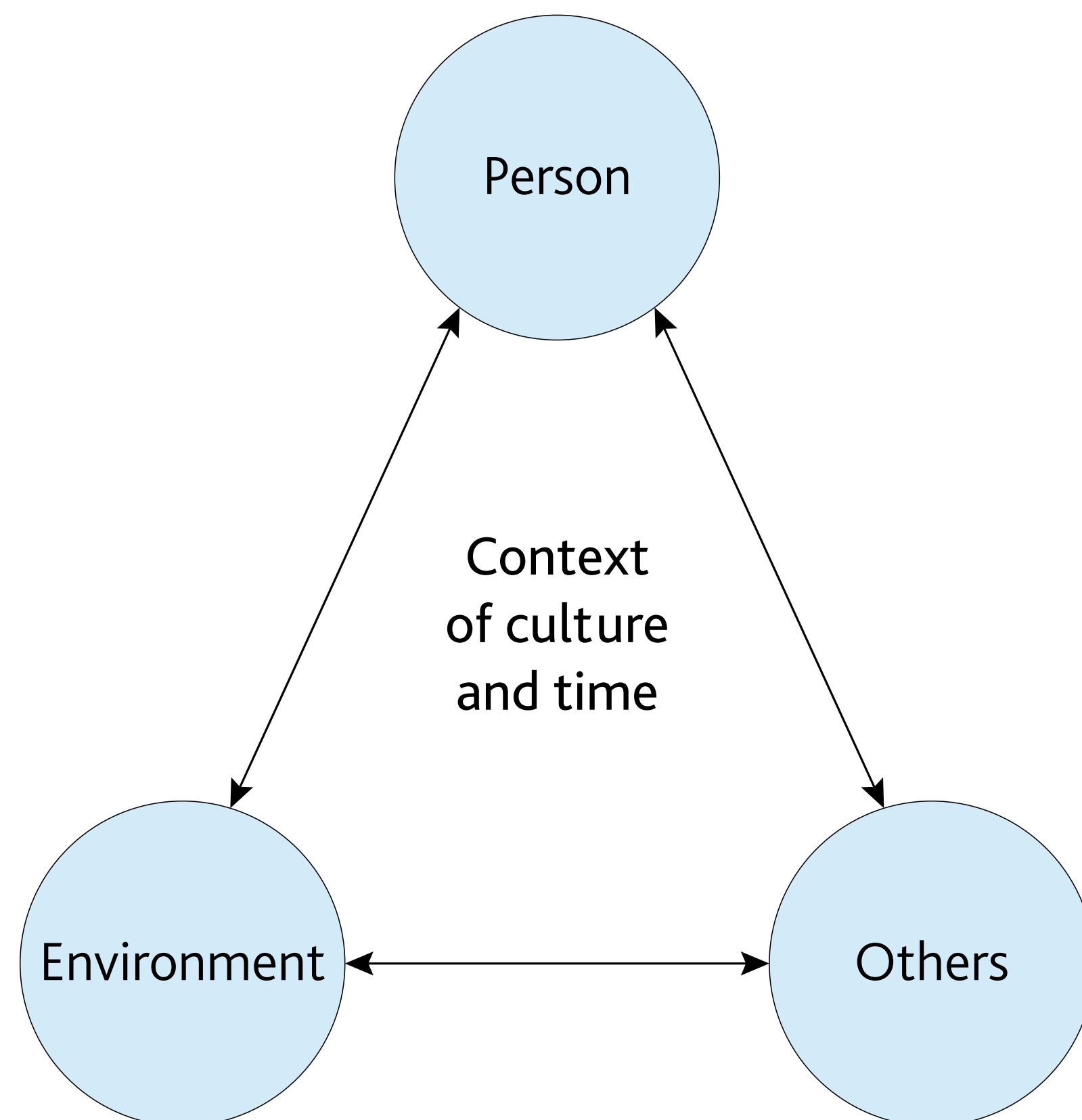


Figure 1. Gustafson's model of the meaning of a place
 Source: Gustafson, 1982.

pieces closer to the citizens. In this way, the need for their works to be incorporated into urban spaces with the professional help of planners and museums is clearly defined, and thus become a recognizable landmark of a certain urban space. As a part of the city, street art contributes to the construction of the image of the city and for that reason cannot be separated from its cultural and contextual existence (Gutierrez & Marcos, 2020).

STREET VISUAL ART IN URBAN PUBLIC SPACE

As a human activity, art transforms space. By transforming space, art proves to be an exemplary practice, because it does not destroy space, but enriches and humanizes it (Galović & Gostović, 1990).

Wall graffiti can be an indicator of social attitudes and preferences for behavior in space (Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974). Motives and themes, symbols and ideas, and even the material in which the work was created depend on the social environment. Through the theme and symbols, the demands of time and society intersect, regardless of whether it is history, everyday life, portrait, pop culture, etc. In the history of art, themes have changed as society has changed. Therefore, the ideas that artists express through their work belong to the social environment in which they live and create. As graffiti spreads across the planet, it often mixes with the local tradition of art and writing and becomes something special, a combination of the global and the local (Baird & Taylor, 2011).

The evolution of modern graffiti dates back to the early 1960s in New York City (Castleman, 1982). In the 1960s, the economic crisis in the United States triggered a series of political and social problems caused by the difference between rich and poor, apartheid and rebel culture (Kim, 2018). In the late 1960s, black and Latin American teenagers broke through the boundaries of traditional graffiti and used pseudonyms and street names (such as TAKI 183) to print graffiti on New York buses and subways, attracting the attention of the media and residents throughout the city (Bih et al. 2018; Bonito & Giulio, 2006). Graffiti was considered the most intuitive product of the Western social crisis and the resistance of the citizens at that time. However, graffiti has not disappeared, but some graffiti artists have “transformed” it into a decorative art form and become an important part of urban street art and youth subculture (Wei & Liu, 2018). Soon, the works of art on the

wall caused cultural euphoria and the promotion of new artistic possibilities (Deni, 2014). The appearance of graffiti has since become widespread in cities around the world and graffiti is created with different purposes and motivations of authors (expressing the author's painting abilities, political activism, marking territory, expressing identity and creativity) (Kujundić, 2006). Although still a subversive and largely illegal movement, through artists and art lovers, street art has taken its place in the world of contemporary art. The reason for this change is the high degree of aesthetic ability, which is vital for completing one of the more complex works (Radwan, 2018). It could be said that this aesthetic movement achieved a socio-cultural significance that surpassed all others in the middle of the twentieth century.

PUBLIC URBAN SPACE AS AN INSPIRING FRAMEWORK FOR STREET ART

Urban space consists of buildings bordering the streets and squares that serve as a place where all public activity takes place. The street gives identity and origin, forms the character of the neighborhood, becomes a catalyst for culture and lifestyle, it is a place of interaction where people gather and circulate freely (Kostof, 1999). Urban public space is filled with architectural elements, projected urban design, and in that way a purposefully organized space is created. Today, the design of urban spaces (especially public ones) is approached from the aspect of interdisciplinarity, both in the pursuit of connecting different spatial elements (city, block, street, building) and discipline (artists, architects, planners, designers), all with the aim of improving life in the city (Krier, 1991).

The artist creates his strategy of action in urban space through graffiti and murals (Weisberg, 2014). Graffiti and murals have the ability to communicate with a modern urban individual or group with the city and the urban population (Knežević, 2017). Through graffiti, the simplest way is to express one's opinion and one's own presence in society (Toborek, 2016). The work is then exposed to an audience, including pedestrians and authorities who seize, interpret and destroy them (Awad & Wagoner, 2017). Street art consists of small formats that force the observer to focus on details, distracting him from the surrounding space and drawing attention only to himself. Ghostly, indecent, visual messages encourage the creation of a deeper image of urban space, forcing the observer to observe the urban environment through dialogues through which the social and political image of society is manifested (Awad & Wagoner, 2017). The presentation of art in public space has changed significantly in the last few decades, both in scope and in practice. The works of art are exhibited in unconventional frames, outside museums and galleries, ie they are placed in urban public spaces. Placing graffiti, murals, and drawings in an urban environment reduces the space that was initially organized by a city government decree (Lefebvre, 1991). Artists most often do not have urban city plans and do not make significant projects to radically change the space, their works are marginal while graffiti forms are transient and volatile (McCormick & Neil, 2005). Therefore, street art is not the dominant message in the visual image of the city, it is a secondary but noticeable element (Toborek, 2016) which is a "window" for understanding society (Zukin, 2004).

Public street art is a widespread tool for presenting the local culture of the city. Drawings on the walls can, in certain circumstances, contribute to the construction of a more dedicated, mature and complex urban landscape (Gutierrez & Marcos, 2020). Whether the works are permanent or temporary, they significantly change the look and character of the space, give it a new dimension and design it in a different way. Public space can be used and understood as a political space, and that all interventions in it require certain steps from initiation to decision-making and implementation (Hristić & Lazar, 2012). In areas with different ethnic, social and economic composition of the population in recent years, there is a growing tendency for artists to apply art inclusively to create the identity of a place (Leithe, 2011).

CULTURE IDENTITY

Man has always changed the environment according to his needs, and all cultures have, in one way or another, intervened in his immediate environment to make him more pleasant (Casanovas, 2005). It is evident that the whole team of urban planners is being formed today around architects as the core. However, this is a consequence of the traditional understanding that the architect is the most invited to be an urban expert. The rise of the creative milieu and the growing role of artists in shaping urban neighborhoods have become a widespread and well-known trend in cities (Jocić et al., 2017). Urban art is understood as an active process by which communities shape and reshape the urban environment (Parisi, 2019). Artists have distinctive aesthetic, political and social impacts on the urban environment than engineers, planners and other professions (Markusen, 2006). The street art scene also plays an important role in a society that influences and informs society about this contemporary art form, while exposing the viewer to contemporary visual culture in society (Rafferty, 1991).

During its existence, although it is widespread, street art is most often neglected as an official way of communication. In addition to direct roles, street art also plays valuable but hidden and indirect roles in society, such as inspiration for architects and designers, making the city more aesthetically pleasing. Community engagement, neoliberalism and support are key DIY impacts of urban planning.

DIY urbanization is usually driven by community members using a basic approach to urban change, focusing on citizen activities and microspace practices in urban areas. Do-it-yourself urbanism encourages the idea of active and creative citizenship. Citizens' activities at the local level reconstruct urban spaces (Pagano, 2013) through spatial planning actions of smaller urban areas (Douglas, 2014). Community planning involves making decisions about urban areas (Shuttle, 2017). DIY urbanism affects the role of planners, as well as the relationships between planners, communities and municipalities. Do-it-yourself urbanism brings a renewed emphasis on creative participatory urban planning focused on people. The place does not only have spatial and structural characteristics, but cultural and aesthetic expressions play an important role in the image of the place and the development of identity. Cultural integrity influences the development of the city, it is a collective treasure of the local community and is expressed through the physical heritage of graffiti and murals. Cultural heritage serves to develop a positive image of the city. "Creative City" has become a well-established and celebrated concept among many urban policy makers and innovators (Burnham, 2010). Much of the literature on urban creativity emphasizes the importance of creative industries in the economic development of urban space. From this economic perspective, creativity is understood as a material for prosperity in post-industrial societies, as a "cure for the decay and disinvestment" of cities through art.

ON THE IDENTITY OF PLACES

Street art has become a universal and almost ubiquitous feature of contemporary urban experience (Molnár, 2017). It is found all over the world in cities as a feature of street culture that leaves traces in urban space. It is certainly the way in which street art objects manifest in the observer the experience of a place that governs impressions of the uniqueness, power and truthfulness of the identity of those places.

The identity of the city represents a precise picture of what in the eyes of the observer should be considered specific to the city (Stoetzer, 2015). Identity is a set of characteristics that characterize the individuality and authenticity of an object and creates recognizability within other objects (Lynch, 1960). Cities are areas where identity gives meaning through historical and cultural relations (Tascioglu & Sirel, 2020). Urban identity has been misplaced due to the method of urban improvement, and the misfortune of uniqueness has gotten to be a common issue confronted by a quickly changing environment. With the development of industry and the emergence of factories as a new urban element, great changes are taking place in the city, unlike the pre-industrial city, which had simpler structures (Gatarić et al., 2019). The city is expanding spatially, enrich-

ing itself in terms of population and function (Živković, 2003). Due to that, they became centers of power and centers of culture in civilized societies (Ćurčić et al., 2021). Urban environments are becoming susceptible to the effects of global events and a generic approach is increasingly being applied in urban design (Champrag, 2014). The idea of a global city shapes images of cities through fundamental spatial change (Champrag, 2015) and the loss of urban local identities is increasingly present.

As cities are continually changing and creating modern shapes, the foremost imperative determinant gets to be the neighborhood urban character. Local urban identity is defined as the identity of small towns, parts of cities, including the positive and negative preferences of people. An individual builds an image of the local identity of the street or neighborhood in which he lives, works and moves, based on common elements of physical appearance and functions, personal experience, media images (Relph, 1976) all through direct observation and analysis.

The design of public space significantly influences human behavior, daily activities and social relations, it can propagate cultural values, beliefs or trends (Gehl, 2006; Hristić & Lazar, 2012). In order to create a modern identity of places inspired by artistic elements and modern phenomena, man creates a new identity suitable for material and spiritual needs in time. Changes in the physical and social characteristics of the space will change the identity of the city (Karimimoshaver et al., 2021). Identifying the local environment that citizens recognize can help practitioners improve the identity of the place and thus distinguish the city from other cities and regions, which will improve the sense of belonging of citizens.

The interconnectedness of the physical environment and activities in open public spaces, makes social activity an indispensable part of this interaction. A large number of authors have argued that street art creates a sense of recognition, develops a sense of place, promotes social change and encourages economic development (Palermo, 2014). Urban art can: contribute to local identity, attract companies and investments, increase open space use, reduce building wear and lower vandalism, as street art elements contribute to visual improvement of gray areas and old buildings, such as abandoned buildings (Poon, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Through art, the ideas, desires and attitudes of individuals in public space can be conveyed and thus actively connect the community. Hence, a city full of art can be seen as a dynamic, free and imaginative city, which supports artistic expression through the freedom given to artists to create. This creates diversity that enriches the city, because different groups participate in creating the look of the city.

Street art reflects wider advances in advanced art practices. These shifts involve a larger number of people involved in creating a work of art and thus changing public space. The city is a suitable place where different social groups have the right to create the development of the city. The revival of street art has led many urban renovations around the world, including significant locations that are mostly located in areas that previously lost importance due to declining economic activity. Instead of destroying buildings, murals, graffiti, mosaics help to restore the recognizability of the local landscape. The revival of street art encourages the creation of a modern cultural and urban identity, and indirectly the attraction of new residents, passers-by, travelers, tourists.

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