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«Public wall artworks (street art, graffiti) and its dynamics in the promotion of degraded areas of Athens. Possibilities of gentrification and opportunities to attract tourist groups».

Master Thesis

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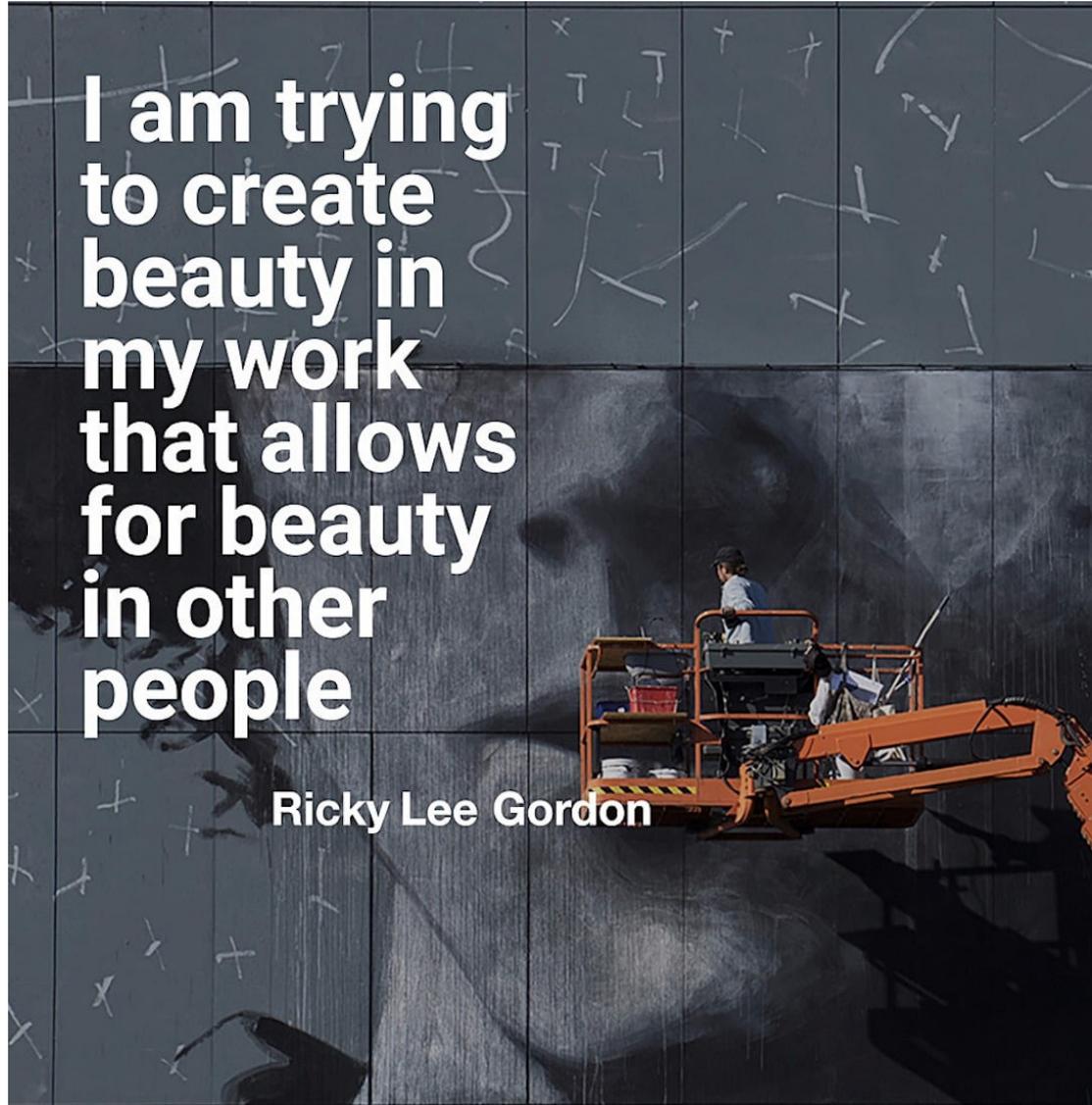
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**I am trying
to create
beauty in
my work
that allows
for beauty
in other
people**

Ricky Lee Gordon

III.1.Ricky Lee Gordon quote (streetart.gorkemticaret.com 2020).

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Abstract in Greek

Η ανθρώπινη παρέμβαση στο δημόσιο χώρο αποτελεί μια μακραίωνη ιστορία και απορρέει από την ανάγκη έκφρασης, δήλωσης ή διαμαρτυρίας. Στο σύγχρονο αστικό τοπίο θα παρατηρήσει κανείς πλήθος επιγραφών, συνθημάτων, χρωματιστών σχεδίων, έργων τέχνης, είτε νόμιμα είτε παράνομα. Συνήθως προσφωνούνται ως graffiti, street art ή mural art κατά περίπτωση.

Η τέχνη του δρόμου απολαμβάνει μεγάλης αποδοχής σε πολλές χώρες παγκοσμίως και το ελληνικό τοπίο δεν μένει ανεπηρέαστο από αυτή την άνθηση. Τα τελευταία χρόνια παρατηρείται μεγάλο ενδιαφέρον για αυτό το είδος δημιουργίας και στην Ελλάδα, ιδιαιτέρως όμως στο αθηναϊκό αστικό τοπίο, γεγονός που σχετίζεται και με την οικονομική και κοινωνική κρίση που από το 2010 ώθησε πολλούς ανθρώπους στην ανάγκη να εκφραστούν πάνω στο δομημένο αστικό περιβάλλον.

Στην παρούσα εργασία εξετάζεται η τέχνη του δρόμου και ο τρόπος που εκφράζεται μέσα από τα γκραφίτι και τις τοιχογραφίες στην πόλη της Αθήνας. Μέσω της βιβλιογραφικής ανασκόπησης αλλά και της χρήσης μεικτών ερευνητικών μεθόδων (ποιοτική και ποσοτική έρευνα) επιχειρούμε να διαπιστώσουμε εάν υπάρχουν δυνατότητες για την πόλη της Αθήνας να ακολουθήσει τα βήματα μεγάλων ευρωπαϊκών μητροπόλεων και να συμβάλλει η τέχνη του δρόμου ώστε να αναδειχτούν υποβαθμισμένες περιοχές αλλά και να προσελκύσει επισκέπτες ειδικού ενδιαφέροντος, δημιουργώντας μια νέα προοπτική για την καλλιτεχνική δημιουργία και την τουριστική αναβάθμιση της ελληνικής πρωτεύουσας.

Abstract in English

Human intervention in public space has an extensive history and stems from the need for expression, make a statement or protest. In the modern urban landscape, everyone will notice a multitude of inscriptions, slogans, coloured drawings, street artworks, either legally or illegally. They are usually referred to as graffiti, street art or mural art as the case where applicable.

Street art is very popular in many countries around the world and the Greek landscape is not unaffected by this flourishing. In recent years there has been great interest in this type of artworks in Greece, but especially in the Athenian urban landscape, a fact that is related to the economic and social crisis that since 2010 has pushed many people to express themselves on the structured urban environment.

This study examines street art and the way it is expressed through graffiti and murals in the city of Athens. Through the literature review but also the use of mixed research methods (qualitative and quantitative research) we try to find out if there are possibilities for the city of Athens to follow in the footsteps of major European metropolitan cities and additionally, if street art could be contributing to the emergence of degraded areas and attract visitors of special interest, creating a new perspective for the artistic creation and the tourist upgrade of the Greek capital.

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Introduction

Art as a means of expression and externalization of feelings and thoughts can be a springboard to upgrading public spaces and urban open spaces in modern cities, to give identity and character. The question that arises is how art interacts with public spaces, the city and consequently the citizens.

In the present dissertation, the field of research that will concern us is about the public form of contemporary art (see street art) and more specifically the case of graffiti and murals. The field of research regards the city of Athens.

By the term Public art or Street art we mean the art that is exhibited in the public space not as a monument but as an organic element of everyday life, as a means of upgrading the urban environment. It could also be a political act, and this is because it activates the public, proposing a new form of communication and participation, like an increased collectivity. Public art is a political commitment against individualization, entrenchment, social exclusion. It gives us strong stimuli to rediscover and imagine our city, and therefore our life (Helioti 2017: 5).

According to Maria Ananiadou – Tzimopoulou (1992): "The urban landscape is an appropriated, codified space, which has undergone uses, habits, regulations, which is not above all free and in no case empty. It is the result of relationships between economic activities, social structures, cultural values as well as their natural background that changes over time. It is a dynamic space with the human perpetrator and affected, not spectator, creative factor, socially and less directly individually. The urban landscape in this sense is a mirror of the evolution of the city and the form of transformation of its space. It is the physiognomy of the city, its image and imagination" (Ananiadou – Tzimopoulou 1992: 7).

The modern urban landscape in Greece and specifically in Athens, with the emergence of the multilevel economic, political and social crisis from 2008 onward, presented as a variety of urban dimensions. Initially, the economic degradation of central areas, with the removal of economic activities of local and metropolitan character from the central areas to new regional residential developments is a basic dimension. In addition, urban gaps and empty shells were created [devaluation of building stock] as well as few urban green spaces [parks, squares] existed in the city, and abandonment of public space was observed (Helioti 2016: 9 – 10).

Another aspect of the urban landscape crisis has been the rising poverty rate of households and social problems such as rising unemployment, rising homelessness, social exclusion, crime and delinquency. A major problem is the lack of new infrastructure and urban reconstruction

programs, the degradation of the built and natural environment [and environmental problems], the lack of social infrastructure projects [social equipment] and the lack of social and territorial cohesion. (Helioti 2016: 9 – 10).

Regarding the graffiti and mural art, the emergence and continued growth in popularity of those forms of art have seen them increasingly exposed to academic analysis across disciplines and yet, until recently, they have rarely been framed as heritage (MacDowall 2006: 471). At this point it would be important to mention that there are different concepts of graffiti, mural and street art, which will be analyzed in the following chapters.

The gap between writers (graffiti writers) and street / mural artists was evident during the first flourishing of the subculture and remains at the heart of the distinctions between sub cultural graffiti, graffiti art and street art. It continues to influence the debate over the contradictory status of graffiti as art and crime. The conventional artistic value of certain forms "Graffiti" is now legally established, but the idea that it is a recent phenomenon is wrong (Merrill 2015: 371).

One of the main research questions is whether graffiti and mural artworks could play an important role to upgrading degraded areas of Athens. At the same time, we will try to identify the possibilities provided by this particular form of artistic creation in these areas, along with other activities, in attracting visitors and / or tourists in particular areas to discover up closely popular and not only graffiti / murals.

A comparative bibliographic study attempted with other selected cities abroad. Besides, the controversy in Greek society over whether graffiti is perceived by the general public as an art form welcomed by citizens and the local political leadership or treated as an abuse of public space or even vandalism in public or private buildings, be discussed.

The selection of appropriate literature for the present study is considered to be a very important tool to help us reach appropriate conclusions. Literature reviews are regularly found in books, journals and all manner of research Writing (Cremmins 1992: 27). There are significant criteria for evaluating the appropriate documents for the literature review and should be characterized by authenticity, credibility, representativeness and be meaningful (Denscombe 2003: 3 – 9).

Furthermore, the research methodology used is the mixed methods. It is also a primary research. According to the methodology, we use semi-structured interview questions and also distributed questionnaires for data collection. The sample of our research consisted of general public for the questionnaires (quantitative method) and we approached Greek artists, residents of Athens, who are active in the field of graffiti, murals and street art and had a discussion with them in an interview with semi-structured questions in the context of qualitative research for the study.

With the aforementioned we scheduled personal interviews (qualitative method), while questionnaires were sent to the other sample groups with snowball method. At this point, it would be important to address ethical issues as well as the limitations of research. According to the ethical rules of the research, the questionnaires will be anonymous and the interviews will mention the name of the respondents only if they want it.

It is important to note that a large number of graffiti artists are not accustomed to publishing their name, but instead sign their works with an artistic nickname. This is because this particular form of artistic activity has always been controversial. We will develop more details in the literature review. At the same time, we will take into account the legal framework, but also the prevailing political, social and economic conditions.

Finally, we could take into consideration in the limitations of this study, the current conditions arising from the pandemic of Covid – 19. It is a global phenomenon that affects all sectors at the economic, social and political levels, changing many of the data we knew before about tourism and more. Overall, during the research we faced critical junctures. Therefore, it is difficult to rule out the possibility of not drawing objective and realistic conclusions for this unstable future.

Chapter. 1 State of the Art

1.1 Historical Framework of street art and graffiti

In modern urban reality, the most widespread form of public art is "Street Art", ie Street Art and Graffiti. In particular, it is one of the forms of public art, which is about 50 years old, as it first appeared in the '70s and was initially characterized by sociologists as a kind of modern popular subculture of large urban centres. Street art dates back to 30,000 BC. with the cave paintings, the frescoes of classical antiquity, the socio – political slogans on the walls during the 19th century, etc. So we observe that from prehistoric times it was a means of expression of public life and public speech (Helioti 2017: 32 – 33).

The birth of street art and its conceptual significance has created a wide gap between scholar views, as it is particularly difficult to define the boundaries between it and graffiti art. There are two sides have been created that disagree on the degree of independence that separates these two art forms. One side categorizes street art as the successor to the art of graffiti and the movement that began in 1970 (Hughes 2017: 1) while the other side differentiates and recognizes them as two independent and constantly evolving artistic means of expression (Mc Kinney 2015: 4 – 6), in terms of philosophy, culture and natural environment in which they operate. Even today, it remains widely accepted that these two concepts do not have a strict conceptual framework (Makris 2020: 3).

The interpretive quality that separates Graffiti art from that of Street Art pushes a fine line between them ideologically and technically, yet these terms are part of a kind of art which, like all arts, has to do with the expression. Street art includes specific artistic practices such as contemporary graffiti, murals, flash mobbing, guerrilla art, sculpture and 3D works, stencils, stickers, posters, wheat-pasting, street installations and screenings video artists, who place their field of action in the urban landscape (Young 2012: 298 – 299).

At the same time, street art, unlike most graffiti art, varies in the media used. Street artists have free range to include tools that best serve their artistic style such as charcoal, paint, collage, spray paint, pens, markers, brushes, markers and aerial spraying. The variety of products on the market today is far superior in quality and quantity to those of the decade. 70 'and the 80's.

A successful attempt to define this relatively new artistic movement is given by John Feckner, who briefly describes street art as "all art on the road that is not graffiti" (Lewisohn 2009: 90 – 92). "Typically, the term is used to distinguish contemporary art in public space from traditional graffiti, vandalism and corporate art" (Alpaslan 2012: 53). Manco (2002: 6) states that Graffiti, as an idea, has always existed in parallel with other artistic endeavors, except that it is a way of self-expression that uses 14 methods that are considered criminal or outside the conventional art world, instead of imposes the execution of art".

An other view is that street art is not street art but art that is inspired by the street or in general by the place where it is made and includes all kinds of art despite the fact that lately it is customary for most writers to focus only on the visual side (Haedicke 2013: 1). In particular, painting as a street art has its roots in prehistoric times with the first paintings in caves and outdoor murals in sacred places (for example in the Sumerian culture, the Phoenician culture, the culture of the Saints, etc.). The modern roots of street art in Europe seem to appear with the troubadours of the late Middle Ages, the «comedia del arte» and the painting in public places in Florence and the Bread of the 15th century (Petropoulou 2019: 57)

Street art became distinct under this name at the end of the twentieth century as wanted to separate it from the art of the elite (which has exclusive access to places where works of art are exhibited or presented). During the Paris Commune, with the founding of the People's Theater (Mauriche Pottecher), street art was redefined and aimed at transforming peoples into social actors through participation in action or work (theater, dance, poetry, painting, sculpture, other artistic activities are made to and from the people). This idea developed more during the period before and after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 (Vladimir Mayakovski in Russia and Erwin Piscator 1922 in Germany) during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and the Spanish Revolution (1936-1939) but also in Free Greece (1942-1944) when theater and poetry became means to change the social situation (Petropoulou 2019: 55 – 57).

Referring to Contemporary Urban Art, or street art, we could include public murals, graffiti as art forms that can be performed in a wide range of techniques that thrive in the urban environment (Fisher 2008; Schacter 2013). Posting graffiti, perforating, pasting, stickers, installations, sculptures, guerrilla art, and even slogans on the walls could in some cases be among the many forms of street art.

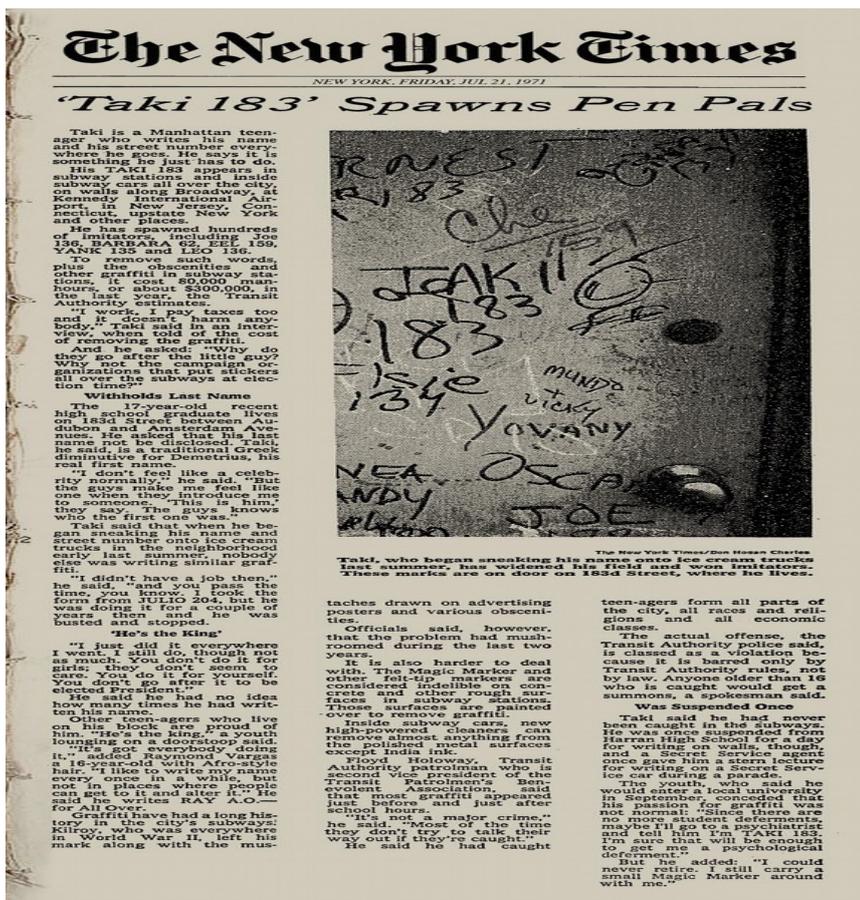
Graffiti, etymologically, is a counter-loan to the Italian term "Graffiti", which is formed from the verb "graffiare" ("draw"), which comes from the Latin words "graphiare" and "graphium", which in turn are related to the ancient Greek word "γράφειν", which has its meaning "writing" (Mandala 2007). Graffiti usually include letters and characters, or just a signature (also known as adding labels). It is illegal and its content is internal language between different graffiti "crews" (Neelon 2003; Pereira 2005: 9 – 10; Lewisohn 2009: 15).

Public murals are usually defined as large-scale paintings on building facades and walls that have legal status, and they also have an acceptable artistic value. Street artists consciously place their work in a space with free access, unprotected from environmental influences and accessible to vandals.

The first type of imprint of the so-called "Graffiti" was and is to this day the signatures ("tags – tagging") of people acting individually or in groups - "graffiti writers or crews" - which began to appear on the surfaces of trains, and walls. This was the common practice of youth social groups in the 1920s and 1930s in New York.

The impact of this unusual for the rest of the social world and unacceptable social behavior was extremely famous in the 1960s and 1980s. In their socio – political environment, they began to create their own movement without rightly treating it this way or perceiving it in this way (Maric 2014).

Another important historical fact is that Graffiti was incorporated into Hip Hop as one of its elements in the late '60s, when a Greek-American pizza distributor wrote down his nickname and the street number where he lived (TAKI 183). Since then it has been transferred to every corner of the globe and has become a way of expressing the artist (Powers 1996: 137).



III.2. TAKI 183 New York Times article (taki183.net 2017).

Graffiti appeared in Greece in the 80's, initially with colorful designs and messages on trains. Greek society then approached the issue somewhat cautiously without giving much scope. In Greece, graffiti, in contrast to the urban ghettos of the USA, is not an expression of the margin. In fact, because sprays are quite expensive, it is considered an expensive hobby and many of the young graffiti artists now belong to the bourgeoisie. Graffiti in Greece does not have a specific identity, although it is often associated with questioning and disobedience, as the so-called "bombing" takes place on prohibited surfaces (Drakopoulou 2017: 204).

"Street art is the term that combines various forms of street expression under an urban environment, with roots from the graffiti revolution" (Lewisohn 2009: 18). Most often, it is related

to the city and life in it, it is based on the transfer of everyday experiences and the need to express the artist with ideas and forms that stem from his imagination in combination with his interaction with the social environment.

Today, for connoisseurs of the subject, 'true' graffiti means hip hop graffiti. The word is known for its Italian roots. However, in Italy the hip hop culture has prevailed, with the result that even there the word graffiti means hip hop graffiti (Phillips 1999). In Greece, the term graffiti means even street art (Iosifidis 2009: 5 – 7).

It is also worth noting the issue of the duration of the artworks, as many of the graffiti or murals that have been created no longer exist. In general, murals in public outdoor space, by their nature have a relatively ephemeral medium-term time horizon, an average of ten years. More specifically, these projects function more like a dialogue with citizens. Many times they are assimilated aesthetically and become landmarks for the areas in which they are located, but their character is temporary.

1.2. International context until modern times

Today, the term "post-graffiti" is used to express the evolution of street art and the new ideas and direction it has taken (Manco 2004). Post-graffiti differs qualitatively from sub cultural graffiti in that it uses a wide range of new media in addition to markers and spray cans and rejects general lettering styles in favor of new graphic forms – logos rather than labels (Manco 2004; Dickens 2008).

This development has revived and expanded public interest in graffiti, but this interest has once again focused on a selected high – profile group artists – a new generation of world – renowned street artists who excel at major international exhibitions such as the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (MOCA) Art's 2011 "Art in the Streets".



III.3. Adaption of Love is in the Air (Flower Thrower) Banksy, MOCA (BA Street art 2011).

Perhaps the most famous of these artists is Banksy, whose Banksy Museum exhibition in Bristol in 2009 caused an international outcry (Gough 2012: 9). Exhibitions such as these not only show

the growing popularity of street art, but also demonstrate the growing isolation of their titles from the wider graffiti subculture and tag writers. (Merrill 2015: 373).

The case of street art has sparked much more debate than the graffiti case as it is characterized or blamed by an ongoing commercialization. Of course, this does not mean that "traditional" graffiti has not been exploited commercially. They often appear in promotional materials, popular media, in many magazines and picture books, and in clothing and furniture - not to mention the market they create for graffiti equipment (McAuliffe 2011).

However, the wider publicity of Street Art has allowed it to be fully assimilated to the prevailing economic forces and therefore the works of a new generation of street artists are more likely to be in gallery exhibitions than those of graffiti writers. While the museum, gallery and private collection contribute to the protection and promotion of street art, in most cases it refers to tangible works explicitly designed for such platforms, namely prints, painted canvases, sculptures and installations that differ significantly in medium, if not in style, from street-based projects (Merrill 2015: 374 – 376).

Some typical examples of the impact of street art are the decision to invite street artists to temporarily paint Kelburn National Castle in Fairlie, Scotland, Bierpinsel in Berlin, Germany (www.kelburnestate.com; www.turmkunst.de) and sections of the World Heritage Site of Malaysia, George Town in order to attract tourists etc. Similarly, when it comes to works locally, nationally and internationally, famous street artists are increasingly considered potential cultural heritage protection issues. Pioneers in this field are heritage institutions in Australia and Germany.

In Melbourne, murals by Mike Brown and Keith Haring sits on state and national heritage records, respectively (MacDowall 2006). In Aachen, works by Klaus Paier have federal protection, while similar measures were recently considered for Blek le Rat's works in Leipzig (Schilling 2012). In the United Kingdom, however, comparable decisions, both private and institutional, surrounding Banksy's work have led to conflicting reactions from graffiti subcultures, which show their perception of heritage protection (Merrill 2015: 375 – 377).

In the case of Barcelona, a typical example is the El Raval area, a rather degraded area which with the support of the state has become an up-and-coming area with an artistic and tourist character and the support program included "street art", murals and graffiti as means of expressing the authentic identity of the district. To be more specific, the municipality of Barcelona integrated street art culture in specific neighborhoods while trying to limit and control the diffusion of street art in the city. In this effort they defined specific areas in which artists apply their works within legal frameworks. Such areas are scattered throughout the city with "free" walls for these purposes.

At the next level, the municipality collaborated with a team of designers creating an application through which the artists could choose an application wall of their work "by booking" the space. The aim of the application is to create a network through which artists can exchange photos of their works and be informed about free application spaces of their works. This practice, of course,

did not limit the spread of street art to other parts of the city, with the extensive use of various techniques and messages.

Barcelona is now flooded with works of art in different places, with different techniques, messages, styles and aesthetics. The ways of applying works vary as much as the artists themselves, from authorized murals, murals in legal parts of cities, strong socio – political messages on "hidden" walls, initiative murals, etc. Also, the use of works of art on the facades of shops is very common (Tsesmetzoglou 2017: 52 – 53).



III.4. Citylife Barcelona (Art Barcelona 2016).

Another aspect that plays an important role in the development of street art and graffiti at an international level is the development of the internet and technologies where much of the information is stored and received by the public through it. Media such as Google, Facebook, Instagram have influenced the way people receive information and communicate on a daily basis.

Rushmore (2013) argues that the future of street art and graffiti may lie in digital rather than physical interventions. Initially, observing the positive contribution of the internet to the evolution of street art, different types of aspects can be distinguished, to which it has offered several possibilities. It is possible through the internet to identify new techniques, aesthetic directions, trends, etc. of this culture in different regions and periods. It enhances discussions between artists from different regions so that information about how street art develops in different regions can be transmitted directly through the exchange of personal experiences (Tsesmetzoglou 2017: 71)

Many street artists, when they have the opportunity, constantly move in this connected and constantly evolving world, like nomads. This is a modern practice of street art, that is, the realization of works in different cities and their simultaneous registration and connection via the internet. (Irvine 2012:235).

We will briefly mention some of the most successful platforms that have contributed to the promotion of street art. A typical example is the Street Art Project (2014). This is an effort by Google to bring street art to the digital world as well, in order to create a large global collection of works using new technologies that will bring the user closer to reality.

Global Street Art (2012) is also a street art communication platform with an active physical presence in London with activities aimed at strengthening the culture of street art in London and highlighting its value. It has a large collection of works from about 100 countries with references to the location, the artist and the characteristics of each.

Also, the team of Street Art Utopia (2010) started the creation of the website in order to present the variety of creativity that is presented in the streets of cities. The page contains images, videos and descriptions of works from different parts of the world, by many artists with different and unique messages.

In addition, the Street Art Heerlen website is an initiative that started in the Heerlen area and has expanded to several parts of the world to date, enabling new groups from different cities to work together to expand the idea. The main activity of the website and the mobile application, which has been developed, is the use of the map (Tsesmetzoglou 2017: 71 – 83).

1.3. Greek street art and graffiti into sociocultural perspectives

In Greece, the street art scene, as mentioned in a previous section, made its appearance in the 80's with strong characteristics from the Graffiti culture, as the scribes used extensive names and slogans, filling more and more the places of the cities. Kyriakos Iosifidis (2009) states "if you took a walk in the main streets of Athens in the late '80s, you would see the black signatures of football hooligans who left their mark just before going to their teams' games." This intense "crisis", which was mainly accepted by Athens, divided society to a large extent between vandalism and the appropriation of public space (Iosifidis 2009: 5- 6).

At this point it would be interesting to mention that in Greece graffiti and street art are not associated with the expression of the margin, in contrast to the ghettos of American cities (Texno – Dromies 2012). In fact, due to the cost of materials, it is considered an expensive activity and a significant portion of the creators belong to the upper social strata. Most are aged 12-30 and act mainly at night to avoid detection and arrest by authorities (Ferrell 1995: 79).

Additionally, it does not have a specific identity, though is often associated with questioning and disobedience, as it is done on forbidden surfaces. On the other hand, Greek street art is highly politicized and deeply affected by the economic crisis, as after all is the whole country and it is becoming more accepted by the public with more and more citizens recognizing it and preferring it to the tags that are incomprehensible to them.

Decisive for the development of street art, was the appearance of the Greek-Dutch Bez in 93 'in Athens who, looking for the people involved in the Graffiti scene, made posters in various parts of the city with the message "Bez is searching for graffiti artists ". So in 94 'a group was organized with all the people gathered under the roof of the music band TXC (Iosifidis 2009: 5 – 7).

In this way, the "54" project began to be active and create artworks in the city, attracting the interest of the public, something that resulted in the first licenses being given to artists from the authorities. In '98, and while the scene was growing rapidly, an unexpected graffiti celebration took place on the pedestrian street of Ermou in Athens, organized by the Hellenic American Union and the train authority of Athens (ISAP). According to Iosifidis (2009) "It was a day where hundreds of people painted next to each other, it was a day that was missing from the history of Greek graffiti. " (Iosifidis 2009: 5 – 7).

Continuing, according to the evolution of street art in the city of Athens, in 2002, in anticipation of the Athens Olympic Games, a large-scale event related to Street Art, "Chromopolis", is coming to Greece. The organizers (Carpe Diem) in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture bring famous artists from abroad but also artists from Greece in a common context to decorate buildings in various cities such as Thessaloniki and Athens. The aim of the event is to highlight that street art can be used in various ways while bringing elegant results. Such practices have proven positive effects on the way societies perceive Street Art. However, they bring to the light the "dangerous" discussion about the use of the city and the role of its user (Moutsopoulos 2017).



III.5. Mural in Mitilini island (Urban Act 2002).

By taking into account the tolerances and limits of the citizens, the artists bring to Greece works that will shape its image in the coming years. Many argued at the time that many street paintings were made to cover the ugly faces of Athens so that they would not be visible to visitors who came to watch the 2004 Olympics. So, once again, society is divided by the intentions of certain uses of Street Art.

Subsequently, after four years of intense oppression and impoverishment of society, we have a tragic event of the assassination of Alexandros Grigoropoulos, a 15-year-old student who was shot in cold blood by a police officer in the area of Exarxeia in 2008, which comes again to upset the balance and start another intense period for the street art scene in Greece. The pressures of the society were intense as the intensification of the rhythms of everyday life, the lack of freedoms

and the increasing impoverishment of the lower strata of the society caused the people to break out and the gray walls that drowned their daily life to be filled more and more.

Furthermore, from 2008 to 2012 we have an escalation of political slogans on walls, mainly in Athens, with people trying to externalize their thoughts and convey their messages and concerns. As Takis Spyropoulos states (2014), "If what was said on the walls were years later, it would be a testimony to the anger of the citizens in the heart of the city." Another period of intense reactions and unrest from all sides. (Tsesmetzoglou 2017: 54 – 55).

In 2014 a very important program for street art took place in Greece. The Greek Ministry of Environment Energy and Climate Change program "Athens – Attica 2014. Visual Interventions in Public Space – Painting on the blind faces of buildings in Athens ». In many municipalities and cities the authorities organize events and provide public spaces for artists, who can use them for their needs.

"These are mainly large-scale artistic interventions, organized by public bodies, whose purpose is to reshape and mark the new image of the urban center, with the participation of important artists and active artistic groups," said the Ministry of Environment Energy and Climate Change) during the implementation of the "Athens – Attica 2014" program, where facades of buildings in Athens were designed and remodeled. The specific program conducted a competition to find the surfaces of apartment buildings in which large-scale works were designed by students and graduates of the School of Fine Arts of Athens. The aim was to reshape and strengthen the image of Athens. (Helioti 2017: 56 – 57).



III.6. The hands, INO artist (Athens Social Atlas 2015).

In Greece, the socio - economic and political crisis in recent years has made Athens an open street art gallery that attracts artists, tourists, art lovers, journalists, and photographers (Henley 2015).

Public art in Athens supports his uprising people against the catastrophic economic crisis. Additional interventions, excessive colors and Labels are constantly changing the look of the city walls. The uninterrupted process of creation, wear, or the intervention raises questions about the need for one new framework for the conservation values of street art. Street art in Athens could be a product of social activism, and therefore questions about its conservation should be approached taking into account the social impact of its conservation interventions (Petropoulou 2019: 204 – 205).

Unconventional resistance actions such as alternative economies, collective solidarity and exchange networks began to multiply on the occasion of the economic crisis that began in Greece in 2010 (Rakopoulos 2014: 315 – 316). From then on, the city of Athens began to occupy a large presence of graffiti, slogans and murals in the urban landscape.

In a changing urban landscape and in relation to the new forms of austerity, the intervention in the city walls began to be perceived by the media in a different way. As a way and means of expression by young people who need to externalize their reaction and in a way began to shift from the negative perception that graffiti is vandalism to being a somewhat more neutral means of expression that enjoys greater tolerance and in some cases acceptance. (Alexandrakis 2016: 274 – 277).

In addition, an interesting presence in the field of Greek street art is the company UrbanAct (1998). It aims to promote art and alternative culture techniques such as public murals, graffiti, street art, etc. UrbanAct intervenes through art in the urban landscape, creating outdoor murals, organizing festivals and exhibitions. At the same time, it promotes the active participation of the citizens and interacts with the Creation and support of publications that promote the art of public murals, graffiti, etc. They also collaborates with famous artists from the graffiti and street art scene, designers, architects, artists, etc. public and private organizations, municipalities, ministries, institutions, citizens' movements, etc. from Greece and abroad (UrbanAct 2020).

Remarkable is what happens in the old, abandoned Columbia factory¹, where for the last ten years the building seems to be reviving through various Athenian street artists who found in it some empty walls on which they could practice without fear of being chased or to erase their works. The Columbia factory that once produced some of the most famous tunes that inspired so many people has now become a regular gallery with some of the brightest "diamonds" from the home street art scene (Saboteur-mag 2020).



III.7. Billy Gee, Columbia Factory 2019 (Saboteur-mag.com 2020).

¹ It was the first vertical record production unit created in Athens and specifically in Perissos in 1929. The factory started operating a year later until April 1990 when it was permanently closed.

There are many other Greek cities that have remarkable activity in street art. Some examples are the city of Kalamata, the city of Volos, the city of Patras and the city of Thessaloniki. A recent very successful example is the International Street Art Festival of Patras "ArtWalk" which was organized for the fifth consecutive year to fill the city of Patras with color. From June 15 to the end of July and from August 25 to October 31, street art artists from all over the world will dress the creations of the walls of buildings they have chosen as a canvas (with the permission of the owners), turning the city into a live and interactive workshop (Kovaiou 2020).



III.8. Mural by KLE, Patra (Kathimerini press 2020).

If we compare Athens with other European metropolitan cities, we will find that no special relations are developed between public space and public art. Contemporary public art in Greece in terms of creation (mainly murals and graffiti) is all around us, but the ideological and institutional background, which will recognize it as a key factor of social and economic development at local, regional and national level is at an early stage.

Street art is a growing phenomenon, which is integral to any city, depicting social activism and artistic intent. Street art has become part of the evolution and current values of historical cities. The preservation and use of the city as an evolving monument can lead to the acceptance of street art as a form of urban decoration. The street art next to the ancient city of Athens acquaints both the scientists, the public and the state institutions with a tolerance that is necessary for the understanding of the chaotic aesthetics of a modern city in deep crisis. The coexistence of historical, aesthetic and social values in street art next to a historical structure is a modern challenge that proves that tolerance is successful (Chatzidakis 2016: 17 – 19).

Chapter.2 Street Art / Graffiti in Athens : Possibilities of development

2.1. Legal framework and State participation

In Greece, there is no specific law that prohibits graffiti and all relevant cases are based on the Criminal Code (CC) and specifically on articles 381 and 382, which refer to "Foreign Property Damage".

Article 381. Damage to foreign property.

1. Whoever intentionally destroys or damages a foreign (in whole or in part) thing or otherwise makes its use impossible is punished with imprisonment of up to two years.
2. If the damage is a thing of cheap value or the damage caused by the damage is minor, the culprit shall be punished by a fine or by imprisonment of up to six months.

Article 382. Distinguished cases of damage.

1. Damage to foreign property of the first paragraph of article 381 is punished with imprisonment of at least three months, if it was done without provocation by the victim.
2. The offender shall be punished by the punishment of the previous paragraph, if the object of the act provided for in the first paragraph of Article 381: a) is something that serves a common benefit. b) is of great value. c) the damage was done by fire or by one of the means provided for in article 270.
3. If in the act of the first par. two or more participants or one of the cases in the second paragraph occurs, imprisonment of at least six months is required.
4. Whoever causes damage or damage to an archaeological or artistic or historical monument or object placed in a public place under the terms of the preceding article shall be punished by imprisonment of at least one year, unless the act is severely punished by another provision.

These legal provisions concern and influence the evolution of street art, as in all areas and periods of its appearance it was a "hunted" movement, until it gained the tolerance and finally acceptance of the people (in some cases).

At its core, this art is practiced "illegally" by artists Designing a street art culture support service on public and private building surfaces. This practice has its roots in the history of culture discussed above. There are, of course, various ways of applying street art, legal and illegal but also commonly accepted.

Most of the time they appear as illegal as the artists select the application area without permission, but the applications are not always unacceptable due to the illegality of the action. This depends on the point of application chosen by the artist and the way he chooses to express himself. Discussions about graffiti and street art are often based on the notion that they are a natural and moral blow to society.

This perception is based on two beliefs, that the cost of removing "illegal" graffiti is charged to the taxpayer and the theoretical feeling of fear caused by graffiti (Baird 2010).

This perception is particularly reprehensible on the part of the artists but also of the entire supporting public, who try to preserve and defend the principles and values of street art and free expression in general. The views of the wider society on this issue are based on the education they have developed in this area. In many cities, such as Berlin, street art has become part of the daily life of the citizens but also in the culture of the city and is considered part of it.

In fact, graffiti and street art can be either legal or illegal. The choice is clearly in the hands of the artist. Many choose legal graffiti because they prefer to be quiet and design calmly and without the pressure of time and the fear of capture, while for many artists creating legal murals or graffiti is their basic choice as it is perceived as a form of expression and of artistic creation, is remunerated in many cases and contributes to the further artistic recognition of artists. But there are others, especially young artists and young people, who are willing to run, climb and take risks, in exchange for the strong emotions caused by the illegal.

The law therefore stipulates that the court must investigate the artist's motives before making a decision. When the element of deceit occurs, when it is done out of boredom, disrespect or disposition for destruction, then graffiti is a criminal offense and depending on the degree of misdemeanor, a sentence of up to five years in prison is provided.

At this point it would be interesting to mention the strong claim by the artistic public of the inclusion of the legal framework that supports the mandatory enrichment of public buildings with works of art. More specifically, this legislation provides: "At the stage of preparing the budget for the construction of any public building, a provision is received from the provider so that at least equal to one percent (1%) of the total construction cost of the building is allocated for its enrichment with a work of art. " "Each body has the responsibility of announcing a public tender for the enrichment of a public building, which is used by it for permanent housing or the provision of services with a work of art." (Excerpts from the legislative framework of 2009, E. E. Par .I (I), n .4208, 5/6/2009). In addition, for historical reasons we will mention that the first claim to comply with the law dates back to 1966 at the National Congress of Greek Artists at the Athenian Institute of Technology. As a result of this law in Greece today there are countless "Murals", large-scale works, which adorn public buildings, apartment buildings and other parts of the country (Tsetmetzoglou 2017: 50 – 53).

It is therefore illegal when it is done privately without the permission of the owner of the property and even more aggravating when it destroys public property. However, it is not a wear

and tear when it is created by the mood of the aesthetic public expression and after it has received the relevant permission. But apart from the law, society itself is often divided into two rival camps over street art and graffiti. One side claims that they pollute the public space, underestimate our heritage and degrade it, while the other side supports this art form and believes that it can beautify the gray and ugly walls of the urban landscape.

Finally, the view of Avramidis (2016) on the legality or not of street art is interesting: "Finding 'art' and 'crime' on the road is not always clear. Licensed murals have been cleaned because their aesthetics were linked to illegal graffiti: viewers have called the police because they assumed that someone painting a graffiti mural in a house must be a criminal". (Avramidis 2016).

The above proposal reminds us that in addition to the current legal framework, something else that contributes to the characterization of graffiti as "illegal" and "vandalism" is the existing mentality towards it. Often people will consider it illegal from the beginning, even though the required license may be available. Respectively, if something fits our aesthetics we can keep it even if there is no authorization.

Therefore, if we take into account that our relationship with the law is subconsciously influenced by prejudices, graffiti delinquency is relative. does not suit our aesthetics or has no historical value.

2.2. Social acceptability of street art in Athens

Street art is a rather complex social phenomenon, which directly and in many cases strongly influences societies at different times and environments. The paradox of this culture is beyond diversity in the way it appears, it also shows diversity in the reactions it provokes. While on the one hand society is taken as a natural unmediated expression of public "speech" that uses it to exercise the rights of citizens in a city, on the other hand it is expressed as a distortion, destruction and attack on clean and orderly society.

Therefore, presents a fluctuating role in the modern consciousness of the people who receive it. Opinions differ as it is a permanent issue for many researchers and those involved. This fact, however, is expressed as a rather interesting aspect by the artists themselves, who want their audience not only to see, observe or hear their work but to participate and react to it, helping it to reproduce.

This is more simply articulated by Wilson in 1986 with the phrase "The listener, whether reading, seeing or hearing, should actively contribute to the overall communication process."(Tsesmetzoglou 2017: 66).

In short, representation is just a part of it, while interaction with the world is the main reason for its existence and the means that will determine its effectiveness. Through the analysis of street art, we can study how people interact, perceive and are influenced by the environment around them.

Numerous efforts have been made and continue to be made by societies to accept street art. Such an effort is the Greek example mentioned above, of claiming compliance with the law on compulsory enrichment of public buildings with works of art. But also efforts that do not involve institutional processes such as events and festivals that aim to bring the world closer to the community of artists and to create relationships between them (Tsesmetzoglou 2017: 51 – 52).

The question of accepting street art is as complex as it usually is to define "what is art." Because the criteria are usually subjective we will try to approach the issue through the recorded literature and observation. Initially, we can observe that an outdoor work of art that has not been implemented in the style of graffiti and is more "neat" and "clean" enjoys greater acceptance and approval. It is easier for people with a classical artistic education to consider elegant and accept a work that may have been created by a graduate of a school of Fine Arts.

In parallel with the above reasoning, Karathanasis explains: "It is no coincidence, then, that the forces that want to replace graffiti with 'custom art' are trying to convince society that one is 'dirty' and the other 'clean' '. One is 'legal' and the other 'illegal' ". (Karathanasis 2019: 26).

An interesting and characteristic example of the attitude of the citizens towards the acceptance of street art, we find in the text of Avramidis and Tsilimbounidi (2016):

"Artists who made an artwork without permission that matched the aesthetics of a street more than a graffiti with permission reported that police and passengers tended to assume there was a license for the work." Such a position depends on a big difference between graffiti and street art as forms of aesthetics. (Avramidis 2017:42).

Most of the time the so-called "legal" graffiti are made by distinguished artists who with their skills are able to create perfect works. A typical example from the city of Athens are the works of the famous artist INO that adorn many buildings in Athens with iconic and impressive murals.

Another example of an authorized mural is the one created by the Carpe Diem team on the wall of the company Elais. The mural was implemented as part of the project of the Ministry of Culture "European Days of Cultural Heritage 2003" under the auspices of the Municipality of Piraeus. In addition, many other actions, some of which have already been mentioned in previous

sections of this paper, have taken place in many cities in Greece and mainly in Athens. Most of them have met with great acceptance (Siniorakis 2019: 30).

There is also the prevailing opinion that such initiatives beautify the urban landscape and cause aesthetic pleasure to passers-by. But if we look at the phenomenon of street art in its entire range authorized and not, we have to make it clear that there is an acceptance of this kind of art, but this depends on the subjective criteria of the citizens and also on the fact that it is considered reprehensible for the works in a city to be done without commercial agreements.

2.3. Possibilities of Gentrification, tourism attraction and urban development

In the area of artists, professionals and institutions that deal with street art, the opinion is heard that Athens is "the Mecca of graffiti". A key argument is that the city is suitable for graffiti due to the general lawlessness and indifference of state mechanisms, and so it is very easy to paint walls in the cityscape. The impact of graffiti can depend on many parameters, on the one hand the economic crisis in Greece which could be said to have inspired even more artists to engage in street art, on the other hand the international trends that exist in this particular type of art could be considered.

What this section deals with is the possibility of gentrifying degraded areas in the city of Athens with the contribution of street art. For a start it would be appropriate to clarify the term. Gentrification refers to the spatial and social processes in the restructuring of deprived city areas. As the process evolves, older and weaker – in financial and political terms – populations are displaced and replaced by middle and upper social strata. At the same time, land prices increase and capital gains are generated mainly through the formation of a rent gap.

In the general context of European cities for the preservation, restoration and protection of their historic centers, while choosing the policy of renovation and upgrading through cultural and recreational areas that present the phenomenon of urban deindustrialisation and degradation are possible points of application of refinement tactics. Industries that cease to perform close down, leaving behind empty industrial buildings and vacant plots, which do not serve the installation of new industries and abandoned. The abandonment of spaces leads to the fall of the land values of the real estate, to the degradation of the shells but also to the degradation of whole areas of the city, as the deindustrialization is accompanied by a number of social and environmental problems (Katsi 2008).

The spatial and social transformations that took place since the early 2000s in the area of Gazi and Metaxourgeio represent newer trends in the gentrification process in the centre of Athens. It was significant the transformation to the "Technopolis" cultural venue, but especially after the launch of the Kerameikos subway station (Alexandri 2005, Tzirtzilaki 2010). In addition, the mid-2000s, luxurious newly built structures appeared, promising a new life in lofts in the centre of

Athens. As a trend, loft-living was initiated by artists in New York, who rented large open-plan areas of old factories, so-called lofts, and used them as a place for working and living. At the same time, gentrifying processes have been carried out in other areas of Athens such as the area of Petralona, the area of Exarcheia, the area of Psyrri and many others. (Alexandri 2015: 20 – 24).

In many of these areas mentioned above the presence of street art is evident. If we take a walk around we will find that they are full of impressive large-scale murals but also graffiti and other types of outdoor art. The cultural industries, after all, have played their role in the effort to gentrificate the areas of the center of Athens.

A typical example is the case of "Technopolis" in Gazi. Also, the organization of the 1st Biennale in Metaxourgeio in 2007, as well as the opening of many theaters and art exhibition spaces in these areas. It is therefore reasonable to wonder if this could go one step further. In other words, if the city of Athens, which seems to have paved the ground and is on a very good way according to the actions that take place and the plethora of interesting creations that we meet all the citizens of Athens every day on the streets of the city, could, to acquire a cultural or even commercial branding around street art.

At the same time, we wonder if it could attract visitors and special tourism interested in this type of art, as is the case in several European capitals that have been mentioned in previous chapters of the study.

So far, according to the literature review and recording of many of the actions that have been taken in recent years regarding street art, the data seem encouraging. In the next chapter follows the mixed methods research that was conducted (qualitative and quantitative) which will help a lot to get an early feedback.

Chapter.3 RESEARCH / DATA ANALYSIS

3.1. Quantitative analysis (Questionnaires)

The quantitative research using a unified structured questionnaire was conducted in order to record the public opinion about graffiti and murals in the city of Athens, so that with the appropriate processing to draw the final conclusions regarding the main questions of the study.

The questions were closed and divided into three parts. The first part concerns the demographics of the respondents, the second part consists of affirmation / denial questions and the third part of the questionnaire was Likert scale questions.

As for the sample of the research, it was random and the questionnaire was made through the google forms platform and distributed to the public via e-mail and electronic communication platforms (social media). At this point it would be important to mention that the questionnaire was created and answered by the participants in the research in Greek and then translated by the writer.

A total of 110 questionnaires were collected and as we will see in detail below, the answers of the sample cover the main questions of the research and are of interest.

In figures 1 to 5 we observe the demographic data of the research sample, which reflect the profile of the respondents and give us data on the social background of the sample. The points worth noting are that 56.9% of the sample belongs to the female sex and 42.2% to the male sex. Also, the majority of the sample belongs to the age group 25-34 (44.0%) and 35-44 (32.1%) respectively, while smaller percentages answered us from the other age groups. At the same time, the majority of the sample work in the private sector (49.5%) with a percentage of 25.7% are self-employed. Also an important point is the fact that the majority of respondents are residents of the center of Athens (43.1%) with the other areas outside the Center being distributed in smaller percentages.

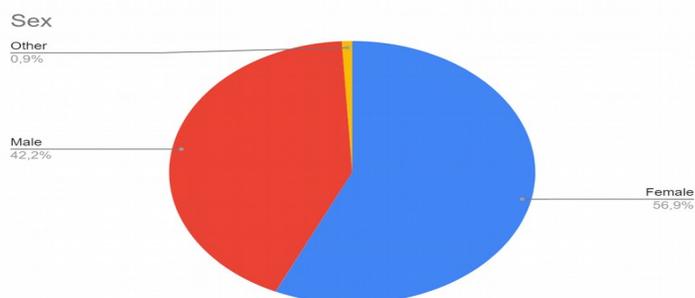


Figure 1. Sex

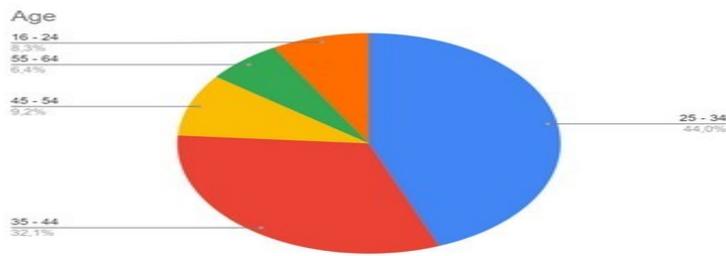


Figure 2. Age

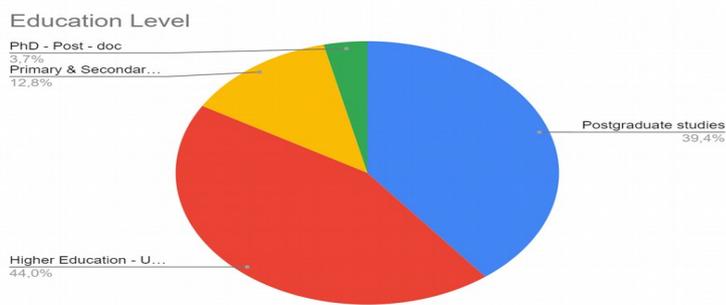


Figure 3. Education Level

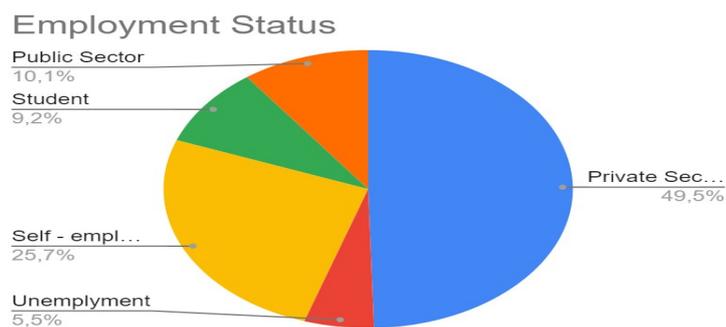


Figure 4. Employment Status

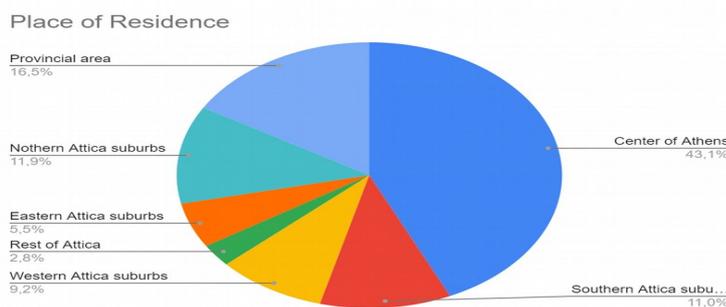


Figure 5. Place of Residence

Figures 6 to 8 show the answers to introductory questions about public opinion on graffiti. When asked if they know what graffiti is, 100% of respondents said they know. When asked if they like graffiti, the vast majority of 96.4% said they like it. Finally, when asked if they consider graffiti to be an art form, 98.2% of respondents answered in the affirmative.

1. Γνωρίζετε τι είναι το Graffiti;
110 απαντήσεις

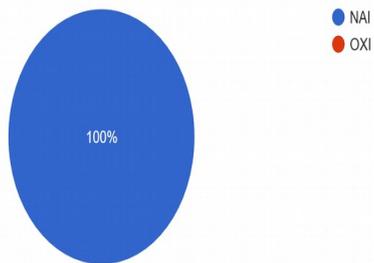


Figure 6. Do you know what Graffiti is?

2. Σας αρέσουν τα Graffiti;
110 απαντήσεις

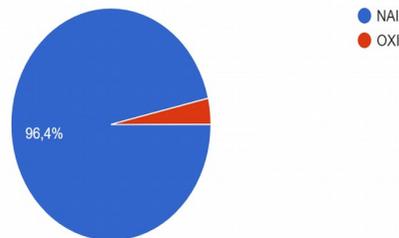


Figure 7. Do you like Graffiti?

3. Θεωρείτε ότι είναι μορφή τέχνης τα Graffiti;
110 απαντήσεις

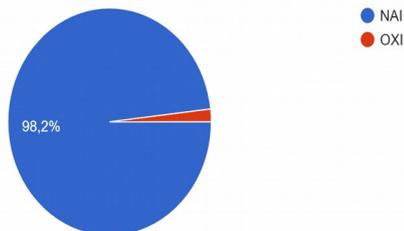


Figure 8. Did you consider Graffiti as an art form?

In figures 9 to 11 we can see the answers gradually begin to differ. The 90.9% of the respondents have noticed graffiti works in their area but 70.9% state that they like it, while 29.1% answered that they do not like the graffiti works they see in their area. Also 81.8% of the sample stated that they would like to have more graffiti in their area with the remaining percentage of the sample giving a negative answer.

4. Έχετε παρατηρήσει έργα Graffiti στην περιοχή / πόλη σας;
110 απαντήσεις

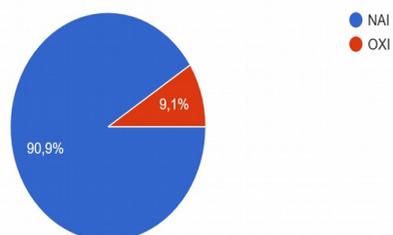


Figure 9. Have you noticed Graffiti artworks / projects in your area / city?

5. Σας αρέσουν τα έργα Graffiti στην περιοχή / πόλη σας;
110 απαντήσεις

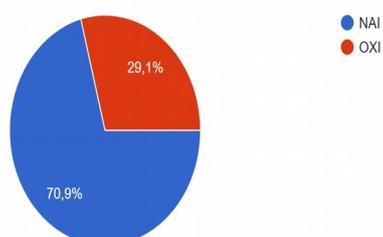


Figure 10. Do you like Graffiti artworks / projects in your area / city?

6. Θα θέλατε να υπάρχουν περισσότερα έργα Graffiti στην περιοχή / πόλη σας;
110 απαντήσεις

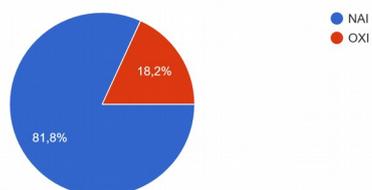


Figure 11. Would you like to have more Graffiti projects in your area / city?

In the figure 12 we see the answers of the respondents about whether they know a graffiti artist and more than half of us answered positively (52.7%). This significant percentage of positive answers could be related to the fact that the art of graffiti is quite widespread in the city of Athens and many young people are active in this area. At the same time in figure 13 the majority of the respondents (93.6%) answered that they consider it difficult to create graffiti.

7. Γνωρίζετε κάποιον/-α που ασχολείται με το Graffiti ;
110 απαντήσεις

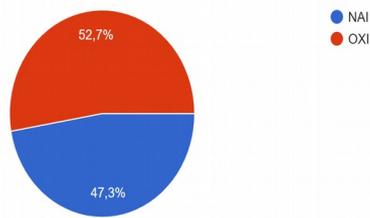


Figure12. Do you know any Graffiti artists?

8. Θεωρείτε ότι είναι δύσκολη η δημιουργία τους ;
110 απαντήσεις

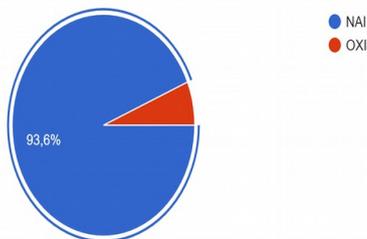


Figure 13. Do you find it difficult to create a Graffiti artwork?

Arriving at an important question that concerns us in the present study, we observe in Figure 14 the answers for the question of whether they consider graffiti a damage to foreign property. At this point it would be important to emphasize, according to the explanations given to the respondents about the object of the research, that the term graffiti is used as a general term that includes the type of murals we see on the streets of Athens and is not perceived only in the sense of "signatures" and "letters" (known as tags) such as the objectively clear separation that exists in this field.

What is interesting in the answers of the respondents is that 41.8% answered that they consider graffiti as damage to foreign property, although an overwhelming majority of the respondents have a positive opinion about graffiti (98.2%). Linking the answers with the current legislation and the corresponding literature, it is understood that there is a polarization in the views of the public.

With one part (58.2%) considering that it is not damage to foreign property, either focusing on the fact that where permission is given for their creation is considered legal, or for other, possible ideological reasons. On the other hand, 41.8% answered positively to the question, expressing a negative opinion about the image of the city, which when the graffiti is done uncontrollably and without permission, presents the image of vandalism.

9. Θεωρείτε ότι το Graffiti είναι φθορά ξένης περιουσίας ;
110 απαντήσεις

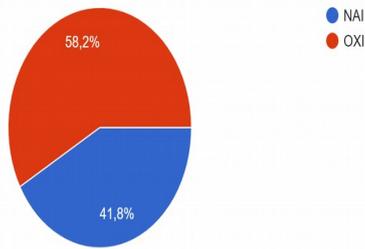


Figure14. Do you consider Graffiti to be foreign property damage?

A small percentage engage or show personal interest in engaging in the art of graffiti (19.1%) which reduces the possibility of subjectivity to the objectives of the questionnaire regarding the view of the city residents on graffiti. (Figure 15).

10. Ασχολείστε ή θα θέλατε να ασχοληθείτε με τα Graffiti;
110 απαντήσεις

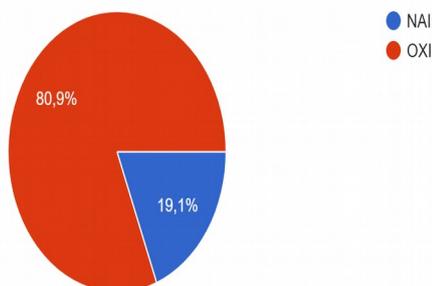


Figure 15. Do you or do you wish to deal with the graffiti?

In Figure 16 to the question of whether graffiti can beautify an ugly building the answers were mostly positive. The 44.5% answered that they completely agree, 45.5% answered that they probably agree and the rest of the sample has a neutral or negative opinion (9.1% and 0.9% respectively). At the same time examining the answers in figure 17, to the question whether they believe that they can highlight and beautify degraded areas of Athens, the answers again in the majority were positive.

11. Πιστεύετε πως τα έργα Graffiti θα μπορούσαν να ομορφύνουν ένα άσχημο κτίριο;
110 απαντήσεις

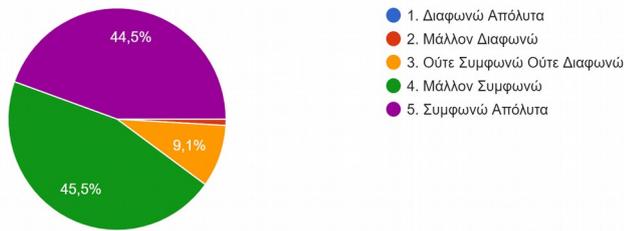


Figure 16. Do you think Graffiti projects could beautify an ugly building?

12. Πιστεύετε πως τα έργα Graffiti θα μπορούσαν να ομορφύνουν και να αναδείξουν υποβαθμισμένες περιοχές στην πόλη της Αθήνας;
110 απαντήσεις

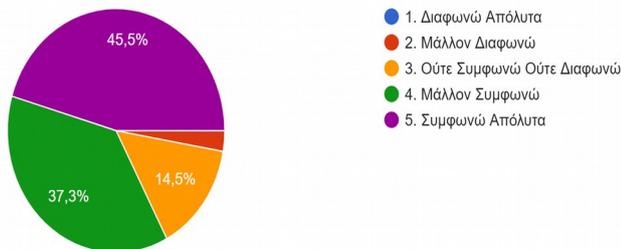


Figure 17. Do you think that Graffiti projects could beautify and highlight degraded areas in the city of Athens?

In Figure 18 on the state's attitude and whether greater control should be exercised over graffiti in the city, the answers were heterogeneous. The majority (38.2%) had a rather neutral stance on the issue and a significant percentage (32.7%) probably agreed that more control should be exercised. The remaining percentages cover the entire scale of responses almost equally. Also to the question we see in figure 19 about whether the state should support graffiti artists with special programs the response of the public was positive. The 50% said they completely agree, 34.5% probably agree and only 11.8% gave a neutral answer. Much smaller percentages said no.

13. Θα επιθυμούσατε η πολιτεία να ασκεί μεγαλύτερο έλεγχο στο έργα Graffiti που γίνονται στους εξωτερικούς χώρους;
110 απαντήσεις

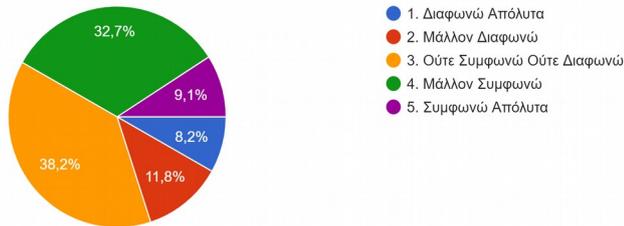


Figure 18. Would you like the state to exercise more control over Graffiti projects done outdoors?

14. Πιστεύετε πως η πολιτεία θα έπρεπε να στηρίξει με ειδικά προγράμματα την δημιουργία έργων και τους καλλιτέχνες του Graffiti;
110 απαντήσεις

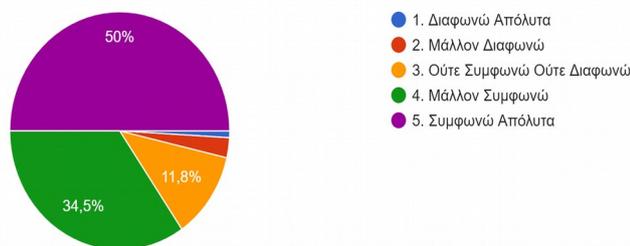


Figure 19. Do you think that the state should support the creation of works and Graffiti artists with special programs?

When asked if they would like to see more exhibitions or events on the subject of graffiti (figure 20), most respondents answered in the affirmative. The 50% completely agreed, 31.8% answered that they probably agree, while in a percentage of 17.3% the answer was neutral. Also when asked if they find a good idea to create a graffiti museum (figure 21) the public opinion was divided, with 31.8% completely agreeing, 32.7% answering that they probably agree, 28, 2% to give a neutral answer and a small percentage to disagree.

15. Πιστεύετε πως εκθέσεις ή εκδηλώσεις για τα Graffiti θα ήταν καλή ιδέα;
110 απαντήσεις

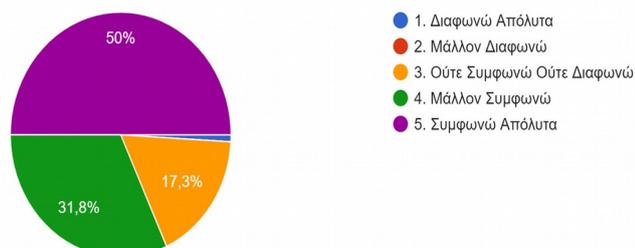


Figure 20. Do you think exhibitions or events for Graffiti would be a good idea?

16. Πιστεύετε πως η δημιουργία μουσείου για τα Graffiti θα ήταν καλή ιδέα;
110 απαντήσεις

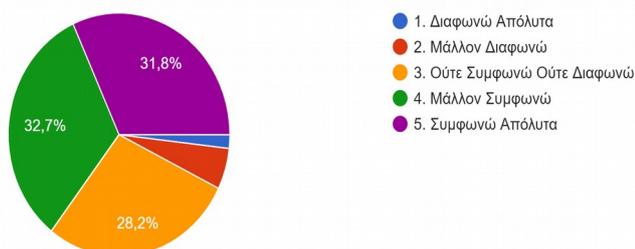


Figure 21. Do you think creating a museum for Graffiti would be a good idea?

In the last question of the questionnaire (figure 22), which is also the main research question of the paper, on whether they believe that graffiti projects could attract visitors / tourists in order to see them up close and photograph them, the views of the respondents were rather positive, although multidimensional. The 37.3% of the sample strongly agree, 38.2% rather agree, 19.1% gave a neutral answer and a smaller percentage (5% and 0.9%) rather disagree or strongly disagree.

What is worth noting in the analysis of these answers is that there is a slight increase in the neutral and negative answers to the present question, a fact through which we conclude that the respondents are not enough optimistic about the extent to which graffiti could contribute to the attraction of visitors and tourists and consequently in an urban revival of degraded areas of the city.

17. Πιστεύετε πως τα έργα Graffiti θα μπορούσαν να προσελκύσουν επισκέπτες / τουρίστες με σκοπό να τα δουν από κοντά ή να τα φωτογραφίσουν;
110 απαντήσεις

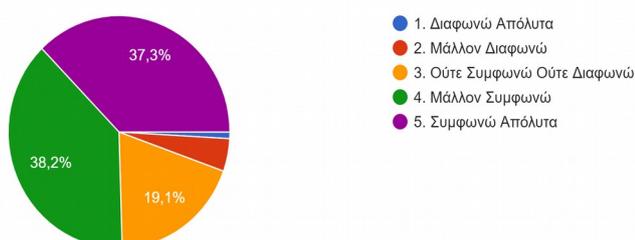


Figure 22. Do you think Graffiti projects could attract visitors / tourists in order to see them up close or photograph them?

3.2. Qualitative analysis (Interviews)

The qualitative research through interviews was conducted in order to record opinions with their proper elaboration to draw the final conclusions regarding the main questions of the study. The type of interview chosen in this study is the semi-structured interviews. In this procedure, the respondents answer predefined questions, the wording of which can be changed and explanations can be given. The aim was to be able to have an in-depth discussion of the subject under study and to have flexibility in the direction and results of the questions.

The following were identified as key questions of the qualitative part of the research:

1. Do you like painting on the street? What is your opinion on graffiti and street art?
2. What are the topics of street art that interest you?
3. Do you think that the citizens of Athens are now familiar with the art of graffiti?
4. In various foreign countries there is great interest in the art of graffiti. Many artists enjoy great acceptance and often attract many visitors who want to admire their works up close. Do you think that the city of Athens has such a perspective?
5. For many years the prevailing view was that painting on buildings was considered vandalism and should be punished. What is the attitude of the state today? Do you think it has become more elastic?
6. It is common to differentiate between uncontrolled graffiti and artistic graffiti implemented as part of a building remodeling project. What is your opinion on this distinction?
7. The inhabitants of Athens? Do you think they perceive graffiti as an art form or as vandalism of buildings and public spaces?
8. Do you think that graffiti /murals could contribute to the development of degraded areas of Athens by attracting visitors and also tourists from abroad?

Regarding the type of questions selected in the interviews, these were open-ended. The aim was to give the respondents complete freedom to express their thoughts without being guided. In addition, through this method, it is possible to collect detailed information and mainly unexpected answers. For the efficient conduct of qualitative research the questions as a whole are a single digit number, as required.

In the context of qualitative research, we approached 5 artists who are mainly active in Greece, either as graffiti artists or street artists, mural artists or combining their activities. They answered on semi-structured questions and below we will see in detail the answers they gave us.

Finally, at this point it is appropriate to mention some restrictions on the conduct of interviews. Initially, due to the research subject which concerns the street art for the area of Athens as well as the further convenience of the respondents, the interviews were done in Greek language and translated by the author of this study.

In addition, due to the difficulties encountered of the special circumstances we are facing, referring to the global pandemic of Covid 19, in-person interviews were not possible but were carried out by phone or via skype platform.

At the same time, the time period during which the survey was conducted (see summer months, July and August) was quite restrictive with several delays and difficulties in terms of communication and response of respondents.

Participants

The first artist we came in contact with, known by the artistic name ATEK, is a mural artist, has been active in the field of graffiti in the past years and is a graduate of the School of Fine Arts in Athens with a focus on sculpture.



III.9. Mural by Atek in Athens (Vice Magazine 2017).

The second artist we came in contact with, known by the artistic name KEZ, has been involved in graffiti and is active in the art of mural being an active member of the company UrbanAct, which as mentioned in the previous section is very active in the field of street art in Athens but also in many Greek cities or cities abroad.



III.10. The hands.

Mural by Kez, Athens (Private archive 2020)

The third artist we came in contact with, known by the artistic name Pupet, is a mural artist, has been active in the field of graffiti in the past and is a graduate of the School of Fine Arts. He is also an active member of the UrbanAct company.



III.11. The lying girl, mural by Pupet. Columbia abandoned factory, Athens (Private archive 2020).

The fourth artist we came in contact with, known by the stage name SAME84, is a street artist, has been active in the past in the field of graffiti and collaborates with urbanact.



III.12. Mural by SAME 84, Giannis Antetokounmpo, Agia varvara (Lifo press 2019).

The fifth artist we came in contact with, known by the stage name Fro, is a street artist and a graduate of the School of Fine Arts in Athens.



III.13. Mural by Fro. (Personal archive of the artist 2020).

The way of analyzing the interviews

The way the interviews were analyzed was based on the following steps, according to Mantzoukas (2004):

↗ Raw text of the interview : The interviews are transcribed, creating the raw material of the research.

↗ Text coding: The text is coded in the following eight sections:

1. The opinion of artists about graffiti and street art.
2. Preference for street art themes.

3. What is the familiarity of the inhabitants of the city with the street art.
4. Perspective of Athens to follow in the footsteps of other European cities in the matter of the impact of street art.
5. The attitude of the state towards the legality or illegality of street art graffiti.
6. Answer the question of whether street art is art or vandalism.
7. Possibilities through graffiti and street art to upgrade degraded areas and tourist development.

↗ Identifying differences and similarities, where the common and different points of each interview are identified.

↗ Concentration of similar codes into thematic sections, where a text is re-created based on the thematic sections

↗ Connection of the thematic units with the wider bibliography, where elements that were identified in the bibliography are added to the text and enrich the present research.

Research results

1. The opinion of artists about graffiti and street art.

ATEK explained to us what are the main differences between these three types that are widely referred to as "graffiti". He first told us about the history of graffiti and mentioned that it was about signatures and letters, known as "tags". Respectively, he said that the murals are a form of public art and are usually made in conditions of legality in relation to the traditional graffiti which is usually illegal.

At the same time, KEZ told us about graffiti that for him it looks like a Sunday walk with his friends, that he popularizes painting, and that all those who do graffiti inhabit the public space. They move out of their homes as form artistic groups and become active citizens by

changing the neighborhood's urban landscape. They are no longer passing citizens-tourists but they play a role in the society.

Then, PUPET answered that he has been dealing with graffiti since a very young age (1996) and does not have a negative opinion, he now notices that in some cases the result is not so beautiful in space (when for example there are many signatures (tags) on the street) .

SAME84 also told us that he likes to paint on public surfaces, as well as to be exposed, which puts him in a process of always trying to give his best under any circumstances.

Then, FRO in the relevant question told us that he really likes graffiti because of the adrenaline and freedom it gives him as well as the large scale of the project. However, he believes that graffiti is not a painting, but an illegal expression on the property of another.

2. Preference for street art themes

The first respondent, ATEK, answered us that the main issue and what concerns him most is the deconstruction of the image on the occasion of the environment, whether it is urban or not. Abstract images and other . In Athens in particular he told us that he would like to see more spaces in which everyone will express how he feels and what concerns him.

The second respondent, KEZ, stated that he is thematically involved in various topics depending on the project he undertakes and the time period. In general, he is interested in nature, textures, Greek mythology and folk art, but lately he has also been involved in sculpture.

The third respondent, PUPET, prefers to paint female figures, while the fourth respondent, SAME84, told us that he likes to paint what he lives, that he cares and that he is not so involved in current affairs or politics. Whenever he dealt with current affairs, he thought that these were issues that cartoonists should cover in the newspapers.

The last respondent, FRO, deals mainly with nature and humans, but this always depends on the case or the task assigned to him if it is a mural (legal mural).

3. The familiarity of the inhabitants of the city with the street art

ATEK separated those who live in the center of Athens and those who live outside the center, meaning that the attitude of the residents of the center who come in daily contact with graffiti is different and the treatment of those who live in the suburbs is different.

He focused on the residents of the city center and stated that he thinks they are certainly very familiar because they have seen it for 30 years, but he was not sure if they are familiar that graffiti is an art. He believes that the answer is negative but that they are definitely familiar with what makes them their day. There is certainly a positive response for artists, but it coexists with the non-acceptance of what graffiti artists do.

He believes that in terms of subject matter, what people like is standard as "the culture of taste" largely shapes the public consciousness through social media, but also the art channels that shape the trends. So he believes that the response an artist will encounter depends on what he will paint. Finally, he believes that people like representation in artworks and they don't like tags.

KEZ believes that there is definitely positive response and that graffiti is often the way out of the poor maintenance of buildings. Also that a complete and quality graffiti protects a wall from signatures, posters, slogans, etc.

PUPET told us that now they are more familiar or just not so interested as now Athens is a very dirty city and secondly everyday life has become difficult where in recent years we all unfortunately have much more important things to deal with. SAME84 also replied that he is sure that after many years the residents of Athens have become familiar with the art of graffiti.

Finally, the FRO believes that the people of Athens are quite familiar now, but this is true until an artist intervenes in their property without their permission, doing something they will not like. That is, as long as they perceive graffiti as something that does not concern them. So they show tolerance and not necessarily consent.

4. The prospect of Athens following in the footsteps of other European cities in the matter of the impact of street art

In the discussion we had with ATEK, among other things, he told us that abroad street art - including graffiti and murals - is a trend that has been exploited a lot. It is perceived as

something "fresh" and not as something that is subject to the norms and forms of the currents of contemporary art. There are festival organizers and institutions that organize such festivals and the public responds warmly. He used the case of Paris as an example. He told us that in Paris there is an area where the train passes by and has 7-8 large murals and a lot of graffiti on the right and left. The same goes for many other European cities, such as Berlin for example.

In Greece there is no corresponding support and exploitation, but there is a very intense activity in terms of creation. He told us that in the artistic circles and in general among the people who are active in the field of art, the news blogs, sites, artists and in general among all those who form the status quo, Athens is considered the "mecca of graffiti". In Athens he told us that graffiti is everywhere, there are almost no empty walls, it is a bit "unobstructed" and this is true from all sides. The state, the citizens and the creators.

Abroad, academies, organizers, the state, financial fans, advertisers realize the influence it has and organize murals, each for its own benefit, and invite artists from all over the world. This is happening in Athens on a much smaller scale. In summary, he believes that in Athens there is the prospect of this evolving much more.

The second respondent, KEZ, told us that this could very easily be done, because murals are a work of public art, and when a lot are collected it could even be described as an open public museum. Athens believes that it is already such a destination and also mentioned to us the city of Volos in which there is already an improvised museum of murals.

PUPET has the opposite view from the two previous respondents. He believes that such a thing is very difficult judging by the course of events so far. He thinks that it would be very nice to have such a development but this presupposes radical changes in education-culture-organization etc. But what is happening in his opinion is that now Greek street artists have more opportunities to show and be recognized for their work abroad, due to social media.

SAME84 told us that there is a possibility that it will happen, if we consider that there are now artists in this area who are renowned both inside and outside Greece. He believes that this is a good sign if we consider that the number of those who are actively involved in graffiti and street art in Greece is quite large.

5. The attitude of the state towards the legality or illegality of street art graffiti

According to ATEK, the state and the law consider that painting on a walls is illegal to the extent that it does not have its license. He also stated that many times the state has subsidized actions related to the murals and considers that it would be unfair to say that the state has not supported public art at all. Once again, it separates graffiti from murals, both legal and illegal. He used some examples, one of which was his script for doing graffiti in a school. He told us that, If he wrote a slogan it would be considered illegal, but if he went somewhere in consultation to make a mural it would be tolerated by the state.

As for the attitude of the state, he told us that the state shows great tolerance. He explained to us that if, for example, a graffiti artist was caught on the spot in a European city (Paris) and did not have a permission, he would be arrested. In Greece in a similar circumstance it would be just a recommendation. He also said that even the police force itself is not convinced of what it should do in the end. In his opinion, there is a serious conflict over what is legal, illegal, vandalism, what graffiti really is and what people believe.

He told us that many galleries around the world trade in graffiti art and wondered if the state could demarcate an area to give artists privileges and a small budget to make murals smaller in scale and self-contained. Not only with a horizon of economic scale of exploitation but also of culture. He suggested that in a collaboration with the artistic chamber, artists should be defined in a transparent manner, who would take turns and be a form of expression, controlled and to produce work, and artists to fill the gap and become a tourist attraction and cultural At this point he mentioned the case of London and more specifically the Brick Lane area, a very popular area for graffiti and murals that created the current image first with the tolerance and then with the support of the British government.

In our conversation with the second respondent, KEZ, he told us that painting on buildings is illegal as long as there is a question of ownership, there have just been so many beautiful murals around the world that have been accepted by the public. He believes that the state will always be thirsty for impressions and superficial things (bread and spectacles he said), so, in his opinion, it appropriates what it sells and finally intensifies it in its mechanism and humiliates it. Finally, he does not believe that he has become resilient to the issue of graffiti, merely that on a case-by-case basis, he supports or fights public expression through street art.

Next, PUPET believes that the attitude of the state is no longer flexible, just that no one cares anymore. He brought us a personal experience as an example, telling us that when he was younger and at night they painted with his friends on the trains, in the morning they ran to take pictures because they went straight and turned them off. This did not happen after and during the crisis, probably due to the fact that they did not have the money to

extinguish it, as he told us, so they left everything like this until today, typically mentioning the case of the Athens electric railway.

Finally, the FRO believes that the attitude of the state has not become more flexible, but in its view in Greece it is relatively easy to paint public space and did not penalize what would happen accordingly abroad.

6. Whether street art is art or vandalism.

A TEK told us about what vandalism is and what it considers to be an example. He mentioned the case of the «Polytexneio». A few years ago, a graffiti artist painted the exterior wall of this historic building, a story that had occupied much publicity at the time and divided the public. For him it was a work of art through vandalism, as he characteristically told us. For him, however, a negatively charged meaning is not necessarily when we talk about these contexts.

Additionally, he considers that the municipality or the respective bodies to use a certain amount of paint and repaint the wall, as it was done, is not such a big problem. He believes that the state tolerates graffiti because he is not interested in doing enough, shows tolerance or believes that they will be repainted and so do not enter into this process often. He also told us about the specific graffiti at the Polytexneio that since it was done without a license, it was the definition of vandalism.

According to the next participant, KEZ, by the term uncontrollable graffiti we mean illegal graffiti. For him, however, this does not make it non-artistic, but rather the opposite. He believes that large murals are made in the context of the city's landscaping and they usually lack the freedom of the creator's point of view since most of the time he enters the context of commercialization, populism and even propaganda, but illegal works are usually more authentic.

He also points out that the constant question is "what is art" and many books have been written on this subject and we are still looking for the answer. He briefly told us that whether it is something art or not, it has to do with the taste of the viewer, that is, it is subjective, and not with the creator, nor with the artwork itself.

Next participant, PUPET, states that when we talk about large-scale outdoor art projects or "street art" as it is commonly called, it is something completely different. If it comes to

letters and signatures, he thinks that the view of the people has not changed, but if they see a large mural, he think they now consider it as an art form.

In addition, the fourth respondent, SAME84, told us that for him there is no separation, that graffiti is one graffiti and the other simply diffuses the artist and the subject matter. In practice, he considers that it is vandalism that it is not implemented with the permission of the owner of the surface, but he believes that usually everyone else is involved except the interested party.

He also believes that to consider graffiti vandalism in Athens is funny because there are much more serious problems than a wall that has touches of paint on it. He tells us that it is not possible for the state to chase graffiti when there are no sidewalks for pedestrians to walk on, when disabled bars are closed and many other daily problems in the city. Of course, he states that even if there are more substantial problems, this does not give everyone the right to intervene on any surface without permission and in any way he wishes.

Finally, FRO in our discussion stated that in Athens most people admire legal paintings and not graffiti that is considered vandalism. In his view, both types of "graffiti" (speaking of those who do tags and those who do murals) started with illegal signatures and vandalism, but he mainly believes that legal graffiti is considered as art while illegal vandalism is not considered in this way. Also, he is active in both species and believes that everyone aims at different things and addresses completely different people. In addition, he believes that painting on a building elsewhere without permission is vandalism whatever you create.

7. Possibilities through graffiti and street art to upgrade degraded areas and tourist development.

The first respondent, ATEK told us that in terms of creation and intervention, Greek artists are at a very good level. If we talk about economic growth it will certainly exist in his view, because the incentive will be great. He referred to the tourism development that can occur with the accommodation that can be created and the shops that can operate.

But for the residents of each area the benefits can be controversial. He considers it possible, depending on the extent to which those involved will decide to invest in such a possibility to become murals under branding conditions and to acquire areas of Athens a tourist attraction through the murals.

Of course, he stressed that we must see and how art must be made in public space. It depends on how the state, NGOs or institutions will define what and where is happening and how they will be linked to private interests.

Then, to emphasize his argument, he referred to an exhibition of a private company with the works of da vinci who made a mural at the expense of the da vinci institute in Athens in 2019. More specifically, he referred to the exhibition at the old OSY Depot in Gazi in which hosted with great success with a huge response from the public "Leonardo Da Vinci - 500 Years of Genius". Completed by the visual artist INO, a 90m long mural inspired by Leonardo da Vinci commissioned by Lavris in collaboration with the Grande Exhibitions and with the assistance of the Leonardo da Vinci Museum in Rostov Lumiere Technology in Paris, but also experts from Italy and France.



III.14. Mural by INO in Peiraeus Street (Nasos Papadokostopoulos 2019).

Then KEZ told us that this already works, in schools in the center of Athens and in refugee neighborhoods of the city. On the contrary the next respondent, PUPET, was not so optimistic in such a perspective. He believes that this is not the case as it is now, but if such a project was organized at the state level, it might help. He also said that I can not imagine that such a thing could become a reality, as there are not many bodies to support it, but even if they are found he doubts whether they will be suitable to implement such a project.

In the same spirit with the first two participants is SAME84, who claimed that this already works in the city of Athens and told us that there are even graffiti tours that groups of tourists make periods in the graffiti of Athens. At the same time, Fro, the last respondent, told us that something like this could definitely happen in Athens. He also mentioned that this is already happening in various places such as Metaxourgeio. Municipalities believe that they use street art to raise property prices and issue licenses for accommodation and airbnb, so he believes that it certainly contributes, but in the end he expresses his concerns about whether such a thing would necessarily be good or bad for the inhabitants of these areas.

3.3. Discussion

From the analysis of quantitative and qualitative research (mixed methods) many interesting findings emerged. Initially, at the level of the quantitative research, through the 110 questionnaires collected, it became clear that the vast majority of respondents are familiar with street art, that is, they know and have observed in the city the abundance of graffiti and murals that exist. This makes sense, given the fact that the city of Athens - mainly - is full of graffiti from one end to the other.

This fact, in addition to personal observation, was confirmed to us by several of the participants in the interviews conducted as part of the qualitative research. The first participant, with the artistic name ATEK, told us that graffiti exists everywhere in Athens and in the area of the Exarcheia, more specifically, he characteristically stated that "there is no empty wall to paint". Also, this view, regarding the degree of familiarity of the citizens with graffiti, was confirmed by all the participants in the qualitative research, who believe that now the inhabitants of the capital are mainly completely familiar with the street art as an integral part of the city.

The findings of the qualitative research show that there is a clear distinction between illegal graffiti and murals made through assignment by a private or public bodies. This is made clear by the words of all the respondents who participated in the interview process.

Initially, all of our participants explained that graffiti is different from other forms of street art. Graffiti are not as popular as large-scale murals, which are usually legal. The topics that interest the participants arise from their personal taste and interests and have heterogeneity, but what converges in their views is that citizens like murals with beautiful content, beautiful colors and impressive themes. Respectively, the state in such cases supports the street art or simply shows greater tolerance.

The above also results from the relevant literature. Also, the preferences of the public tend to be directed towards the murals which are treated as works of art as they are more complete and perfect works, while the graffiti (in the sense of letters and signatures - tags) are usually treated as unsightly, vandals and illegal projects that pollute the urban landscape.

Similarly, this view could be confirmed by the results of the quantitative research, as a significant percentage stated that they would like the state to exercise more control over graffiti on the streets, obviously keeping in mind the illegal graffiti and not the legal murals.

Summarizing the answers of the respondents, the common point in the answers of the majority was that there is a big difference between graffiti and street art or mural art. More specifically, when we talk about graffiti, we refer to the signatures and the letters, mainly that in most cases it is an illegal activity.

Conversely, when we talk about murals, where they are usually large-scale works, we mainly mean the execution or creation of works after some consultation on a private or public level, regardless of the monetary consideration, which is usually considered as a legal activity.

Another general conclusion that emerges from the answers of the respondents is that graffiti has a greater social, political and in some cases a "revolutionary" burden, compared to the murals. In addition, what we notice is that the view of the respondents is positively attuned to graffiti and street art in general.

Then, interesting conclusions emerge about the attitude of the state towards street art, which converge with the current literature. The state, therefore, seems to support - on a case-by-case basis - the creation of murals in the city of Athens, but also in other cities. Of course, this does not happen to a large extent, as it does in other major European cities (see Paris, London, Berlin, Barcelona, etc.) but according to the respondents, Athens is on the right track.

At the same time, in terms of the findings of the quantitative research, the positive mood of the public is interesting to see more graffiti in the city, to hold events and festivals with the theme of street art, and even the creation of a museum for graffiti art. The above show that there is great acceptance but also a desire to develop even more in Greece this phenomenon called street art.

If we connect the findings of quantitative research with the findings of qualitative research and the corresponding bibliography on the perspective that exists in the city of Athens in order to develop the phenomenon of public street art but also to be exploited by the state, the private bodies and institutions, the picture looks quite encouraging. Already, as mentioned in previous chapters of this study, the actions taken in Greece with the support of public or private bodies, are several and important.

Returning to the state's stance on graffiti, the prevailing view is that the state does not care enough. On the one hand, referring to the case of uncontrolled graffiti done in Athens without a relevant license and without the commonly accepted aesthetically pleasing result, the view of the participants in the qualitative research was that in Greece there is a general

lawlessness and indifference to the image of the city. The legal framework exists and the law is clear. It is not allowed to intervene in any public or private area without permission. The point, however, is that in the context of a general indifference and flexibility, it is not always observed even in such a strict context as is applied in other European capitals.

We could connect the above with the economic crisis in Greece from 2008 onwards, where if we look at the literature we will find that many efforts to gentrify cities were left in the middle, as new and more serious problems social, economic, political and even issues of daily survival concern the state and its citizens. The result is that the image of the city becomes secondary.

At this point we come to a crucial question regarding the opinion of the participants on whether they believe that street art can play a crucial role in the refinement of degraded areas in the city of Athens and whether they could attract visitors in order to admire or study the graffiti of Athens.

The research findings are very encouraging. At first, many of the participants in the interview process told us that they believe this can happen or that it will definitely happen in Athens. Others have told us with greater certainty that this is already happening in many areas of Athens, such as the areas of Metaxourgio and Kerameikos. At the same time, according to the results of the quantitative research, a significant percentage (75.5% of respondents) believe that this can happen in Athens.

In summary, all of the above demonstrate the great impact that street art has today, something that is of course an international trend, as many of the respondents in qualitative research have informed us, but this is something that we can very easily do. We can also see from the international literature that confirms that in the last decade at least, with the contribution of electronic media but also the interest of artistic funds for the phenomenon of street art, this happens in many urban cities worldwide and why not, it could also happen in Greece.

Conclusions – Further Research

Athens is a densely populated city characterized by an admittedly inadequate urban design. If we add to the already problematic plan of the city and the economic crisis that plagues Greek citizens from 2010, everyone can reasonably understand the reasons that the image of the city in many areas, especially in the city center, presents an image of abandonment and perhaps ugliness.

In the midst of many miscellaneous issues concerning the Greek capital, a dialogue emerges as to whether street art could contribute positively or negatively to the sustainable image of the urban landscape.

The main conclusions that emerge from this study are the following:

First of all, taking into account the domestic and international literature, street art and more specifically graffiti and murals is an art form that monopolizes the interest of art circles and citizens in recent years. In other words, it is no longer a kind of marginal art as it was perceived in the past, but keeping its subversive character, it is now the subject of exhibitions in prominent museums around the world.

Many artists enjoy recognition and are widely accepted and at the same time more and more professional artists are turning to public / street art. Alongside, we are no longer talking about some unconventional young people who choose to express their opposition by painting in public walls.

In addition, in terms of the international context, an important role is played by the state and private sector who seem to understand the new trends of the time and support the spread of street art, using it to build a new identity in modern cities.

In the Greek example, the conditions are difficult but not disappointing. More specifically, the attitude of the state is an interesting topic of discussion. While the state is not hostile to street art on the one hand, on the other hand it does not seem to make effective use of the potential that street art can provide to urban centers.

As we have seen through the review of the literature and the research carried out, the state has supported through various actions and programs to carry out murals in central parts of the urban landscape, but there is no specific policy or action plan in this direction.

At the same time, there is a problem with the uncontrolled creation of graffiti, with the state showing considerable tolerance and even indifference to the image of vandalism presented by the urban landscape. While the law is clear about interfering in public space without permission, it ultimately does not apply. As a result, the image of the urban landscape is in many cases characterized by an image of abandonment by the state.

Summing up the results of the research, we find that they are quite encouraging. On the part of the citizens, we observe a familiarity and a growing interest in street art, as well as an optimistic perspective on the possibilities that street art has to contribute to the urban revival of degraded areas in the center of Athens.

On the other hand, equally encouraging is the attitude of professional artists that activate in the field of graffiti and murals, who presented us with an image of Athens as "the Mecca of graffiti" according to the prevailing view in art circles internationally. Most likely this is due to the strong artistic presence and activity that exists in the Athenian capital in combination with the tolerance shown by the Greek state compared to the austerity observed in respective European cities.

At this point we will list some suggestions for the sustainable development of the city center through the contribution of street art.

Initially, it is important to have a comprehensive strategic action plan for the development of the urban center with the main purpose of making cities competitive according to the new standards of internationalization, deepening the comparative advantages and possibilities that are found in the city of Athens.

It is proposed to utilize the existing murals and to highlight the new artists through the support and motivation of them in order to create. At the same time, the organization of cultural activities and collaborations with foreign artistic institutions could make Athens a modern city characterized by freedom of expression and artistic creation.

In addition, it would be very important to redefine the relevant law which is not up to date, is not at all detailed in terms of public art and does not include many of the changes that have taken place in the new way of living and communication conditions of modern cities.

At the same time, the utilization of new technologies and education will be integral and valuable tools for building a city with a new modern and artistic identity, first of all within the

country and the citizens who live in it and after in terms of the external image. presented to visitors / tourists.

Finally, we could not ignore to mention the new world order which created by the existence of the global pandemic Covid 19 from February 2020 until today, where it is still in progress and with an uncertain outcome. The two sectors that have been hit hardest are the culture sector and the tourism sector, key areas addressed in this study.

Nevertheless, this difficult period could give birth to new innovative ideas to make the city of Athens more sustainable and modernized by making the city walls a canvas of creation, expression and optimism for the future.

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Appendix

Qualitative Research – Interviews

Interview No 1 – Atek:

1. Do you like painting on the street? What is your opinion about graffiti?

There is a separation between graffiti which means I repeat my name and other art forms such as street art and mural murals. Through it it has been created. I do not know when this thing starts. I think after 2000, let's not be absolute, which is called street art. An extension of this thing a little more extended. Street art is a "market" term that sounds nice, it is catchy and fits a lot of people from the point of view of the creators and those around and I will explain it. It is a term used mainly by galleries and museums, ie those who are economically active around art with the aim and purpose of integrating graffiti into contemporary art forms.

The third is mural art. Here are the simplest things, regardless of one's starting point. We are talking about small or large scale works of someone, they are usually more complex performances of course.

OK, now we do not judge this. Everyone chooses their style, you understood their technique. We are talking about what we call mural painting which is not a new thing. He is often confused with graffiti because the people who make murals / mural art are more or less the same people who made graffiti in the past.

My view of graffiti is positive. produces people who love art in general, how to say it. I see graffiti as such. Art. My view is positive. It could not be non-existent. I do not have in mind that it is something that should be avoided today. Although it is on a declining course.

2. What are the topics that interest you?

I like to paint in the street and that is what attracted me. That is, first I did graffiti on 11-12-13 years old, of course at school, in the notebooks, but that moves me. Graffiti, in other words, aroused my curiosity to deal with the visual arts in general later. That is, when I arrived in the third year of high school, I said whether I should give architecture or graphic design. To get to the end, of course, later I study a second school, the fine arts. So obviously I like to paint on the street.

- yes it has to do with the trend of the time. For a decade now, I do not know if it is further back or forward. Lately, the social media and the accounts of the great artists and the accounts, in any case, of all the organizations that are active today, play a very big role. It has to do with a lot of things.

The topics that interesting me are different from season to season. These periods are very short in duration. That is, over time you can find something different in my subject matter because e = is exactly the result of the influence and the steps I take. That is, now this thing is essentially born, it is molded and of course, and as a human being I have no attachments, I have no problem jumping from one to the other.

As a basic theme, however, what concerns me most for the future and now is the deconstruction of the image on the occasion of the environment, whether it is urban or not. There you will see a topic, let's say that I keep digging it up. Abstruse or abstract images as you will hear it. There is a lot of deconstructed, more abstract, and representational work.

It is the one reason who got me here. In the sense that this is what people want to see. Coexisted with currents of painting now all this,

so. We are talking about painting now, about me. You will see impressionist elements now in the work, these.

Now what I like to see is what I like to do. In Athens in particular, I would like to see more places with which everyone will express how they feel and what concerns them. Of course it would be nicer for me to be all the more innovative to say it, not to see the same things over and over again but the key is to see more places. If you ask me what I like to see, I like to see more places where people can express themselves freely.

- regardless of whether I see something good or bad. Personally, if you ask me in Athens, I do not particularly like what I see. It is multi factorial, without saying that there are no remarkable artists etc

- I understand... but what to say. In a city where sculpture is buried 2000 years back. How am I suppose to say it.

- exists because the culture for the state is basically the ancient civilization.

3. Do you think that the inhabitants of Athens are now familiar with the art of graffiti?

7. Do you think they perceive graffiti as an art form or as vandalism of buildings and public spaces?

Other case are the people who live in the center of Athens and other who live outside. If we talk about the residents of the center, they are definitely familiar because they have seen it for 30 years. I do not know if they are familiar with the fact that graffiti is an art. Definitely no. They are probably familiar with what make their day. There is definitely a positive response to artists who coexist with not accepting what we do.

-really. So this can also depend on taste.

- what people like is a bit standard. In terms of subject matter. What he is used to seeing elsewhere, on his cell phone, is shaped in his consciousness.

- this is related to what you said earlier. It is influenced by social media.

- what is it that shapes what the average resident of Athens will like. Definitely me writing something that I will like 500 people and we communicate through it. If I make a girl who looks carefree at the stars everyone but 500 will like it.

What is art is judged by history. But there is definitely a familiarity with the concept that this thing has been around for 35 years.

What response you will encounter depends on what you will paint. If you want to tell you something, people likes the representation.

4. In various foreign countries there is great interest in the art of graffiti. Many artists enjoy great acceptance and often attract many visitors who want to admire their works up close. Do you think that the city of Athens has such a perspective?

Look what is happening, abroad they have managed to catch the trend that people like this thing as something fresh. Spontaneous and not channeled through the forms and norms of contemporary art and they lead this to new channels and obviously with the criterion of economic motivation. In other words, festival organizers and institutions that organize such festivals come out, promoting this form. Many people respond. Let's say Paris is full of graffiti. It is a point where the train passes overhead and has 7-8 large murals on the right and left. and has a lot of graffiti.

In Athens, for example, the square of Omonia is being renovated. A Greek sculptor is not consulted. There is only one sculpture of Zongolopoulos that he had made in the past... you understood what I was saying.

- yes yes I know them.

- let's go to other European cities and not talk about Paris let's take a walk in Germany after all. Did you understand why am I telling you this? Because it plays a role and what we see as street art graffiti etc as artworks. Of course there is mayor activity with graffiti and street art. Athens is considered "the mecca of graffiti and street art". I do not know if I am right or wrong. However, in terms of quantity, it is everywhere.

Generally from the people who are active, news blog sites, artists, all those who shape the status quo after all. Athens is considered a mecca because it is precisely considered a mecca. Because there is an unhindered expression in relation to other capitals.

- Unobstructed in any way. K in relation to say k with the amount controlled by the state;

- Yes. It is a bit unobstructed. From the whole system called the city of Athens. State citizens, creators.

That is, Exarchia does not exist elsewhere. Where everything is painted. There are no empty walls.

Abroad there is a marketing idea. Academies, organizers, state, financial fans, advertisers all catch what is happening and what impact this thing has and they organize murals each for its own benefit so to speak and invite artists from all over the world.

This is happening in Athens on a much smaller scale.

With the share of the pie belonging to an artist mainly and some around.... He wants an analysis here now... I do not know if you want to tell....

An artist doing a work on a housing web is like having done 15 painting exhibitions in one year.

Certainly artists enjoy great acceptance. It happens, certainly more limited from abroad. In Athens it will evolve even more, for better or worse. I do not judge this now. So? The thing will definitely evolve.

5. For many years the prevailing view was that painting on buildings was considered vandalism and should be punished. What is the attitude of the state today? Do you think it has become more elastic?

6. It is common to differentiate between uncontrolled graffiti and artistic graffiti implemented as part of a building renovation project. What is your opinion on this distinction?

[Refers to the example of graffiti of the Polytechnic University of Athens].

- Look, I can not believe that they do not paint them because there is no money. I believe that it is possible (State) because they tolerate it and secondly because they believe that it will be repainted.

-Yes. Graffiti at the Polytechnic University.

- yes it was graffiti. It was the definition of graffiti. That is, the intervention of the artist in terms of illegality, so to speak, ie without permission. With whatever significance this thing may have. I'm not ready to tell you yes or no. I do not criticize it or not.

It was a work of art through vandalism. That's it. It was vandalism. What was. Public property and in fact a building with a long history with a fighting spirit and a symbol for a large part of society etc that classifies it as a vandalism act. To me vandalism is not a negatively charged concept. Vandalism in these contexts. Intervention in a wall and creation of something new. Creation on a blank wall. You paint it. If I do graffiti at a school or write a slogan it will be considered illegal. If I

go somewhere to make a mural to do a mural, that is tolerable. It is what the state considers illegal or legal or vandalism.

The attitude of the state today. Socrates shows great tolerance. If a graffiti was caught without a license abroad (France) he would be arrested. A recommendation will be made in Greece. They will tell us guys you have to stop. Even the police force itself is not convinced of what it should do. There is a serious conflict over what is legal, illegal, vandalism, what it really is and what people believe.

The official state and the laws prohibit any such space without the permission of the state – where permission is outlined for any private initiative

with a corresponding economic interest if we are talking about a private initiative or a cultural initiative.

8. Do you think that graffiti could contribute to the development of degraded areas of Athens by attracting visitors and why not tourists from abroad?

Yes in terms of intervention. Greek artists are at a very good level.

Development now...yes development let's not take it literally now.

If we talk about economic growth there will definitely be. Because the motivation will be great. The hotels that will sprout. What will the resident of the area gain? To see the murals.

There will definitely be tourism development. They could and will play it to the extent that they decide. That all these areas will become tourist attractions.

Under the terms of branding marketing will be made murals. In order for Athens to develop in terms of tourism. An exhibition of a private company was held with the works of da vinci and they made murals at the expense of the Da Vinci institute. It refers to an exhibition The OSY Old Depot in Gazi hosts with great success and huge public response the magnificent exhibition Leonardo Da Vinci – 500 Years of Genius.

Of course we have to see how art should be made in public space. This is a big debate. With the state, the NGOs, the institutions. Where the state puts a municipal district that will define what and what is done and how they are connected to private interests.

Interview No 2 – Kez:

1. Do you like painting on the street? What is your opinion about graffiti?

I have been drawing on paper for this purpose since 1997. I do not remember when I first came out on the wall. I probably like it.

I prefer it to painting in my workshop. Graffiti is like a Sunday walk with friends, it popularizes painting, and most importantly of all, everyone who does graffiti takes up public space. they go out of their homes, form artistic groups and become active citizens by changing the urban landscape of the neighborhood. they are no longer passing citizens-tourists but they play a role in the public. bad or good this is another conversation.

2. What are the topics that interest you?

Thematically I am involved in various analogues with both progesterone and the time period. In general, I am interested in nature, textures, Greek mythology and folk art, but lately we are also dealing with sculpture.

3. Do you think that the inhabitants of Athens are now familiar with the art of graffiti and the art of the street?

Yes, this is for sure, i would say better that graffiti is often the way out of the poor maintenance of buildings. Also a complete and quality graffiti protects a wall from signatures, posters, slogans etc. there is respect between us.

4. In various foreign countries there is great interest in the art of graffiti. Many artists enjoy great acceptance and often attract many visitors who want to admire their works up close. Do you think that the city of Athens has such a perspective?

Yes, this can be done very easily. A mural is a work of public art, and when a lot is collected we can say that there is an open public museum.

athens is already such a destination. and in Volos city there is already an improvised mural museum.

5. For many years the prevailing view was that painting on buildings was considered vandalism and should be punished. What is the attitude of the state today? Do you think it has become more elastic?

Painting on buildings is still illegal since there is property, there have just been so many beautiful murals around the world that have been accepted by the world.

The Greek state will always thirst for impression and superficial things (bread and spectacles), so it appropriates what it sells, intensifies it in its mechanism and humiliates it. I do not think that her work has become flexible depending on her interests.

6. It is common to differentiate between uncontrolled graffiti and artistic graffiti implemented as part of a building renovation project. What is your opinion on this distinction?

Suppose uncontrolled graffiti means illegal graffiti. But what makes it illegal makes it non-artistic? rather the opposite in my opinion. Large murals are made in the context of landscaping, they always lack the freedom of the creator's point of view, since most of the time it enters in the context of commercialization, populism and even propaganda. illegal works are more authentic.

7. The inhabitants of Athens? Do you think they perceive graffiti as an art form or as vandalism of buildings and public spaces?

Now this is the constant question of what is art. Many books have been written and we are still looking for the answer. I would say briefly that whether it is something art or not has to do with the viewer and not with the creator or with the work itself. Vandalism could be considered graffiti done without permission. Those who have a license are not considered vandalism. Whether it is art or not is subjective.

8. Do you think that graffiti could contribute to the development of degraded areas of Athens by attracting visitors and why not tourists from abroad?

Yes, this already works, in schools in the center and in refugee neighborhoods, murals and graffiti are made. Many people see them on social media and are looking to find them in the city.

Interview No 3 – Pupet:

1. Do you like painting on the street? What do you think about graffiti / street art?

Yes of course otherwise I would not do it. I have been involved in graffiti since a very young age (1996) and I have nothing negative to say. Maybe now that I am a little older I would say that in some cases the result is not so beautiful in the space (when for example there are many signatures (tags) on the street etc.

2. What are the topics that interest you?

I generally like to paint female characters so my subject matter tends to go there most of the time.

3. Do you think that the inhabitants of Athens are now familiar with the art of graffiti?

I think that now they are more familiar or just not so interested as now Athens is a very dirty city and secondly everyday life has become difficult where in recent years we all unfortunately have much more important things to deal with.

4. In various foreign countries there is great interest in the art of graffiti. Many artists enjoy great acceptance and often attract many visitors who want to admire their works up close. Do you think that the city of Athens has such a perspective?

I'm not sure about that, judging by the course of events so far. It would be very nice to have such a development but it requires radical changes in education-culture-organization etc. Many changes are needed, substantial, so I do not think that such a thing can be done. What is happening nonetheless is that Greek artists now have more opportunities to show and have their work recognized abroad, due to social media.

5. For many years the prevailing view was that painting on buildings was considered vandalism and should be punished. What is the attitude of the state today? Do you think it has become more elastic?

In general, as I told you before, I do not think it is more flexible, just no one cares anymore. For example, when I was younger and at night we used to paint on the trains, in the morning we ran to take pictures because they went straight for extinguishing. After and during the crisis this did not happen, probably due to the fact that they did not have the money to extinguish it, so they left it all like this (and unfortunately after so many years it is still like this, see ISAP), as well as the walls in the center Athens.

6. It is common to differentiate between uncontrolled graffiti and artistic graffiti implemented as part of a building remodeling project. What is your opinion on this distinction?

First of all, graffiti as a term has more to do with letters and not with large murals. There we are talking about works of art in a large dimension outdoors or "street art" if you will, is something completely different. Usually the murals are made with permission, the graffiti (letters - tags) no.

7. The inhabitants of Athens? Do you think they perceive graffiti as an art form or as vandalism of buildings and public spaces?

If they are letters and signatures, I think their point of view has not changed, but if they see a large mural, I think they now consider it as an art form.

8. Do you think that graffiti could contribute to the development of degraded areas of Athens by attracting visitors and why not tourists from abroad?

So as they are now individually I do not think anything can be done but if such a project was organized maybe it would help yes. But the truth is that I can not imagine that such a thing could become a reality, as there are not many bodies to support it, but even if they are found I doubt whether they will be suitable to implement such a project. Maybe in time such an image of Athens will be created, but in order to have real success it will have to be seriously supported.

Interview No 4 – Same84:

1. Do you like painting on the street? What is your opinion on street art / graffiti?

I like to paint in public places and I am excited that I am exposed and I do not have the opportunity to apologize for the circumstances in which my work of art was made. This forces me to always try to give my best as I can, under any circumstances.

2. What are the topics that interest you?

9 out of 10 times I paint what I like, what concerns me, what I live. I like to present issues that I experience in everyday life and not so much dealing with current affairs and politics. These are pieces that cartoonists undertake in newspapers. Somehow I saw myself the times I tried to deal with current issues.

3. Do you think that the residents of Athens are now familiar with the art of street art and graffiti?

After many years that there is graffiti on the streets of Athens (and not only) they have become familiar. I am sure.

4. In various foreign countries there is great interest in the art of graffiti. Many artists enjoy great acceptance and often attract many visitors who want to admire their works up close. Do you think that the city of Athens has such a perspective?

I think yes, that could happen. If you consider that there are now many artists in the field who are famous both in Greece and abroad. This is a very good sign if you count the number of people who deal with graffiti in Athens (There are too many now).

5. For many years the prevailing view was that painting on buildings was considered vandalism and should be punished. What is the attitude of the state today? Do you think it has become more elastic?

7. The inhabitants of Athens? Do you think they perceive graffiti as an art form or as vandalism of buildings and public spaces?

It is practically vandalism, when it is not done with the permission of the owner of the surface, but usually everyone is involved except him... the person concerned.

To consider graffiti vandalism in Athens in my opinion is funny. When there are no free sidewalks for the citizens to walk, when the ramps for the disabled are closed, when the city is so dirty anyway... I think all of the above and more are much more important than if a wall has touches of color get him.

Although for me the above are more essential, I obviously believe that this does not give everyone the right to intervene on any surface in any way he wishes. The state is tolerant in relation to abroad. Citizens are also responding positively.

6. It is common to differentiate between uncontrolled graffiti and artistic graffiti implemented as part of a building renovation project. What is your opinion on this distinction?

For me it is the same. Graffiti one graffiti and the other. Artists are different. And it is also subjective what everyone finds nice.

8. Do you think that graffiti could contribute to the development of degraded areas of Athens by attracting visitors and why not tourists from abroad?

This already works, there are already graffiti tours that guide groups of tourists to the graffiti of Athens. And not only are different things happening, but still small. There are prospects for many things to be done in this regard.

Interview No 5 – Fro:

1. Do you like painting on the street? What is your opinion on street art / graffiti?

I really like it yes. The adrenaline and freedom it gives you as well as the large scale of the project. Graffiti, if we take it exactly as a concept, is not a painting. Graffiti is an illegal expression on another's property.

2. What are the topics that interest you?

Mainly nature and people. Depending on the case or the work they have assigned to me if we are talking about mural (legal mural).

3. Do you think that the residents of Athens are now familiar with the art of street art and graffiti?

Many yes until you make them tags in their house haha..

4. In various foreign countries there is great interest in the art of graffiti. Many artists enjoy great acceptance and often attract many visitors who want to admire their works up close. Do you think that the city of Athens has such a perspective?

Let's highlight something here. Graffiti is different from murals, although many people mean both when they talk about graffiti. In Athens it is understood that most people admire legal paintings and not graffiti vandals. As I do both, I have to say that everyone looks at something else and you address completely different people.

5. For many years the prevailing view was that painting on buildings was considered vandalism and should be punished. What is the attitude of the state today? Do you think it has become more elastic?

Not at all. Just in Greece it is relatively easy to do and did not punish as much as abroad. Yes, painting on a building elsewhere is vandalism, whatever you do, if you do not have a license. The laws are not strictly applied in Greece.

6. It is common to differentiate between uncontrolled graffiti and artistic graffiti implemented as part of a building renovation project. What is your opinion on this distinction?

Another one another the other as we said above. Some do both. Others only one. The only thing that is certain and common is that both types of graffiti started with illegal tags and vandalism for the most part.

7. The inhabitants of Athens? Do you think they perceive graffiti as an art form or as vandalism of buildings and public spaces?

Both apply here. But mainly the legal ones consider them art and the illegal ones vandalism.

8. Do you think that graffiti could contribute to the development of degraded areas of Athens by attracting visitors and why not tourists from abroad?

Of course. This is already happening in various places such as Metaxourgeio, for example. The municipalities use the street art to raise prices on real estate to give licenses for airbnb etc so yes it is understood that it contributes regardless of whether it is good or bad in the end something like that.