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Approaching Athenian Graffiti and Street Art as a Multimodal Genre with GIS Application

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Highlights

- Graffiti and street art as an ever-changing form of public art and visual communication is naturally multimodal, focusing on verbopictorial relations (Bateman 2014; Stampoulidis 2016a, 2016b).
- The Athenian graffiti and street art scene is a visually alternative medium of intercommunication during the socioeconomic and political crisis in Greece. The graffiti and street art activity on city’s walls can be characterized as:
  - Interactive public medium of multimodal communication
  - Metamorphosis of public space
  - Open dialogue with Athenian society

Project overview in Cognitive Semiotics

- Cognitive semiotics: “an interdisciplinary matrix of disciplines and methods, focused on the multifaceted phenomenon of meaning” Zlatev (2012).
- Street art: performative, ephemeral, site specific.
- Digital technology: digital archive, GIS – Geographical Information System

Research Questions

- What is the semiotic nature of different multimodal verbopictorial meanings: iconic or indexical, metaphorical or metonymic/syncrastic, or a smooth mixture of these?

Rhetorical structure of graffiti and street art

- Convention: the absence of shared pragmatic knowledge emerges as important boundary condition (Kennedy & Scott 2003).
- Selection: [...] all pictures are unavoidably selective, and therefore rhetorical. The rhetorical intention is articulated by the selection of one view instead of another. The persuasive intent in pictorial rhetoric is manifested in what is not shown (absenta) as in what is shown (praesenta)” (Kennedy & Scott 2003).
- Artfulness: potential to provide pleasure (McQuarrie & Mick 2003).

Conclusions

- Street art is locational oriented.
- Verbal and pictorial integration based on various semiotic modalities is a visual testimony, in order to establish a spiritual bridge with the Greek society.
- The interpretation of graffiti and street art requires shared sociocultural Lifeworld.
- The sociocultural and political changes give birth to a wave of popular sociopolitical wall commentary.
- Redefined signs and symbols, intertextual references, and culturally related subjects reconstruct the current Athenian public landscape.
- Complex multimodal verbopictorial nature of graffiti and street art

Preliminary Results and Discussion

- 2008 revolution in Athens, after the shooting of a 15 year old student by the police on December 6, 2008 in Exarchia district, downtown Athens.
- The protest actions in 2008 constituted the onset of the sociopolitical and financial crisis.
- Mass student demonstrations in traffic areas signified the end of Greek society of the last decades.
- From May 2010 to present day, Greece has been part of three economic adjustment programmes.
- The public walls rapidly started transforming into an interactive social public magazine, as an attestation of all those sociopolitical processes in the Athenian public landscape.

Sociopolitical Context

- From May 2010 to present day, Greece has been part of three economic adjustment programmes.
- The Athenian graffiti and street art scene is a mul'modal, focusing on verbopictorial relations (Bateman 2014; Stampoulidis 2016a, 2016b).
- The public walls rapidly started transforming into an interactive social public magazine, as an attestation of all those sociopolitical processes in the Athenian public landscape.

Research goals

- What?
  - Empirical and experimental testing of suggested hypotheses on multimodal verbopictorial rhetoric in graffiti and street art.
- How?
  - Creating a corpus of pictures with rhetorical deviation (convention, selection, artfulness).
  - Building up an explicit and reliable taxonomy of verbopictorial rhetoric in graffiti and street art.

References