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A digital archive

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Street Art and Public Space: A digital archive

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss street art as new form of art and activism of uncommissioned and unsanctioned artifacts including paintings, murals and various kinds of stencils, posters, and stickers applied in any public surface. As Bengtson (2014) has argued street art is a sociocultural practice, which is performative, ephemeral, and site specific. Street art has much to tell us about the dialectics in public space, the cultural interaction, and the meaning – making of the urban verbo/visual text production depending on the urban contextualization. Relying on the researcher’s own empirical data gathered during fieldwork conducted in Athens, I discuss if and how Athenian street artists reflect upon contemporary sociopolitical issues, and if and how street art has the potential to actively transform the public space into a communicative and dynamic sociopolitical arena.

In particular, the always-imposed question is if and how street artifacts become historical objects with social and artistic expressions of cultural values and heritage (MacDowall 2006, 2008). If so, it is important a research to be pursued towards the cultural significance of street art with the help of digital georeferential applications. Towards this direction, an interdisciplinary study of street art based on GIS models is to be conducted.

One of the main objectives of my PhD project in cognitive semiotics is to build up a digital infrastructure for restoring, protecting, analyzing and visualizing street artifacts with the implementation of GIS (Geographical Information System) technique. In fact, it seems to me that a project like this is an appropriate example of how cultural archival data despite of their ephemeral nature can be explored in new ways applying digital technology in relation with the geographical coordinates.

Keywords: street art, public space, and database, GIS

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