

Urban uprisings

Graffiti and Street Art in Nijmegen 1980-2015



Nijmegen, 1981. Photo from Council Archive



Nijmegen, 2012. Photo by MeerLiefde

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Society has been completely urbanized... The street is a place to play and learn. The street is disorder... This disorder is alive. It informs. It surprises... The urban space of the street is a place for talk, given over as much to the exchange of words and signs as it is to the exchange of things. A place where speech becomes writing. A place where speech can become 'savage' and, by escaping rules and institutions, inscribe itself on walls."

--Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (1970)

Are not the blank walls, and all flat surfaces carrying no messages, the updated, liquid modern version of the 'void' which all nature, in this case, the nature of information society, abhors? Where is such an institution [that will protect public place] to be sought?

--Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Life* (2005)

Street art embodies a different answer to modernism-one that truly allows art to join the living.

--Nicolas Elden Riggle, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplaces* (2010)

'What is most important to each of us is what we have in common with others: that the springs of private fulfilment and human solidarity are the same'.

--Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989)

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Introduction

“The concept of “writing to exist” is one that is often overlooked by most academic and creative writers. We are usually so focused on the process of writing, or the product that we are going to produce (or the grade or level of success that will be attached to the finished product), that we forget that our writing, regardless of its merits, is first and foremost an expression of our human existence. If we did not exist, we could not produce writing. Conversely, our written work proves that we are here, that we exist in a literate, writing community, that we had the courage and presence to put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard, or spray can to wall) and tell an ambiguous audience that what we have to communicate deserves the attention of space and time. This might seem like an obvious even redundant realization, but it carries incredible consequences. Because if/when we write, we, like graffiti writers, are claiming a written identity that demands to be heard and recognized. We are asserting ourselves in a space that becomes uniquely our own and forcing those who may prefer for us to be silent to take notice of our presence and potential.”¹

Writing and existence are interlinked, both physically and philosophically. A very special kind of writing is graffiti and street art, for the practice of this writing happens on ‘non-official’ places in the public realm, such as walls and lampposts rather than in books, newspapers, or street advertisements. These practices themselves are not easy to grasp, let alone their impact on society. It is nonetheless an emerging and worldwide phenomenon that has existed and transformed since the beginning of mankind.² Graffiti and street art can, among other things, be seen as part of an artistic and cultural dimension. This dimension stretches beyond the span of vandalism and runs the gamut of identity, counterculture, and commerce. In this particular thesis, graffiti and street art are studied, situated in the city of Nijmegen in the timeframe 1980-2015.

Dialectical structure of art and culture

In this thesis the view of culture as ‘contested, temporal and emergent’³ is taken as the point of departure. Art and culture can be viewed as being interwoven in a dialectic structure. This structure consists of the actual reality which takes shape in its endless cultural expressions and as such constructs a so-called *thesis*, and an imagined reality evoked by a work of art shapes its so-called

¹ E. Nave (2013) *In Search of Sol: Graffiti and the Formation of a Writing Identity*. P93. http://isuwriting.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Nave_Evan_3.2_Graffiti_and_Writing_Identity.pdf (last seen at 15-4-'17)

² *A Brief History of Graffiti*. (2015) BBC Documentary. Kaboom Film and TV. Presented by Dr. Richard Clay. Last aired at 13-12-'16 at BBC Four. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b067fxfr> (last seen at 15-4-'17)

³ E. Diamond (2015) *Performance as Cultural Politics*. Routledge. P5.

countercultural *antithesis*. The effect on an audience, to a certain extent creating an agency in them, can lead to the so-called *synthesis*. Notable philosopher and sociologist Herbert Marcuse encapsulates this reciprocal and dialectic dynamic between art and reality in his work *The Aesthetic Dimension*.⁴ Marcuse argues that the public reception of art can thereby have potentially revolutionary and liberating effects.

In my bachelor's thesis 'Hiding in the Light. Possible proliferations on Banksy' I refer to Marcuse to explain the properties and potentials of revolutionary art in my own words:

While the subject matters of art may often converge, it is the different perspectives on the subject which allows us to examine this subject in a different light. This is what Marcuse calls the simultaneous sublimation and desublimation of art. Thus form and content complement each other. The same goes for cognition and experience; the immersion to the artwork can invoke a cognitive inception. The interrelatedness of aesthetic quality and political potential is not a direct unity, but a possible one.⁵ The aesthetic form that both imitates and opposes established reality is a form of affirmation through a reconciling catharsis.⁶

For a cultural studies scholar, this *synthesis* is very fascinating and important, for it is the intersection between so many levels, or plateaus (productive connections between immanently arrayed material systems without a reference to an external governing source).⁷ Focus on this *synthesis* allows for many different disciplines to contribute their partial yet crucial piece to the complex and multi-layered puzzle we call meaning or significance. Examples of disciplines that deal with the meaning or significance of art and culture, are art history, anthropology, sociology, philosophy and media studies. Therefore, these disciplines will provide the necessary sources to build a theoretical framework.

Defining the city, the right to the city and urban common space

Dealing with graffiti and street art in a specific city like Nijmegen means to deal with highly complex concepts that have an actual existence in reality; they do not merely function in abstract thinking.

Before it is possible to deal with the main research question and the subsidiary questions, it is vital to formulate clear definitions. Even though definitions are inherently limiting, they do offer clarity in the form of a framework. As an academic researcher, I have taken a multitude of definitions into account

⁴ H. Marcuse (1977) *The Aesthetic Dimension. Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. New York: Beacon Press. <http://www.marginalutility.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/aesthetic-dimension--marcuse.pdf>

⁵ N. Neijboer (2014) *Hiding in the Light. Possible Proliferations on Banksy*. Radboud University Nijmegen. P53.

⁶ Ibidem. P58-59.

⁷ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (2015) The Metaphysics Research Lab. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/deleuze/#ThoPla> (last seen at 15-4-'17)

before stating my own definitions. I have chosen these formulations on the basis of their usage in this research.

Let us begin with the physical dimension in which the graffiti and street art are situated: the city. I approach the city as a complex dynamic process, for it is an ever changing entity shaped by many different institutions, companies, citizens, architectures, artists and tourists. A couple of important concepts in this research are directly linked to the city, for example 'urban common space' and French philosopher and sociologist Lefebvre's 'the right to the city'. I will define these concepts later, but it is crucial to understand these concepts as being interlinked and interactive. None of these concepts can fully be understood in isolation. I define the city as a geopolitical conglomerate consisting of living, housing, schooling, business and leisure resulting in a dynamic structure of economic imperatives, social development, artistic existence and cultural entrepreneurship.

An often overlooked, yet increasingly growing phenomenon is the right to the city. To live in a city can mean many things. It is relevant to realise that cities existed before industrialization and that cities do not solely exist to gain capital. Citizens are in a way entitled to and responsible for the quality of their surroundings. This quality can entail numerous facets of the surrounding of the city. Some aspects are included in council laws. Each city has the so-called 'General Municipal Ordinance' laws (*Algemene Plaatselijke Verordening*). In Nijmegen, these laws focus on sixty one topics.⁸ These vary from the road, commercial advertising, street artists, protection of flora and fauna, noise to parking excesses.⁹ This long list is not neutral; it contains the topics that revolve around rights and obligations for citizens and for the council of the city of Nijmegen. Most of these topics are explained as forbidden or requiring a license. A license basically means paying an amount of money.

The General Municipal Ordinance Laws do not speak of the right for citizens for an environment that is inclusive for all inhabitants and that is as peaceful as possible. When it comes to advertising, they merely speak of commercials in written or printed form as requiring a license. They

⁸ The roads, public water, the urban area (*bebouwde kom*), vehicles, edifices, livestock, commercial advertising, wild animals, trade display, license application, license exemption, public order, the control of violence and disturbances, meetings, demonstrations, parades, the distribution of printed documents, street artists, the monitoring of events, supervision of public establishments, the combat of nuisance and mischief, drug trafficking, the use of hard drugs in the streets, skateboarding, public drinking, harassment near buildings, behaviour in public spaces, the parking of bikes and mopeds, alarm systems, noise, stray dogs, the keeping of bees, the control of receiving goods, administrative detention, firework sales, surveillance in public spaces, street prostitution, sex shops, protection of the environment and the natural beauty, the care of the external appearance of the municipality, waste, pollution of soil, the road and other surroundings, the prohibition of the spreading of written and printed commercials without permission of the mayor and the aldermen, the keeping of standing timber, the protection of flora and fauna, measures against defacement and odours, parking excesses, collection, sales, pitches, browsing markets, animal slaughter, practice areas, motorised vehicles and equestrian traffic in nature reserves, the dispersal of ashes, street name signs, addresses, water cocks, lost property and recreational shelter outside a campsite.

⁹ Council Nijmegen.

http://decentrale.regelgeving.overheid.nl/cvdr/xhtmloutput/Historie/Nijmegen/80193/80193_1.html (last seen at 24-11-'15)

do not speak of only handing out licenses to advertisements of companies who, apart from making a profit, benefit society. They do not speak of written or printed (or sprayed, painted, etc) advertisements that promote, for example, peace, solidarity, or happiness, or advertisements that raise critical questions about society or that display disapproval for violence, hatred, etc. They do not speak of the council's obligation to support and stimulate community art. When these laws mention the prohibition of pollution of the surroundings, they refer to soil, the road, and other surroundings, like water. But what about the social environment? What about the pollution of peaceful quiet areas by the optical violence of excessive advertisements? What about the council's duty to provide areas of free expression for citizens? All of these issues are revolved around the concept 'the right to the city'.

The right to the city is in a way 'an empty signifier'¹⁰ for it is a topic that is still open to debate. The World Charter for the Right to the City seems to include so many rights—to cultural memory, telecommunications, retraining, day care, the removal of architectural barriers, and so forth—that the right to the city seems to be at the same time everything and nothing.¹¹ It can be used as a demand for a new kind of contract of citizenship.¹² The right to the city can also be synonymous to de-alienating and appropriating space in the urban landscape.¹³ At its core, the right to the city stresses the need to restructure the power relations that underlie the production of urban space, fundamentally shifting control away from capital and the state and toward urban inhabitants.¹⁴ My definition of the right to the city is the capacity for the citizens of a city to shape, transform and maintain the urban common space in a way that addresses both the needs of their individuality and their community.

What follows from this is the next concept to define: urban common space. A possible definition for this concept is as follows:

a space within a city that is for public use and collective possession and belongs to the public authority or to society as a whole — for example, spaces for circulation (such as a street or a square), spaces for leisure and recreation (such as an urban park or a garden), spaces for contemplation (such as a waterfall), or spaces designated for preservation or conservation

¹⁰ D. Harley (2012) *Rebel Cities. From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. London: Verso. P XV.

¹¹ M. Purcell (2013) *Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City*. In: 'Journal of Urban Affairs' Vol 36 Nr 1. University of Washington. P141-142.

¹² Ibidem. P148.

¹³ Ibidem. P149

¹⁴ M. Purcell (2002) *Excavating Lefebvre: the right to the city and its urban politics of the inhabitant*. In: 'Geo Journal' 58. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers. P101-102.

*(such as an ecological reserve). In all of these cases, the right to free access and movement is guaranteed to everybody.*¹⁵

Urban common space is more than physical materiality, it is a space filled with socio-political layers. It is often used as a plural; not one space but spaces. Several different academics have defined this concept. Italian philosopher of law and political science Norberto Bobbio has defined it as 'spaces of public interest.' Brazilian professor of sociology Emir Sader used the definition 'spaces constituted of identities and collective action.' American professor of political science formulated 'spaces that allow societal representation and collective expression.' Argentine political scientist Guillermo O'Donnell envisioned it as 'spaces for political freedom.' German-American-Jewish philosopher and political thinker Hannah Arendt focused on the notion 'spaces advancing the condition of equality'. German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas wrote 'spaces reflecting democratic formation of opinion and public will.'¹⁶

In the current *zeitgeist* urban common space is predominantly experienced as an anonymous space for commercial activities; citizens are usually targeted as individual consumers. In the city of Nijmegen, especially the city center, we can also see a lot of advertisements and shops. Yet certain phenomena also appear, be it scarcely or small, that break this paradigm. Such phenomena are, for example, demonstrations, protests, graffiti and street art. My definition of urban common space is a common ground, literally and figuratively, on which citizens can experience, express, and experiment with the conditions that constitute the community/communities of their city.

In summary, we are dealing with the frameworks of the city, the right to the city, and urban common space. In order to grasp how graffiti and street art influenced and still influence these frameworks, we need to go even deeper into the concepts of space, place, and non-place. These concepts were extensively discussed by the aforementioned philosopher Lefebvre and French anthropologist Marc Augé. If we understand the different dynamics behind the materiality of geographical areas, then we can look at the topic of this thesis with a strategic lens.

Relationship between citizenship and space, place, and non-place

Under the current law, graffiti and street art are merely identified as vandalism. When actually analyzing at a deeper level what places, spaces, and non-places are, we can see how the city, the right to the city, and urban common space are interlinked. Following that, we can see how they have a revolutionary potential, together with the political aesthetics of graffiti and street art, to create a

¹⁵ O. dos Santos Jr (2014) *Urban common space, heterotopia and the right to the city: Reflections on the ideas of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey*. In: 'Brazilian Journal of Urban Management' Vol 6. Nr 2. Licensed by Creative Commons Brasil. P147.

¹⁶ Ibidem. P147-148.

new contract of citizenship and constitute new council laws.

Citizenship is another concept that can mean many different things. An important feature of citizenship within this field of research is 'the right to change the set of available rights when they no longer (if they ever have) reflect the justified necessities of citizenship.'¹⁷ Before we can evaluate if the current council laws reflect the justified necessities of citizenship, let us find out what place, space, and non-place mean.

There are many ways to look at, interpret, and use space, place, and non-place. The aforementioned Lefebvre, French historian and philosopher Michel de Certeau, and French anthropologist Marc Augé wrote extensively about these topics. These three had in common that they put emphasis on the human practice that is connected to spaces, places, and non-places.¹⁸ It is human practices that shape and transform places, spaces, and non-places. Human practices link place, space, and non-place together in the domain of the city. So it is rather pointless making an effort to define these concepts in an isolated manner; as if spaces, places, and non-places exist autonomously. The surroundings of a city are used in different ways by several agents.

According to de Certeau, place is an 'instantaneous configuration of positions'¹⁹ and can be relational, historical, or concerned with identity.²⁰ In a simplified way, place is static, while space is dynamic because it is produced. Space is not merely a physical space, but a production of the meanings that people ascribe to this place. Lefebvre sees space as a subdivision of perceived, conceived, and lived space.²¹ Perceived space in this regard is the first dimension in the process of space production; it represents 'the practical basis of the perception of the outside world'.²² The conceived space is the space of scientists, urbanists, and architects.²³ So conceived space is the space that people in such professions envision and try to impose on cities. The third dimension of space is how space is actually used and experienced in practice by people: lived space. This dimension deals in a holistic way with communication in society.²⁴

To make this triplicity more concrete, let's take a random building in a random city as an

¹⁷ A. Plyushteva (2005-2009) *The Right to the City and the Struggles over Public Citizenship: Exploring the Links*. In 'The Urban Reinventors Online Journal' Issue 3/09. (www.urbanreinventors.net) P5-6.

¹⁸ O. dos Santos Jr (2014) *Urban common space, heterotopia and the right to the city: Reflections on the ideas of Henri Lefebvre and David Harley*. In: 'Brazilian Journal of Urban Management' Vol 6. Nr 2. Licensed by Creative Commons Brasil. P148

¹⁹ M. Augé (1995) *Non Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Chapter: 'The Near and the Elsewhere.' Verso: London, New York. P53-54.
<http://14.139.206.50:8080/jspui/bitstream/1/668/1/Auge,%20Marc%20%20Non%20Places,%20Introduction%20to%20an%20Anthropology%20of%20Supermodernity.pdf> (last seen at 15-4-'17)

²⁰ Idem. P77-79.

²¹ H. Lefebvre. (1991) *The Production of Space*. Translated by D. Nicholson-Smith. Blackwell: Oxford UK, Cambridge USA.

²² http://geography.ruhosting.nl/geography/index.php?title=Perceived_space (last seen at 15-12-'15)

²³ http://geography.ruhosting.nl/geography/index.php?title=Conceived_space (last seen at 15-12-'15)

²⁴ http://geography.ruhosting.nl/geography/index.php?title=Lived_space (last seen at 15-12-'15)

example. This building is perceived space in the sense that it is a configuration of walls, floors, doors, corridors, etcetera. It is conceived space because it was meant to be a school, an apartment flat or a shop etcetera. It is lived space, because people choose to use it as shelter for refugees, as a squatting place, etcetera. At this point, it becomes clear that graffiti and street art are part of perceived place because they are paint or other media on surfaces, they are vandalism or a commercial tool within the parameters of conceived space and they can be potentially everything in the dynamics of lived space.

There is yet another dynamic in urban areas and that brings us to this question: what is a non-place?

If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which unlike Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of 'places of memory', and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position.²⁵

Examples of non-places can be metro stations, supermarkets, malls, and highways. It is important to notice that the only forms of communication in non-places are advertisements. So non-places are in way places of capital. But non-places can change when people start interacting with them in ways that exceed in forms of communication. Graffiti and street art can play a part in this transformation. An interesting example of this transformation of non-places is the installation of public pianos on train stations. The train station becomes a place of meetings, of music, of artists, of audiences.

To summarize again at this point: this thesis will be concerned with the city of Nijmegen and how graffiti and street art influenced the urban common area in the time scope of 1980-2015. The city of Nijmegen is a site of places, spaces (perceived, conceived and lived), and non-places. The people of Nijmegen interact with these places, spaces, and non-places and they also deal with the notion of the right to the city. Graffiti and street art are created by people, but graffiti and street art also are observed, admired and demolished by people. Human practices and politics are always involved in this research.

Thesis structure

In order to research the significance and meaning of graffiti and street art at a certain place in a certain time period, a proper understanding of this dialectic proces, and of the combined methods of

²⁵ M. Augé (1995) *Non Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Chapter: 'The Near and the Elsewhere.' Verso: London, New York. P77-79.

several disciplines is necessary. It is the foundation on which the research, and therefore its conclusions, rests. Shed under this light, the main research question of this thesis is: In what ways was the urban common space in Nijmegen affected by graffiti and street art from 1980 to 2015?

In this master thesis, we can distinguish three parameters. First, the graffiti and street art, which is a parameter revolving around the ontological friction that deals with the oscillating tension between crime, art, and activism. It is noteworthy that this particular subject has only recently fallen under the purview of academic research. Second, the city of Nijmegen is the physical parameter in which the graffiti and street art are situated. Both the dynamics of modern cities in general, as well as particularly Nijmegen are important in this regard. Finally, there is the timely parameter of the period of 1980-2015, which is enough time to allow the subject of graffiti and street art to transform.

Within the three parameters several dimensions play their part. These dimensions form the basis for the chapters of this thesis and their complementary subsidiary questions. The first chapter deals with language in text and image. The subsidiary question that revolves around this chapter is 'What is the function of the different usages of language for the writer and the audience?' The second chapter is concerned with materiality, with the subsidiary question 'How do materials influence the practice of graffiti and street art? After that, the third chapter is all about the dynamics of urban spatiality by answering in what way graffiti and street art deal with ownership and value of spaces in Nijmegen. Finally, the fourth chapter will have memory as the common thread and will shed light on this subsidiary question: 'In which ways are graffiti and street art remembered, conserved, removed and rewarded?' After these four chapters the conclusion follows to end this thesis.

Previous academic research on this topic

Even though academic research on graffiti and street art is far from abundant, some significant remarks have been made. I have constructed a specific framework in which I situate both theory and practice. But is also important to have certain background information on which this framework rests. A few citations from academic sources help to provide this background:

Street art, c. 2010, is a paradigm of hybridity in global visual culture, a post-postmodern genre being defined more by real-time practice than by any sense of unified theory, movement, or message. Many artists associated with the "urban art movement" don't consider themselves "street" or "graffiti" artists, but as artists who consider the city their necessary working environment. It's a form at once local and global, post-photographic, post-Internet, and post-medium, intentionally ephemeral but now documented almost obsessively with digital photography for the Web, constantly appropriating and remixing imagery,

*styles, and techniques from all possible sources. It's a community of practice with its own learned codes, rules, hierarchies of prestige, and means of communication.*²⁶

*Street art subcultures embody amazingly inventive and improvisational counter-practices, exemplifying Michel de Certeau's description of urban navigators in *The Practice of Everyday Life* and Henri Lefebvre's analyses of appropriations of public visual space in cities. Street artists exemplify the contest for visibility described by Jacques Rancière in his analysis of the "distribution of the perceptible," the social-political regimes of visibility: the regulation of visibility in public spaces and the regime of art, which policies the boundaries of art and artists' legitimacy.*²⁷

These two citations illustrate the complexity of graffiti and street art, and show how they are at once part of the reality of everyday life and simultaneously ingrained in modern theory.

*Artists are sparking an important dialogue through their street art "regarding the search for common space and the democratization of art." Street artists strive to demonstrate that "while public space can be contested as private and commercialized by companies," it is the artists who offer public space "back as a collective good, where [a] sense of belonging and dialogue restore it to a meaningful place."*²⁸

*But this war of the walls is, more profoundly, a war of the worlds. For graffiti writing not only confronts and resists an urban environment of fractured communities and segregated spaces; it actively constructs alternatives to these arrangements as well.*²⁹

*Members of subcultures challenge hegemony by drawing on the particular experiences and customs of their communities, ethnic groups, and age cohorts, thereby demonstrating that social life can be constructed in ways different from the dominant conceptions of reality.*³⁰

²⁶ M. Irvine. (2012) *The Work on the Street: Street Art and Visual Culture*. Georgetown University. Pre-press version of a chapter in *The Handbook of Visual Culture*, ed. Barry Sandywell and Ian Heywood. London & New York: Berg. P1. <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/articles/Irvine-WorkontheStreet-1.pdf> (last seen at 15-4-'17)

²⁷ Ibidem. P2

²⁸ K.M. Gleaton (2012) *Power to the People. Street Art as an Agency for Change*. A project submitted to the faculty of the graduate school of the University of Minnesota. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Liberal Studies. P39-40.

²⁹ J. Ferrell (1995) *Urban Graffiti: Crime, Control and Resistance*. In: 'Youth and Society.' Vol. 27. No. 1. P37.

³⁰ R. Lachmann (1988) *Graffiti as Career and Ideology*. In: 'The American Journal of Sociology.' Vol. 94. No. 2. The University of Chicago Press. P231-232.

Here, with these three citations, we see the dialectic structure of the meaning of public space and social classes where artists try to transform that area into a certain *synthesis*. Such academics citations are illustrative of the complex dynamics of graffiti and street art.

*An analysis of graffiti on the urban environment can serve as an excellent tool in understanding behavior, attitudes and social processes of certain segments of society. The thematic content of graffiti can provide valuable information on these groups that are not often in public view in the urban environment. Subcultures in our society that have gone against the normative values that the dominant culture has laid out have been overshadowed by the practices of popular culture.*³¹

This citation stresses how research of graffiti and street art is embedded in a much broader realm that encapsulates a certain oscillation between popular culture and counter culture. The following citation describes the tension between crime and art:

*It is worth noting that vandalism and art are defined as opposites (destruction versus creation), yet can also be seen as different forms of transgression. While vandalism transgresses the law, art is often defined by a poetic license to transgress aesthetic boundaries. However, a key difference between graffiti and legal public artworks is that the latter are rarely transgressive.*³²

This multi-dimensional platform of transgression is important for the topics of this research. Just as the changing economic function and ownership of graffiti and street art, as is shown in this quotation:

*Aesthetic discipline around who is allowed to initiate projects in the public sphere and who is not, tied to common conceptions of race, class, gender and youth. However, the incorporation of graffiti into high art markets, and as a marketing tool for everything from sodas to video games, also reveals the remarkable flexibility of neoliberalism to incorporate insurgent elements, even if only to a partial degree.*³³

³¹ A. Alonso. *Urban Graffiti on the Urban Landscape*. University of Southern California, Department of Geography. P2. <http://www.asu.edu/courses/aph294/total-readings/alonso%20--%20urbangraffiti.pdf> (last seen at 15-4-'17)

³² K. Dovey, S. Wollan, I. Woodcock (ND) *Graffiti and Urban Character*. University of Melbourne, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning. P4. http://soac.fbe.unsw.edu.au/2009/PDF/Dovey%20Kim_Wollan%20Simon_Woodcock%20Ian.pdf (last seen at 15-4-'17)

³³ M. Dickinson (2008) *The making of space, race and place. New York City's War on Graffiti 1970-Present*. In: 'Critique of Anthropology.' Vol. 28. No. 1. Sage Publications. P40.

The meaning of space in relation to graffiti and street art can be illustrated in a hierarchal manner:

*Non-, marginal, or liminal spaces are not necessarily marginal by way of geography, but rather by way of use. The concept of liminality is related both to physical space and to identity, or social space. As a physical or conceptual realm, the marginal affords the subversion of space, an idea especially relevant for street artists. While some artists choose spaces that lie on the periphery of a city, many work in the city core - amidst otherwise mainstream uses of space.*³⁴

These were all examples of analyses from academic endeavors on graffiti and street art as well as the space in which graffiti and street art appear. When it comes to the specific site of the city of Nijmegen in this regard, academic sources are very difficult to find. Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to the already existing body of knowledge. It offers a specific focus on graffiti and street art in Nijmegen, which is a topic that has up until now received scarce attention. A lot has happened in Nijmegen when it comes to graffiti and street art. Proof of this can be found in more unofficial sources, like Youtube and people's personal archives and interviews with such citizens, as well as official sources like council archives. These videos, archives and interviews, as well as photographs I took myself, provide an extensive source with which theory can be woven into an understanding of this fascinating phenomenon.

My own position in this field

As an academic researcher, it is better to not have the illusion that one is able to be fully objective. This is simply impossible. Instead, it is important to recognize one's position *within* the field of research. Furthermore, researchers need to be mindful of the fact that in isolating a particular topic for their research they are themselves creating an artificial situation, for no work exists in isolation. So to be able to make a proper analysis, one is required to try to take into account as much influences as possible that relate to this particular topic.

Nijmegen is the city I was born and raised in. I feel very connected to this city, its proclivity for left wing policies, the university, the culture, and its inhabitants. When I stroll through my city streets, I am always happy to see graffiti and street art. It intrigues me and I wish to more fully understand and illuminate its significance. I strongly feel a form of communication that I do not fully

³⁴ A. Wacławek (2009) *From Graffiti to the Street Art Movement: Negotiating Art Worlds, Urban Spaces, and Visual Culture, c. 1970 – 2008*. Concordia University, Department of Art History. P19.
<http://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/976281/1/NR63383.pdf> (last seen at 15-4-'17)

grasp, and wish to understand more deeply. I even tried to do some street art myself, using chalk, and later spray cans and markers.



Photo by author in April 2014.

This is my position on a highly personal level. On the level of me being a student of Creative Industries, the graffiti and street art in Nijmegen are a very interesting topic. This topic deals with the local-global tension (often referred to as 'glocalization'), since both inhabitants of Nijmegen and international artists leave their mark on these streets. The process of glocalization is indicative of the tendencies that exist within many industries and art worlds. Studying this particular field of art and culture 'fosters new learnings; it encourages exploration of urban areas as potential free zones for creative expression, while also examining the complex ideals and realities governing freedom of artistic and cultural expression in public spaces.'³⁵

General background knowledge about graffiti and street-art in Nijmegen

Before the actual exploration of Nijmegen's graffiti and street art within the frameworks of the chapters can commence, it is pivotal to give an outline of the development of graffiti and street in Nijmegen in a more general sense. Graffiti and street art are media that can serve many different purposes. Such purposes are for example:

'embodying cultural significance through its individualistic nature, through its ability to

³⁵ K. Keys (2008) *Contemporary Visual Culture Jamming: Redefining Collage as Collective, Communal and Urban*. In: 'Art Education' Vol. 61 No 2. National Art Education Association. P99

*beautify and enhance public spaces, and through its highly visible way of speaking out on political, social and economic issues*³⁶

*'communicating messages in the public arena that are accessible to all, and acting as an instrument for advocacy and an essential element and reflection of the human existence, protesting to bring about social change for communities of people who have no voice.'*³⁷

Squatters in Nijmegen in the 1980s used the streets to advocate their political protest in a very explicit way. These squatters tried to prevent the demolition of lower class housing in the Piersonstraat to make room for a parking garage. On February 27th, this culminated in the biggest protest in the history of Nijmegen: approximately 2100 police officers were called in to deal with the protestors. The severity of the protests were such that the police used tear gas, tanks, and helicopters to deal with the 15000 protestors.³⁸ The visibility of their protest in the public sphere can be seen in pictures like these:



Photos by GemeenteArchief Nijmegen February 1981.

In chapters one and four, I will go into this topic. This type of agency visible in urban common space is highly articulated as being political, responding to council policy. But graffiti and street art can also function with subtler messages. They can be political in an indirect way; communicating differentiation in the performance of identity, displaying innovation within language by the means of innovating typography, displaying a paradigm of sharing and DIY sentiments, appropriating spaces that were otherwise used for advertisements, experiment with the materiality of city surfaces, to name a few. The significance of graffiti and street art in Nijmegen knows many faces.

It is important to distinguish the difference between graffiti and street art. The exact

³⁶ L. Bates (2014) *Bombing, Tagging, Writing: An Analysis of the Significance of Graffiti and Street Art*. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.Scholarly Commons.P1-2.

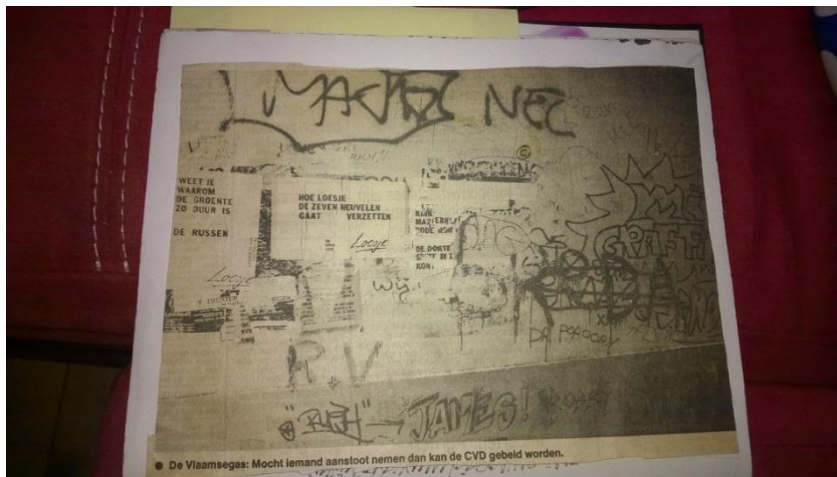
³⁷ K. Gleaton (2012) *Power to the People: Street Art as an Agency of Change*. A Project submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota. P4-5.

³⁸ Huis van de Nijmeegse Geschiedenis.

http://www.huisvandenijmeegsegeschiedenis.nl/info/47_Het_rode_Nijmegen(seen at 6-9-'15)

boundaries between them depend on one's definition of these two terms. It is possible to situate them both in a very large historical timeframe; dating back to cave paintings, Egyptian hieroglyphs, the cuneiform, political wall messages in ancient Greece and Rome, and so on. It is also a possibility to make a distinction between the two by looking at graffiti's illegibility and street art's legibility.³⁹ Because of graffiti's forbidden status, it is an act that has to happen very quickly and is often considered as cryptic and coded communication, while street artists can take the time to create a visual language that is often viewed as aesthetic and universal.⁴⁰ For this particular thesis however, I wish to focus on the time period of 1980-2015 and on the place of the city of Nijmegen. Within the boundaries of that time and place, graffiti seemed to emerge first roughly during the 1980's and when graffiti started to commercialize in the 1990s, street art evolved out of that. I will go deeper into the differences, similarities and significance of graffiti and street art in the chapters of this thesis. But it can be useful to give a simplified overview of the two for clarity's sake.

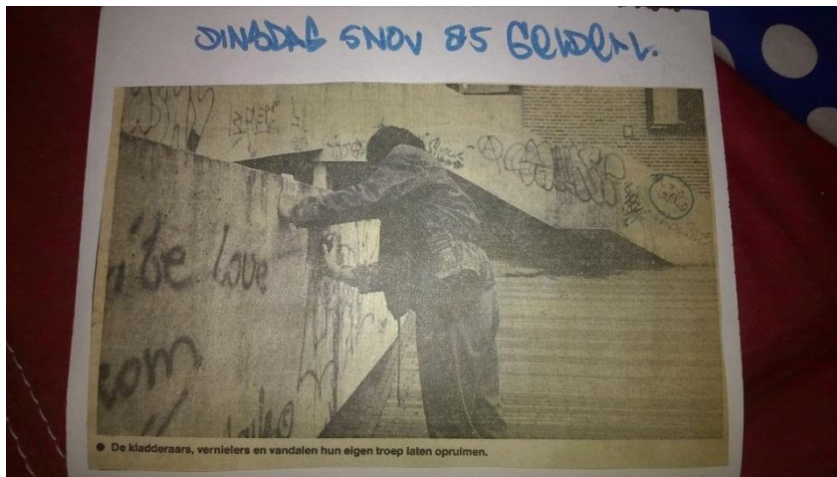
Graffiti, derived from the Latin *graffitio* (I scratch, I write), is all about the written letter.⁴¹ The written letter structured into a specific name, often serving as the alter ego of the writer, is called a 'tag'. This tag is then written all over specific sites in a city, like a marker of existence. Tags will be further examined in the first chapter. The activity of writing your tag on as many places in a city as possible is called *bombing*, a term coined by graffiti writers in cities like New York in the 1980s. When a graffiti writer does this, it is called *getting up*. This phenomenon quickly travelled to Europe. Examples of graffiti tags in the streets of Nijmegen in the 1980s can be seen in local newspapers:



³⁹ S. Chattopadhyay (2014) *Making Place, Space and the Embodiment in the City*. Chapter 1: Visualizing the Body Politic. Indiana University Press. P52

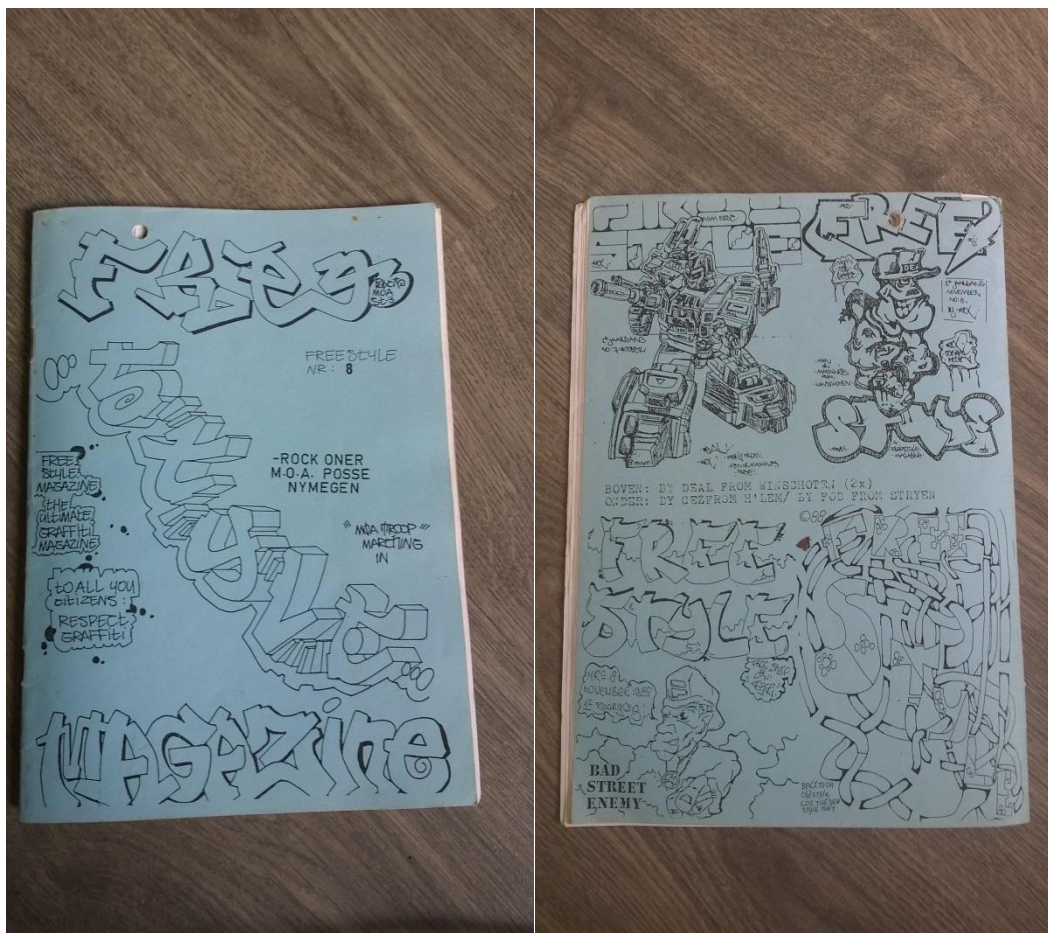
⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ L. Bates (2014) *Bombing, Tagging, Writing: An Analysis of the Significance of Graffiti and Street Art*. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA. Scholarly Commons. P56.



Pictures of graffiti tags in Nijmegen in the 1980s, published by local newspapers (photo taken by author, source: personal archive of '103')

Graffiti writers used unofficial magazines, zines, to inspire each other. These zines were handwritten and would be sent to one another through mail (read: mail, not email!). An example of such a zine that also circulated in Nijmegen is Freestyle.



Pictures of zine 'Freestyle' that was spread throughout the Netherlands, in which several graffiti writers published their works. Freestyle contains works of, amongst others, 103 and Marty. (photo taken by author, source: personal archive of '103')

A writer often evolves a tag into a piece (short for masterpiece). This is a tag that is big, vibrant and colorful. The individual letters are broken up and build again in unique ways. Chapter one will also dive deeper into pieces. An example of a piece in Nijmegen from the early 1990s is this one:



Liroy and Alpha (Focus) at the old 'Doornroosje' building 1991. Photo from the Facebook group 'Nijmegen Oldschool Graffiti'

When in 1987 the official graffiti magazines 'Bomber Magazine'⁴² and 'Can Control'⁴³ were first published, things started to change. Graffiti communication could travel much faster around the world; it was not confined to a particular place anymore.

⁴² <http://www.bombermagazine.nl/> (seen at 1-4-'15)

⁴³ <http://cancontrolone.com/> (seen at 1-4-'15)



Photos from the Can Control website

Spray cans started to be sold in venues like skate shops, so writers did not have to steal them anymore. In Nijmegen, such a shop was 'Powerhouse', which started in 1988 and had to close because of bankruptcy twenty-five years later.⁴⁴ These kind of shops meant that graffiti slowly became more accessible to a wider range of people. Graffiti became part of skate and hip-hop subcultures.

When graffiti slowly became more commercialized and accessible, some 'writers' evolved into 'artists'. They felt as if a marker or spray can and the letters of their writer's name limited them in their work. It was not merely about spreading your name across cities anymore, it was about something bigger. They started to use different materials and techniques, such as stickers, stencils, posters, etc. Not just the written letter was used, but also imagery and icons. Another general difference is that writers often wish to remain in the realms of the street, while artists also choose to participate in expositions or do commissioned works for individuals, institutions, and companies.

Hypotheses

There are 'movements' within this phenomenon of graffiti and street art in urban common space; movements in the local/global tension, movements in material and content, movements in function, and movements in the official and underground tension. These movements, or developments if you will, are thus the locus of my thesis.

⁴⁴ De Gelderlander <http://www.gelderlander.nl/regio/nijmegen-e-o/nijmegen/kledingwinkel-powerhouse-moet-na-25-jaar-stoppen-1.3787143> (last seen at 20-10-'16)

My hypothesis is that street art maintained its function to raise awareness concerning societal subjects, even though the content and explicitness of these subjects changed over the years. I also hypothesize that graffiti's and street art's function in the 1980s was characterized by anti-authority sentiments, while over the years several institutions and companies started to implement street art themselves. The medium is 'encapsulated' by dominant power structures and is used as an instrument of that power. This is what Marcuse calls 'repressive tolerance'.⁴⁵ So the potential agency of graffiti and street art has perhaps been diminished in a certain way. Following that, I put forward the acceptance of street art (not graffiti) by companies and council asks for a certain responsibility to use street art in a way that benefits urban common space. I hypothesize that for citizens there is an opportunity to address their 'right to the city'. Graffiti and street are possible tools for agency in that realm.

As was mentioned in the beginning of this introduction, writing is an existential activity that carries meaning and significance on its own. Writing in urban common space therefore deals with the existence of us all, regardless of what we think of the legitimacy and aesthetics of such writings. With this thesis I dive into a highly complex yet ubiquitous subject. I do not believe I am able to find one single narrative thread that links all the writings on the walls of Nijmegen. I am convinced however, that I will distinguish certain motifs (recurring themes) and approach the writings from several different angles in order to construct conclusions that are relevant for the several disciplines in an overarching manner. Furthermore, graffiti and street art deserve a proper and honest research, for they embody soundless voices that are all too easily overlooked and overheard. Finally, this thesis can be used for touristic purposes in the city of Nijmegen. The graffiti and street art in Nijmegen have a certain character and this is an attractive feature for the new wave of tourists, such as young backpackers who are interested in local art and culture.

Let us start with the language itself, in both words and imagery...

⁴⁵ H. Marcuse (1965) *Repressive Tolerance*.
<http://ada.evergreen.edu/~arunc/texts/frankfurt/marcuse/tolerance.pdf> (last seen at 20-10-'16)

Language in Text and Image

*Graffiti writers possess both personal and social identities.*⁴⁶



Hatertseveldweg, Nijmegen, 2015. Photo taken by author.

Unknown tag 'Maat' (Buddy),

A fragment of a poem made by author 'De gaten die de taal achterlaat, die dicht ik. NCN Nachtelijke Stadsdichter' (The wholes that language leave behind, I close them) In Dutch 'dichten' means both closing and writing poetry. A unicorn stencil.



*Piersonstraat, Nijmegen, 1981. Pierson website*⁴⁷

Left: symbol of Vrijstaat De Eenhoorn (Republic Unicorn), the squatted area in Piersonstraat.

Right: two squatters standing in front of a wall with the same symbols, some unknown tags and a protest sentence 'Over m'n lijk!' (Over my dead body!)

⁴⁶ A. Dar (2013) *Identifying with the Graffiti Subculture: The Impact of Entering and Exiting the Graffiti Subculture on the Social Identities of Graffiti Writers.*

https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/Dar_uncg_0154M_11112.pdf (last seen at 30-4-'17)

⁴⁷ Pierson

<https://www.facebook.com/DePierson.nl/photos/gm.947252668643749/951107641592550/?type=3&theater> (last seen at 30-4-'17)

First and foremost, graffiti and street art are all about communication. The photographs at the start of this chapter, show that in thirty-five years a complex language has been created in Nijmegen, which has simultaneously transformed and remained similar. The pictures show tags, symbolic imagery, protest sentences and poetry. They illustrate that graffiti and street art are intertwined.

This chapter deals with the language in text and image in the urban common space in Nijmegen over the last thirty-five years. As was explained in the introduction, urban common space is defined as ‘common ground, literally and figuratively, on which citizens can experience, express and experiment with the conditions that constitute the community/communities of their city.’ The sub question that I ask here is ‘What is the function of the different usages of language for the writer(s) and the audience?’ Language here entails the broad spectrum of words and imagery in all its possible forms. Sources for answers to this question are academic works, archives of graffiti writers and street artists, interviews with writers and artists, Youtube videos, and the council archive. When I write about the current writers and artists, I use their own created names. In this chapter, these are: ‘103’, ‘TL’, ‘2073’, ‘MeerLiefde’ and ‘De Imker’.

The structure that makes the answers to this sub question coherent is as follows. We will explore tags, pieces, stencils, icons, political activist sentences, and brands that can be found in the field of graffiti and street art in Nijmegen. The function of these communications for the writer(s) and the audience will be examined. These forms of expressions are related to complex concepts like identity and protest. The performance of identity (either individual or communal) and political activism via the use of these forms of expressions is examined in this chapter. Before analysing actual examples, the concept of ‘performance’ needs clarification.

Cultural and identity performance

In his exposition of the elements of performance Alexander (2004b: 529) defines cultural performance as:

*the social process by which actors, individually or in concert, display for others the meaning of the social situation. This meaning may or may not be one to which they themselves consciously adhere; it is the meaning that they, as social actors, consciously or unconsciously wish to have others believe. In order for their display to be effective, actors must offer a plausible performance, one that leads those to whom their actions and gestures are directed to accept their motives and explanations as a reasonable account.*⁴⁸

Cultural performance is linked to identity performance. In this context, identity is not something you are or have, rather it something you do. To be more precise, identity is performed by repetitive acts and by ‘framing these acts in time and space and remembering, misremembering, interpreting, and

⁴⁸ I. Woodward (2007) *Understanding Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications. p154.

revisiting across a pre-existing discursive field'. This process of performance is simultaneously 'doing something and a thing done.'⁴⁹ In this thesis, the performance of identity is applied to the act of writing graffiti and street art, as well as the reception of these acts by other writers and by passersby. The perspective of identity as a continuous flow of constructs was used to explain gender identity by philosophers like Judith Butler. Looking at identity as a performance, the notion of 'I' is not static, but fluid.

'Performance both affirms and denies this evacuation of substance. In the sense that 'I' has no secure ego or core identity, 'I' must always enunciate itself: there is only performance of a self, not an external representation of an interior truth. But in the sense that 'I' do my performance in public, for spectators who are interpreting and/or performing with me, there are real effects, meanings solicited or imposed that produce relations in the real'.⁵⁰

So in the context of graffiti and street art, through the acts of writing graffiti and street art in urban common space, the artists perform a certain identity. Political activism is just as much an act of performance. With the mobilization of people through (among other things) graffiti, a certain group identity of protest is performed. These performances are relevant because they provide us with 'means of understanding how people situate themselves in the world, for themselves and for others'.⁵¹ By examining these forms of expressions, we can see how these performances are solidified in particular language on the surface of urban common space.

The expressions of graffiti and street art have complex characteristics, such as the value of a name and the impact of a protest. To make this more concrete and tangible, we will examine particular examples that are documented in photography and video. As was stated in the introduction, graffiti writing starts with a tag and evolves into a piece. So let us begin with that often very quickly scribbled down, but endlessly repeated phenomenon of the tag.

Tags in Nijmegen in the 80s

A tag, nowadays also applied on Facebook to mark the identity of the face on a photograph, is in this context the name of a person placed in urban common space. A tag is written in one's own handwriting, and often the name of an alter ego or pseudonym is used. It is customary that a name is given to people at their birth by parents or caretakers, but one can also name oneself later on in life. Tags are therefore intrinsically linked to the performance of identity. This was already stated about taggers in New York in the 1980's:

⁴⁹ E. Diamond (2015) *Performance and Cultural Politics*. Routledge. P1.

⁵⁰ Ibidem. P5

⁵¹ Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past and the Institute of Historical Research, 2007: <http://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/media/methods/performance.html> (last seen at 21-09-'16)

The basic form of graffiti is simply the artist's name on the wall, known as a "tag," as a means of announcing their existence, documenting themselves and establishing an identity within a space. One's name is perhaps the most deeply personal way of identifying ourselves: it is the first thing we are given at birth, and our first answer to the question, "Who are you?"⁵²

In the eighties, a lot of walls in Nijmegen were completely filled with tags of writers as well.⁵³

Spreading your tag in as many places as possible was called 'bombing' by the writers in New York in the 1980s, but also by writers in Nijmegen and it is still called bombing today. The concept of 'getting up', being visible in many places in the city, also stems from 1980s New York, yet is also a common term within the vocabulary of graffiti writers in Nijmegen then and nowadays. Is it not interesting that the same phenomenon occurred in New York and Nijmegen, and in many other cities all over the world?



A graffiti writer from Nijmegen writes a tag in the 1980s. Source: Facebook group Nijmegen Old School Graffiti.

A possible link between these phenomena in the same decade is the similarity between the poverty- and unemployment rates in both USA and Europe, including the Netherlands. An economic recession impoverished citizens in the eighties; unemployment increased. This is shown in the two graphs below. Important to note is that poverty is often concentrated in urban areas, as is the case in this decade.⁵⁴ Another nuance about poverty is that it is also definable in terms of 'social inclusion' and

⁵² L. Bates (2014) *Bombing, Tagging, Writing: An Analysis of the Significance of Graffiti and Street Art*. University of Pennsylvania. Posted by Scholarly Commons. P3-4.

⁵³ Interview with '103'. See Appendix

⁵⁴ Poverties (2015) <http://www.poverties.org/blog/poverty-in-america> (last seen at 20-10-'16)

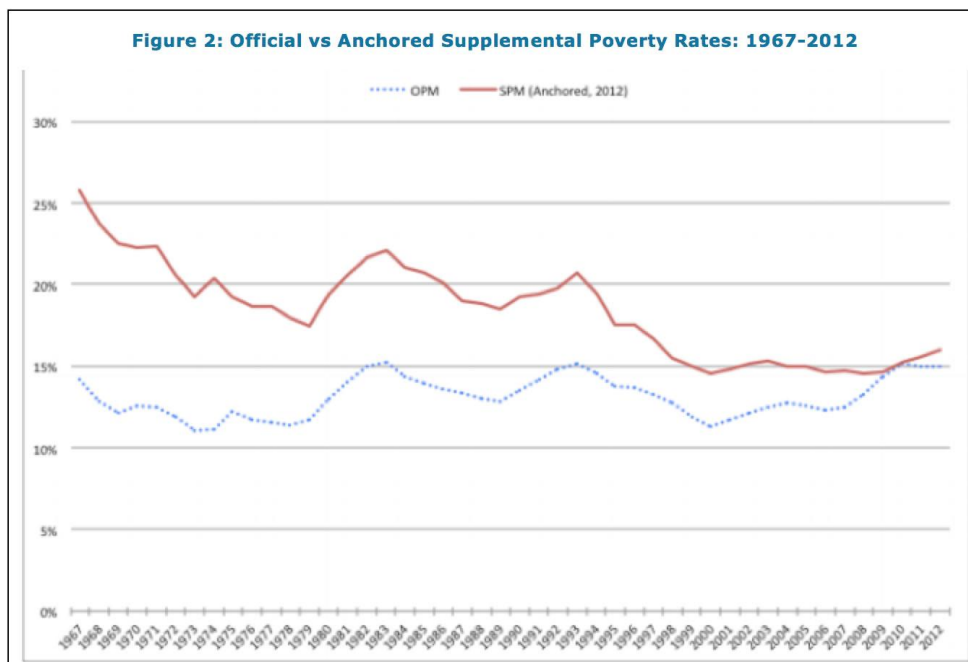
'social exclusion'.⁵⁵ More and more people are excluded from certain parts of society, such as employment and sites of required wealth. City centers, contrasted by their poorer peripheries, are for a large part places for commerce. In that sense, a part of society was excluded from those places. The conceived space of the city center (a clean area for work and commerce) differs from the lived space filled with tags. An explanation of the appearance of tags in city centers is a response to this exclusion; a reinstatement of individuals in this space. 'To be visible is to be known, to be recognized, to exist.'⁵⁶ With the writing of the tags, an identity of existence is performed. 'A search for identity is a search for a territory'⁵⁷; and people who are excluded from the city by their poverty, include themselves by leaving their mark behind. A correlation can be found between graffiti and the people that produce it: 'the chosen medium is marginal and illegal and this often correlates to the type of people who produce graffiti: people who are themselves marginalized, even if only through the manner they choose to express themselves.'⁵⁸

⁵⁵ B. Nolan. (ND) A Comparative Perspective on the Development of Poverty and Exclusion in European Cities. P2. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/05016.pdf> (last seen at 20-10-'16)

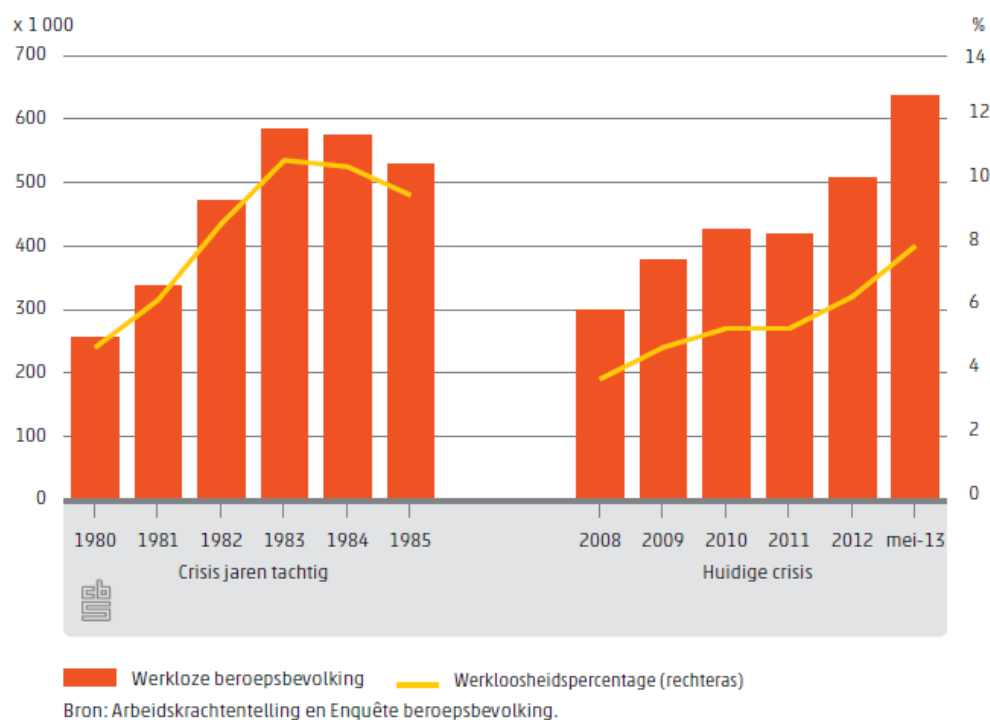
⁵⁶ M. Irvine. (2012) *The Work on the Street: Street Art and Visual Culture*. Georgetown University. Pre-press version of a chapter in *The Handbook of Visual Culture*, ed. Barry Sandywell and Ian Heywood. London & New York: Berg. P20. <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/articles/Irvine-WorkontheStreet-1.pdf> (last seen at 15-4-'17)

⁵⁷ A. M. Brighenti (2010) *At The Wall. Graffiti Writers, Urban Territory and the Public Domain*. In: 'Space and Culture' Sage Publications. P328 <http://sac.sagepub.com/content/13/3/315> (last seen at 15-4-'17)

⁵⁸ B. Bartolomeo (2001) *Cement or Canvas: Aerosol Art & The Changing Face of Graffiti in the 21st Century*. Union College, New York. <https://www.graffiti.org/faq/graffiti-is-part-of-us.html> (last seen at 21-9-'16)



SOURCE: Wimer, Christopher, Liana E. Fox, Irwin Garfinkel, Neeraj Kaushal, Jane Waldfogel, and Christopher Wimer. Trends in Poverty with an Anchored Supplemental Poverty Measure. *Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison*, 2013.⁵⁹



In orange: the unemployed populus. In yellow: the percentage of unemployment. Left: recession of eighties. Right: recent recession.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Regents of the University of Michigan. <http://www.npc.umich.edu/poverty/> (last seen at 20-10-'16)

⁶⁰ For The Money. <https://www.ftm.nl/artikelen/jaren-tachtig-crisis-vergeleken-crisis-graphics> (last seen at 20-10-'16)

Protest in Nijmegen in the 80s

Tags are still written down in Nijmegen, and later in this chapter, we will look at recent examples. But there is more to be said about the eighties in Nijmegen, apart from tags. Nowadays, social (virtual) media can be used to organise protests and to create awareness for social causes. In the eighties, the internet was not a normalized tool for communication as it is today; it was barely accessible. Graffiti back then could be used as social media, in the sense that the walls in the city could be transformed into platforms for public communication:

“Writing is a creative method of communicating with other writers and the general public...the artist's identity, expression, and ideas. This type of communication is vital because of its ability to link people [together] regardless of cultural, lingual, or racial differences in ways that nothing else can. [...] Because of the universal nature of street art, it can be recognized as a medium for mass communication as it provides a voice for those who otherwise could not comment upon or support current or perceived social problems.”⁶¹

A very clear example of such a mass communication medium in the streets of Nijmegen in 1981 were the Pierson riots. As explained in the introduction, the social rent houses at the Pierson street were squatted by a group of activists who protested against their demolition and thus prevented the creation of parking spaces. The activists demonstrated for the value of housing; showing that housing was more important than the ability to park a car in order to go shopping in the city centre. They denounced the council policy and called the Pierson street ‘Vrijstaat De Eenhoorn’ (Republic The Unicorn). Their protest was visible on several walls. This quickly spiralled out of control and the council attempted to force the squatters to leave in February of that year. The citizens of Nijmegen reacted to this violence and started to protest.

I will show the importance of this event for the subject of the language of graffiti through photographs and documents from the city council. Let us begin with the fact that the squatters changed the name of the squatted area and made this visible. This is a form of appropriation and a performance of claimed ownership by a group of people.

⁶¹ K.M. Gleaton (2012) *Power to the People. Street Art as an Agency for Change*. A project submitted to the faculty of the graduate school of the University of Minnesota. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Liberal Studies. P16.



Pierson straat, Nijmegen, february 1981. Source: Pierson website.

Squatter standing with a flag, a mask and a sign that reads 'Welkom in Vrijstaat De Eenhoorn' (Welcome in Republic The Unicorn)⁶²

By placing sentences on walls, the squatters communicated their message to themselves, to the citizens of Nijmegen, and to the city council. 'Visual expression has the power to evoke thought and to instigate action. Unadulterated creative expression that can occur at any time in any space is in direct opposition to those with authority, especially if its message is one that speaks out against or criticizes this authority.'⁶³

⁶² Pierson. http://www.depierson.nl/index.php/nggallery/de-pierson?page_id=41 (last seen at 30-4-'17)

⁶³ K.M. Gleaton (2012) *Power to the People. Street Art as an Agency for Change*. A project submitted to the faculty of the graduate school of the University of Minnesota. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Liberal Studies. P45.



Nijmegen, 1981 'geen garage' (no parking) on the left and the unicorn icon on top. Source: Council Archive.



Nijmegen, 1981. Many protest sentences on the wall and on banners. Source: Council Archive.

The council of Nijmegen responded to these acts of squatting; several attempts were made for voluntary evacuation. When these failed, a more drastic response followed:

WAARSCHUWING

Hier volgt een waarschuwing van de Burgemeester van Nijmegen.

Alle ondernomen pogingen om langs de weg van overleg tot een ontruiming te komen van de kraakpanden Piersonstraat en Karregas zijn mislukt.

Daarom zal de uitvoering van het in kortgeding gewezen vonnis t.w. de ontruiming van bovengenoemde panden, met behulp van de sterke arm worden gerealiseerd.

De politie zal thans een actie beginnen met als doel ontruiming van de panden en slechting van de barricades.

Alleen als verzet of lijdelijk verzet wordt geboden zal met geweld worden opgetreden.

Als molotov-cocktails, brandflessen of dergelijke, of vuurwapens worden gebruikt, zal de politie mogen schieten. Het is levensgevaarlijk zich op of bij de barricades te bevinden.

Verwijdert U van daken en de barricades.

NOGMAALS

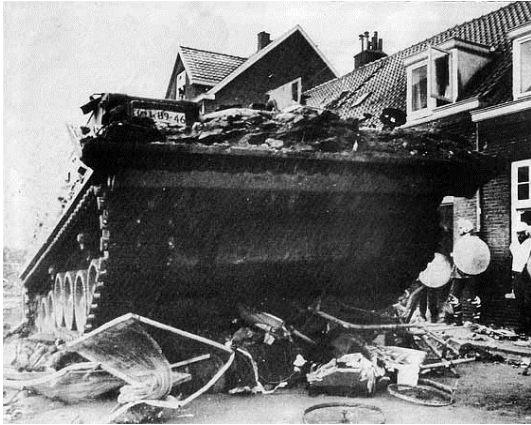
1. GEBRUIK GEEN GEWELD
2. GOOI NIET MET MOLOTOV-COCKTAILS, BRANDFLESSEN EN DERGELIJKE
3. VERWIJDERT U.

De Burgemeester

The official warning letter given to the squatters during the Pierson riots. Source: Council Archive.

It reads: Here follows a warning from the major of Nijmegen. Every effort in the form of dialogue to reach evacuation of the squatted Piersonstraat and Karregas, has failed. That is why the execution of the evacuation with the strong arm of the law will be realised. The police will start an action with the purpose to evacuate the buildings and destroy the barricades. Only if resistance, or passive resistance, is shown, violent action will be the response. If Molotov cocktails, burning bottles or similar kinds are used, the police will be forced to shoot. It is life threatening to be on or near the barricades. Remove yourselves from the roofs and the barricades. Again 1)do not use violence 2)do not throw with Molotov cocktails, burning bottles or similar kinds and 3) remove yourselves. The major.

The squatters did not leave voluntarily and this culminated in the biggest protest in the history of the Netherlands. The severity of this protest is shown in the two following pictures.



Nijmegen, Pierson street, February 1981. Source: Pierson Website. Tank and Riot Control officers force the squatters out of the houses.



Piersonstraat, Nijmegen. February 1981. Source: Pierson Website.

Another example of the tanks that the council used against their own citizens.

In February 1981, these squatted streets in Nijmegen were zones of serious conflict. Graffiti appears on many places of conflict in the world, for example the West Bank in Palestina and Israel. What is written about that area is also applicable to the Pierson riots: 'Executed in a climate of violence, political graffiti became a medium for [...] recording historical events and processes. [...] The walls were transformed by graffiti and became interventions in public space, speaking to an audience and forming audience communities by activating reading on the street.'⁶⁴

The violence of the police, supported by the city council, led to mass protests in the city centre. The squatters did not cave and gained support from the citizens. This is shown in the following two pictures:

⁶⁴ S. Chattopadhyay (2014) *Making Place, Space and the Embodiment in the City*. Chapter 1: Visualizing the Body Politic. Indiana University Press. P53



Bloemerstraat, Nijmegen. February 1981. Source: Pierson Website. Citizens of Nijmegen protesting against the police violence and sympathising with the squatters, visible at the the background of the picture.



De Grote Markt, Nijmegen, February 1981. Source: Pierson Website. Citizens of Nijmegen protesting.⁶⁵

Protest to the police violence also occurred in the form of graffiti. In the fourth chapter I will come back to the iconic image of the Riot Control officer, which still is visible in the Piersonstreet. Other graffiti was put on walls in that area after the riots, such as is portrayed in the photograph below. Noticeable is how the letters ME ('ME' stands for Mobiele Eenheid, which means Riot Control) are capitalized, stressing once again the influence of the police force:

⁶⁵ De Pierson http://www.depierson.nl/index.php/nggallery/de-pierson/de-eenhoorn-2?page_id=41



Nijmegen, 1981. Source: Pierson Website. 'Tanks tegen daklozen' (Tanks against the homeless) 'Oorlog in NijMEgen' (War in NijMEgen) 'In het land kraak 'n pand!' (In the country squat a building)⁶⁶

In a broader scope, such messages in urban common space display the performance of an alternative voice of a unified group of people. The squatters were considered criminals by the law, but they received a lot of support from the inhabitants of Nijmegen. The visual protest icons and sentences displayed a resistance to council policy. The fact that the squatters used graffiti to perform this vocabulary to their actions is crucial. For the squatters, graffiti functioned as a medium through which they could perform an identity of a counter movement. For the audience, in this case both the citizens of Nijmegen and the city council, the graffiti had the function of visualizing the presence of this counter movement identity. It also resulted in gaining sympathy and support from citizens, while simultaneously pushing the dialogue with the council to a much more extreme nature. This type of language 'communicates messages that focus on themes such as anti-capitalism, anarchism, hypocrisy, greed, poverty and despair.'⁶⁷ The result eventually was that the parking spaces were not built at the site of the Pierson-street.

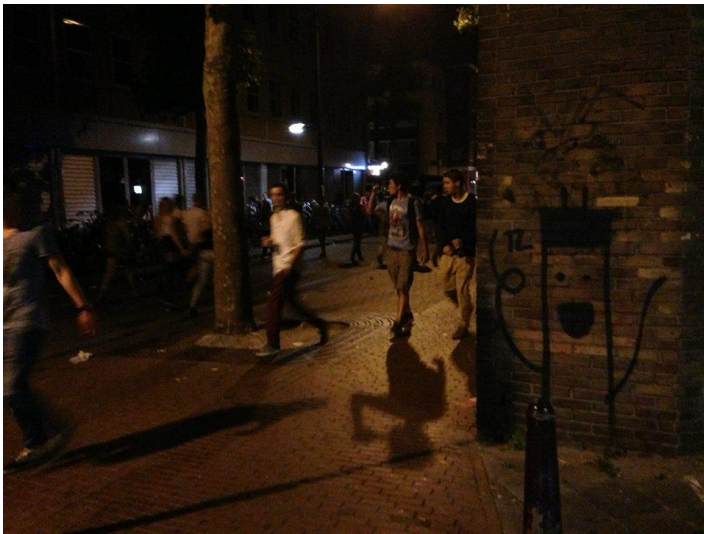
Current tagging in Nijmegen

Moving away from the activist graffiti, but still lingering a little at the phenomenon of the tag, it is interesting to note that tags are still written down in Nijmegen, though not as much as in the eighties. A few recent and very peculiar examples of tags that can be found in many places in Nijmegen, are '2073' and 'TL'. In the case of TL, the tag stands for 'Tube Luminescent'. The writer shows this by also adding a drawing of this light carrier to the composition of the tag. In an interview, TL informed me about the motivation behind writing this tag in Nijmegen. "I was depressed when I

⁶⁶ De Pierson http://www.depierson.nl/index.php/nggallery/de-pierson/demonstraties?page_id=41

⁶⁷ S. Chattopadhyay (2014) *Making Place, Space and the Embodiment in the City*. Chapter 1: Visualizing the Body Politic. Indiana University Press. P 39.

started tagging. The luminescent tube is a happy image, and it gave me pleasure to give happiness to people who would see this tag appear on many places. Another reason for me to tag is to literally and figuratively brighten up the city, which is so grey and dull. And people should realise that the city belongs to everyone, and tagging is a way of showing that.”⁶⁸ This kind of ‘identification and empathy with the city, this need to state something *in* and *with* the city’⁶⁹ is one that most graffiti and street art writers share. In this case, a certain identity of hope is performed by the TL tag. Instead of a cryptic coded name, we see an actual light tube, which is laughing at the audience. This tag is perhaps a bridge between graffiti and street art.



*Mariëburgsestraat, 2014. Picture taken by TL.
'TL' and luminescent tube symbol.*

⁶⁸ Interview TL. See Appendix.

⁶⁹ M. Irvine. (2012) *The Work on the Street: Street Art and Visual Culture*. Georgetown University. Pre-press version of a chapter in *The Handbook of Visual Culture*, ed. Barry Sandywell and Ian Heywood. London & New York: Berg. P3. <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/articles/Irvine-WorkontheStreet-1.pdf> (last seen at 15-4-'17).



*A wall near Square 1944. Picture taken by author.
'TL' and luminescent tube symbol.*

2073 is somewhat more mysterious, is it a date or something else? Is it meant as a prophecy, that in the year 2073 things will happen? Or is it just a joke to make people guess? Just as TL, 2073 nowadays can be found all over the city centre and the peripheries. Many more recent examples of other tags are present in Nijmegen, such as 'MAAT' (buddy), 'itisi', 'BAM', 'MODO', 'etr' and 'AGK'. Some tags are made by crews, rather than individuals.⁷⁰ Older examples, starting in the 1980's, are 'Marty', 'Dragon', 'Vision', 'yel one', 'part26', 'Trance', 'rock', 'roz' and 'falcon'.⁷¹ They are the visible marker of performed individual-, or crew-performed identities in the city.



*Nijmegen, 2012. Photo taken by 2073.
'Repaint your city. 2073'*

⁷⁰ Interview with TL (29-9-'16) See Appendix.

⁷¹ Interview with 103 (8-10-'16) See Appendix.



*Groenestraat, Nijmegen. 2015. Photo taken by author.
'2073' and the unicorn stencil.*

These individual anonymous writers are actual inhabitants who belong to certain groups. TL for example is a recent graduate. 2073 came to Nijmegen from another town in The Netherlands, father died at a very young age and no contact with the mother anymore, no stable job and after high school no further official education. Writers like 2073, TL, De Imker, MeerLiefde and 103 actually know each other and are part of the same subculture. De Imker is an actual beekeeper, MeerLiefde a drop out philosophy student who now lives in a self-sustaining community in northern Spain but comes back to Nijmegen every once in a while. 103 is the oldest of the bunch, is married, has children and has no stable job.⁷² Within this subculture people come together who otherwise would probably never have met. They also meet up with writers and artists who live in other cities of the Netherlands, Europe and all over the world. This social network is maintained by public events like exhibitions but also informal meetings.

An example of an exhibition in Nijmegen where this subculture finds official expression was Verflslag (Paint Battle).⁷³ This exhibition was held at Collectief Derde Wal and was organised by Verfbaar⁷⁴ and by myself. Verfbaar is a small community of writers and artists from Nijmegen and sometimes other cities as well; it is not really clear who belongs to it, for this differs per event and artwork. Often the artists and writers that are discussed in this chapter are part of it. Another example of a manifestation of Verfbaar is Step In The Arena 2016.⁷⁵ The Verfbaar Crew were allowed to fill a spot at the seventh edition of this prestigious event in Eindhoven. In the right low corner of the photo the Verfbaar tag is visible.

⁷² Interviews with 103, De Imker, 2073, TL and MeerLiefde. See Appendix.

⁷³ See the Appendix 'Verflslag'.

⁷⁴ Verfbaar <https://www.facebook.com/Verfbaar-229972700514131/> (last seen at 22-4-'17)

⁷⁵ Dynamo <http://www.dynamo-eindhoven.nl/urban/step-in-the-arena/> (last seen at 22-4-'17)



Berenkuil, Eindhoven, 5th of June 2016. Art from Verfbaar with 103 standing next to it.

Performance through graffiti and street art

Through the writing of tags individual identities are performed, while through the writing of crew names and the gatherings of such crews communal identities are performed. This performance is acted out, not only by names expressed in letters, but also by a certain visual style. In the image of the Berenkuil, the iconic individual style of 103 is shown on the left, for example.

Why would writers and crews wish to perform their identity at all? The possible link between social exclusion and graffiti has been mentioned. On a more meta-level, why do such performances exist? Since the eighties and the fast rise of globalisation, 'where spatial and temporal boundaries in the physical world are deteriorated' and where 'a lack of definitive boundaries and cultural markers' occurs, there is a 'culmination of a shared symbolic system', and 'the image acquires value and meaning in different contexts', resulting in the 'comprehensive identity' of tags and recognizable imagery.⁷⁶ In other words, in a culture of superfluous amounts of information and images created not directly by ourselves, the performance acts of writing one's own tag and/or personal visual style, is a way of marking and distinguishing boundaries of the constructed self.

Branding

This process of performances can stretch further than tags and crew names. Writers can also perform with their street art a 'brand', as one would expect of a product and its accessory advertisement. This brand can be a performance of a more complex commentary on society and the writer's place in it. 'The desire for fame remains at the root of graffiti writing, but not in the

⁷⁶ B. Bartolomeo (2001) *Cement or Canvas: Aerosol Art & The Changing Face of Graffiti in the 21st Century*. Union College, New York. <https://www.graffiti.org/faq/graffiti-is-part-of-us.html> (last seen at 21-9-'16)

traditional sense. Writers are concerned more so with branding as opposed to personal identity, and re-inscribing the city, which they accomplish through mass coverage as well as style.⁷⁷ Again, this citation is written about New York in the eighties, yet it is still applicable to Nijmegen.

A typical example of a recognisable style and brand in Nijmegen over the last five years is 'Meer Liefde' (More Love). Written in a classical primary school handwriting, this statement is omnipresent in the urban common space of Nijmegen. A reaction in the same handwriting often appears as well, for example 'Meer Olie' (More Oil), 'Meer Haat' (More Hate), 'Meer Wanhoop' (More Despair) etcetera. De Imker (who will be analysed later in this chapter) reacted to Meer Liefde in these particular dialogues. De Imker copied this style, but adapted the message. People who passed by were surprised by the contradictory messages. They were often placed in 'non-places', for example the bridge crossing the marshalling yard near St Anna street. The fact that 'MeerLiefde' and 'De Imker' inscribed such non-places with their statements does something with spaces; they are appropriated as places for public dialogue. In such cases, the act of public dialogue is performed by copying and adapting. Such performances also carry a certain potential for agency, for they have the ability to transform non-places into lived places.



Bridge St Anna Street, 2013. Photo taken by De Imker.

'Meer Liefde. Meer Gramschap.' (More Love. More Wrath.)

This particular MeerLiefde style is recognisable, even if the writer performs it in a different environment or context. At the exhibition 'Verfslag', a wall was dedicated for free expression.

⁷⁷ K.M. Gleaton (2012) *Power to the People. Street Art as an Agency for Change*. A project submitted to the faculty of the graduate school of the University of Minnesota. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Liberal Studies. P8.

MeerLiefde wrote his signature again, changing it into 'Meer Verf' (More Paint). The analogy is apparent: the city needs more love, while the exhibition needs more paint.



Exhibition 'Verfslag' (Paint Battle) at Collectief Derde Wal, June 2015. Photo taken by Elleke Theunissen. 'Meer Verf' (More Paint)

De Imker also uses a recognisable style using a self-composed stencil. In the second chapter I will explore the function of the different kind of materials, such as spray cans and stencils, that are used in graffiti and street art. In this chapter however, the communicated language itself is the point of focus. The photograph on the next page shows De Imker icon on a building of which it is unclear to whom it belongs. It is not accessible for public use. This stencil shows both a tag written in red, as well as the iconography of a beekeeper (in Dutch 'imker'). Because the writer is an actual beekeeper, the language works in a reciprocal manner; the word, the image and the performed identity actually refer to each other. The audience therefore, in a way, sees the constructed identity of the artist, even though the face is hidden. The performance of the identity of 'imker/beekeeper' is both acted out in street art as well as an 'official' profession. For this artist, bee keeping is also a philosophical activity that reflects societal dynamics. Even though bees seem a nuisance to most people, they are necessary for the pollination of the crops that feed us.⁷⁸ A beekeeper makes sure that the bees can live in a certain balance. 'De Imker' explains in an interview:

*'People in society also need that kind of nurture to keep the balance and to make sure the products we create are actually beneficial. To see the beekeeper in urban common space is a reminder that someone is watching and trying to look after everyone.'*⁷⁹

This illustrates how the artist wishes to perform an identity that stretches beyond the parameters of the individual. This performance of the 'imker/beekeeper' brand carries elements of protest; it

⁷⁸ BBC <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20140502-what-if-bees-went-extinct> (last seen at 22-4-'17)

⁷⁹ Interview with De Imker at Collectief Derde Wal, May 2015. See Appendix.

'disrupts the lived experience of mass culture and the passivity of mediated consumption'⁸⁰ for the created icon suggests a different way to organise consumption and society.



Nijmegen. Picture taken by De Imker.

'De Imker' (The Beekeeper)

But De Imker also works for companies. An example is the street summer festival 'De Kaaij' in Nijmegen, where a lot of local companies have a stand. De Imker makes handmade logos for such events. In these cases, the writer performs an identity of the company and suggests with such a logo a certain craftsmanship and authenticity, because the audience often interprets such handmade logos as the opposite of mass production. This kind of performance is instrumental for making a profit and constructing an identity for a particular company, rather than for oneself. Where graffiti and street art are often considered as a counter reaction to billboards and other forms of advertisement, in this case the street art is performed as an advertisement itself.

"Every day, we consume more visual messages than products. Street advertising has to be instantly recognizable, but with image saturation, it's also instantly disengageable, a contest between meaning and noise. All advertising messages are constructed to interpellate us, calling us out to take up the position of the advertising addressee—the consumer, the passive receiver. Street art strikes back with alternative subject positions for inhabitants and citizens, confusing the message system by offering the alternative subjectivity of gift-receiver, and

⁸⁰ B. Bartolomeo (2001) *Cement or Canvas: Aerosol Art & The Changing Face of Graffiti in the 21st Century*. Union College, New York. <https://www.graffiti.org/faq/graffiti-is-part-of-us.html> (last seen at 21-9-'16)

blurring the lines between producers and receivers.”⁸¹

It is interesting that small, local companies choose to work with street artists, perhaps because they both operate in the margins of society.



Nijmegen, 2014. Picture taken by De Imker.

Handmade logo for 'De Meesterproef' (The Master Taste), a venue at The Honig Complex.

Murals

So far we have discussed graffiti in the form of tags and street art in the form of stencils and brand advertisement. Murals are another form of street art, where an entire wall is covered with the work of a street artist. An interesting example of a performed identity as a paid assignment are murals for schools. The audience in these cases are students, parents, teachers and other members of the staff. Such murals express the preferred identity of the school in the style of the artist. The Montessori primary school in Dukenburg (a southern part of Nijmegen) has such a mural.

⁸¹ M. Irvine. (2012) *The Work on the Street: Street Art and Visual Culture*. Georgetown University. Pre-press version of a chapter in *The Handbook of Visual Culture*, ed. Barry Sandywell and Ian Heywood. London & New York: Berg. P21. <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/articles/Irvine-WorkontheStreet-1.pdf> (last seen at 15-4-'17)



*Montessori primary school, Meijhorst, Dukenburg. 2009. Picture taken by author.
Fragment of mural. Tag 'Jim van Overbeek'.*



*Montessori primary school, Meijhorst, Dukenburg. 2009. Picture taken by author.
Fragment of mural.*

Jim van Overbeek is an 'official' artist that exhibits all over the world, from Amsterdam to Tokyo. His style is characterised by bright colors and figurative elements.⁸² Other works by his hand are immediately recognisable. The Montessori primary school used his style to perform a certain identity; the school comes across as colorful and modern itself. The artist Jim van Overbeek uses his own characteristic style to spread his name, but also to help the school to express its overall thematics of childhood and the kind of world in which the school wishes to bring up children. So in this case, the function of the street art is fame for the writer and the performance of institutional identity for the school and the people who are connected to the school.

The language of graffiti and street art as 'depth'

In this chapter, both recent and historic examples were used to explore the issue of the function of language in words and imagery in the urban common space of Nijmegen. The themes of the performance of individual and communal identity, style, branding, and protest were examined. Of

⁸² Moondance <http://www.moondance.nl/jimvanoverbeek/> (last seen at 15-4-'17)

course, endless more examples could be used. In general it can be said that through the use of the language of graffiti and street art 'depth is given to the environment'.⁸³ The concept of 'depth' on flat surface needs more exploration. So the next chapter will be concerned with the materiality of graffiti and street art messages.

⁸³ L. Visconti, J. Sherry Jr, S. Borghini, L. Anderson (2010) *Street Art, Street Smart? Reclaiming the 'Public' in Public Space*. In: 'Journal of Consumer Research' Vol. 37 No. 3. Oxford University Press. P525

Messages Through Materiality

In 'What is Philosophy?' Deleuze and Guattari put forward a materialist a conception of knowledge production, which they describe as "the art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts"⁸⁴



Nijmegen, steps to Valkhof Museum at Kelfkensbos. July 2010. 'Kun je houden van een vreemde?' ('Can you love a stranger?') Source: Facebook page Smoove Business . The author of this sentence is Jaap Robben, who was the 'stadsdichter' (city-poet) at that time.

The first chapter ended with the notion that graffiti and street art 'give depth to the environment'.⁸⁵

This asks for more exploration, because what kind of depth can be given to flat surfaces like walls?

This chapter deals with materiality and discusses how several kind of materials influence the practice of graffiti and street art. The materials that will be examined are the walls on which graffiti and street art are placed, materials used by the writers like markers, spray cans, chalk, stickers and posters and the human body. At the end of this chapter, I will shed some light on the unique example of corroded graffiti in Nijmegen. All these materials interact in a specific way and it is vital to find out how.

Canadian philosopher and scientist Marshall McLuhan stated in the 1960's 'The medium is the message.'⁸⁶ While he wrote about this in the context of electric light and automated machines, this statement is also relevant in the field of graffiti and street art. 'The personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that

⁸⁴ E.Barrett (2013) *Materiality, Language and the Production of Knowledge*
<http://dro.deakin.edu.au/eserv/DU:30064236/barrett-materialitylanguage-2013.pdf> (last seen at 22-4-'17)

⁸⁵ L. Visconti, J. Sherry Jr, S. Borghini, L. Anderson (2010) *Street Art, Street Smart? Reclaiming the 'Public' in Public Space*. In: 'Journal of Consumer Research' Vol. 37 No. 3. Oxford University Press. P525

⁸⁶ M. McLuhan (1964) *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Chapter 1: The Medium is the Message. (<http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/mcluhan.mediummessage.pdf>)

is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.⁸⁷ If we consider street art and graffiti to be forms of media, it is evident that they are extensions of ourselves. This argument can also be applied to the different materials used to produce graffiti and street art. It is crucial to emphasise the link between technology and humanity. Technologies are not isolated phenomena that we merely use; in a sense we existentially are those technologies. So not just the languages themselves as discussed in the first chapter, but also the different media through which these languages are communicated, play an important role.

Materiality

Before looking at the different kind of materials, we must define 'materiality' and look closely at how it operates. Ian Woodward (Senior Lecturer in Sociology in the School of Humanities and Deputy Director of the Centre for Cultural Research at Griffith University in Australia) uses the following definition for materiality: 'the most crucial dimension in understandings of material culture – which refers to the relations between people and objects, especially the way in which social life is inherently structured by everyday dealings with objects.'⁸⁸ In an interview he states: 'Material culture studies looks to things as vital matter that organise, animate and orient social action.'⁸⁹ He distinguishes three elements of materiality: cultural, interpretative, and pragmatic. Cultural elements of materiality deal with 'the symbolic capacities objects offer to think through and about diverse aspects of social life.' Interpretative elements of materiality are about a 'hermeneutic dialectic' between on the one hand the individual dealings, framing, negotiations, and understandings of objects and on the other hand the way social and cultural researchers discover and report these individual relations. Pragmatic elements are the third approach to materiality and here the reciprocity between objects and people is on the foreground, 'the fact that objects do things to people, and people do things with objects'. This pragmatic stance makes materiality 'a fundamental platform of sociality.'⁹⁰

Indeed, contrary to what one might expect, people are not merely defined by what they think and say, but more so by what material things they surround themselves with, for these material things 'help to establish, mediate and assist in the performance of our personal and social

⁸⁷ M. McLuhan (1964) *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Chapter 1: The Medium is the Message. (<http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/mcluhan.mediummessage.pdf>)

⁸⁸ I. Woodward (2007) *Understanding Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications. P55.

⁸⁹ D. Hourigan (2012). "A Conversation with Ian Woodward," *Figure/Ground*. October 26th. <http://figureground.org/interview-with-ian-woodward/?print=pdf>

⁹⁰ I. Woodward (2007) *Understanding Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications. P172.

identities.⁹¹ In the first chapter the performances of identities through graffiti and street art were discussed and in this chapter I will look closer at how the actual material things play a part in these processes.

French sociologist, postmodern philosopher, and cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard explained how 'the possession of objects is not just about *having*, but *being*.'⁹² I would argue that being related to objects is about having, being and doing. An important nuance here is that these 'objects' in this object-relations theory are 'are not always or necessarily hard, material things, though they can be. An object within this theoretical tradition could be a person, a part of another person, or indeed an item of material culture. They can be animate or inanimate, human or non-human.'⁹³ So objects are not confined to the category of commodities. In this chapter, works of graffiti and street art are also considered objects. The human body that creates these works is also considered an object in this context.

Cathexis

There is a tendency for people to invest objects with power and energy; this is described within psychoanalytic theory as cathexis.⁹⁴ To be more precise, cathexis is

*'a moment of the coalescing of subjectivity according to the pleasures and displeasures of our encounters with objects – something between an emotional commitment and a vested interest in the relative rewards and satisfactions offered in processes of making and interpreting art and indeed in experiences of everyday life.'*⁹⁵

Whether people enjoy or dislike graffiti and street art as objects, they always relate to them in certain intricate ways. When a work of graffiti or street art is observed by someone on the street, this cathexis occurs. We do not just look at graffiti and street art; we *experience* them in complex ways. Graffiti and street art are 'not just about an optical experience, but rather one that is inherently haptic and physical.'⁹⁶ This haptic and physical experience of graffiti and street art can be subdivided into 'private' and 'public' meanings; so as an object, a work of graffiti or street art can affect

⁹¹ I. Woodward (2007) *Understanding Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications. P133-134.

⁹² I. Woodward (2007) *Understanding Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications. P141.

⁹³ I. Woodward (2011) *Objects and Object-relations: Toward a Psychoanalytics of the Material Culture. The Aesthetics of Desire and the Unfolding Materiality of Social Life*. Griffith Research Online. P8. <https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au> (last seen at 20-4-'17)

⁹⁴ Ibidem. P139.

⁹⁵ E. Barrett (2013) *Materiality, Language and the Production of Knowledge*. Deakin University's Research Repository. <http://dro.deakin.edu.au/eserv/DU:30064236/barrett-materialitylanguage-2013.pdf> (last seen at 20-4-'17)

⁹⁶ T. Bowen (2013) *Graffiti as Spatializing Practice and Performance*. In: 'Rhizomes. Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge' Issue 25. University of Toronto <http://rhizomes.net/issue25/bowen/> (last seen at 20-4-'17)

members of society at large as well as individuals.⁹⁷

The process of creating and experiencing social and cultural meanings is a 'psychodynamic' endeavor. American sociologist and psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow explains this as simultaneously 'affective, non-linguistic and cognitive'.⁹⁸ It is thus very difficult to describe the analyses of graffiti and street art as objects of experienced social and cultural meaning in a mere linguistic matter, for the described subject deals with matter which cannot always be accurately described with words. Yet it is possible to attempt to provide this subject with a precise framework and approach the matter with the knowledge of psychodynamics in mind.

Material aspects of our surroundings

Considering graffiti and street art as haptic, the notion follows that it is 'a spatialising practice that claims spaces, makes places, and illuminates margins and borderlands'.⁹⁹ In other words, graffiti and street art change the way we consider and treat the area in which it is written. French historian, philosopher and psychoanalyst Michel de Certeau stated that 'spatial practices secretly structure the determining conditions of social life'.¹⁰⁰ So even though we may not directly notice it, the way we act as social beings is influenced by how our surroundings are organized. Graffiti and street art make adaptations in the form and function of our surroundings, thus transforming our social lives.

'Human bodies themselves generate spaces which are produced by and for their gestures; gestures being the 'whole body' performance of writing on walls, between doorways, around corners, and underfoot'.¹⁰¹ Just as roads, sidewalks and roundabouts are generated by city planners for the movement of human gestures, so are a lot of sites generated for the creation of graffiti and street art, be it indirectly. The human body, with such gestures, holds time and space together; as French phenomenologist philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty stated: "I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them. The scope of this inclusion is the measure of that of my existence."¹⁰² The body, as an object of materiality, thus functions as a mediator between these dimensions.¹⁰³

French sociologist and philosopher Latour explained actor-network-theory (ANT) as a web of entanglements in which several actors interact. An actor in this regard is 'anything with the ability to

⁹⁷ I. Woodward (2007) *Understanding Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications. P148.

⁹⁸ Ibidem. P138.

⁹⁹ T. Bowen (2013) *Graffiti as Spatializing Practice and Performance*. In: 'Rhizomes. Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge' Issue 25. University of Toronto <http://rhizomes.net/issue25/bowen/> (last seen at 20-4-'17)

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem.

¹⁰² M. Merleau-Ponty (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge. P140.

¹⁰³ K. Simonsen (2005) *Bodies, Sensations, Space and Time: The contribution of Henri Lefebvre*. In: 'Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography. Vol. 87. No1. P7 <http://www.jstor.org.ru.idm.oclc.org/stable/3554441>

act, or to produce action.¹⁰⁴ In this perspective humans, but also spray cans and walls are actors. The ANT, as well as the aforementioned theories, serve as fitting perspectives for the research about the relationship between the materials of graffiti and street art and their affect on the city of Nijmegen and its citizens.

Walls

After this exploration at an overarching meta-level, we will look at more specific and concrete elements. Let's start with the surface on which graffiti and street art are most often written: walls. Walls serve certain purposes; within the framework of French philosopher Foucault, walls are 'governmental' objects. This governmentality operates with three interlocked elements: the first being 'a set of institutions and procedures for the exercise of power on the population', the second 'the emergent historical configuration of such governmental *savoirs*' and the third 'the application of these tools to political institutions'.¹⁰⁵ So by controlling space through the planning and building of walls, a strategy of controlling people is acted out.¹⁰⁶ Walls are useful in this strategy because they literally create separation and boundaries in a formerly smooth space; and walls 'enable the demarcation of a *within* and a *beyond*'.¹⁰⁷ To go even further, walls 'reshape the distribution of inter-visibilitys, define flows of circulation, set paths and trajectories for people, and consequently determine the possibilities and impossibilities of encounters'.¹⁰⁸ Within this framework, walls serve as dead ends, as impasses.¹⁰⁹

This framework utilizes a top-down mentality, while the possibility exists for a bottom-up point of view. The use of graffiti and street art fits better in this bottom-up scheme, which will be discussed later in this chapter and also in the third chapter. Apart from this binary focus of bottom-up and top-down, walls definitely 'forcefully affect the material and sensorial environment'.¹¹⁰ We often forget how confined our spatial experiences are, because we never fully interrogate our horizons. This is what Vincent Miller (Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Cultural Studies at the University of Kent) calls the 'intrinsic vagueness and unmappability of spatial experience'.¹¹¹ So, in a way, we take our spatial experiences for granted. By this logic, when we actively and consciously make gestures like writing graffiti and street art on walls, we do not take our spatial experience for

¹⁰⁴ J. Entwistle (2016) 'Bruno Latour. Actor-Network-Theory and Fashion.' In A. Rocamora A. Smelik (Eds) *Thinking Through Fashion. A Guide to Key Theorists*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris. P274-275.

¹⁰⁵ A. M. Brighenti (2010) *At The Wall. Graffiti Writers, Urban Territory and the Public Domain*. In: 'Space and Culture' Sage Publications. P322 <http://sac.sagepub.com/content/13/3/315> (last seen at 15-4-'17)

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem. P322

¹⁰⁷ Ibidem. P322

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem. P322

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem. P323.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem. P322.

¹¹¹ Ibidem. P323.

granted anymore and reshape our environment.

So most walls are built as governmental strategies as Foucault stated, but walls can be used as subjects of tactical uses as well. Michel De Certeau makes a distinction between *ingénieurs* and *bricoleurs* in this context. The *ingénieurs* are the ones who plan the projects to build the walls, while the *bricoleurs* 'make do with whatever is at hand'.¹¹² Walls are built to serve as seemingly neutralising strategies, while tactics like graffiti and street art put the walls in new foregrounds and transform their thematics.¹¹³ 'As visible surfaces, walls define a public focus of attention for a number of viewers and actors who are spatially dispersed', and in this regard, walls function as mediators.¹¹⁴ As material surfaces, they are political territories in a city; they are 'part of the struggle for public attention and key element in the configuration of an urban regime visibility'.¹¹⁵

Swati Chattopadhyay (architectural historian, specialising in modern architecture and urbanism) states that the power of wall writing is about 'expressing the wall's impermanence and malleability, its usability to bring forth new intentions and forge new readership and political agency with sundry effort and resource.' She sees wall writing as a 'political vernacular that reminds us of the important relationship between the materiality of public space and political freedom'.¹¹⁶ This view is particularly interesting when it is contrasted with the pre-modern notion of a city divided by the very literal metaphors of *intramuros* (inside the walls) and *extramuros* (outside the walls). In this Latin medieval metaphor, walls are material and symbolic zones of authorities and framings of hierarchical identities. This notion still exists in many institutions, such as schools, universities, and hospitals, but also urban common space itself.¹¹⁷ Such a view focuses on the space inside and outside the walls, rather than on the walls themselves. Writing on walls is so powerful, because it interacts with the potential of the walls themselves.

An example in Nijmegen of how the function of a wall is transformed by writing on it, can be found in de Ruyterstraat in the neighborhood Bottendaal, which borders on the city center. Here, the wall literally became a canvas to paint on. When we look at how the wall used to look, it becomes clear how much difference a mural can make.

¹¹² A. M. Brighenti (2010) *At The Wall. Graffiti Writers, Urban Territory and the Public Domain*. In: 'Space and Culture' Sage Publications. P323 <http://sac.sagepub.com/content/13/3/315> (last seen at 15-4-'17)

¹¹³ A. M. Brighenti (2010) *At The Wall. Graffiti Writers, Urban Territory and the Public Domain*. In: 'Space and Culture' Sage Publications. P323. <http://sac.sagepub.com/content/13/3/315> (last seen at 15-4-'17)

¹¹⁴ Ibidem. P323.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem. P323.

¹¹⁶ S. Chattopadhyay (2014) *Making Place, Space and the Embodiment in the City*. Chapter 1: Visualizing the Body Politic. Indiana University Press. P64-65.

¹¹⁷ M. Irvine. (2012) *The Work on the Street: Street Art and Visual Culture*. Georgetown University. Pre-press version of a chapter in *The Handbook of Visual Culture*, ed. Barry Sandywell and Ian Heywood. London & New York: Berg. P11. <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/articles/Irvine-WorkontheStreet-1.pdf> (last seen at 15-4-'17)



De Ruyterstraat 2015. Photo taken by author.



De Ruyterstraat, Source: Google Maps.

Before, the wall as perceived space consisted of the grey bricks, and the wall as lived space was tagged by names that were mentioned in the first chapter as well: AGK, Maat and HSK. The wall looked somewhat like a bulletin board for graffiti writers. The transformation into the wall as a painting made the wall more of a vehicle for an aesthetic image that passersby and the neighbors can enjoy. The wall shown in both pictures is not a neutralized object of governmentality; it is a tactical wall, 'a set of elements in contingent relation, a set of possibilities, and instructions for a potential

event'.¹¹⁸

The painting of this particular mural was done by street artist Rob Aarts and Michel Alders as an official, paid assignment. The revolving parties in this assignment were the city council of Nijmegen, the owner of the house, the inhabitants of the Ruyterstraat in the 'Bottendaal' district, and the street artists. Paulien Driessen, an inhabitant of the Ruyterstraat, was the spokesperson for the district and desired three elements: that that wall was transformed by a mural, that plants would be planted at the bottom of the mural so that the entire wall was more organic, and that the drawings of the children would remain on the wall. The street artists chose to paint a garden where someone was drinking coffee, so the wall and the growing plants would overlap and so the wall would seem more inviting to look at, because it portrays a homely situation.¹¹⁹

The space of the street, the space of the wall and their prompted cathexises are transformed by the tagging and the mural. The tags on the wall are received in different manners by taggers and by citizens who do not engage in graffiti; other taggers can read and understand the tags and may know to whom they refer, while citizens who do not engage in graffiti might see a 'dirty' and vandalised wall. However, the way passersby and the inhabitants of the street experience the mural as a piece of art; it is clear that there is a distinction between whether the aesthetics are appreciated or not. A clear distinction here is that tags are often considered as unwelcome vandalism, while street art is acknowledged as a positive addition to urban common spaces. The wall of that particular house in de Ruyterstraat seemed, before the tagging appeared, as a neutral zone. This zone is nonetheless governed and therefore not neutral. The tagging made this 'not-neutral' aspect much clearer and the mural proved to be a compromise between several parties. The agency of the citizens and the street artists in examples like these will be further looked into in the following chapter.

Spray cans

The two pictures of the Ruyterstraat show two different usages of the same material: paint. The choice for using a paintbrush or a spray can is often a conscious one. Spray cans usually are to be used very swiftly, and often they are used secretly, while the usage of paintbrushes often requires more time and therefore is a visible act. While paintbrushes are ancient, spray cans have a more modern history. The spray can as a material object deserves a little more exploration.

The invention of spray paint, or aerosol paint, dates back to the nineteenth century, when 'in 1899 inventors Helbling and Pertsch patented the use of methyl and ethyl chloride as a propellant for aerosols, and in 1927 a Norwegian engineer by the name of Erik Rotheim patented the first aerosol

¹¹⁸ J. Drucker (2006) *Graphical Reading and the Visual Aesthetics of Textuality* in: 'Text' Vol. 16. Indiana University Press. P275.

¹¹⁹ Interview Rob Aarts. See Appendix.

can and valve that could hold products and dispense them with the use of propellants.¹²⁰ After that, 'in 1943, two researchers from the Department of Agriculture in USA, Lyle Goodhue and William Sullivan, developed a small portable can pressurised by a liquid gas, a fluorocarbon, that was capable of spraying an ant insecticide agent to combat the plague of insect-borne disease that was affecting American servicemen in the South Pacific.'¹²¹ In 1947, Robert H. Abplanalp invented the 'crimp on valve', which enables the removal, replacement and manipulation of valve nozzles on portable aerosol cans. This is crucial because it made possible for liquids to be sprayed from a pressurised can in controllable ways.¹²² This invention was then used for hygienic products like liquefied creams, foams and powders.¹²³ In 1949 Edward started to use paint in the aerosol cans and his company Seymour of Sycamore, Inc started to produce spray cans in aluminium color.¹²⁴

Before graffiti writers started to use spray cans, other materials were used. For example, gang youths in USA, like the Chicano's in the late 1940's used 'buckets of paint and brushes, a piece of chalk or charcoal, a shoeshine bottle with its characteristic rectangular sponge, or a pocketknife, used for inscribing one's name or neighbourhood in a pliable surface.'¹²⁵ With spray paint, a graffiti writer can carry over a dozen different colours and enough paint in volume to cover a substantial area, all in something the size of a backpack or shopping bag. Another beneficial characteristic is that the paint dries much faster when it is used with a spray can. This enables writers to put different colours on a surface, without mixing these colours.¹²⁶ In that regard, spray cans were revolutionary in their practical usage.

Using a spray can is quite complex, as 'writers need to familiarise themselves with the tools of their trade; which spray brands are suitable for which jobs, how to apply different spray nozzles to alter line widths and create different effects, how to paint without making drips or spotty paint marks.'¹²⁷ Another aspect that writers deal with is the different characteristics of several kinds of brands. There are differences in opacity, pressure, durability, range of colours, smoothness and consistency of the paint and the can's compatibility with any number of custom nozzles.¹²⁸

The relevance of spray paint as a material object becomes evident in this citation by Robert Weide in his essay 'Spray Paint, How an Object Became an Object and a Subculture' in 2011:

Spray paint is not just another object, it is the object that the whole subculture is based on

¹²⁰ R. Weide. (ND) *Spray Paint. How an Object Became an Object and a Subculture.* P3.

¹²¹ Ibidem. P4.

¹²² Ibidem. P4.

¹²³ Ibidem. P4.

¹²⁴ Ibidem. P5.

¹²⁵ Ibidem P7.

¹²⁶ Ibidem. P10-11.

¹²⁷ Ibidem. P12.

¹²⁸ Ibidem. P14-17.

*and the subculture would never have come to exist how it does today if it wasn't for that simple object, the spray paint can. In this regard one can conceive of spray paint itself as possessing some sense of agency as an object. This agency is apparent both on the more superficial level, that the availability, or lack thereof, of different spray paints influences the graffiti that the subculture produces; but it is also apparent on a more subtle level, in that spray paint is the modern graffiti subculture. The two are intimately and inseparably linked together, and in fact they are one entity.*¹²⁹

In other words, spray paint and spray cans, constitute the existence of the graffiti subculture and a possible agency can be performed by writers through the use of spray paint and spray cans. An older source that also deals with the agency of art and objects is 'Art and Agency' in 1998 by anthropologist Alfred Gell. He defines art as a 'special form of technology' and art objects as devices 'for securing the acquiescence of individuals in the network of intentionalities in which they are enmeshed'.¹³⁰ Gell moves away from the tradition that sees art as a 'matter of meaning and communication' and poses instead that art is about 'doing' and this he links to agency, in the sense that material entities motivate inferences, responses, or interpretations.¹³¹ Within this framework, objects like spray cans are a vital element in the possible agencies that graffiti and street art carry. In the same fashion, spray cans are actors within the networks of entanglements that exist in the graffiti and street art subculture. The spray can enables the writer or artist to bring adjustments to the material surfaces of the city.

In Nijmegen, the accessibility of spray cans is rather small nowadays; only the second-hand vinyl shop 'Vinylarchief' and skate hall 'Waalhalla' sell them. However, online the access is easy and abundant. As was explained in the introduction, in the eighties spray cans were very difficult to get hold of. Writers from Nijmegen would go to Amsterdam to obtain them.¹³² This changed when the graffiti subculture gained popularity in the nineties and magazines with advertisements for, among others, spray can brands were distributed.

Other examples of materials that are part of graffiti and subculture, which will be discussed in less detail, are posters, markers, stickers, chalk, moss, and the lack of dirt. The latter is simply the use of a high pressure water spray on a dirty surface, thus creating an image that comes out the dirt with clean lines. Some artists use the natural material moss to create a work that then over time, ideally, grows and evolves. Examples of these two forms of materials exist in Nijmegen, but I do not have specific examples or pictures of them. An exploration of these other materials now follows.

¹²⁹ R. Weide. (ND) *Spray Paint. How an Object Became an Object and a Subculture*. P30.

¹³⁰ A. Gell. (1998) *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory*. Clarendon Express: Oxford. viii

¹³¹ Ibidem. ix

¹³² Interview with 103. See Appendix.

Posters

For the exhibition 'Verfslag' I found a lot of posters that were made in the eighties by emancipation groups in Nijmegen; organisations for gays, lesbians, women and sexual diversity. They can be found online at the 'Lesbisch Archief'. Such posters were part of the urban common space of Nijmegen in the eighties. Just as the graffiti that was part of the Pierson riots, so are these posters a form of very articulated activism. Some of these groups remained active after the eighties and some posters show more recent events they hosted. These posters were designed by these groups themselves and through these posters, their shared identities are performed. Posters are made of paper with ink printed on it, and usually their durability is a couple of weeks, after which other posters are put over them. Due to the effort of the 'Lesbisch Archief' the posters were documented. At the 'Verfslag' exhibition we emulated the surfaces of street walls with numerous posters put over one another. On top of that surface, several posters from the 'Lesbisch Archief' were placed. This gives a certain overview of the political activist posters that were present in Nijmegen from 1980 until 2015.



Photo taken by Joep Janssen. From left to right low corner:

- Roze Stembusakkoord Nijmegen. (Pink Polls Agreement Nijmegen) Organized by COC. Joining political parties: GroenLinks, D66, OPA, CDA, Creatieve Partij, SP, ONP PSP, Nijmegen Fractie, VVD, PvdA.
- FEEST 14 okt, 10 jaar erop en nog steeds niet eronder, Vrouwenschool (PARTY 14th of October, 10 years and still going strong, Women's School) with programme
- 23 juni Nijmegen Potten en Flikker Dag 1984 (23th of June Nijmegen Lesbians and Gay Day 1984) with the programme.
- Vrouwenschool Afscheid Gerard Noodtstraat 12 december. (Women's School Goodbye Party. Gerard Noodtstraat, 12th of December)
- 1 jaar Flikkerradio Kuiffe. 29 april. Luister vanaf 15:00 uur naar Radio Rataplan en Radio Kuiffe. (1 year Gayradio Kuiffe. 29th of April. Listen from 15:00 hour to Radio Rataplan and Radio Kuiffe) With programme.

Notable with these posters is the fact the Women's School still exists as a resident's building where only women can live. The fact that Gay radio Kuifje collaborated with Radio Rataplan is also relevant, because Radio Rataplan (a pirate radio) reported about the Pierson Riots, which were discussed in the first chapter, from the perspective of the squatters, rather than the council. So these activist groups sometimes cooperated. Another interesting analysis that can be taken from these posters is that the more we move forward in time, the more the council and official political parties started to work together with these emancipated groups; this is particularly apparent with the Pink Polls Agreement.



Photo taken by Joep Janssen. From top to low:

-21 november 2002 bestaat boekhandel de Feeks 25 jaar. 16 november starten de jubileumfeestelijkheden.

(21th of November 2002 bookstore De Feeks exists for 25 years. 16th of November the anniversary parties start)

With programme.

-5 jaar Feeks. Boekhandel. Kaffee, Dokumentatie. 21-23 januari 1983. (5 years Feeks. Bookstore, Bar, Documentation. 21th-23th of January 1983) With programme.

'De Feeks' is nowadays still a bookstore for books and information about homosexuality and feminism. In most 'regular' bookstores, books about such information will be scarce, or non-existent. The fact that this bookstore is now over 40 years old, shows that there is a demand for such information.



Photo taken by Joep Janssen. From left upper corner to right low corner:

- 1995-1996 Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen. Lesbische en Homostudies. (1995-1996 Catholic University Nijmegen. Lesbian- and Gaystudies.) With content of the courses.
- “Ons koninkrijk voor ‘n Homohuis” Benefietfeest in 042. (“Our kingdom for a Homosexual House” Benefitparty in 042) With performing parties
- Zondagskinderen presenteren Fata Morgana. 25 juni 1989. De Plak. Dance en performance. Nijmeegs potten- en flikkerkoor. Vier deze dag! (Sunday's Children present Fata Morgana. 25th of June 1989. De Plak Dance and Performance. Lesbian and gay choir of Nijmegen. Celebrate this day!)
- Homoëmancipatiegroep Andra. Actie in de Roerstraat. Flikkers en potten tegen facisme en geschiedvervalsing. (Homosexual Emancipation Groep Andra. Action in de Roerstraat. Gays and lesbians against fascism and falsification of history.) With programme.

The Catholic University of Nijmegen (nowadays the Radboud University) started to implement courses on homosexuality in 1995. In a catholic environment, this is striking, because strictly speaking, homosexuality is not acceptable within Catholicism. Of course, this shows how modern and tolerant an institute like a university can be in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Nowadays there is an entire faculty for Gender Studies, the replacement for Homosexual Studies, that is known in the rest of the Netherlands as well. The fact that the emancipation groups really started to

organise themselves apparently had its results. A decade later these groups were part of an official institute like a university. The impact of these groups is immense, when taken into account that homosexuality used to be illegal. The other posters illustrate how these emancipatory groups use both celebratory and activist tactics to perform their identities. They use art to communicate their messages.



From left corner above til right corner below:

- 23 juni Nijmegen Potten-en-Flikkerdag 1984 (23th of June Nijmegen Lesbians and Gays Day 1984) with programme.
- Nijmeegse Potten- en Flikkerdag. Zaterdag 27 mei '95. (Nijmegen Lesbian- and Gay day. Saturday the 27th of May '95) with programme. Supporting venues with their logo: Café The Spot, Villa Lila, Café De Plak, Café Mets.
- Huis van de Nijmeegse Geschiedenis 19 januari t/m 5 mei 2013. De Roze Geschiedenis van Nijmegen van Nul tot Nu. (Home of the History of Nijmegen January 19th until May 5th. The Pink History of Nijmegen from Zero until Now). Supported by the Council of Nijmegen.
- 1 jaar Flikkerradio Kuifje. 29 april. Luister vanaf 15:00 naar Radio Rataplan en Radio Kuifje. (1 year Gayradio Kuifje. 29th of April. Listen from 15:00 to Radio Rataplan and Radio Kuifje) With programme.
- Pottenradio. (Lesbian radio.) With airing dates.
- Lesbisch Archief Nijmegen. Open en feest 19 janurai. Receptie in Villa Lila. Feest in Feeks. Vol Verrassingen. (Lesbian Archive Nijmegen. Open and party 19th of January. Reception in Villa Lila. Party in Feeks. Full of surprises)

Yet again it is clear how much these groups and venues cooperated. Villa Lila, Café De Plak and bookstore De Feeks are mentioned several times on these posters. These groups had places to organise and used posters to promote their events. The material of posters was also used at the 'Verfslag' exhibition by artist Naamloozz. This artist had collected all sorts of posters, but also advertisements in magazines, and shredded them into pieces and created a kind of collage. On top of that, images were drawn.



Photos taken by Joep Janssen. 'Verfslag' exhibition 2015. Work by Naamlooz (Nameless)

With this choice of the use of posters and magazines, the emphasis is placed on the paper itself, rather than what is printed on it. The drawings on top of the paper distract the viewer from what the paper used to be. In this case, the materials are not used in a social emancipatory sense; they are not

instrumental for promotion for certain groups or events. There is, however, a certain identity that is performed. What seems to be performed here is a fragmented identity that is built up with shared printed communicational products. The artist comments on our communication flows by presenting them in a different order from what we are used to. Nowadays, the amount of posters we see in urban common space is abundant; we see advertisements for products and announcements for parties and concerts, while posters for such emancipatory subcultures are scarcely visible anymore. Naamllozz, as a street artist, does something entirely different with the materials, thus making us aware of the materiality of the paper itself.

The posters in the eighties could prompt a cathexis for people who identified or sympathized with certain gender group formations; a feeling of empowerment, a curiosity, or other reactions. The posters served as actors because they could put an image to the formation of groups and spread their news and activities. The posters for Naamllozz are actors to distort and transform the order of communication flows, thus creating a cathexis of confusion, alienation, beauty, or other sensations. It becomes clear that the same material used in different ages and different spatial contexts has different effects.

Markers

When it comes to another material used in graffiti, namely markers, an interesting phenomenon occurs. Some brands of markers have the capacity of refilling the ink, and some artists create their own colours by mixing different colours of ink. This is also the case with MeerLiefde.¹³³ This practice of mixing one's own colour is indicative of the 'do it yourself' attitude that the punk subculture of the eighties left behind. Markers that graffiti writers use are very strong kind of markers; they leave a clear mark on surfaces like walls. They are more silent than spray cans, which need to be shaken before using and thus creating a very distinctive sound. Markers are usually put to practice in the act of tagging on walls, lampposts and electrical cabinets. But with the international festival 'The Big Draw'¹³⁴ markers are also used to make the windows of shops and cafes in the city centre livelier. Sometimes street artists are invited to draw for the festival as well.

Markers, illegally put to practice, are often used to leave small tags behind. When an official assignment is given, the marker can be a tool for much bigger works. They are the same kind of actors for graffiti writers and street artists as spray cans; yet they differ in the fact that strong markers are not produced in as many colours as spray cans. Another difference is the kind of touch they have on surfaces; a lot of pressure is put on the ink of spray cans, while a marker must be used more gently. Markers often leave messages behind that prompt a cathexis of school dribbling,

¹³³ Interview with MeerLiefde. See Appendix

¹³⁴ The Big Draw Nijmegen <http://www.thebigdrawnijmegen.nl/> (last seen at 22-2-'17)

because they seem so similar to ordinary pens. When markers are allowed to be used on surfaces like shop windows, a cathexis is prompted of drawn art.



Nijmegen, Meisje Meisie store, 2014. Photo by Jeroen Majoor.

Chalk

The use of coloured chalk is often associated with child play on street pavement, usually practiced in the neighbourhoods where the children themselves live. But a few examples of the use of chalk as street art can be found on walls in city center of Nijmegen.



Nijmegen, 2015. Picture taken by Sara Zamboni.

Flowers, and two female friends giving a 'high five' with the names 'Charlotte' and 'Char'.



Nijmegen, Konninginnelaan, 2015. Picture taken by author.

Thuis is de plek waar je vrienden ontmoet. (Home is the place where you meet friends) Allesbinder.¹³⁵

To illustrate the difference how the use of chalk effects and affects a wall in the urban common space, I show photographs of a wall near Square 44 with chalk drawings made by myself and two friends with permission of the company 'Primark', as the wall belongs to their storehouse. I will also show the wall after the chalk is removed after about a year of being there. The wall became a visual sounding board for expressions. When we were drawing the chalk on the wall, passersby were happily surprised and started laughing and complimenting us on how nicer the wall, that they daily passed, looked. We drew things that we felt related to; we would go to ballet performances, we both joined a Taekwondo club in our puberty, we love beautiful natural living things such as swans, fire, and stars and we wished to show the importance of learning and peace, as well as portray the playful element of chaos. This work happened spontaneously and organically; no plans or design were made before we started drawings.

¹³⁵ Allesbinder <http://www.allesbinder.nl/> (last seen at 20-4-'17)



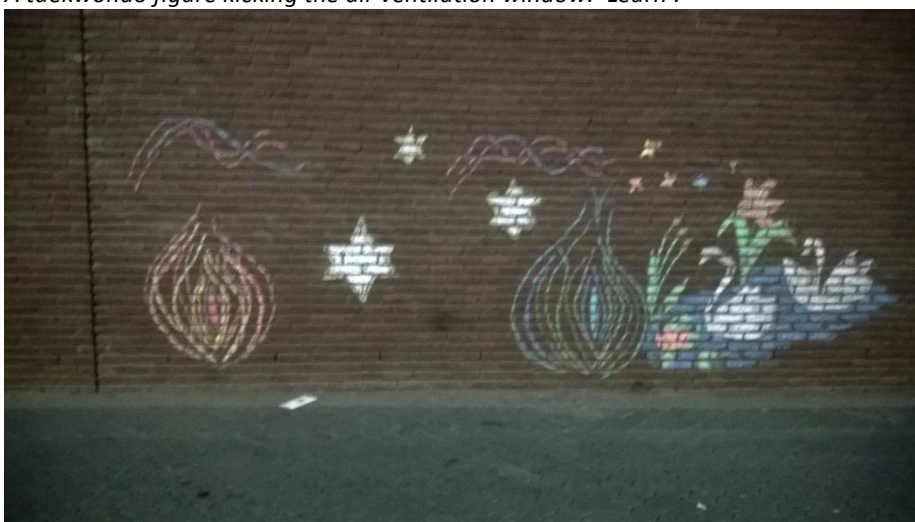
Nijmegen, 2014. Photo taken by my friend S.

A dancing ballerina, 'CREATE CHAOS', 'PEACE', the Ohm symbol, a girl with butterfly wings



Nijmegen, 2014. Photo taken by my friend S.

A taekwondo figure kicking the air ventilation window. 'Learn'.



Nijmegen, 2014. Photo taken by my friend S.

Abstract drawings of fire, stars and swans in a lake.



*Nijmegen, 2016. Picture taken by my friend S.
The same wall, the drawings are still somewhat visible in their outlines.*

The wall was used a vehicle to express something that prompts a cathexis of simultaneously friendly, childlike, playful, provocative and peaceful associations. After the removal of the chalk, the wall in a way served again as a governmental strategy that appears to be neutral. But the drawings could not be removed entirely; there still appeared a certain visual echo, as the areas of the drawings are cleaner now than the rest of the wall. The wall as whole is now much less colourful and vibrant; it radiates much less diversity and complexity. What remains, is a wall of bricks where something used to be on. The wall and the chalk as material objects are possible actors to communicate, in this example colourful messages, with inhabitants of the city of Nijmegen. The use of chalk on the wall changed the space of this area in the city centre, and the removal of that chalk transformed it yet again.

Stickers

Stickers are a special form of street art, for they are not strictly 'written', like a tag or a piece is. The artist creates a digital design that can be taken from a drawn design, and prints it as a sticker. The 'do it yourself' attitude is also apparent here. Artists like 103, TL, and De Imker made stickers and spread them across Nijmegen, and other cities as well. They are often placed on non-places like lampposts and electrical cabinets, thus transforming the seeming neutrality of those spaces. With the objects of stickers, there is a link between street artists and student unions, music bands, companies, and organized parties. They all use stickers as an actor to promote their own 'brand'; they all place stickers in the urban common space in order to increase their visibility.



Nijmegen, no date. Photo taken by 2073. A sticker with the humorous design of the artist's name and an impossible digital time reference.

Because stickers are often very small, they have to be placed in unusual spaces or they have to be placed in many places to be noticed. The cathexis prompted by street artists differs with every individual sticker. The transformations they put to all sort of spaces can be experienced as vandalism, cultural expression or other observations.

Corrosion

A unique use of material in street art is corrosion. The picture at the start of this chapter show the corroded letters, forming the question posed by former city poet Jaap Robben 'Kun je van houden van een vreemde?' (Can you love a stranger?). At Jaap Robben's website another picture is also shown if this project. The same sentence was also placed in the Piersonstraat. And on the Facebook page of SmooveBusiness more pictures can be found of the same project on locations near the 'Waalkade' and under the bridge next to 'De Kaaij'.



Piersonstraat, 2010. Picture taken by Jaap Robben.



'Waalkade' and the bridge next to 'De Kaaij', 2010. Pictures taken by SmooveBusiness.

The material that was used to place these sentences was spray paint in the colour 'Heavy Metal', and this paint gradually oxidizes in slightly different colours. The letters were placed using stencils. This particular use of spray paint deliberately plays with the notions of aging and decay. Graffiti and street art are often very ephemeral, due to the fact that the works are often removed within weeks; the use of this kind of paint comments thus on that ephemerality. After they have been placed on the surfaces in urban common space in Nijmegen, they instantly prompt a cathexis of old and rusty associations. Instead of using bright colours and unique letters and images, this project went in the

opposing direction; thus experimenting with form and function in a unique fashion. This project generates a different transformation to the spaces they are written on than the examples that were mentioned prior this example. Because the work looks so old and deeply embedded in the surface of the wall, it generates the idea that it is there for a reason; otherwise it would have been removed already. These works would not very quickly be categorised as vandalism.

The fact that a question is being asked is also striking. The passersby attention is caught and a certain active approach is generated. Thinking about the possibility of loving a stranger already raises more questions about what a stranger is. A view on strangers in the space of a city is the following:

*It is not possible to simply 'be' a stranger; you become a stranger through specific, embodied encounters. The stranger is a relational figure, constituted in a spatial ambivalence between proximity and distance. And in this way he/she can take different shapes and different roles depending on the context in which it is performed.*¹³⁶

So in a city where citizens move in different directions in the urban common space but do not meet one another and socially interact, it is very easy to become a stranger. In hyper-individualised systems, the communal aspects of contact can be minimalised to specified events like festivals, concerts and other cultural constructs. Instead of meeting others in urban common space as possible friends or as persons to acknowledge, it is often the case that people consider other citizens as strangers to be left alone. This work of street art is thus an actor to open up a socio-cultural and philosophical realm of human contact and transforms the spaces where it is placed.

The materials in this chapter were very diverse; walls, aerosol paint, spray cans, posters, chalk, markers, stickers and corrosion. We encounter these materials every day, yet we often do not pay close attention to them. After the examination of them in this chapter, it becomes clear that the materials of everyday life are less mundane when looked at more closely. They are involved with ruses and transgressive tactics; and within these practices people are neither 'disciplined dupes' nor 'heroic agents', but co-producers of systems of provision.¹³⁷ This leads us to the next chapter of this thesis, where the question of ownership is a red thread. After examining both the language and the materials, it is time to look at how dynamics in power relationships take shape in the urban common space of Nijmegen.

¹³⁶ L. Koefoed, K. Simonsen (2011), 'The stranger', the city and the nation: on the possibilities of identification and belonging. In: 'European Urban and Regional Studies' Vol. 18. No.4 P Abstract.

¹³⁷ F. Trentmann (2009) *Materiality in the Future of History: Things, Practices and Politics*. In: 'Journal of British Studies' Vol. 48. No. 2. Special Issue on Material Culture. Cambridge University Press. P305.

Dynamics of urban spatiality

*Reclaiming public space is not always strictly about possession. Often, street artists and graffiti writers produce their art in locations that have little or forgotten beauty of their own.*¹³⁸



Nijmegen, 2014. Picture taken by author.

The second chapter ended with the notion that people in urban areas are neither ‘disciplined dupes’ nor ‘heroic agents’, but ‘co-producers of systems of provision’.¹³⁹ This statement bridges the extreme poles of the top-down regulations and grassroots bottom-up paradigms. While the second chapter focused on materiality, this chapter attempts to look at graffiti and street art from the overarching perspective of power relations in ‘private’ and ‘public’ realms. Even though materiality is a crucial aspect regarding graffiti and street art, ‘space itself no longer attaches to materiality; and thus whatever material displacement might have marked their difference no longer distinguishes public from private space.’¹⁴⁰ When it comes to graffiti and street art in the city of Nijmegen and its urban common space, there is a constant interplay of dynamics between city planners, local policies, the inhabitants and the graffiti- and street artists themselves.

An important question regarding this interplay of dynamics deals with ownership. The subquestion that structures this chapter is: ‘Who owns the urban common space of Nijmegen?’ The

¹³⁸ L. Bates (2014) *Bombing, Tagging, Writing: An Analysis of the Significance of Graffiti and Street Art*. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.Scholarly Commons.

¹³⁹ F. Trentmann (2009) *Materiality in the Future of History: Things, Practices and Politics*. In: ‘Journal of British Studies’ Vol. 48. No. 2. Special Issue on Material Culture. Cambridge University Press. P305.

¹⁴⁰ H. Hein (1996) *What Is Public Art?: Time, Place, and Meaning*. In: ‘Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism.’ Vol. 54. No. 1. P5

aim is not to find one single owner, but rather to find out how ownership is acted out in several situations and places. Concepts that can help to structure this acting out of ownership are: urban common space itself, different kind of agencies, the interrelations between culture and counter culture and the practical implications of political power on a local scale. These concepts will be explored with the help of specific sites in Nijmegen where, through graffiti and street art, these concepts play an important role.

The photograph with which this chapter starts, portrays some factors in this interplay of dynamics about ownership. The traffic sign, usually displaying the maximum speed for car drivers, is owned by the state. The '30' logo is adjusted so that it appears to be the Hindi 'Ohm' sign. Someone appropriated the traffic sign in a way that it alters the communication with urban citizens. A traffic sign communicates a restriction in behaviour, while the 'Ohm' sign points to universal connection. The way citizens experience that particular street may be transformed because of this. The alteration of the traffic sign can be considered as vandalism, but also as a philosophical joke or a comment about community. In what other ways can graffiti and street art play with dynamics in urban spatiality?

Urban common space and the city

As I explained in the introduction of this thesis, cities existed long before processes of industrialisation and urbanisation took place. Living in an urban common space entails much more than serving one's part within the reality of the ideology of capitalism. The sociality of city life has shifted from collectivised to market-based mode¹⁴¹, yet the communal aspects of urban common space have not entirely vanished. For German philosopher Martin Heidegger, the city was a 'symbolization of a person's being and consciousness' in the sense that the city 'reflects a shift from the individual to the collective level.'¹⁴² Aforementioned philosopher Lefebvre departed from that perspective in order to create his notion of the production of space. Especially 'lived space' is interesting here, for it deals with 'the dialectic structure between materialism and ideology' and because it depends on 'material, mental and bodily constructs.'¹⁴³ So urban common space, and its graffiti and street art, are part of a living, organic process.

Our understanding of urban common space is partly prompted by 'spatial imagination.' This concept can be described as: 'the process through which a given social group works out the relation between social and physical phenomena, establishing links between physical attributes of people and

¹⁴¹ L. Visconti, J. Sherry Jr, S. Borghini, L. Anderson (2010) *Street Art, Street Smart? Reclaiming the 'Public' in Public Space*. In: 'Journal of Consumer Research' Vol. 37 No. 3. Oxford University Press. P513.

¹⁴² K. Simonsen. (2005) *Bodies, Sensations, Space and Time: The Contribution from Henri Lefebvre*. In: 'Geografiska Annaler. Series B. Human Geography.' Vol. 87. No. 1. Wiley. P3

¹⁴³ Ibidem. P7.

objects, other sensory attributes such as sound and smell, as well as the nonphysical dimensions of ideas and ideology.¹⁴⁴ Urban common space is not merely experienced individually; it is rather a common event of constant dynamics. Every spatial imagination thus has a constitutive relation to the historical field of production.¹⁴⁵

From that point of view we can look at a 'supra-economic definition according to which the public sphere is the realm in which people define themselves as publics, through ongoing communication, definition and negotiation over their shared concerns.'¹⁴⁶ With this communal point of view in mind, urban common space can be viewed by researchers as 'cultural fields and texts that affect the community.'¹⁴⁷ Graffiti and street art in this regard fulfill their part as cultural fields and texts in diverse manners, such as activism, inspiration, protest and beautification. Apart from analyses of these cultural fields and texts, the urban landscape of street art 'provides the opportunity for participation to flourish beyond institutionalised political arenas.'¹⁴⁸

As philosopher Gilles Deleuze puts it: "A public space is not a plane of organisation [*plan d'organisation*] of identities in an environment, but a plane of consistence [*plan de consistance*] where identities are problematized and situations become constantly redefinable."¹⁴⁹ In other words, one's position in urban common space, such as Nijmegen, is not at all fixed. Rather, it is redefined by one's actions and alliances within that space. Works of graffiti and street art can be viewed as initiatives that start to create a 'sense of place'.¹⁵⁰ This creation of a 'sense of place' happens by transforming non-places into 'places with a strong identity and communal value.'¹⁵¹

The dynamics in urban common space show how ownership is a process of interaction with communal values and meanings. An example of an obvious communal project is education, for it is an institutionalized value that affects all people in a society. In 2015 there were changes in the national policies about education in the Netherlands, like debates concerning the implementation of a loan system for students, replacing the scholarships.¹⁵² Stencil graffiti appeared in Nijmegen, such as this one:

¹⁴⁴ S. Chattopadhyay (2014) *Making Place, Space and the Embodiment in the City*. Chapter 1: Visualizing the Body Politic. Indiana University Press. P46.

¹⁴⁵ Ibidem. P46.

¹⁴⁶ L. Visconti, J. Sherry Jr, S. Borghini, L. Anderson (2010) *Street Art, Street Smart? Reclaiming the 'Public' in Public Space*. In: 'Journal of Consumer Research' Vol. 37 No. 3. Oxford University Press. P512.

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁹ A. M. Brighenti (2010) *At The Wall. Graffiti Writers, Urban Territory and the Public Domain*. In: 'Space and Culture' Sage Publications. P328 <http://sac.sagepub.com/content/13/3/315> (last seen at 15-4-'17).

¹⁵⁰ P. Bishop. L. Williams (2012) *The Temporary City*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. London and New York. P125.

¹⁵¹ Ibidem. P146

¹⁵² NRC (<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2014/09/16/miljoenennota-2015-de-belangrijkste-maatregelen-op-een-rij-a1422375>)



Burchtstraat, Nijmegen. 2015. Picture taken by author. "Onderwijs is een recht voor iedereen, dat laten we ons niet afnemen! Een weg naar speciale gelijkheid." (Education is everyone's right, we shall not let that be taken from us! A road to special equality).

This non-space, namely a wall at the side corner of a store, transforms into a vehicle for socio-political statements. A burning book accompanies this particular statement. This is a symbol with many historic layers, for in many instances in human history books were burned to accompany a revolution or in order to suppress forms of knowledge and culture. Such a symbol is linked with the text of 'education being a right for everyone that shall not be taken away' at a time when cutbacks in education on a national scale were a reality. The design of such a stencil thus relates to a frame much larger than the space in which it is placed. A communal value, namely education, is addressed in a place where many citizens pass by, namely a wall in the city centre. This place thus becomes a sounding board for communal values. The city as a place for shared communication is appropriated, as well as the right to education.

Different forms of agency

The current *zeitgeist* is largely influenced by the neo liberal paradigm. Inhabitants of a city are mostly framed as consumer individuals and therefore consumer agency is relevant in this context. Consumer

agency includes 'acts of resistance, social movements, labor and political consumerism, consumption communities, ludic behavior and liberatory prosumption.'¹⁵³ Prosumption is particularly interesting when it comes to graffiti and street art, for a prosumer is 'a member of the market that produces or co-produces the products and goods that he or she consumes.'¹⁵⁴ A graffiti writer or a street artist produces works that he or she consumes along with other city dwellers. In this context, consuming means experiencing the work haptically, as explained in the second chapter. When we consider works of graffiti and street art as public or collective goods, then graffiti writers and street artists act as consumer agents. Public or collective goods are 'goods produced by and on behalf of the public to address matters facing the commonwealth.'¹⁵⁵

It can also be argued that the public nature of goods implies the emergence of 'imbricated agency'; the overlapping of 'contemporaneous, interactive, convergent and divergent forms of agency.'¹⁵⁶ In this sense, graffiti and street art are simultaneously artistic and ideological in the realm of urban common space.¹⁵⁷ Inhabitants of a city do not merely consume products from stores, in a way they consume their own city as well. And when works of graffiti and street art act out as public or collective goods, they are carriers of agency. Ownership in this context means expressing one's agency towards the physical surfaces of urban common space. By producing public or collective goods, like graffiti and street art, one acquires partial ownership of the city.

Like in most cities, the urban common space of Nijmegen is mostly 'owned' by advertisers and city planners, because they design the physical surfaces mostly. An interesting example of street art related to this topic is the following work. The stencil shows the message 'Who needs ads when there's graf', graf being short for graffiti. This displays a view of advertisements as obsolete compared to graffiti, perhaps because graffiti and street art serve much better as public or collective goods. This work is situated at a non-place: an electricity cabinet at the Marienburg Square. When an urban citizen sees this work, he or she might think differently about advertisement than before seeing this work. The non-place is transformed to a site that comments on advertisement, making city dwellers more aware of it. The non-place is also appropriated by graffiti writers to counter the tactics of advertisements.

¹⁵³ L. Visconti, J. Sherry Jr, S. Borghini, L. Anderson (2010) *Street Art, Street Smart? Reclaiming the 'Public' in Public Space*. In: 'Journal of Consumer Research' Vol. 37 No. 3. Oxford University Press. P511.

¹⁵⁴ Wordpress <https://prosumerism.wordpress.com/2010/10/21/prosumer-prosumption-prosumerism-basic-definitions-pt-2/> (last seen at 22-4-'17)

¹⁵⁵ L. Visconti, J. Sherry Jr, S. Borghini, L. Anderson (2010) *Street Art, Street Smart? Reclaiming the 'Public' in Public Space*. In: 'Journal of Consumer Research' Vol. 37 No. 3. Oxford University Press. P512.

¹⁵⁶ Ibidem. P512.

¹⁵⁷ Ibidem. P512.



Marienburg, Nijmegen. 2015. Picture taken by author. Who needs ads when there's graf.

Another example that comments on current consumer culture is the 'Free Money' logo placed at several places in Nijmegen. The two that I point out is situated next to an APM machine. The word 'free' in this context can point to at least two meanings: as an adjective (money that is given away) or as a verb (liberate money). This evokes associations with money that are counterintuitive in a capitalist paradigm; we are used to money as an acquired reward for labor, as something that we use to gain all sorts of products to fulfill our needs. The placement of this logo next to an APM machine changes the way people experience that particular space.



Nijmegen, Oranjesingel. May 2014. Picture taken by author. Free Money.



Nijmegen, Burchtstraat. September 2014. Picture taken by author. Free Money

Culture and counter-culture

Nowadays, the boundaries between culture and counterculture are increasingly difficult to locate.

This is partly due to the 'expansion and diversification of the creative scene' and the 'increasing

integration of aesthetic production into commodity production.¹⁵⁸ Another factor is the expansion of the means of production, circulation and exchange of arts and culture that resulted from the 'new technology and information revolution'.¹⁵⁹ This leads to a 'wider and easier access to a large number of practitioners'.¹⁶⁰ In other words, everyone that consumes and produces culture, can easily also consume and produce counterculture. Graffiti and street art are also increasingly accessible to produce, because markers and spray cans are easier to get your hands on, but also because they are increasingly accepted as legal art forms.

Street artist Rob Arts¹⁶¹ is a local example for Nijmegen in this regard. He works as a street artist and produces works as official, paid assignments. His views on the production and consumption of culture and counterculture within the graffiti and street art scene are useful insights.

*'In order to obtain enough experience and practice with graffiti and street art, it is often necessary to make work illegally. There are too little, if any, venues where writers and artists can practice their work. When a person becomes really good at his or her work, then it can happen that he or she is asked to do official assignments. This happened to me as well. But from a policy point of view, this makes no sense. On the one hand graffiti and street art are illegalized, but on the other hand these illegal practices are rewarded if the works are appreciated. So policy makers stimulate illegality and do not take responsibility to facilitate a proper nourishing ground for this form of art; they only enjoy the end result of people who risk fines and a criminal record for their passion. This balance between legal and illegal in the field of graffiti and street art is off.'*¹⁶²

Both legal and illegal graffiti are urban interventions. And as such, they 'span the boundaries between political protest and avant-garde'.¹⁶³ They create 'temporary autonomous zones' and 'make a stand against the functionalism of the modern city' by 'exploring the hidden potentials of the city' and by 'creating new ways of reading the urban landscape' and 'actively refreshing' it.¹⁶⁴ Graffiti and street art represent aspects of both culture and counterculture, because the works play with 'the premise that we are all as ephemeral as our creations'.¹⁶⁵ This notion of ephemerality can be a critique and a description simultaneously. The critique would be that a more sustainable system is favorable above our fast consumption cycle, while the description would be that life is fleeting in

¹⁵⁸ P. Bishop. L. Williams (2012) *The Temporary City*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. London and New York. P117.

¹⁵⁹ Ibidem. P117.

¹⁶⁰ Ibidem. P117.

¹⁶¹ De Vasim. <http://devasim.nl/graffiti-nl/> (last seen at 21-3-'17)

¹⁶² Interview Rob Arts. Translation. See Appendix

¹⁶³ P. Bishop. L. Williams (2012) *The Temporary City*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. London and New York. P121.

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem. P121.

¹⁶⁵ Ibidem. P121.

general; nothing can last forever. The layers of meaning and representation thus overlap.

Yet clear differences between culture and counterculture in the form of graffiti and street art can be found as well. I will start with a very clear example of counterculture. In February 2012 in Nijmegen, several advertisement locations were altered by subversive messages. The official spaces of advertisement were literally broken into, or 'hacked', in order to place an alternative message. Some of the alternative messages read 'Hier had ook een boom kunnen staan' (*A tree could have been here instead*). The example that I will discuss is the somewhat violent and humorous message of a person holding a Molotov cocktail in front of a line of police mobile unit officers with the text 'Come on baby light my fire'. This text can be read as a plead to light the Molotov cocktail and thus protesting against the official police order. It can also be read as a joke, because 'Come on baby light my fire' is a fragment of the lyrics of the song by the psychedelic band The Doors. This work was composed of several A4-papers were this image was printed on, the result looked obvious amateurish. The people behind this advertisement boycott appropriated the spaces for local mass communication and thus acted out their ownership within the realm of the urban common space of Nijmegen. The official advertisement space was transformed into a temporary autonomous zone.



Nijmegen, Van Schevichavenstraat. February 2012. Picture taken by author. 'Come on baby, light my fire.'

Graffiti and street art in Nijmegen also act as agents in the official, legal culture. An example is the wall at the side surface of the Graafse brug. This wall marks the border of the Bottendaal district. This wall was allowed to be vitalized by vibrant colors, shapes and imagery by the council of Nijmegen. The name Bottendaal is shown, as well as the flag of NEC (the local soccer team) and the phrase 'Pirates of the Waal' (Nijmegen lies near the river Waal). Different local artists collaborated to create this mural. This can be viewed as an example of city marketing, a form of local culture and of community art. This wall is very near the central station and as a work of street art it has 'clean' aesthetics; the dominant light-blue colors and the cartoonish fishes radiate a kind of innocence. It thus serves a proper welcoming into the city, which is beneficial for the marketing of a city. This kind of art carries the 'opportunity to unite people in an effort to reinvent an environment with complex attachments.'¹⁶⁶ Ownership in this context is constituted through collaborative action and shared local values.

¹⁶⁶ A. Zemel. (1999) *Fine Arts 349: Community, Collaborative, and Public Art*. In: 'Art Journal' Vol. 58. No. 1. College Art Association. P67.



Nijmegen, wall of Graafse brug. 2015. Picture taken by author.

Political power on a local scale

Before we can understand political power on the local scale of the urban common space of Nijmegen, we have to acquire a greater understanding of political power in general. Political power as a top-down process always deals with, even starts with, ‘the agreement to limit liberty’ and ‘containing freedom’.¹⁶⁷ French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty sees political power as the ‘intertwining of the world within and without’¹⁶⁸, German-Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt emphasized that political power is acted out in the ‘space appearance’.¹⁶⁹ Political power is in constant flux and embodied by people in particular spaces. Professor of Humanities James Mensch describes it as ‘the bodily “I can”, the ability to act and change the world’ and he suggests that if the connection between sovereignty and violence is broken, a space between authority and physical power opens up.¹⁷⁰ Arguably, political power that is exercised in a top-down movement controls the freedoms of a population by acting as a sovereign agent, and thus allowing itself to use violence to maintain this power. The possibility also exists for other movements of political power; such movements appear in spaces where people get in contact with each other and contextualized freedoms rise to the surface.¹⁷¹

Public spaces in their local context have the characteristic of ‘openness of political action’ that is ‘indexed in the freedom of appearance’.¹⁷² They are spaces that ‘enable the presence of others’ and must ‘contain room for refashioning, alteration and maneuver’ and this affects the content of freedom.¹⁷³ The content of freedom is not determined; it is contingent.¹⁷⁴ As such, the locality and openness of urban common space can be understood as a realm of possibilities to

¹⁶⁷ S. Chattopadhyay (2014) *Making Place, Space and the Embodiment in the City*. Chapter 1: Visualizing the Body Politic. Indiana University Press. P44-45.

¹⁶⁸ Ibidem. P44-45.

¹⁶⁹ Ibidem. P44-45.

¹⁷⁰ Ibidem. P44-45.

¹⁷¹ Ibidem. P44-45.

¹⁷² Ibidem. P47.

¹⁷³ Ibidem. P49.

¹⁷⁴ Ibidem. P49.

change the conditions for freedom to act and communicate. When we consider urban common space as a social space, then the interactions in that space are 'a duality between opacity and transparency, subjectivity and objectivity.'¹⁷⁵ Local urban spaces thus carry great potential for dynamics in communicating power relations.

An interesting example in this context is another wall on the side of the Graafsebrug. The 'Dreamwall' project simultaneously facilitates and portrays work by local residents, as well as stimulates passersby to leave their message behind and communicate with other city citizens. The non-place of the side wall of the Graafsebrug is transformed into a sounding board for new wishes, ideas and dreams, and a canvas of local art. Even though it is not officially labeled as such, this can be described as an example of community art.

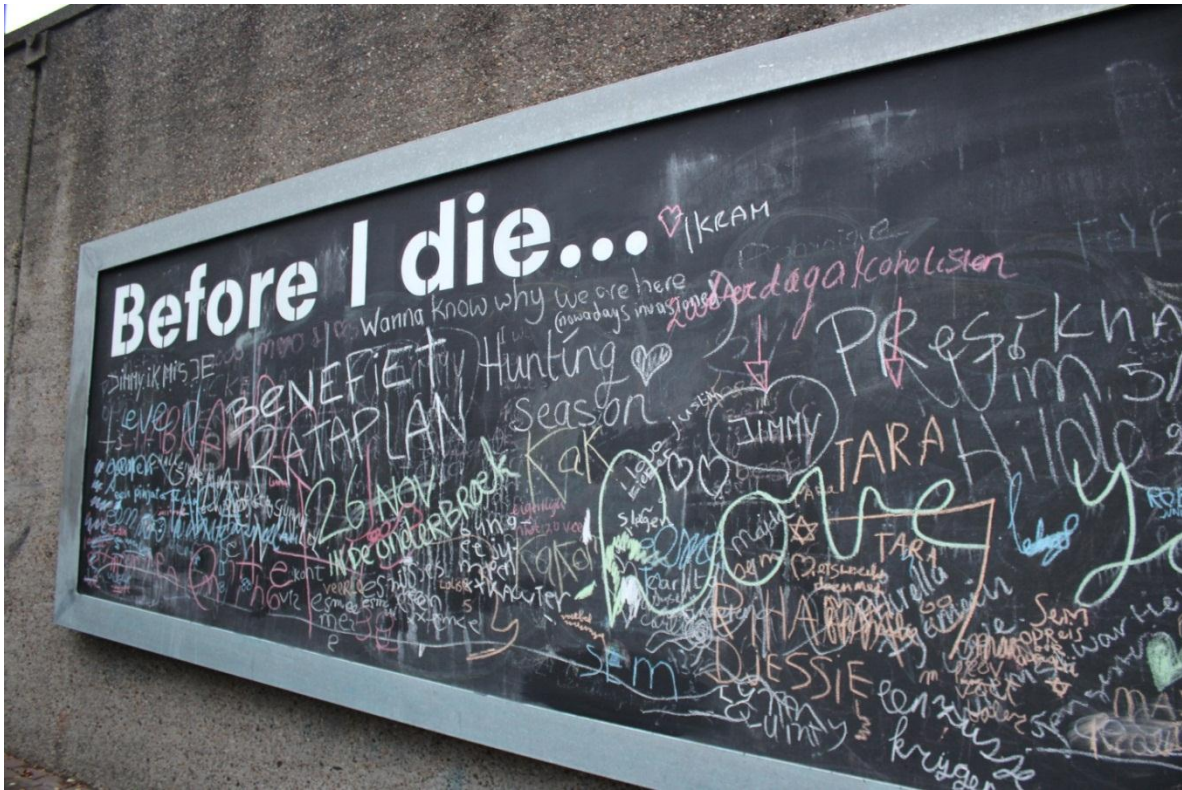
The 'Before I die...' part of the Dreamwall in particular enables the aforementioned 'bodily I can' that resides in the ability to act and change the world. By allowing citizens to openly communicate their wishes, ideas and dreams with other citizens in urban common space, a field is opened up for shared ownership of that space. The messages on the Dreamwall change over time and thus an endless flux of interaction is created. Usually such communication can be found online, but to solidify this communication flow in an area in urban common space is an attempt to use the openness of local spatiality. The 'Before I die...' project is not only situated in Nijmegen, but all over the world. Artist Candy Chang decided to start this project as a way of processing the death of a loved one.¹⁷⁶ This part of the Dreamwall thus interacts with local and global dynamics of street art.

¹⁷⁵ K. Simonsen. (2005) *Bodies, Sensations, Space and Time: The Contribution from Henri Lefebvre*. In: 'Geografiska Annaler. Series B. Human Geography.' Vol. 87. No. 1. Wiley. P6.

¹⁷⁶ Candy Chang <http://candychang.com/work/before-i-die-in-nola/> (last seen at 20-4-'17)



Graafsebrug, Nijmegen, 2015. Picture taken by author. 'Droomwand met schilderijen gemaakt door bewoners van de Wolfskuil. Before I die is een wereldwijd verspreid initiatief. Voorbijgangers kunnen er hun wens, idee of droom opschrijven. De Droomwand is gerealiseerd door buurtbewoners en mede mogelijk gemaakt door de Gemeente Nijmegen, Coöperatiefond RABO, Apotheek Binnendijk, LECON BV Las- en Constructiewerk.'
(Dreamwall with paintings made by inhabitants of the Wolfskuil district. Before I die is a worldwide initiative. Passersby can write down their wish, idea or dream. The Dreamwall is realised by neighbourhood inhabitants and made possible by the Council Nijmegen, Cooperation fund RABO, Apothecary Binnendijk, LECON BV Welding and Construction work.'



Graafsebrug, Nijmegen, 2015. Picture taken by author. 'Before I die....' With all sorts of messages in chalk.



Graafsebrug, Nijmegen, 2015. Picture taken by author. Paintings by neighbourhood residents.

In this chapter several examples of ownership in urban common space were examined with the help of concrete examples of graffiti and street art. It is clear that cities like Nijmegen are nowadays

experienced rather individually and neo-liberally, while some tendencies for communal, shared values and communication in local spatiality are rising. This chapter focussed on graffiti and street art, but other examples of this local communal movement can be found in areas like community gardens and repair shops.

When it comes to urban common space and ownership, it is important to realise the distinction between 'true' and 'false' needs, as is explained by Marcuse.¹⁷⁷ Advertisements tend to push on the individual rather 'false' needs in the streams of mass production and mass consumption, while 'true' needs include nourishment, lodging and culture.¹⁷⁸ It is my argument that the need for a healthy, safe, beautiful and open urban common space is also a 'true' need. Initiatives of bottom-up tactics to practice different kind of agencies, like certain forms of graffiti and street art, are a display of such a need. Through these displays local ownership and new communication flows are fostered. These forms of local ownership and communication flows are concrete in time and place (in contrast with the virtual movements of the internet) and thus interact in certain ways with the realm of shared memory. The next chapter will dive deeper into aspects about how works of graffiti and street art are remembered, conserved, removed and rewarded.

¹⁷⁷ I. Woodward (2007) *Understanding Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications, P47.

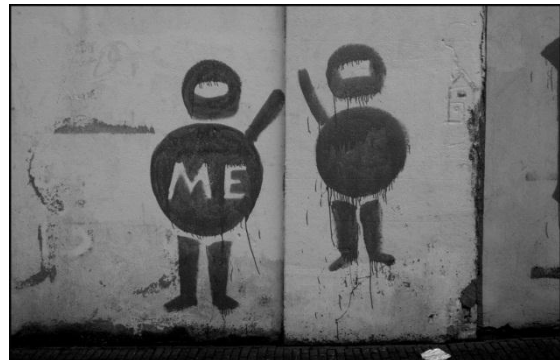
¹⁷⁸ Ibidem. P47-48.

Remainders of Memory

*The memory of a society extends as far as the memory of the groups composing it.*¹⁷⁹



*Piersonstraat, Nijmegen, February 1981.
Picture of the Riot Control officers occupying the
Piersonstraat.*¹⁸⁰



*Piersonstraat, Nijmegen, February 1981.
Picture of street art portraying Riot Control
officers.*¹⁸¹



*Piersonstraat, Nijmegen, 2015.
Remainder of the street art.*



*Keizer Karel Garage, Van Schaek Mathon Singel,
Nijmegen, 2015. Icon of Canon van Nijmegen.*

The four pictures above show, in different ways and in different times, the portrayal of a Riot Control officer related to the Pierson riots. The previous chapter ended with the notion of ‘true needs’, such as nourishment, lodging and culture, expressed through bottom-up initiatives by certain forms of graffiti and street art. In the introduction and in the first chapter the Pierson riots were already mentioned. These riots, and their accompanied graffiti, can be seen as an extreme expression for the need of nourishment, lodging and culture, because they supported the maintaining of the houses, the nourishment of the inhabitants and their areal culture. But they can also be remembered in many other ways, just as graffiti and street art can be remembered in a multitude of manners. The

¹⁷⁹ J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, D. Levy (eds) (2011) *The Collective Memory Reader*. Oxford University Press. P144.

¹⁸⁰ De Pierson http://www.depierson.nl/index.php/nggallery/de-pierson/demonstraties?page_id=41 (last seen at 20-4-'17)

¹⁸¹ Ibidem.

final chapter of this thesis revolves around memory, particularly addressed to the graffiti and street art in Nijmegen from 1980 until 2015.

In order to understand the concept of memory, this chapter will start with delving deeper into the notion of time, followed by different conceptualisations of memory and how they relate to graffiti and street art. As in each chapter, specific examples from Nijmegen in the form of photographs are used to concretise the theory. After that, the role of institutional and personal archives, as well as the increasing use of digital communication will be discussed, with their accompanied practical examples. This chapter ends with the interplay between nostalgia, city marketing and the durability of graffiti and street art. I will look closer at how Nijmegen as a city performs certain identities and builds up certain communities through specific forms of graffiti and street art.

Time

It is only possible to remember through the passage of time; and people tend to structure time as one single entity through which events take place. Yet memory studies state the importance of the focus on 'temporalities' rather than time.¹⁸² This philosophical understanding of memory made possible by different time frames that partly overlap, makes it possible to see the human self as a 'diachronic identity'¹⁸³. In other words, people exist because they move or live through the passage of different times.

For example, a person moves through the time of his or her own lifetime, but also partly through one or two centuries and its accompanied developments, and as well through the lifetimes of others. These different times all pass on existing memories and create new memories. I, for example, move through the timeframe where the rise of the internet was present, through the timeframe of the last part of the lifetime of my grandfathers, but also the beginning of the lifetime of my cousins. In order to understand how memory works, it is thus crucial to take in account that time is plural, not singular. From that point of view, we can see how 'the synthesis of time and identity is effectuated by memory.'¹⁸⁴ This dialectical structure of time, identity and memory shows how time, identity and memory are connected in inseparable manners.

¹⁸² J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, D. Levy (eds) (2011) *The Collective Memory Reader*. Oxford University Press.. P37.

¹⁸³ J. Assmann (2008) *Communicative and Cultural Memory*. Berlin, New York. P109. (http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/propylaeumdok/1774/1/Assmann_Communicative_and_cultural_memory_2008.pdf)

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem. P109.

Defining memory

The studies on memory are interdisciplinary¹⁸⁵; they derive sources from disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, political studies, sociology, history, cultural anthropology, cultural and art studies. Memory is therefore called a 'travelling concept'¹⁸⁶. In the examination of this topic it is therefore necessary to take several disciplines in account. From German Egyptologist Jan Assmann we can learn that memory is 'the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood, both on a personal and collective level.'¹⁸⁷ He divides memory into the subcategories of individual, social and cultural realms.¹⁸⁸ The reciprocity between memory on one hand and groups and communities on the other hand is stressed by Assmann; as he states that 'memory enables us to live in groups and communities, and living in groups and communities enables us to build a memory.'¹⁸⁹ In other words; it is our individual brain that produces the fabric of memories on an inner and personal level, but it is the experiences with others that can create the content of such memories and it is with others that we share these memories so that they may continue to exist.

Assmann makes a distinction between communicative and cultural memory. Communicative memory is non-institutional and exists in the everyday interaction of people and therefore has a maximum time-span of three interacting generations. Cultural memory exists in institutions of re-embodiment and preservation, like monuments, museums, archives, movies and libraries.¹⁹⁰ The characteristics of cultural memory are: 'the concretion of identity, capacity to reconstruct, formation, organisation, obligation and reflexivity.'¹⁹¹ Humans thus create ephemeral memories through communicative interaction and more durable memories via cultural institutions. Graffiti and street art can be part of both communicative and cultural memory, as will be shown in concrete examples later in this chapter.

An older, but not out-dated, figure related to memory theory is French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs; he introduced the term 'collective memory' in 1925.¹⁹² He saw memory as a tripod comprised of autobiographical memory, historical memory and collective memory.¹⁹³ According to Halbwachs, it is only through contact with others that we can create

¹⁸⁵ H. Thaler (2011) *Memory*. ISA. P2. (<http://www.sagepub.net/isa/resources/pdf/MemoryREV.pdf>)

¹⁸⁶ Ibidem. P3.

¹⁸⁷ J. Assmann (2008) *Communicative and Cultural Memory*. Berlin, New York. P109. (http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/propylaeumdok/1774/1/Assmann_Communicative_and_cultural_memory_2008.pdf)

¹⁸⁸ Ibidem. P109.

¹⁸⁹ Ibidem. P109

¹⁹⁰ Ibidem. P111

¹⁹¹ Ibidem. P130-132.

¹⁹² J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, D. Levy (eds) (2011) *The Collective Memory Reader*. Oxford University Press. P16.

¹⁹³ T. Bosch. (2016) *Memory Studies. A Brief Concept Paper*. University of Leeds. P3. http://www.mecodem.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Bosch-2016_Memory-Studies.pdf

meaningful memories, but also stimulate our intelligence and form identities¹⁹⁴. Assmann referred to Halbwachs to explain his own theories:

*Groups are formed and cohere by the dynamics of association and dissociation which is always loaded (to varying degrees) with affection. Halbwachs, therefore, spoke of "communautes affectives." These "affectivities" lend memories their special intensity. Remembering is a realization of belonging, even a social obligation. One has to remember in order to belong.*¹⁹⁵

The groups to which one can belong, thus producers of collective memory, are families, social classes and religious communities, according to Halbwachs.¹⁹⁶ Western societies in the 1920s were differently structured than societies nowadays; social classes and religious communities have increasingly less influence or have been transformed. Current producers of collective memory for young people are perhaps found in subcultures and temporary group forming in leisure time, for example in the choices of what kind of festivals to attend. Modern versions of religious communities can be found in the growing interest in spiritual, shamanistic and eastern meditational workshops and groups. Such religious communities are less strict and cohesive as their former versions.

Space, Media, Ideology, Power, Nostalgia and Memory

An important aspect of groups and their collective memory is social space, for groups integrate in particular spaces and form notions of selfhood and maintaining.¹⁹⁷ Nowadays such spaces can be particular urban spaces like neighborhoods, bars, parks, squares, but also virtual spaces like online platforms. Such spaces embody the dynamic social relations that exist within groups and communities. These spaces change gradually and have a dynamic on their own; because 'generations go by, but cities and neighborhoods persist.'¹⁹⁸ In other words, it is not only groups of people, but also spaces that carry collective memory. This can be linked with the 'social manifestation thesis', which states that 'an individual's milieu plays a physically constitutive role in cognitive activity'.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ J. Marcel. L. Mucchielli. (ND) *Offprint from Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin, New York. P143.

(https://www.laurentmucchielli.org/public/Halbwachs_collective_memory.pdf)

¹⁹⁵ J. Assmann (2008) *Communicative and Cultural Memory*. Berlin, New York. P114. (http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/propylaeumdok/1774/1/Assmann_Communicative_and_cultural_memory_2008.pdf)

¹⁹⁶ J. Marcel. L. Mucchielli. (ND) *Offprint from Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin, New York. P144.

(https://www.laurentmucchielli.org/public/Halbwachs_collective_memory.pdf)

¹⁹⁷ Ibidem. P144.

¹⁹⁸ Ibidem. P146.

¹⁹⁹ R. Wilson. (2005) *Collective Memory, Group Minds and the Extended Mind Thesis*. In: 'Cognitive Prossesing. Vol 6. Issue 4. P230. (<http://www.artsrn.ualberta.ca/raw/collectmem.pdf>)

Remembering in a social context is an 'embedded activity' of cognitive functions.²⁰⁰ A concrete example of memory of a neighborhood in Nijmegen through the use of graffiti and street art will be given later in this chapter.

The way the spaces of neighborhoods are organized, influences how people act in it socially, as it was also already stressed in the second chapter. In this chapter this is also relevant, for it is the spatial images and formations which produce collectively constituted psychological states; especially the collective representations connected with memories and stored in the collective memory.²⁰¹ In modern cities, collective social life can be very hectic and this leads to a 'mixture of mental and material representations' that can dissolve social groups.²⁰² When it comes to the dynamics of collective memory, two forces are active according to Halbwachs: fragmentation and concentration.²⁰³ These two opposing forces interact through time and space.

Following Halbwachs theories, collective memory is defined as the 'public manifestation of mythology, tradition and heritage' by Garde Hansen, professor in Culture, Media and Communication. Such public activity can be regarded as 'therapeutic' for a community, for group members are allowed to process and interpret their shared past events.²⁰⁴ Italian sociologist Franco Ferrarotti states that memory is always an inter- and contextual construction; it is built up by different times, different groups of people in particular spaces. For instance, when visiting a city, we see the current city, but simultaneously we see the city through the eyes of important historical figures and events.²⁰⁵ Another contemporary sociologist, Michael Billig, mentions collective memory and states that it is always connected to ideology; 'it is ideology that constitutes what is collectively remembered and forgotten.'²⁰⁶ Ideology is closely linked with power. It is therefore not strange that the politics of remembering are viewed as intrinsically linked to power relations.²⁰⁷

Nowadays, the acts of collective remembrance are often made possible by mass media, therefore it is crucial to recognize the power of those mass media to communicate dominant ideologies.²⁰⁸ American sociologist George Lipsitz looks at popular culture as a dialogical tool to make

²⁰⁰ R. Wilson. (2005) *Collective Memory, Group Minds and the Extended Mind Thesis*. In: 'Cognitive Processing.' Vol 6. Issue 4. P230. (<http://www.artsrn.ualberta.ca/raw/collectmem.pdf>)

²⁰¹ J. Marcel. L. Mucchielli. (ND) *Offprint from Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin, New York. P146.

²⁰² Ibidem. P146.

²⁰³ Ibidem. P148.

²⁰⁴ T. Bosch. (2016) *Memory Studies. A Brief Concept Paper*. University of Leeds. P5. (http://www.mecodem.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Bosch-2016_Memory-Studies.pdf)

²⁰⁵ J. Wilson. (2014) *Memory: From A Sociological Perspective*. P41. (<https://d-commons.d.umn.edu/bitstream/10792/867/1/Nostalgia-ch2.pdf>)

²⁰⁶ Ibidem. P42.

²⁰⁷ T. Bosch. (2016) *Memory Studies. A Brief Concept Paper*. University of Leeds. P6. (http://www.mecodem.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Bosch-2016_Memory-Studies.pdf)

²⁰⁸ J. Wilson. (2014) *Memory: From A Sociological Perspective*. P43. (<https://d-commons.d.umn.edu/bitstream/10792/867/1/Nostalgia-ch2.pdf>)

sense of shared memories and identity. He remarks about this topic: "This capacity of electronic mass communication to transcend time and space creates instability by disconnecting people from past traditions, but it also liberates people by making the past less determinate of experiences in the present."²⁰⁹ The role of graffiti and street art as media is relevant here as well, and will be discussed further on in this chapter with concrete examples.

Criticism on Halbwachs' theory of collective memory is that he puts focus on memory as a 'mechanism that unites groups and cements identity' and this creates a blind eye for 'conflicting memories' and therefore it seems that he suggests that 'memories that do not accord with the group gradually fade from memory'.²¹⁰ There are perspectives that do take such conflicting memories into account. What is collectively remembered can be seen as an endeavour of semi-conscious co-creation, for people have a choice in which modern rituals of remembering they participate. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham views individuals as active agents in their selection and use of popular culture, rather than as passive dupes.²¹¹ From a cultural studies perspective we can learn about the notion of polyvalence; meaning that the messages of cultural expressions, and thus the collective memories related to them, can be read or evaluated as 'both hegemonic and empowering'.²¹² In other words, the continuous act of collective memory can simultaneously be an instrument for the sustaining of certain dominant ideologies, and for the emergence of active engagement of emancipatory norms, values and activities. This dynamic will be clarified with concrete examples of graffiti and street art later in this chapter.

A closely linked subject related to memory is nostalgia. Political scientist Kimberly Smith notes that nostalgia often occurs in 'struggles over the creation of collective memory.' She views nostalgia as a 'key concept in the political conflict over modernity'; as an 'important weapon in the debate over whose memories count and what kinds of desires and harms are politically relevant'.²¹³ In other words, acts and rituals of remembering can serve as a way of evoking feelings of nostalgia in people; the past to which this nostalgia refers is always re-presented and re-arranged to paint a particular picture, the past is never a neutral and stable event. It is fluid and variable rather than constant and fixed. The past, and a nostalgic reference to it, can be used to maintain certain aspects of the present or create new meanings in the present; collective memory can therefore be

²⁰⁹ J. Wilson. (2014) *Memory: From A Sociological Perspective*. P44. (<https://d-commons.d.umn.edu/bitstream/10792/867/1/Nostalgia-ch2.pdf>)

²¹⁰ A. Green. (2004) *Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates*. In: 'Oral History' Vol. 32, No. 2. P38. Found on Jstor. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179797>)

²¹¹ J. Wilson. (2014) *Memory: From A Sociological Perspective*. P44. (<https://d-commons.d.umn.edu/bitstream/10792/867/1/Nostalgia-ch2.pdf>)

²¹² Ibidem. P44.

²¹³ Ibidem. P45.

interpreted as a situational structure.²¹⁴

Following the logic of anthropological and semiotic theories, this situational structure can be seen as an interplay of three realms, the same realms that comprise culture: a framework of social, material and mental aspects. Social aspects here are people, social relations and institutions, material aspects are artefacts and media and mental aspects are culturally defined ways of thinking.²¹⁵ In other words, collective memory moves through shifting paradigms of people's social interaction through media and artefacts. The characteristics of memory bridge gaps between 'corporeity and consciousness', 'private and public' and 'social and historic'.²¹⁶ Memory thus encapsulates much of our experiences and surroundings on diversified levels.

Remembrance through graffiti and street art

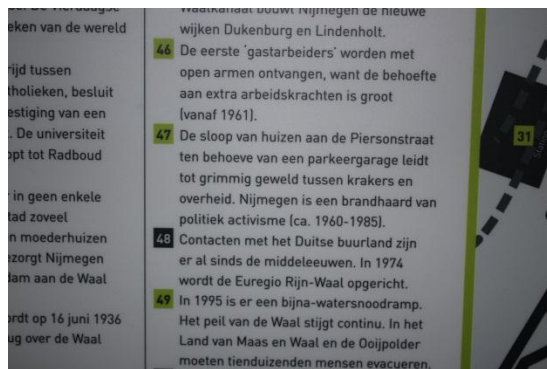
The portrayals of the Riot Control officer at the beginning of this chapter show how memory is 'framed in the present as much as in the past'²¹⁷. The Riot Control officers were physically present during the riots in 1981 and photographed in action, but also framed in the same time period as an icon in the form of graffiti on the wall in the Pierson street that is still present nowadays. That same icon is now also part of the canon of Nijmegen, visible in the most recent car parking space in the city centre. It is somewhat ironic that this Riot Control officer icon is shown in a parking space, because the riots to which they refer were all about a protest against the building of a parking space at the expense of residential buildings. This iconic memory is therefore embedded with multi-layered power relations; it can be a symbol of the violence against resistance and of the prevailing of council policies. Nowadays the Pierson riots are remembered by the council in the canon as one of the fifty most important stories of the history in Nijmegen. The following two pictures show a public board where a map of Nijmegen is shown accompanied by this canon of icons and their stories. These stories consist of a few sentences and point to a much richer history of events. The description of such a story can tell us a lot about the power relations between a council and its citizens.

²¹⁴ J. Wilson. (2014) *Memory: From A Sociological Perspective*. P46-47. (<https://d-commons.d.umn.edu/bitstream/10792/867/1/Nostalgia-ch2.pdf>)

²¹⁵ A. Erll, A. Nünning (eds) (ND) *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. P4. (<http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/pdf/geschiedenis/cultural%20memory.pdf>)

²¹⁶ J. Wilson. (2014) *Memory: From A Sociological Perspective*. P39-40. (<https://d-commons.d.umn.edu/bitstream/10792/867/1/Nostalgia-ch2.pdf>)

²¹⁷ J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, D. Levy (eds) (2011) *The Collective Memory Reader*. Oxford University Press. P18.



Nijmegen, underground car parking space Keizer Karel Garage, Van Schaek Mathon Singel.
 47: The demolition of houses in the Pierson street due to parking space leads to grim violence between squatters and state. Nijmegen is a trouble spot of political activism. (1960-1985) (translation)
 Picture taken by author.



Nijmegen, underground car parking space Keizer Karel Garage, Van Schaek Mathon Singel.
 Always Welcome In The Oldest City of Nijmegen.
 Picture taken by author.

The riots are described as ‘grim violence between squatters and state’ that took place in a time where Nijmegen as a city was a ‘trouble spot of political activism’. This story does not mention the massive local support the squatters gained and how much protest from citizens there was against the violence of the police, as I have shown in the first chapter. In a sense, these parts of the story are ‘forgotten’; this is not uncommon with commemoration, for it is always merely traces that remain.²¹⁸ This story equates political activism with trouble, not with agency or the voice of the people or the struggle for social justice. The nature of the violence that took place between squatters and the state is not specified, for example the state’s use of tanks or tear gas is not mentioned. The Pierson riots are considered important enough to be part of the canon of Nijmegen, yet its portrayal serves certain purposes for the present, for example the maintaining of the justification of council policies.

The use of iconic memory, also known as *Bildgedachtnis*²¹⁹, can be a referent for different sentiments; the squatters and their sympathisers would experience this icon in another way that members of the council of Nijmegen or tourists would. The place and the creator of the *Bildgedachtnis* add to this diversification; whether it is created by squatters themselves at the Piersonstreet itself or copied by the council placed in a new parking space. The icon of the Riot Control officer transformed over time. Marcuse categorised certain properties and potentials for revolutionary art, as I explained in the introduction, and they are applicable to the icon produced by the squatters. Marcuse describes art as revolutionary if it represents ‘the prevailing unfreedom and

²¹⁸ Y. Hamilakis, J. Labanji. (2008) *Time, Materiality and the Work of Memory*. In: ‘History and Memory’ Vol. 20 No. 2. Indiana University Press. P12 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/his.2008.20.2.5>)

²¹⁹ J. Assmann (2008) *Communicative and Cultural Memory*. Berlin, New York. P110. (http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/propylaeumdok/1774/1/Assmann_Communicative_and_cultural_memory_2008.pdf)

the rebelling forces' by virtue of 'aesthetic transformation'. The result hereof is 'breaking through the mystified and petrified social reality, and opening the horizon of change.'²²⁰ The icon produced by the squatters embodies these properties. Yet the icon produced by the council embodies different properties, namely of 'repressive tolerance', a term also used by Marcuse. In his view, the powers of freedom are declining in this late industrial society. With the increasing concentration and effectiveness of economic, political, and cultural controls, the opposition in all these fields has been pacified, co-ordinated, or liquidated.²²¹ The opposing forces of the squatters solidified in the Riot Control officer are thus pacified and co-ordinated by the council so that it fits in the kind of canon that serves the purpose of the dominant power relations of the council.

Another example of remembrance through graffiti and street art can be found in a neighbourhood in the periphery of Nijmegen: the Kolping area near the Goffertpark and NEC stadium. The side wall of a residential home is filled with a mural of successful Dutch soccer player Dennis Bergkamp, with the emblem of the city football team NEC and with the words 'Oost Blok Kolping' (East Block Kolping), also abbreviated as 'OBK'. Memory is both a micro and macro process²²²; and this wall shows both micro local and macro national remembrance.

²²⁰ H. Marcuse (1977) *The Aesthetic Dimension. Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. New York: Beacon Press. Px-xi. <http://www.marginalutility.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/aesthetic-dimension--marcuse.pdf>

²²¹ H. Marcuse (1964) *One Dimensional Man*. UK: Routledge. Pxxiv
https://www.stereolux.org/sites/default/files/fichiers/marcuse_h_onedimensional_man_2nd_edn_routledge_2002.compressed.pdf

²²² J. Wilson. (2014) *Memory: From A Sociological Perspective*. P39.
<https://dcommons.d.umn.edu/bitstream/10792/867/1/Nostalgia-ch2.pdf>



Nijmegen, Kolpingstraat, 2015. Picture taken by author. NEC emblem, Dennis Bergkamp mural, East Blok Kolping.

This house is part of the east side of the Kolping area and this spatial reality is stressed by the 'Oost Blok Kolping' tag. The painted emblem of the NEC football team points to the locality of the near Goffert Stadium, which is the home base of NEC. Many people living in the Kolping area support NEC and this street art is thus a remembrance of that support. The Dennis Bergkamp mural is a memory of an iconic figure in Dutch football history. This wall is currently more related to memory, because the Kolping area will be renovated and discussions are going on about the preservation of this wall.²²³ For many residents, this wall is an important part of the community. And because every community has its history²²⁴, this wall becomes part of the traditions of this area.

An example of a tradition within the graffiti and street art subculture is the commemoration of a 'king' in Nijmegen, namely Marty. Local news channel N1 reported about this tradition in 2013, one year after Marty had passed away. Since then, every year a graffiti jam is hosted in his name and graffiti writers and street artists come together to create new pieces. The reason why Marty was called a king is because of his superior techniques. The writers and artists create pieces that imitate Marty's style, thus keeping his legacy alive. The jam in 2013 took place at the former music venue Doornroosje, other years places like De Vasim were used. The urgent need to uphold such a tradition is stated by one of the artists in the report: 'He is an old king from Nijmegen and he must be

²²³ Meetings between Portaal, Council Members and citizens of Kolping area that I have been present in.

²²⁴ J. Olick. (ND) *From Usable Pasts To The Return Of The Repressed*. P20 (<http://www.iasc-culture.org/THR/archives/UsesPast/Olick.pdf>)

honoured.²²⁵ This can be seen as a combination of cultural and communicative memory; such an event is not part of official institutions, yet within the subculture it is an event that must not be missed.²²⁶ It is thus definitely part of the performed identity of that community; through remembering a particular member of the group, the entire group enforces its cohesive sense of self. It is held at sites that used to have great status, but now have an uncertain future. The remaining of these pieces can be years or decades, but can also be just a few weeks, depending on what happens with the particular places. Therefore this kind of collective memory is not entirely communicative, nor entirely cultural; it is both. It transcends the day-to-day communication, but does not yet reach solidification in big institutional archives.



door Nijmegen1 656 views
 Printscreen of online Daily Motion video of the N1 news report. Marco van der Bol standing in front of his piece, an imitation of a photograph of Marty, while he is being interviewed.

Different types of archives and city marketing

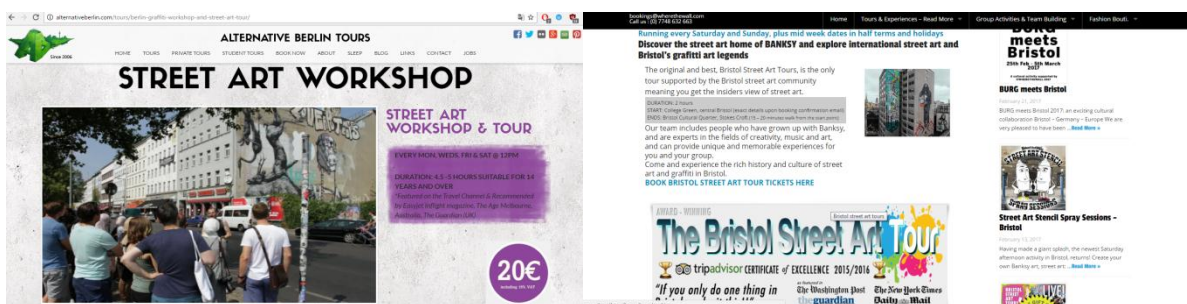
Examples of memory through graffiti and street art can be found in many surfaces of urban common space, but other forms of memory revolving around graffiti and street can be found in archives. Both

²²⁵ Daily Motion, Nijmegen 1. *Nieuwsuitzending 18 februari*. 2:34-5:28.
 (http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xxlp3w_nieuwsuitzending-18-februari_news)

²²⁶ Interviews with 103 and TL. See Appendix.

institutional archives, that are part of the aforementioned cultural memory, as well as people's personal archives, that are more closely linked to communicative memory, are very resourceful tools in this regard. Institutional archives that have photographs, news articles and video's related to graffiti and street art in Nijmegen are 'Regionaal Archief Nijmegen' and 'Lesbisch Archief', though their documentation about graffiti and street art is very limited. With 'Lesbisch Archief' this is explainable because their focus is on gay emancipation in Nijmegen and most of that happened through posters that advertised events. The 'Regionaal Archief Nijmegen' is owned by the council and graffiti and street art do not seem to have a big part of their interest. People's personal archives, however, are much more abundant. Inhabitants like 103 collect as many photographs and news articles as they can, for they value the remembrance of local graffiti and street art.

The cause of this difference in official city archives and people's personal archives can be found in the way certain identities are constructed. The identity, and thus the history, of a city is hardly comparable to the identities of individuals or subcultures. From the overarching perspective of a city council, works of graffiti and street art might not be very relevant, or they may be seen as a problem of vandalism. However, it may actually benefit, rather than harm the city of Nijmegen to remember its graffiti and street art history more often, because it could enhance its city marketing. More and more cities give 'alternative' graffiti and street art tours to tourists as part of, or instead of, the traditional historical cultural tour of the city. Examples are Berlin²²⁷ and Bristol²²⁸, where such tours are hosted all year long. The popularity of these tours show how more and more people wish to experience graffiti and street art, just as much as they wish to experience historical sites like churches, castles, etcetera. Such tours are indicative of how cities view their graffiti and street art as part of its identity and thus worthy of showing tourists.



Printscreens of websites of graffiti tours in Berlin and Bristol.

A possible reason for the increasing popularity of such tours in big cities is because works of graffiti and street art are more widespread due to internet communication. More people get familiar with the beauty of graffiti and street art, and realise that this phenomenon is more than merely visual

²²⁷ Alternative Berlin <http://alternativeberlin.com/tours/berlin-graffiti-workshop-and-street-art-tour/>

²²⁸ Where The Wall <http://www.wherethewall.com/the-bristol-street-art-tour/>

noise. Forums like Reddit and Facebook display massive amounts of communication about graffiti and street art. When it comes to Nijmegen, Facebook groups like 'Street View 024' and 'Old School Graffiti', where people share historic and recent images of graffiti and street art in Nijmegen. This kind of collective memory also bridges the gap between communicative and cultural memory. Online platforms are not recognised as official institutions like museums or libraries, but they do carry greater impact than day-to-day communication, because more people are reached and it can be remembered as long as the website is active.

While most graffiti and street art in Nijmegen that is placed spontaneously, instead of as part of an official paid assignment, does not have a long life, a particular work seems to pass the test of time. On two pillars of De Waalbrug (the Waalbridge) the words 'Nijmegen Gastvrij' (*Nijmegen Hospitable/Welcomingly*) have been present for decades and the council does not seem to wish to remove them. Nijmegen has, for decades, been known for decades as a place where refugees are welcomed and as a place that has left-wing policies. The city could use this image to promote itself through works like this one, thus sharing its culture and using nostalgia in a constructive way. This would make works of graffiti and street art more durable on the actual surface of urban common space. Most graffiti and street art is remembered through archives, but it could be possible to remember the graffiti and street art in Nijmegen in their actual material manifestation. Because 'materiality embodies memory through duration'²²⁹ and because 'the production of remembering and forgetting happens through embodied social practices'²³⁰, it can be stated that graffiti and street art have the capacity to serve as mediators of collective memory. This can be instrumental for the maintaining of identities of both subcultures and cities. The link between collective memory and graffiti and street art provides such works with more legitimacy and reason for existence.

²²⁹ Y. Hamilakis, J. Labanji. (2008) *Time, Materiality and the Work of Memory*. In: 'History and Memory' Vol. 20 No. 2. Indiana University Press. P8. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/his.2008.20.2.5>)

²³⁰ Ibidem. P8.



Nijmegen, Waal bridge. 'Nijmegen Gastvrij' (Nijmegen Welcomingly/Hospitable). Found on Google.

Conclusion



Waalkade, Nijmegen, 2016. Art of De Imker at exhibition 'Kleve De Kade'. Photo taken by author. *De Kube, Nijmegen, 2016. Work in progress at Plak Festival by Verfaar crew. Photo taken by author.*

The field of graffiti and street art in Nijmegen from 1980 until 2015 is very vast and bountiful. It is thus impossible to capture everything worth examining in this thesis. The process of writing this thesis took over two years and within those two years more developments took place within this realm. For example, in 2016 an exhibition called 'Kleve de Kade' at the outside walls of Holland Casino and nearby bars took place, displaying works from graffiti writers and street artists in Nijmegen. Another example in 2016 is the invitation of local street artists to create their art live in front of a festival audience on the Plak festival, celebrating its forty year existence. Street art is slowly becoming more visible in the urban common space as official art forms.

Whether graffiti and street art are considered as forms of urban art, a social phenomenon, an urban intervention or an uprising worldwide culture, it is often something which emerges in an organic way. This is because very little governing exists about the creation of graffiti and street art, mostly only its removal receives attention from authorities. Especially tagging in the eighties was considered a criminal problem that needed to be resolved, both in America and in Europe. It is only more recently that a street art is considered an official form of artistry, with paid assignments. Examples of such individuals who professionalise graffiti and street art are Rob Arts, 103 and De Imker.

When we regard graffiti and street art as specific forms of art, its analysis is complex because very little criteria for establishing quality of development have been created. Such criteria do exist within the subculture of writers and artists themselves; they decide who can join in official jams like 'Step in the Arena' based on the quality of the works of the artist. Most inhabitants of a city would argue that tagging is vandalism, while pieces and murals are artworks that contribute to urban common space. Examples of such pieces and murals are the walls in the Bottendaal districts and in the Kolpingstraat.

When graffiti and street art are seen as a social phenomenon, it is usually framed as deviant, criminal behaviour by (often young adult) individuals or groups of people that belong to certain layers of society; mainly economically poor people from 'bad' neighbourhoods. Interestingly enough, people with more financial income are starting to buy street art from exhibitions and people from all economic backgrounds visit museums where street art is shown as an official art form. The most famous and widespread example of this are the exhibitions of Banksy.

Looking at graffiti and street art as forms of urban interventions, both graffiti and street art are framed as critical comments on the life and looks of a city; they provide certain areas with new meaning and/or purpose. Within this frame, 'the right to the city' is a crucial link, because urban interventions like graffiti and street art are form of actively interacting with the city, appropriating it in a sense. Often this is a reaction to the anonymity of many urban spaces filled with advertisements, attempting to make such spaces more personal and humane. This relates closely to the interlinked dynamics of conceived-, perceived- and lived space. Examples of this are the 'Before I Die' project and the hacking of advertisement spaces.

Within this dynamic multi-layered field I discussed in what ways the urban common space in Nijmegen was affected by graffiti and street art from 1980 to 2015. I used four different, yet overlapping themes that structured the chapters: language, materiality, urban spatiality and memory. These four themes were suitable for graffiti and street art situated in a specific place and specific time frame, for these themes open up room for the unique examples used in this thesis.

Because graffiti and street art communicate messages in a language that is not taught in education, it was first important to gain a fuller understanding of the different existing formats in the field, such as tags and murals. I examined how certain identities were performed through the use of such language formats. Graffiti and street art are mostly created with materials like markers, spray paint and stickers on urban materials like walls. It was thus relevant to dive into the subject of materiality to find out how these elements influence the communication of graffiti and street art. Not only urban material surfaces like walls, but also the entire dynamic realm of urban spatiality needed examination. Which forces govern these spaces, what kind of agencies emerge here and how do graffiti and street art play their part in this? And finally, because graffiti and street art seldom lead a long life, I looked at how graffiti and street art are remembered. This remembrance I divided into different subcategories, such as official en personal archives, offline and online communities, the role of city marketing, and a city's identity.

These examinations have led to a couple of general insights. For example, graffiti and street art in Nijmegen were used as media tools to perform personal-, group-, and neighborhood identities, to give expression to protest activities against council policies, for the branding of local small

business, and to beautify areas in neighborhoods. Graffiti and street art can give a dynamic depth to flat and static materials like walls, thus providing people in local contexts with certain forms of agency. The iconic mobile unit police officer travelled from the Pierson street as a symbol for protest of the squatters in the eighties to an underground parking place as a symbol of the Canon of Nijmegen, remembering the Pierson riots from the perspective of the city council. This shows how expressions of graffiti and street art can be remembered in different ways by different people and institutions. Traces of collective and cultural memory can contradict and overlap simultaneously. Since the arrival of the internet, graffiti and street art became more widespread across the globe and writers and artists from different countries started to meet one another at local jams and were more easily inspired by each other's work. In the eighties, zines were used to communicate within the graffiti subculture in smaller circles. A large part of graffiti and street art is removed in Nijmegen after a couple of weeks, months, or years. This often depends on how many complaints the council receives from citizens. Writing graffiti and creating street art is still illegal and if one is caught in the act, they face a fine or even jail time. Yet some official projects remain, and this amount of projects has gained significantly since the eighties, when only the old Doornroosje building was a legal site.

Such insights are on a general, overarching level. When we look at graffiti and street art in Nijmegen chronologically, we can begin to understand several developments more specifically. During the eighties the city center of Nijmegen was filled with illegal tags of individuals and groups while the old Doornroosje building was one of the first spaces where writers and artists could freely display their work. The consensus of the city council was that all graffiti needed to be removed. However, in the following years, more opportunities were created for graffiti and street arts, as neighbourhoods allowed artists to decorate walls and as small businesses wanted to use the skills of writers and artists to create and strengthen their business identity.

In the eighties, political activism was accompanied by graffiti during the Pierson riots, thus empowering this movement. Since the arrival of the internet, political activism is more acted out online with surveys and such, and in Nijmegen there has not been such explicit political activism with graffiti since the Pierson riots. The messages have perhaps become more 'positive', 'constructive' or 'philosophical' when we look at examples like 'MeerLiefde', 'De Imker' and 'Tube Luminescent'. Rather than opposing council policies, the performed identities through graffiti and street art after the Pierson riots often display sentiments about love, happiness and taking care of one another.

During the eighties, it was mostly markers and spray paint that were used, while over the years stickers, moss, and chalk were also introduced as materials for the creation of graffiti and street art. Posters were used in the eighties to communicate events of women's,- and gay rights

movements in urban common space, while nowadays posters are used as materials to communicate advertisement messages and to promote concerts and dance parties. Nowadays, street artists may choose such posters as materials to create new pieces of art by tearing them apart and composing them in totally new way. The use of paint that imitates corrosion can be linked with both the perspectives of materiality and memory, because the choice for such paint comments on the longevity of graffiti and street art.

When it comes to the link between agency, graffiti and street art, a lot can be said. In the eighties graffiti was used to perform personal identities and to empower the Pierson riots. After that, inhabitants of several neighborhoods collaborated with street artists to perform local identities and to beautify certain urban areas. Graffiti and street art in the city centre still serve occasionally to act out certain forms of consumer agency. In particular the Before I Die project is powerful in this regard, because it enables local communication of inhabitants and passersby. Instead of promoting certain values, it stimulates others to think about which values they hold dear and allows them to express them. It is also an interesting example, because it is a project that is spread worldwide. It therefore influences both local and global spaces.

This thesis could not have been written if it was not for documentation in all sorts of archives. I was not yet born in the early eighties, yet I do have some recollection of what happened during the Pierson riots. It is clear that the council did not consider graffiti as valuable for remembrance in the eighties; most documents about graffiti were added in city archive by citizens themselves or citizens created their own archives. Today, the graffiti and street art subculture in Nijmegen organize jams for the remembrance of 'kings' like Marty and several online social media platforms that collect photographs and enable communication about graffiti and street art in Nijmegen emerge.

Like many cities in The Netherlands and in Europe, Nijmegen is working on its city marketing. It promotes itself as a green city, a cycle city and a summer capital. Graffiti and street art can also be used as a marketing tool, as it displays local culture in a hip and trendy manner that benefits not only the city's popularity for tourists, but also the inhabitant's urban common space because it becomes more vivid and colorful. In addition, the artists gain more attention and payment. In other words, while we may be used to displaying centuries old buildings like the Valkhof ruins and telling ancient stories like 'Moenen and Mariken', we could enrich the city and its marketing with a more modern approach by focusing on local graffiti and street art and the many local identities performed through it.

My hypotheses were: 'street art maintained its function to raise awareness concerning societal subjects, even though the content and explicitness of these subjects changed over the years.'

Graffiti's and street art's function in the 1980s was characterized by anti-authority sentiments, while over the years several institutions and companies started to implement street art themselves. The medium is 'encapsulated' by dominant power structures and is used as an instrument of that power. This is what Marcuse calls 'repressive tolerance'. So the potential agency of graffiti and street art has perhaps been diminished in a certain way. The acceptance of street art (not graffiti) by companies and council asks for a certain responsibility to use street art in a way that benefits urban common space. There is an opportunity for citizens to address their 'right to the city' and a new contract of citizenship. Graffiti and street are possible tools for agency in that realm.'

After the research for this thesis, these hypotheses seem valid for the most part, considering the aforementioned general and specific insights. But I discovered that graffiti and street art are not totally 'encapsulated' by dominant media and they have not fully lost their revolutionary potential. Several examples have shown the tactical qualities of current graffiti and street, especially in the third chapter. Graffiti and street art still function as a tool for many forms of agency. Yet the 'right to the city' and new contracts of citizenship carry great potential in theory, but are far from a reality in Nijmegen. The General Municipal Ordinance Laws could be altered, but both the council and the citizens do not yet try to do so.

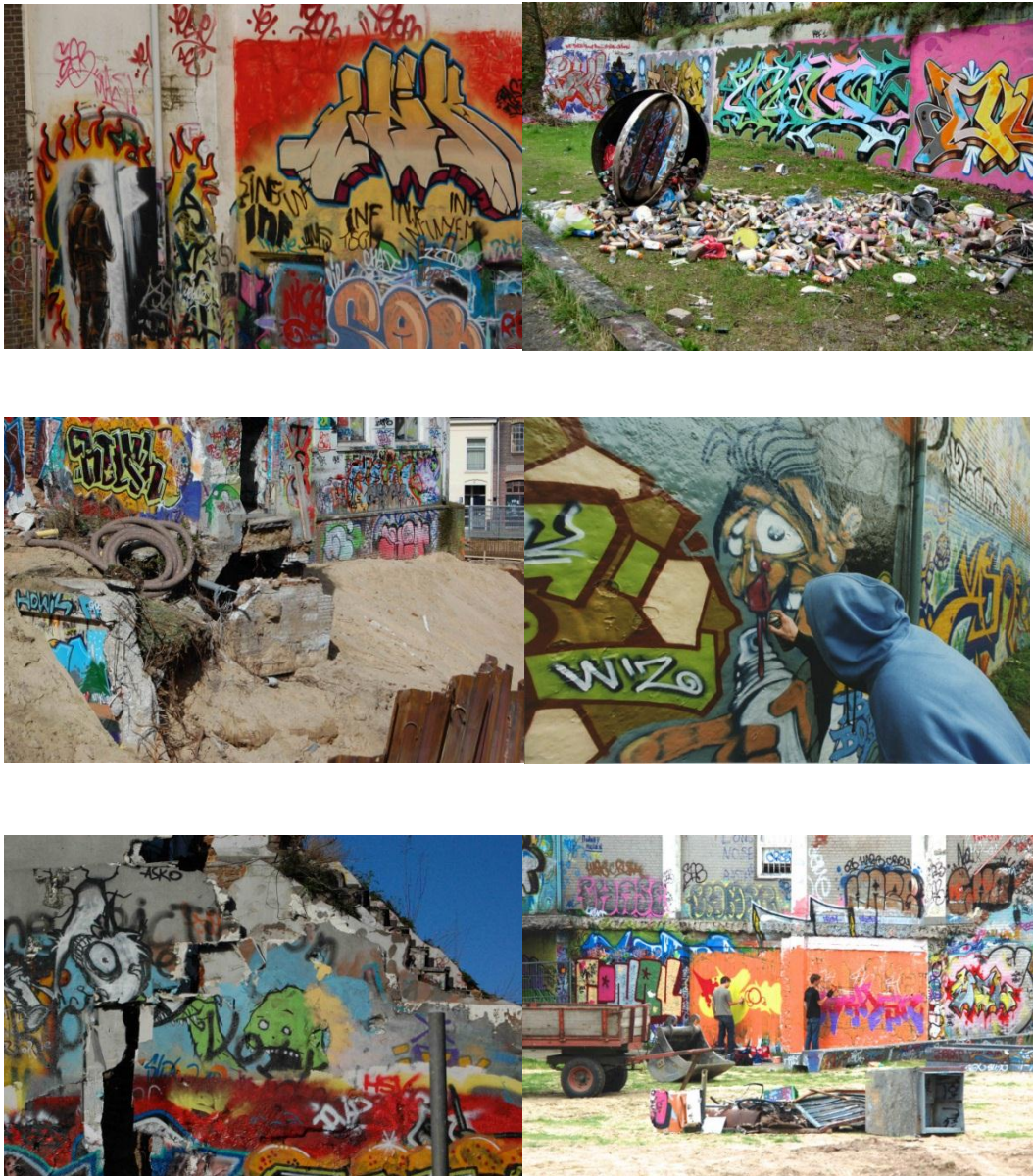
Graffiti and street have been emerging since the eighties, even though it is illegalized. Writers and artists will not stop to transform non-places into lived spaces, thus changing the way conceived spaces are perceived. This is how the aforementioned dialectical structure between reality and art is acted out in practice. Why not use this dynamic between writers, artists and urban common space in a constructive way, rather than spending time, effort, and money on removing its visible traces? This thesis can be used as an argumentation for the creation of legal, open and free spaces in the urban common space of Nijmegen to experiment with graffiti and street art, thus enriching the social and physical environment for all parties involved. It can also be used as a document instrumental in the creation of new laws concerning the General Municipal Ordinance, legalizing the act of graffiti and street art in certain areas in Nijmegen.

Appendix

Database of imagery

-Regionaal Archief Nijmegen/Council Archive

Hessenberg, 2001-2010:



Lindenholt, 1986:



Neerbosch Oost, 1986:

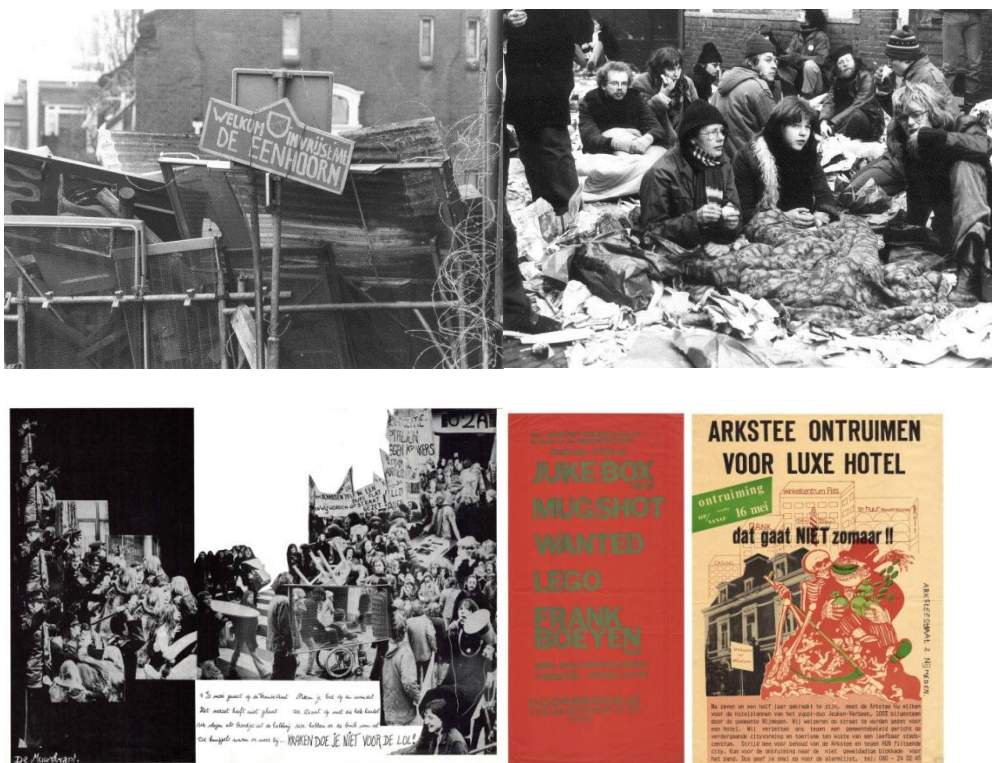


Sites unknown in Nijmegen, 1986:





Pierson Riots 1981-1982:





Youth Centre Meijhorst, 1994:



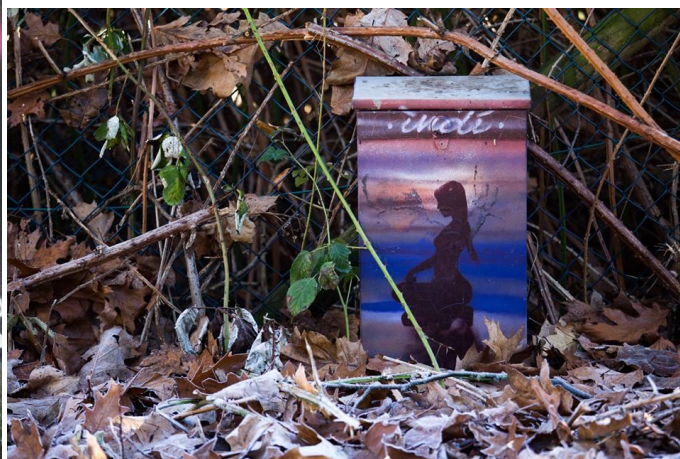
Social Media Archives

-Facebook group Street View Nijmegen (a small selection, entire archive contains much more imagery of graffiti and street art in Nijmegen)









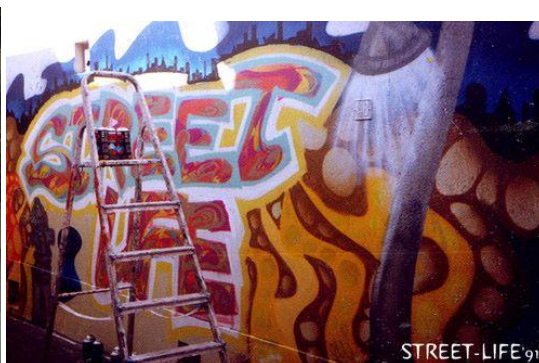






-Facebook group Nijmegen Old School Graffiti (a small selection, entire archive contains much more imagery of graffiti and street art in Nijmegen)





Wedstrijd voor 'spuitbus-kunstenaars' " *Dukenburg Nieuws* " 3 maart 1987

Dukenburg - In navolging van het plan van de gemeente om het geklieder op muren en schuttingen tegen te gaan niet echt legale graffiti, gaat Stichting Intercity de eerste officiële graffiti-activiteit in Dukenburg organiseren. Daarmee is men de gemeente zelfs nog een slag voor, want die heeft alleen nog maar plannen.

Intercity, dat een beter leefklimaat wil bevorderen tussen de verschillende nationaliteiten in Dukenburg, is een van de acht initiatiefnemers die samen een interculturele week in Dukenburg gaan organiseren. Die week vol activiteiten is van 22 tot 27 maart en het graffiti-toernooi maakt er deel van uit. Intercity wil verder gaan met de afstemming van de jeugd, die nu ook de weg naar het maandelijkse Intercultureel Café heeft gevonden. Bestuurslid Sylvia Tahalele, bedenker van het plan: „Graffiti is een leuke creatieve uiting met interessante technieken; waarom zouden we de jongeren niet serieus nemen in hun creativiteit? Graffiti is prima, maar dan wel legaal. Immers ook wij zijn tegen het volkladden van iedere muur, schutting of pui. Als je zo'n 'scribble-scrabble' ziet, een oppervlakte met over elkaar heen geschreven en gespoten kreten en beeldmerken ('tags'), dan is dat haastig in de nachtelijke uren aangebracht en daarom nauwelijks als artistiek te betitelen. Daar tegenover staan de 'burners', veelkleurige graffiti-schilderingen van hoge kwaliteit, die in alle rust worden uitgevoerd. Vaak na eerst een ontwerp te hebben geschetst. Nu de tag-golf voorbij is; ligt de nadruk op de burners, kwaliteit in plaats van kwantiteit”.

Demonstratie

Om nu het heimelijke en haastige aspect te verleggen naar het creatieve gaat Intercity op 22 maart een graffiti-wedstrijd en demonstratie. Hieraan kan iedere spuitbus-kunstenaar van 12 tot 25 jaar deelnemen. Na opgave ontvangen de deelnemers twee grote velen etalage-karton, waarop thuis in alle rust een graffiti met dikke viltstiften gemaakt kan worden. Dit produkt moet voor vrijdag 20 maart worden ingeleverd. Uit de inzendingen worden dan zes werken geselecteerd en de makers hiervan zullen worden uitgenodigd voor een groots opgezette graffiti-wedstrijd en demonstratie op zondag 22 maart op het zwembadplein naast het wijkcentrum Meijhorst. Na de officiële opening van de week kan daar begonnen worden met het spuitwerk op platen van 3.20 bij 1.25 meter. Voor de meeste Dukenburgers zal het de eerste keer zijn dat ze 'graffity-bombers' aan het werk kunnen zien.

De platen gaan overigens dienen als Intercity-decor en als expositie-materiaal.

De interculturele week zal worden besloten met een feestavond met diverse zang-, dans- en toneelgroepen van allerlei nationaliteiten. Dan zal de 'Graffiti Master 1987 Intercity' ook zijn of haar beker in ontvangst mogen nemen. En mocht de gemeente straks muren beschikbaar gaan stellen voor legale graffiti, dan kunnen de zes Dukenburgse finalisten rekenen op een warme aanbeveling door Intercity. Informatie en opgave is mogelijk bij Sylvia Tahalele, tel. 080-444687.

Personal Archives

-Image received from 2073



-Images received from De Imker



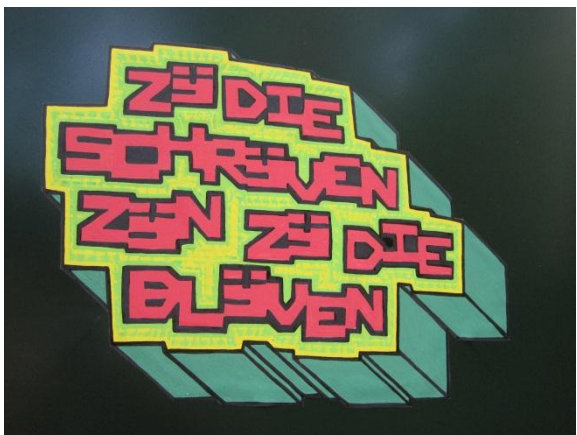
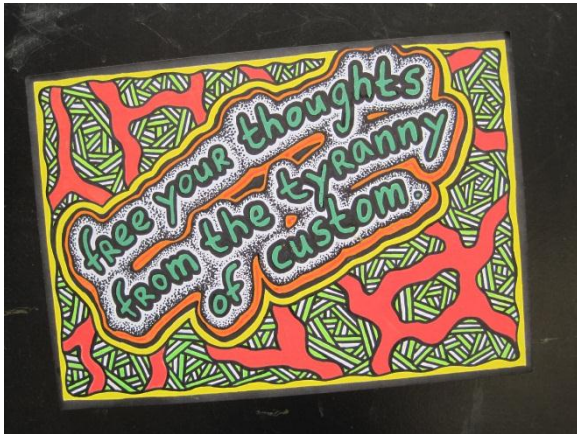




-Images received from MeerLiefde



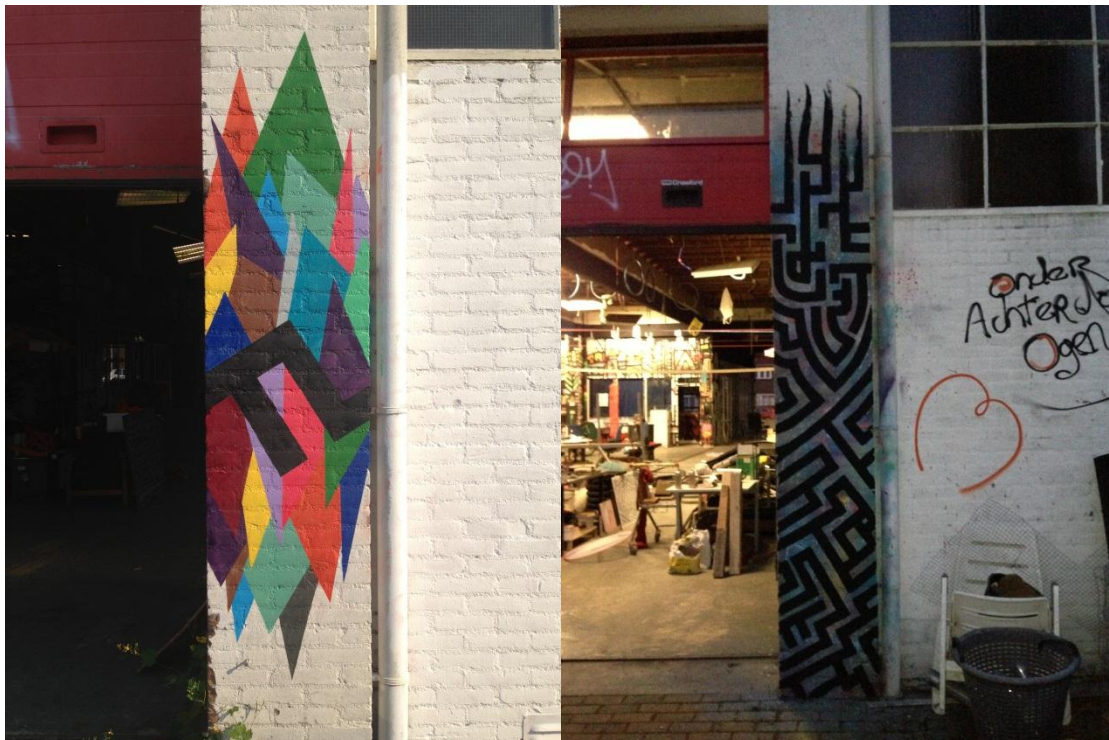






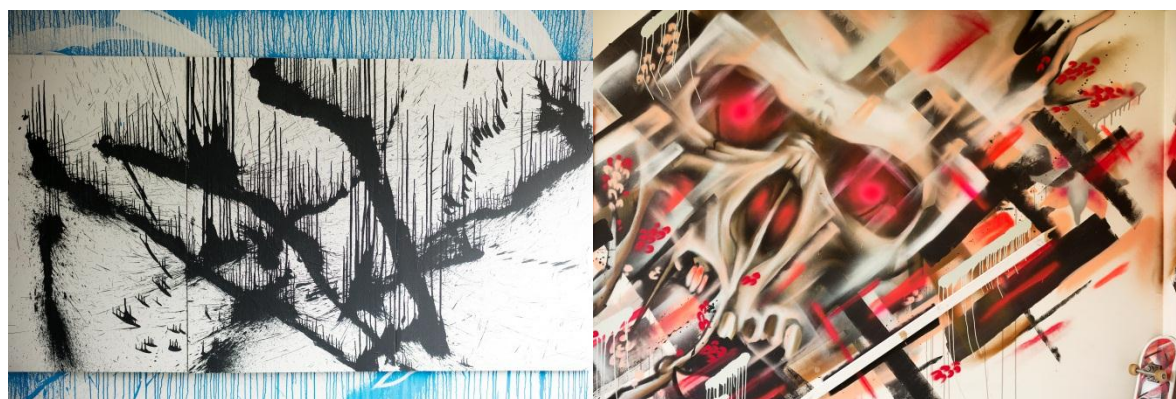
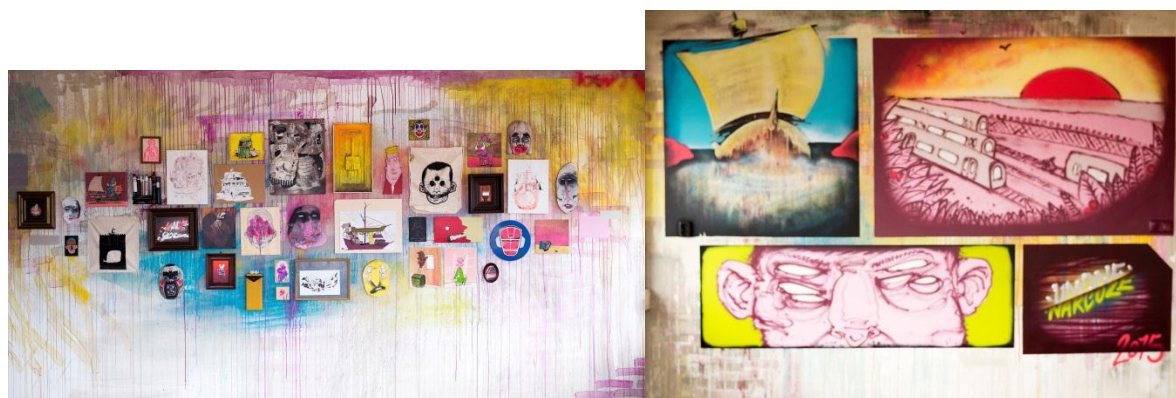
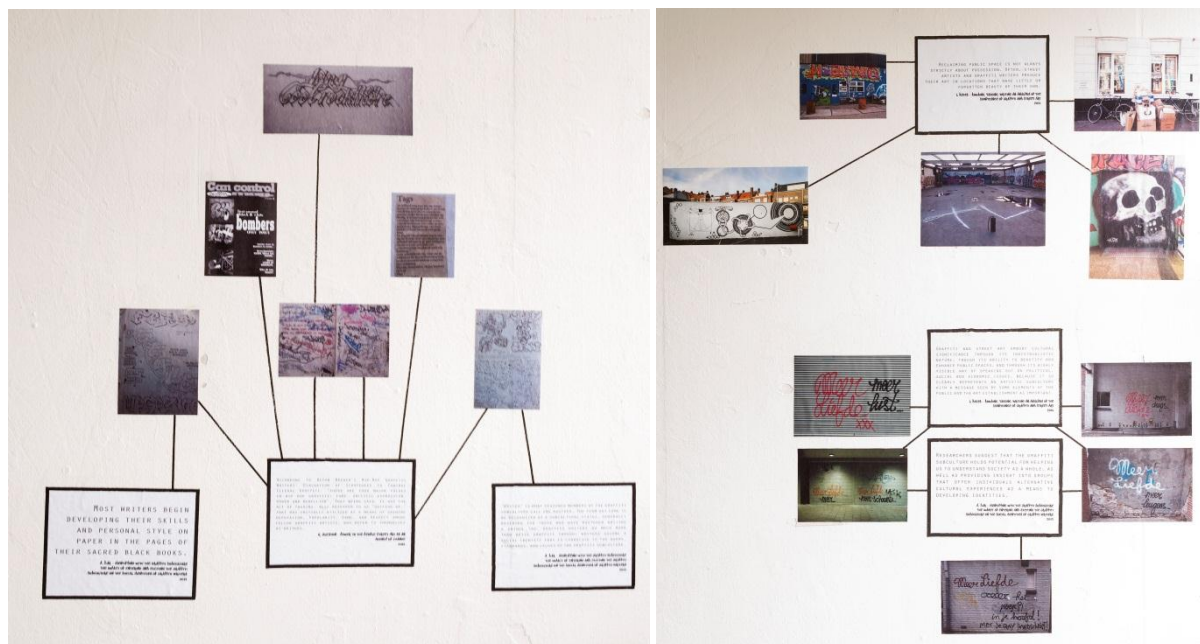


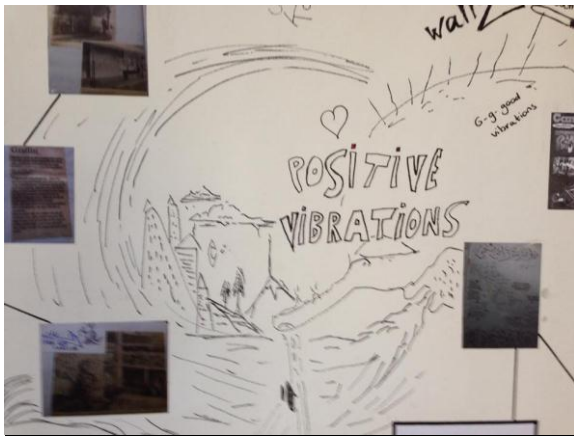
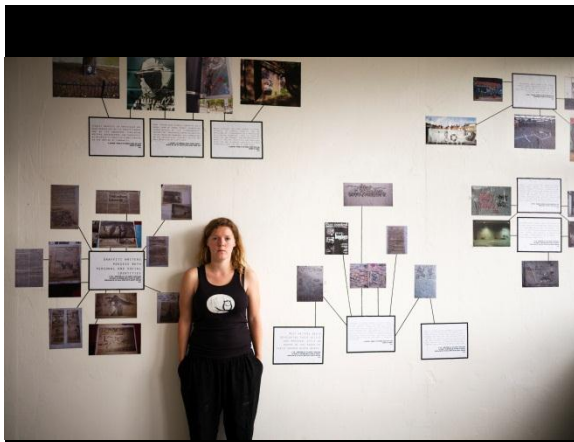
-Images received from Tube Luminescent





-Images taken at exhibition 'Verfslag' at Collectief Derde Wal 2015





Interviews with graffiti writers and street artists in Nijmegen

'103' February 2015 at his house (translated)

-When did you start with graffiti?

I was very young, between a child and a teenager. I would see all sorts of dribblings on walls and I was fascinated by them. You have to realise, in the eighties, it was not so easy to acquire spray cans, markers and such. We would have magazines like these (shows me 'Freestyle') to communicate with each other and show our styles. Sometimes we would even go to Amsterdam to get some good stuff like quality spray cans and other local crews there would steal them from us. It could be quite hostile sometimes, dangerous too. We would tag on walls and trains. Over the years I have created my own style. As you can see, I have also decorated my own home with that style. This is my passion.

-You have boxes and boxes filled with photos, such an impressive archive! Can I use some of it?

You can look at them now and take some pictures, but I will not give them away to copy. They are too precious for me. But we have started a Facebook group called 'Nijmegen Old School Graffiti' and we will upload pictures there and you can be part of that online group and use those pictures.

-Why the name 103?

It stands for the area code where I grew up. Many graffiti writers in New York did that too you know. It's exciting to 'get up' with your tag, to spread it in as many places as possible. Especially spaces up high are very prestigious.

'De Imker' March 2015 in Collectief Derde Wal (translated)

-What is the difference between graffiti and street art where do you belong?

When I do graf, it's about leaving my name behind. Fame is the game and fame is in the name. It's about marking territories. Around 1995 that subculture started to commercialize and street art arose. When it comes to street art, then it's more than that; it's about spreading more than just your name. I spread positivity, the notion of 'do it yourself'. I am more a street artist I suppose. Especially with my Imker art. Then it's about creating awareness about that profession. A beekeeper is a very important profession. The world would be so much more chaotic if bees would extinct. But the beekeeper can also be a symbol in a society, do you know what I mean?

-Not exactly. Would you care to elaborate?

People in society also need that kind of nurture to keep the balance and to make sure the products we create are actually beneficial. To see the beekeeper in urban common space is a reminder that someone is watching and trying to look after everyone.

-What do you think of the different forms of media in our society and how does street art relate to that?

Well, there's official media and non-official media. I help to write a free newspaper called 'Vlegelcoursant' in which we write critical and satirical articles. And another small newspaper once wrote about my work, this was in the 'De Nijmeegse Stadskrant.' It is important that small groups of people maintain to produce on-official media, it stimulates other ways of thinking. I consider graffiti and street also as on-official media.

-Could you give me some tips about where to look for graffiti and street art in Nijmegen?

If you can find imagery of 'Igcognito' then that could be useful for you. That was the first street art exhibition in Nijmegen. The neighbourhood Bottendaal is interesting, the street art you can find there is useful as well.

'Tube Luminescent' October 2016 in café De Kluizenaar (translated)

-Can you explain your TL art? Is it a tag or street art and why do you do it?

Language is about two basic things: letters and images. I tried to combine these two. In a way it is really about expressing a form of identity, to be visible in the streets. First, I only saw graffiti and street art. I saw it in my town Nijmegen, on tv, online. It is a kind of subculture, but you cannot really clearly define it. It's like hooligans, people from all layers of society can belong to it. Most of the times, you wouldn't know somebody is part of that subculture. When I started to spread the TL logo, I was kind of depressed. The image and the letters are happy and appear in the city, this makes me happy. I hope it makes other people happy as well. It's nice to bring more colour and more happy faces in the city. I feel like the city belongs to us all and even though it is illegal, I want to share my logo. Sometimes on my own, sometimes with others. To make the city your own.

-What kind of things are important within a graffiti- or street art crew?

Credibility, reputation and respect. How much of your work is already spread, how good your techniques are. What kind of spots you choose. Which areas you have covered. If you've only just started, then you're not really taken seriously. But once you've 'gotten up', then it becomes fun.

-Could you give me some tips about where to look for graffiti and street art in Nijmegen?

You've already spoken to 103 right? He knows so much, he's much older compared to me, has so much more experience. Another key figure in Nijmegen is Rob Arts, he is doing stuff legal. Look up his website. Ask him about his mural in de Ruyterstraat, he collaborated with another artist and the Bottendaal neighbourhood. You should also pay attention to how organic graffiti and street art are. Its cycles of creation and destruction are so dynamic and unpredictable. That's probably why it is quite hard for you to research it. When you are in the city, just look at tags like hort, BAM, ok, MAAT, stick, etc. You should also know about Marty, the king. A jam about him was filmed by N1.

Rob Arts November 2016 in Hotel Nimma (translated)

-What are you doing here in Hotel Nimma while it still under construction?

The interior walls of the rooms, I am painting them. I was asked to imitate the patterns that were already on some of the walls. It's nice to do precise work, I can fully concentrate and emerge myself in this kind of work.

-Can you tell me about the mural in de Ruyterstraat?

It was a collaboration with artist Michel Alders and Bottendaal inhabitant Paulien Driesen. There was a request for a project with graffiti and something 'green', you know, nature. Three things were important for Michel and me to work on: the painting of the children on the wall had to remain, something alive and green had to be placed there and elements of graffiti or street art had to be implemented. The building of that wall belongs to Jan, so we had to talk with him, as well as with initiator Paulien. But also the council had to give permission. Two attempts were made before Michel and I were asked to help. This time everyone was happy with the end result.

-What is your position within the field of graffiti and street art in Nijmegen?

Well, I try to make graffiti and street art more accessible for people. I give workshops. Most writers and artists want to claim their place in society, they want to be seen. I do not really feel that urge any more. I work for official jobs, I get paid. I mostly work alone. I do have a desire to show people the entire scene of graffiti and street art, not so much my own work. I want to show others what kind of world this is. The history, the beautiful things, the new things. I notice how the illegal graffiti of the eighties had very critical remarks about society, while modern legal street art does not have such critical remarks anymore. Once I went to Gaza, in 2005. This was also with Michel Alders. There we started this project that was all about dialogue between young Palestine's and Israeli's. in society. It was based on the four pillars of hip-hop: rap, breakdance, dj's and graffiti. These forms of expressions are good tools for political and personal dialogue. This was one of the most special things I have done so far. When I became a father myself, I could not continue with this project. I did not want to be far away from home for a long time.

-What is your opinion about the city and how it looks?

The city looks immensely grey and boring. Every addition of colour is a positive act in my eyes. It is really sad and closed-minded that everything has to look so clean and normal. It kills creativity. I do not think that repressing graffiti and street art makes any sense. It is not a solution.

-Can you elaborate on the repression of graffiti and street art?

In order to obtain enough experience and practice with graffiti and street art, it is often necessary to make work illegally. There are too little, if any, venues where writers and artists can practice their work. When a person becomes really good at his or her work, then it can happen that he or she is asked to do official assignments. This happened to me as well. But from a policy point of view, this makes no sense. On the one hand graffiti and street art are illegalized, but on the other hand these illegal practices are rewarded if the works are appreciated. So policy makers stimulate illegality and

do not take responsibility to facilitate a proper nourishing ground for this form of art; they only enjoy the end result of people who risk fines and a criminal record for their passion. This balance between legal and illegal in the field of graffiti and street art is off.

Where can I look for more important information about graffiti and street art in Nijmegen?

You are also writing about the Pierson riots, right? You should know that the icon of that Riot Control officer has now become part of the Canon of Nijmegen. Perhaps you can do something with that.

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