



GSA

**Graffiti
and Street Art**

Scientific Journal

Inscribed Territories:
Informal Governance

Vol. 3 / N° 2

gsa-journal.org

Title:

Graffiti and Street Art

Editor-in-chief and Publisher:

Pedro Soares Neves

This work is licensed under
Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial
4.0 International License.
Lisbon 2023

Contact and information:

info@urbancreativity.org

gsa-journal.org

urbancreativity.org

ISSN 2975-965X

All authors declare
no conflict of interests.

Editorial	
Pedro Soares Neves	6
Articles	
Writing on the Great Walls: Hidden Transcripts of Radical Graffiti in China	
Andrea L. Baldini, Shangge	8
Crafting Territory and Negotiating Identity in Third Places in Belfast	
Quill R Kukla	22
A Mural-Graffiti in Medellín: Fighting for the territory	
Juan Carlos Guerrero-Hernandez	48
Going Local: Deciphering Street Art through Urban Territory and Urban Territory through Street Art	
Diana Raisa Laura Lolici	64
Illegal Urban Art and Naples: between mappings and contemporary iconoclasm	
Lorenza Carannante	76
Urban Art and Cultural Travel	
Bruna Lobo	84
Review of “Banksy cultural outlaw”	
Pedro Soares Neves	94
Working paper	
Lessons in Equity:	
Addressing history textbook silences on the Canadian women’s labour movement through public art	104
Anna Augusto Rodrigues	

Executive Committee and Editor

Pedro Soares Neves, University of Lisbon Faculty of Fine Arts / Artistic Studies Research Centre (CIEBA/FBAUL)
Associate Laboratory of Robotics and Engineering Systems / Interactive Technologies Institute (ITI/LARSyS)

Contact and information

info@urbancreativity.org

gsa-journal.org

urbancreativity.org



Editorial

Pedro Soares Neves

Researcher collaborator CIEBA/FBAUL; ITI/LARSyS/IST Lisbon University; CIDEHUS/UEvora Évora; Portugal

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3767-9785>

Inscribed Territories: Informal Governance

This issue of *Graffiti and Street Art* develops from the 2025 edition of *Urban Creativity*, whose overarching theme—Territory—foregrounded questions of power, boundary-making, and the social production of space. Within that broader framework, *Inscribed Territories: Informal Governance* brings together contributions that examine writing, marking, and image-making as practices through which urban territories are regulated, contested, and reimagined outside formal institutional structures. Across diverse geopolitical contexts, the articles assembled here reveal how graffiti, muralism, and other forms of unofficial inscription operate as mechanisms of governance from below.

Territory, as Henri Lefebvre reminds us, is not merely occupied but produced through spatial practices, representations, and lived experience (Lefebvre, 1991). The inscriptions examined in this issue—on monumental walls, in contested neighborhoods, within post-conflict cities, or across informal social spaces—participate directly in that production. They articulate claims, enforce boundaries, memorialize violence, and negotiate belonging. In doing so, they function as forms of informal governance: systems of regulation that emerge through cultural practice rather than legal codification.

Several contributions foreground writing itself as a technology of power. From large-scale monumental inscriptions to small-scale graffiti interventions, acts of inscription materialize authority and resistance alike. Writing on walls is never neutral; it organizes visibility, frames historical narratives, and establishes hierarchies of voice. As explored in this issue, graffiti can both reproduce and disrupt dominant spatial orders—sometimes simultaneously—making it a particularly productive site for examining the tensions between control and autonomy in urban space (Mitchell, 2003).

Ethnographic and case-based approaches further demonstrate how territory is lived and negotiated in everyday contexts. Third places, neighborhoods marked by conflict, and cities shaped by informal economies become arenas where identity and spatial justice are actively constructed. Here, graffiti and street art do not merely decorate space; they mediate social relations, encode collective memory, and regulate access—often compensating for the absence or failure of formal governance structures (Soja, 2010). In post-war or post-industrial settings, inscriptions take on an especially charged role, functioning as durable records of trauma, survival, and political positioning.

A recurring theme across the issue is illegality—not simply as a legal condition, but as a productive spatial category. Illegal urban art exposes the limits of official planning and highlights how informal practices sustain urban life. In cities where regulation is uneven or exclusionary, graffiti becomes a means of asserting presence and negotiating rights to the city. These dynamics resonate strongly with debates raised at Urban Creativity 2025 concerning ideological and political territories, as well as the blurred boundaries between public and private space.

By placing historical, theoretical, and contemporary perspectives in dialogue, *Inscribed Territories: Informal Governance* advances graffiti and street art studies as a field capable of addressing fundamental questions about power, representation, and spatial organization. Rather than treating inscriptions as secondary or decorative, the issue positions them as active agents in the governance of urban space—agents that reveal how cities are shaped not only by policy and planning, but by everyday acts of writing, marking, and visual claim-making.

In line with the ethos of Urban Creativity, this issue does not seek to stabilize definitions or impose singular frameworks. Instead, it reflects the complexity and contingency of territory itself—inscribed, erased, rewritten, and constantly renegotiated through cultural practice. Together, the contributions affirm graffiti and street art as critical tools for understanding how urban life is governed, contested, and lived beyond official structures.

References

- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Blackwell.
- Mitchell, D. (2003). *The right to the city: Social justice and the fight for public space*. Guilford Press.
- Raffestin, C. (2012). Space, territory, and territoriality. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 30(1), 121–141.
- Soja, E. W. (2010). *Seeking spatial justice*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Zukin, S. (1995). *The cultures of cities*. Blackwell.