Marissa Gutiérrez-Vicario, MPA, Med. "The construction of global citizenship and human rights through graffiti in Europe." (2023) 7 *Global Campus human rights Journal* 35-48
http://doi.org/10.25330/2664

The construction of global citizenship and human rights through graffiti in Europe

Marissa Gutiérrez-Vicario

Abstract: *The article explores hip-hop culture's global impact, specifically focusing on graffiti art to shape global consciousness and human rights education among youth. Originating in the Bronx in the 1970s, the art form of hip-hop emerged as a unifying force in traditionally marginalised communities and communities of colour, transcending borders to become a catalyst for social change around the globe. Emphasizing graffiti's significance within hip-hop, the article delves into its role as a voice for marginalized communities and a form of resistance against societal norms. It examines how graffiti fosters a sense of global consciousness and reinforces human rights among young artists, particularly in the German hip-hop scene, creating inclusive communities and diverse spaces. The article examines specific educational initiatives like Hip Hop Mobil and the Graffiti Research Lab in Germany. It discusses how these initiatives have played pivotal roles in educating youth about hip-hop culture, using technology, and fostering cross-cultural connections through digital graffiti. Furthermore, the article raises critical questions about the future of graffiti, especially in its integration with digital technologies, and its potential to democratize public spaces further. Lastly, this article considers the evolving nature of graffiti to expand public participation, shape a collective global identity among youth, and help reinforce human rights within communities. In essence, the article highlights hip-hop culture's transformative power, focusing on graffiti art as a tool that empowers marginalized community members, fosters a global sense of belonging, and encourages human rights activism among the younger generation while examining the trajectory of graffiti amidst technological advancements.*
Keywords: *global consciousness, graffiti, hip-hop, human rights, technology, youth*

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1. Introduction: Hip Hop as a "Way of Life"

Hip-hop is a culture. It is a way of life for us.

Words Painted on Neighbourhood Mural (King, 2001)

But one thing about hip-hop has remained consistent across cultures: a vital progressive agenda that challenges the status quo. Thousands of organizers from Cape Town to Paris use hip-hop in their communities to address environmental justice, policing and prisons, media justice, and education.

(Chang, 2007)

Since its emergence in the United States during the 1970s, popular hip-hop, or rap,[1] music and culture have had a significant impact on the rest of the world. From its inception at a 1973 house party in the Bronx, New York City, it was arguably an art form used for unifying what was considered "broken" communities plagued by gang violence (Chang, 2005) and systemic state violence and oppression. Since then, hip-hop has continued to be used as a mobilizing tool for social change and for advocating for human rights. Yet as the world has become more globalized, especially through the proliferation of the internet and digital technology, hip-hop as an art form has transformed various communities, and simultaneously also has been transformed by communities, as hip-hop culture has transcended across borders, an exemplification of what is considered as "cultural globalization." Undoubtedly, there have been countless examples of positive social change in communities through the globalization of hip-hop. Some prime examples of this positive social transformation are non-profit organizations that have used hip-hop in the United States to encourage youth empowerment and youth voting registration, such as the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network, founded in 2001[2] by Def Jam Records co-founder Russell Simmons, along with the mobilization of more radical, grassroots community-based organizations that have used hip-hop as a tool to promote positive social change (Hip-Hop Summit Action Network, 2014).

In efforts for communities in the United States and across the globe to construct more democratic public spaces, one often finds that these spaces manifest themselves as murals or similar forms of public art. Using the framework of hip-hop, this article explores the idea of the construction of the global consciousness and engagement of young Europeans through

[1] "Rap" music and hip-hop are often synonymously used, however, hip-hop organizations like the Universal Zulu Nation will argue that this is incorrect, as "rapping" and "rappers" are only one aspect (MCing) of the entire hip-hop culture. (Universal Zulu Nation. 2024. "Hip-Hop History." Link.) For the purposes of this paper, the author will exclusively utilize "hip-hop" when referring to its connection with graffiti.

one of its primary components, graffiti art or public muralism. Some questions to be explored include:

- What are more creative ways of building a more democratic form of community art? Specific case studies will focus on Berlin, Germany, including the Berlin Wall and other current projects.

- How has the "beauty and intense vitality of graffiti art" (Chalfant & Martha, 2021) been used as a resource for developing a youth global consciousness and what does the future of this look like?

- How can art be used to cultivate global understanding, global consciousness, and a definition of global self among young people, most specifically through graffiti and public artworks?

2. Background on the Origins of Hip-Hop Culture

2.1 Bronx, New York City: The Birthplace of Hip-Hop and the Graffiti Movement

As previously stated, the very first instance of hip-hop in the United States came out of the New York City borough of the Bronx, ridden with gangs, bloodshed, and state neglect in the late 1960s, and seeking an alternative to violence in the early 1970s.

By no means an overnight process, a few young leaders of a predominately Puerto Rican gang known as the Ghetto Brothers, sought to unify the deeply segregated gangs of the Black and Puerto Rican communities. After a member of the Ghetto Brothers was murdered by a rival gang, leaders of the Ghetto Brothers did not seek retribution and instead developed a four-point "peace treaty" to help initiate a truce between gangs within the Bronx community (Chang, 2005). It was during this period of borough unification that the foundation of hip-hop was laid.

On August 11, 1973, Cindy Campbell and her brother Clive, more famously known as DJ Kool Herc, by many considered the father and the "alpha DJ [Disc Jockey, or record player] of hip-hop," held the famous party that has been credited as the single event leading to the birth of hip-hop at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue address in the Bronx (Gonzalez, 2007). This was one of the first of many parties and community social gatherings where DJ Kool Herc would spin the records of such famous U.S.-American musicians as James Brown and Jimmy Castor, enticing the crowd to dance (Gonzalez, 2007). In time, DJ Kool Herc created what was known as the Herculords: a "clique of DJs, dancers, and rappers (Chang, 2005)," representing three of the four official classical elements of hip-hop culture. Today these four elements are considered: DJing (one who utilizes the turntables), MCing (also known as the "Master-of-Ceremonies, or rapping), B-boying (or the

form of dance known as break-dancing), and lastly, graffiti, which emerged originally before the other four artistic elements and eventually becoming one of its elements of hip-hop (Vancouver Visual Art Foundation, 2023).

Along with DJ Kool Herc, another hip-hop pioneer attending that very first party in the fall of 1973 was Afrika Bambaataa, widely considered the "grandfather" and "godfather" of hip-hop (Official Site of the Universal Zulu Nation, 2024). During this period through the efforts of Bambaataa, the Bronx gang the Black Spades was transformed into the Universal Zulu Nation, which considers itself the "world's oldest, largest most respected grassroots Hip Hop organization" (Official Site of the Universal Zulu Nation, 2024). Along with the four classical elements of hip-hop culture mentioned, the Universal Zulu Nation advocates for a fifth, which is considered "knowledge." It is this last element, the Universal Zulu Nation believes, that acts as the essential "glue" for the entire hip-hop culture and thus "knowledge" remains a critical part of its organizational mission in educating the world about hip-hop (Official Site of the Universal Zulu Nation, 2024).

2.2 Use of Hip-Hop as a Tool for Democratic Participation and Amplifying Voice

The sixties were undoubtedly a turbulent time in the United States, as Black Americans struggled against racism and overt oppression throughout the Civil Rights Movement. Although there is a movement within the hip-hop genre to primarily focus on social justice and human rights issues, better known as "conscious hip-hop;" hip-hop in the United States during the 1970s was just in its earliest stages, just as the peak of the Civil Rights Movement had come to an end. During this period, hip-hop was birthed out of a period of neglect and structural violence enacted against poor Black and Latino urban youth by the state. In its earliest stages, it had become a part of the "marginal New York subculture," (Simon, 2003) and eventually became a tool for intense political mobilization or as an invitation for democratic participation, as it is more commonly utilized today. From its earliest roots in the United States, the hip-hop culture celebrated by the Universal Zulu Nation was "not about politics," but rather the attainment of knowledge for oneself (Chang, 2005). According to some of the written Infinity Messages of the Universal Zulu Nation, hip-hop and the Organization were most about "wisdom and understanding of everything, freedom, justice and equality," which would help lead to one's own positive, personal transformation (Chang, 2005). It was only when hip-hop, became a phenomenon that had "saturated mainstream [U.S.] America," (Simon, 2003) and through the forces of cultural globalization, had a considerable impact on the rest of the world, did it became used on the political mobilization front. Yet, while music, lyricism, and turntablism are some of the more well-known aspects of hip-hop culture, graffiti muralism remains an integral component of the phenomenon, especially

as a vehicle in which the traditionally "invisible" voices of those within cities across the globe, including those across Europe, which will be more closely discussed, became finally heard and amplified.

3. Background on Graffiti as a Tool for Voicing Injustice

We also feel that after thirty years the beauty and the intense vitality of graffiti art have made the point that it is art and that graffiti has developed within itself the strength to overwhelm the naming power of the oppressors.

(Chalfant & Martha, 2021)

On the most basic level, "graffiti primarily refers to spray-painted, written and scratched words or motifs on exterior surfaces," (Walde, 2007) utilized in predominately public spaces, meant to be consumed by a larger audience. Others, like scholar Ronald Niezen, argue that graffiti "is a form of communication…in which the message is amplified by illegality" (Niezen, 2020), yet an art form ironically calling for a more "fair application of the law" (Niezen, 2020). Niezen also notes that street graffiti is often tied to "significant currents of justice claims" (Niezen, 2020), meaning this often-anonymous street art is connected to issues of injustice, frequently what is viewed as "liberal" social causes, yet not exclusively.

Gaining momentum with the hip-hop culture that emerged in New York City in the 1970s, graffiti became a movement within itself. Challenging the "ownership of public space" (Walde, 2007) graffiti artists, or taggers, used subway cars travelling throughout each of the five boroughs as their canvasses. Through globalization and the spread of media, like the films Style Wars, Wild Style, and Beat Street, (Walde, 2007) graffiti spread throughout the globe, particularly around the 1980s, when young graffiti artists like "Jean-Michel Basquiat, Futura 2000, Lee Quinones, and Keith Haring" became icons overnight (Kan, 2001). Into the 1990s, graffiti, along with other aspects of hip-hop became what was considered "commercialized," being used in corporate advertisements seeking to reach out to a younger, "more hip" generation (Kan, 2001). This generation would become captivated by this illegal art form through the work of famous street artists like Banksy and Shepard Fairey. Some of these young people would even engage in the creation of graffiti themselves, as in the early 2000s, the age of most graffiti artists in the United States was "estimated to be between the ages of 12 to 30, with the majority younger than 18 years old" (Kan, 2001). Either way, graffiti has always been alluring to the young, closely intertwined with hip-hop culture, it has symbolized an active resistance to the status quo, through scrawled messages made by invisible hands for all to see across the urban landscape.

We also see on a global level how graffiti has been used as active resistance on a political level. While their book on the subject matter

primarily focuses on graffiti being used as a tool of resistance in Ireland and Palestine, authors Philip Hopper and Evan Renfro outline how graffiti is used as a tool by "occupied and oppressed peoples" (Hopper & Evan, 2023) in their political struggles. Some of these include:

- As a tool for individuals to express themselves "against the establishment in a public and often provocative manner" (Hopper & Evan, 2023)

- To raise awareness on particular issues, especially those that are intentionally or unintentionally "ignored by mainstream media" (Hopper & Evan, 2023);

- Lastly, it also allows for "an alternative form of the historical record and serves as a reflection of the political climate at a particular place and time" (Hopper & Evan, 2023).

While all valuable points, for this paper, most of the focus will be on how individuals (and/or collectives of individuals) use graffiti as a tool to be able to express themselves, particularly within the public arena, in often provocative or unconventional manners, as global citizens utilizing a global consciousness to be discussed in the next section.

4. Definitions of Global Consciousness for Youth and Global Citizenship

In their article From Teaching Globalization to Nurturing Global Consciousness, two Project Zero researchers based at Harvard University, Veronica Boix Mansilla and Howard Gardner reflect on the necessity of young people understanding the problems that exist in the world around them (Gardner & Mansilla, 2007). Similarly, they explore the development of the "globally conscious mind" of youth, one that understands the "local expressions of global phenomena;" from their neighbourhoods to communities that they might know only digitally, thousands of miles away (Gardner & Mansilla, 2007).

In further exploring these ideas of global citizenship, particularly in terms of global sensitivity, global understanding, and the global self as mentioned by Mansilla and Gardner, graffiti and public art can be explored through this framework, which together all three "lie at the heart to global consciousness" (Gardner & Mansilla, 2007). In their work, Mansilla and Gardner describe these concepts as the following:

> Global sensitivity, or our awareness of local experience as a manifestation of broader developments in the planet; global understanding, or our capacity to think in flexible and informed ways about contemporary worldwide developments; and global self,

> or a perception of ourselves as global actors, a sense of planetary belonging and membership in humanity that guides our actions and prompts our civic commitments (Gardner & Mansilla, 2007).

One can argue that through hip-hop culture, specifically graffiti and public muralism, artists, particularly young people, are expanding their global consciousness, reaching out to a larger "manifestation of broader developments in the planet" (Gardner & Mansilla, 2007). While graffiti may exemplify many aspects of local culture, in participating in such practices, they are (whether consciously or unconsciously) gaining a sense of global self, through connecting through the wider cultural phenomenon of hip-hop culture. In the article, "German-Turkish Transnational Space: A Separate Space of Their Own," Ayhan Kaya reflects on youth engaged in hip-hop culture as "global constituents," citing Turkish youth in Germany as an example (Kaya, 2007). Being an ethnic minority, Kaya argues that through hip-hop culture, including designing graffiti and even developing their bilingual graffiti magazines, Turkish youth were able to resist "the dominant regimes of representations" and contribute to and even help build the globalized mainstream culture of graffiti (Kaya, 2007).

Overall, when one considers global citizenship, it is a reference that extends beyond the traditional concept of being a citizen of any country. Rather, this is a reference to a larger connection to a "broader global community" and according to UNESCO, this concept refers to any individual who "understands how the world works, values differences in people, and works with others to find solutions to challenges too big for any one nation" (UNESCO, 2024). A global citizen, like a graffiti artist, might also be interested in issues that go beyond any one community, country, or region, for instance, humanitarian border crises and the plight of refugees, global poverty, and climate change. Scholar William F. Fernekes further describes the concept of global citizenship as interdisciplinary with "its foundations heavily rooted in the study of cosmopolitanism" (Fernekes, 2016). Furthermore, a global citizen is also connected to human rights and is more simply, someone who embraces upholding universal human rights and possesses the competencies required to educate others on human rights (Fernekes, 2016), which in many cases the tool of graffiti allows young people to do. In the following sections, a further analysis of the role of graffiti in the lives of young people in the German hip-hop scene and its connection to global citizenship and global understanding will be explored.

5. Graffiti In Germany and Hip-Hop in Diasporic Communities

East Side Gallery is quite possibly the most dispiriting art showcase mankind has ever produced. If you like art, the chances are that you've seen much better. Nothing is stunning here. I expected much more from a place that is said to be one of the must-see art exhibits in the city.

James W., London, UK

One of my favourite things in Berlin and one of the greatest community art projects of all time. I love how they took something so ugly and heavy and turned it into a wonderfully beautiful piece of art, even if some of the artwork has serious commentary on the situation.

Anya R., New York City, USA

The East Side Gallery, however, tops my list. The artwork is both thought-provoking and amazing. It's also a great walk and doesn't strain the wallets of us budget travellers. Don't miss it.

Alea G., San Jose, California, USA (Yelp, 2014).

As reflected by the random assortment of Yelp reviews from tourists across the globe, the attraction elicits a wide range of feelings emotions and opinions about the art of the Berlin Wall. Outside of serving as a significant memorial commemorating the wall's demolition, the East Side Gallery in Friedrichshain also serves as one of the longest open-air galleries in the world since 1990 (East Side Gallery, 2024). For some scholars in the late 1980s, the graffiti of the wall appeared restricted to tourists and non-Berliners (Stein, 1989), but as the decades went on, the Berlin Wall soon found itself as the canvas for artists from around the world, including several notable international artists, like the UK's Banksy and Brazil's twin graffiti crew, Os Gemeos (Tzortzis, 2008).

The German hip-hop and graffiti scene birthed in the early 1980s was heavily influenced by Western media and culture, especially that of New York City (Tzortzis, 2008), the birthplace of hip-hop. However East and West Germany underwent two unique experiences. While the latter was influenced by the U.S. American forces stationed there, the East, through "state control of popular life," was stymied by the lack of access to popular media and the import of Western music, which caused a slower evolution in the development of hip-hop technology, like turntables (Hoyler & Christoph, 2005).

Early on in West Germany, influential graffiti films like the previously mentioned Beat Street, Wild Style! (Hoyler & Christoph, 2005) and Style Wars, along with seminal graffiti books like Subway Art by Henry Chalfant and Martha Cooper (Tzortzis, 2008), found their way into youth populations interested in learning, replicating, and also creating their graffiti, distinctly relevant to their communities.

During this time, graffiti and hip-hop in general, served as a tool for bringing diverse communities of young people together, particularly diaspora communities congregating at local youth clubs or community centres (Hoyler & Christoph, 2005). As young people sought to share their talents with others

and gain respect, they hosted "jams," or community-based hip-hop performance spaces, in their communities and travelled to others hosted nearby (Hoyler & Christoph, 2005). These hip-hop communities often included a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, as one scholar notes that in the late 1980s in Nuremberg alone, there were Turkish, Italian, and Peruvian artists performing alongside their German counterparts in public spaces together (Hoyler & Christoph, 2005). Arguably, this creation of diverse hip-hop and graffiti communities is an example of the increased global sensitivity of young people from varying ethnic backgrounds and furthering a perception of themselves as global actors (Gardner & Mansilla, 2007). Through creating graffiti using their artistic styles and personal backgrounds, in these communities, these artists are simultaneously sharing their narratives and becoming informed about those of others, fostering their sense of global understanding.

A few examples of hip-hop and graffiti projects from Germany that intentionally or unintentionally foster these concepts of global citizenship and global understanding, particularly within youth populations, will be briefly explored in the next section.

6. The Past, Present, and Future of German Graffiti Art

Below are a few examples of hip-hop and graffiti projects that were created in Berlin, Germany from 1993 through 2024. Some of the projects appear to no longer be active at the time of writing this article, but their legacy has arguably left a significant impact on the graffiti movement in both Germany and throughout Europe.

6.1 Hip Hop on Wheels: The Hip Hop Mobil Project

Started in 1993 in Berlin, Hip Hop Mobil was a mobile studio unit that carried various technologies for hip-hop artists, including turntables, a mixer, and recording equipment (Hoyler & Christoph, 2005). Since its inception, Hip Hop Mobil offered educational workshops on hip-hop culture and its five elements, including graffiti. The project was originally sponsored by Arbeitskreis Medienpädogogik (AMP) and had previously received funding from the Berlin city government (Templeton, 2005). Hip Hop Mobil also had an educational component, having travelled to schools, educating young people on hip-hop history, while also encouraging them to create their artwork. Many of its alumni who have related to the program are now considered some of Berlin's "most successful" hip-hop artists (Templeton, 2005), thus the impact of Hip Hop Mobil remains.

6.2 Hip-Hop Technology Spanning Countries: Graffiti Research Lab – Berlin

Although prominent, Hip-Hop Mobil is only one of the many examples of hip-hop educational spaces throughout Germany. Less tied to the cultural

roots of hip-hop yet committed to a new manifestation of the graffiti element of the culture, is the more recent Graffiti Research Lab (GRL) in Germany. Founded in 2010 in Berlin, the GRL is self-described as "a collective of hackers, coders, artists and vandals who considered themselves activists that use technology as a tool for intervention in the public space" (Graffiti Research Lab, 2024). In the age of digital technology, graffiti itself is being transformed from an art form that relies solely on paint, spray cans, and concrete walls to one that involves digital projections, open-source technologies, and collaborations of several artists who may not even be in the same time zone as one another. The GRL itself is committed to providing tools, particularly "participatory media interventions that bring together open-source technologies and the philosophy and aesthetics of graffiti" (Graffiti Research Lab, 2024).

One of the GRL's most famous digital graffiti events was PWN THE WALL in October 2012, a digital graffiti installation that lasted 25 hours connecting the cities of Vancouver, Berlin, and Seoul. Through open-source technology, digital graffiti artists were able to connect with other artists from three different continents, allowing for a simultaneous exchange of digital art that was also open to the rest of the public (Graffiti Research Lab - Cannada, 2014). This project, like many others from the GRL, is another clear example of graffiti, in this case digital, creating awareness and a sense of global citizenship among young people of the "local experience as a manifestation of broader developments in the planet" (Gardner & Mansilla, 2007) by literally connecting them from distant parts across the globe.

6.3 Documenting the Hip-Hop Movement: Martha Cooper Library at Urban Nation – Museum for Urban Contemporary Art

In the last several years, one may argue the emergence of more institutionalized spaces for graffiti within Germany. For instance, since November 2021, Berlin now boasts the Martha Cooper Library at Urban Nation, Museum for Urban Contemporary Art in Berlin, Germany (Urban Nation, 2024). This is especially significant as Martha Cooper, a photography pioneer of graffiti art, once captured the images of prominent graffiti artists of the 1970s, particularly within the United States, many of whom risked legal consequences for their actions. Today, the Museum "specializes in the literature on street art, graffiti, and urban art since 1960" (Urban Nation, 2024), ensuring that these same artists' contributions are being celebrated as relics and as a critical part of hip-hop as a global movement. The Museum is especially significant as it allows for the preservation of "an alternative form of historical record" of graffiti during a particular "political climate," as previously referenced (Hopper & Evan, 2023).

We have yet to see the repercussions of this institutionalization (some may argue co-optation) of the art form. Yet, significantly, the graffiti of the

past is no longer restricted only to the streets, as its memories are now being housed in a museum. One hopes that this will allow the art form to live on, long after the paint has dried and peeled off, allowing another future generation of global citizens to learn about this artistic movement that has crossed so many borders and spanned so many decades.

7. The Future of Public Art and Graffiti in Europe

Through open-source graffiti projects like these, young people will continue to learn how to use these new tools to create a dialogue; a new way to engage with others in their city and others in cities across the globe. One can argue that when graffiti artists roam the city to find empty walls and seek permission to do graffiti, they are forced to think deeply about the construction of their city, the events that take place, and the way that people live together in one city. Similarly, when young people are asked to connect with other artists in a different country, they must consider both the global and local implications; often asked to consider and explore communities outside of their neighbourhoods for the first time, a critical component of being a global citizen.

Through the efforts of the GRL and other networks of artists using graffiti as tools for activism and providing educational instruction on open-source technologies, young people will be able to share projects, ideas, and tools with other young people across the globe. Arguably, this will further the potential for cross-cultural graffiti projects, allowing for the creation of more democratic public spaces and community-based discourses to flourish. Undoubtedly, as the GRL and other groups mobilize and amplify their work through social media networks and other democratic means of participation, the use of digital art will proliferate throughout Germany and other parts of Europe as the more contemporary form of graffiti muralism, transforming the idea of what is considered public art and accelerating a movement of young people who are building an actual "global consciousness."

8. Implications for Graffiti and Global Consciousness in Europe

"I'm an urban artist, not a writer. I love and worship everything in the city. Cities have an abundance of personalities who are forced to integrate and deal with each other every day. Cities are fully fabricated and organized by us. What does the city tell us about ourselves and one another? How is it that people from unique backgrounds can come together and follow the same general rules to function as this mass in our creation? These are the questions I work out every day by making what I make…

Cade, graffiti artist (Ganz, 2006)

As the graffiti artist, Cade suggests, the concept of the city is constantly being constructed and reconstructed, as its very narrative is developed

by those who live within it. This is especially true of the graffiti artists, who both literally and figuratively, construct anonymous messages for the rest of the city to see, most often by transforming aspects of the metropolis in ways that best suit them personally. Thus, the city becomes the graffiti artist's canvas and the very idea of "public art" relies on the idea of connecting with an audience. The graffiti artist may ask a question of the public through their art, and even if rhetorical, its success rests on the simple notion that someone within the public will indeed "experience" it in some way.

As people from "unique backgrounds" come together in the city, graffiti is one form of uniting them through a shared experience. While this article primarily reflected on the building of global consciousness, global sensitivity, global understanding, and global self of the artists who create graffiti, one may believe that these global lenses are also constructed for the very society that participates in the graffiti experience. The level of participation will undoubtedly change as the tools for transmitting messages become more technologically complex and convoluted through digital means. As previously mentioned, as digital graffiti becomes more intricate, there exists greater possibilities of increasing public participation. People will no longer be simply passers-by of a graffiti mural painted on the wall, but rather through digital tools, members of the city will be able to participate in the graffiti experience in a way never thought possible.

9. Is Graffiti Here to Stay? Conclusions and Further Questions

Just as hip-hop helped to transform communities within the United States by mobilizing young people during politically turbulent times, arguably a similar phenomenon occurred in Germany during the aftermath of WWII. In efforts to rebuild their own social identities on an individual level and cultivate community-based spaces on a more societal level, hip-hop, specifically graffiti, was a tool that many young people easily and willingly gravitated to.

Graffiti was also a tool that supported and continues to support the construction of more democratic spaces within the city, along with serving as a vehicle for greater democratic participation, including the cultivation of the notion of global consciousness.

One will be curious to see how global networks will continue to be fostered through digital graffiti networks. In Germany alone, it will be interesting to see how youth of the diaspora community connect with their home countries through this technology. One must also consider the implications this will have on these youth's connection with other young Europeans as they continue to build upon the concept of their global self. One may also consider if more traditional forms of graffiti, like that which

emerged with the inception of hip-hop culture back in the Bronx, New York City will soon be eradicated or if it will be allowed to grow alongside the newer forms of graffiti, including those that may or may not incorporate the use of AI and social media. Scholars like Ronald Niezen continue to argue that graffiti, one of the "oldest [forms of] media to sway opinion continue[s] to be used "alongside social media and journalistic media coverage" (Niezen, 2020) in various campaigns, perhaps demonstrating to us that the street artform, regardless of the influence of technology, is here to stay. Yet, that is something for the graffiti community and the street artists themselves to decide.

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