



Urban art traditionally framed in aesthetic aspects, criminalization and vandalism, as a democratic scope in cultural valuation

El arte urbano tradicionalmente enmarcado en aspectos estéticos, criminalización y vandalismo, como alcance democrático en la valoración cultural

Mayra Alexandra Mendoza Cahuana

Licenciada en Instrucción Musical. Abogada. Máster en Investigación Musical
Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo
mayra.mendoza@unach.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-7992-2801>

Alegría Cumandá Navas Labanda

Licenciada en Ciencias de la Educación. Doctora en Gerencia Educativa
Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo
anavas@unach.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7818-4845>

Byron Leonardo Obregón Vite

Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación Artes Aplicadas Magister en Docencia Intervención
Psicopedagógica
Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo
bobregon@unach.edu.ec, <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7478-9509>

Robert Danilo Orozco Poma

Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación mención Bellas Artes. Magister en Antropología Visual.
Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo. Grupo de investigación: ETZA KURI"
robert.orozco@unach.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2262-5741>

ABSTRACT

Urban art, traditionally associated with aesthetic aspects, criminalization, and vandalism, has evolved into a form of democratic and cultural expression. Manifested in murals, graffiti, and other

visual forms, this art reflects the creativity that flourishes in urban environments and communities. This article analyzes the transformation of urban art, traditionally framed within criminalization and vandalism, towards recognition as a cultural and democratic manifestation. The methodology used is a bibliographic study with a qualitative approach. The main results indicate a paradigm shift: urban art has moved from being stigmatized to being recognized as a legitimate form of artistic and cultural expression with significant democratic implications. This change is due to a greater understanding of its potential as a tool for empowerment, social critique, and citizen participation. As a main conclusion, it is explained that urban art has evolved from being seen as mere vandalism to being valued as a democratic cultural manifestation. It allows various social groups to express themselves and participate in the construction of urban narratives. This form of artistic expression seeks beauty and social critique, contributing to the aesthetic enrichment of cities. Urban art, rooted in the emotions, thoughts, and experiences of its creators, provides a reflection of cultural and social diversity. Despite the stigmatization and criminalization, its aesthetic influence and capacity to democratize culture make it a relevant cultural phenomenon.

RESUMEN

El arte urbano, tradicionalmente asociado con aspectos estéticos, criminalización y vandalismo, ha evolucionado hacia una forma de expresión democrática y cultural. Manifestado en murales, grafitis y otras formas visuales, este arte refleja la creatividad que florece en entornos urbanos y comunidades. El presente artículo analiza esta transformación del arte urbano, tradicionalmente enmarcado en la criminalización y el vandalismo, hacia un reconocimiento como una manifestación cultural democrática. La metodología utilizada es un estudio bibliográfico con enfoque cualitativo. Los resultados principales indican un cambio de paradigma: el arte urbano ha pasado de ser estigmatizado a ser reconocido como una forma legítima de expresión artística y cultural con importantes implicaciones democráticas. Este cambio se debe a una mayor comprensión de su potencial como herramienta de empoderamiento, crítica social y participación ciudadana. Como conclusión principal, se explica que el arte urbano ha evolucionado de ser visto como mero vandalismo a ser valorado como una manifestación cultural democrática. Permite a diversos grupos de la sociedad expresarse y participar en la construcción de narrativas urbanas. Esta forma de expresión artística

busca la belleza y la crítica social, contribuyendo al enriquecimiento estético de las ciudades. El arte urbano, arraigado en las emociones, pensamientos y experiencias de quienes lo crean, proporciona un reflejo de la diversidad cultural y social. A pesar de la estigmatización y criminalización, su influencia estética y su capacidad de democratizar la cultura lo convierten en un fenómeno cultural relevante.

Keywords / Palabras clave

right, childhood, violation, integral development, right to education

derecho, niñez, vulneración, desarrollo integral, derecho a la educación

Introduction

The cultural manifestations are the contemporary processes that are formed in the main Latin American metropolises, diverse contemporary processes are developed that shape urban life and society in the region, according to urban art that are of relevance for the understanding of varied aesthetic discourses on the construction of images of the city. Likewise, they denote the characteristics and inclinations of the people who use it as a means of manifestation, that is to say, these processes reflect the preferences, values, interests and needs of the people who participate in them.

These movements are a manifestation of the inclinations and values of the people who seek to generate positive changes in their communities. Urban art aims at harmony with the environment, trying to order the preponderant and exalted aesthetic guidelines through an intervention that enables the best use of the physical characteristics of the public space through the skills of the author. It is based on the thoughts and feelings of its artists (Viasus, 2019).

In different societies, it is traditionally shown that urban art has a democratic scope in the valuation of culture, based on the thoughts of the participants who take advantage of the conditions of the environment with the purpose of publishing their interests and requests. In general, they serve the needs of specific social groups or actors.

Accordingly, there are cases in which certain urban artistic expressions may be associated with vandalism groups or gangs, related to criminal

behavior, but it is important not to generalize or stigmatize all urban artistic manifestations for this reason (Hidalgo, 2019). Graffiti and other forms of street art are complex and diverse practices that can be performed by a wide range of people with different motivations and objectives. Thus, the need arises to study their delinquent separation and their incidence within a normalized society. In other words, there is an interest in considering the relevance of its democratization in cultural valuation.

Thus, the general purpose of this article is to analyze urban art, traditionally framed in criminalization and vandalism, as a democratic scope in cultural valuation. The ultimate purpose is to explore the relationship that exists between cultural expressions unlinked to inappropriate behaviors generated by groups in popular communities. Thus, the importance of the writing developed here is observed in the contribution to the existing body of knowledge on the cultural development carried out by the referred popular movements.

Materials and Methods

The study of social phenomena is based on the analysis and understanding of social events or needs; and thus the process cannot be developed without considering the experiential reality of the actors involved. In relation to this, the methodological procedure indicates the way in which the collection of the information necessary for the satisfaction of the proposed objectives is carried out. In the present work, the methodology addressed is based on the qualitative approach which, according to Sanchez (2019), focuses on understanding the behavior, motivations and characteristics of social groups. It is based on more descriptive research methods that are based on interpretations, experiences and their meaning. Likewise, it takes into account the data and analyses previously done by other authors in the same research topic.

Specifically, in the case that occupies the present article, through a bibliographic-based research, it is expected to consult what has been exposed by other studies related to the subject of urban art in the valuation of culture. The purpose of this procedure is that through the comparison and analysis of the works consulted as a whole, new contributions and conclusions on the subject will be presented.

Results

Throughout the present work, studies related to urban art previously presented by other authors were consulted, and the main results can be evidenced as common and contradictory aspects in relation to the subject under analysis. Accordingly, there are conflicting positions in reference to urban art as a scope for the valuation of culture. Thus, Herrera and Salas (2021) explain that within the public space, interculturality and urban art are linked, in the sense that they represent two phenomena that occur through the interaction between individuals in a given environment. This is how, graffiti are an essential part of these cultural expressions related to social coexistence in different popular environments.

For his part Jarro (2018), explains urban art arises in the context of the artistic avant-garde of the twentieth century and later integrated into the artistic academy. Its origin and main development are located in New York in the mid-1970s. This artistic movement is inspired by pop art, comics and hip hop culture, and is generally carried out by young people and social collectives with similar ideological objectives. Through various intervention techniques, urban art seeks to convey messages and stands out for promoting freedom of expression in public space.

It involves any artistic activity whose context is the urban environment performance in public, such as flashmobs, smartmobs, happenings; the counterculture of hip-hop with graffiti, stencil or shoeffiti; and music in the street. Several types of these expressions can be highlighted as cultural practices, since they have a defined organization, history and representatives. Graffiti, according to Jarro (2018), as an artistic expression was born at the end of the 1970s in New York, and spread to Europe through the hip-hop movement, which brought as a consequence that it was introduced in almost all Western countries. However, continents such as Asia and South America, was where the development of the movement took longer, although today it continues to grow in this area, reaching a sufficiently high level.

As can be noted, the origin of graffiti is not directly related to the artistic technique of graffiti, but is rather linked to the Greek term *grapho*, which means to write or engrave. This connection traces the origins of graffiti back to ancient Greco-Roman cultures, where writing was done in public spaces. As a reminiscence of the Italian word

sgraffire (which in Spanish means sgraffito), which is a facade decoration technique, according to which several layers of plaster are superimposed on the wall, in which it makes small incisions by line before it dries lifting large areas of the upper layer, which encompasses its etymology: the superimposition of paintings (Jarro, 2018).

Additionally, as stated by Ariza and Caballero (2022), graffiti is a social fact linked to the direct action of generating a mark in the public space, in a particular or collective way, highlighting that the individuals who execute it are the product of political, economic and social factors of the society to which they belong, turning artistic interventions into political acts aimed at the dissemination of personal messages or social denunciation.

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This is how, according to Jarro (2018), graffiti reveals a city full of multiple meanings, which reflect the different ways in which people experience urban life. These meanings are valuable for understanding key aspects of the collective construction of cities, as well as for expressing criticism and protests regarding the current social situation or current state of a society or community at a specific time. It is known as a pictorial artwork developed on the walls of street walls, which seeks to break away from conventional exhibition spaces and directly reach the general public.

Certainly, the study of interculturality and its influence on urban art grants symbolic value to the improvement of integration processes, identification and social protagonism, incited by means of plastic arts. The graffiti artists, with innovative proposals and styles, direct the cycle of current art history. Following the line of Jarro (2018), there is a relevant advance in the production of Ecuadorian urban art linked to graffiti, with works of great conceptual and aesthetic quality, in which the representation of the cultural variety of the environment prevails.

From this perspective also suggested by Viasus (2019), in spite of the development and inclusion within the artistic expressions of the present time; there are reduced spaces in which it is stimulated to theorize the cultural and political transcendence that graffiti possesses within society. For this reason, it is a priority to relate with urban artists and cultural managers linked to actors from various disciplines whose participation may be interesting.

Thus, in reference to what has been said so far, the aforementioned authors add that there is a need to expand knowledge for the joint study of the importance of these manifestations, promoting a

significant transformation of knowledge among professionals from different specialties and new generations of artists.

Similarly, the community artistic space requires for its empowerment, the meeting and networking with educational, business and community institutions, not only for the multiplicity of audiences, but also to achieve recognition of graffiti artists in relation to the spread of their work that, although unacceptable to certain areas of society, becomes necessary to achieve a balance against social injustice and totalitarian practices that are still present in the world.

By the way, Ariza and Caballero (2022), show a specific situation in Colombia regarding cases of protest and the participation of organized groups for the dissemination of education through communication. According to the findings of the referred work, they generate collective communicational processes that give rise to coordinated actions and enunciate nonconformity against the posture and procedures of hegemonic power, albeit virtually through social networks.

This approach provides an important point of reference to compare and interpret different dynamics of interaction between artists and the communities in which the mediation of the mural takes place and which are developed at the moment of intervening the public space; in other words, urban art is disseminated in the physical space where the work of art is created, which implies that the public is not always the main recipient of the work.

Within this line of urban art, it is also relevant to mention the position of Cubides and Valderrama (2020), in relation to artistic practices in the field of education through communication, since in these there are communicative-educational practices of resistance, difference and production of knowledge, which make possible the existence of new forms of life and knowledge and give way to new subjectivities, as well as other ways of socialization.

In reference to the authors, it is valued not only the production of the artistic practices themselves, but also the means used for their dissemination, reproduction and extension to the public and the expansion of the audiences so that the works can be examined, that is, by means of specific techniques or technologies that allow their timely visibility in the process of formation of new knowledge.

Now, Onoa (2019), refers that the importance of the public graphic expressions of post-graffiti and graffiti in the transformation of cities,

in the framework of the current urban redevelopment, is complemented by the gradual process of institutionalization, professionalization and regulation of these practices of recognized urban art.

In his study, the author shows images such as the one shown below:

In relation to the previous image, Onoa (2019), warns that murals are accepted as a contribution to the identity of the neighborhood. A significant number of neighbors offer the walls of their houses to be painted by local artists. However, the Comité Pro-Mejoras de La Floresta warns that the neighborhood is changing from a residential area to an area of the city with a new characteristic tone. The greatest fear is that La Floresta will undergo the same transformation as the Mariscal area, which is currently an area of bars, discotheques and a high crime rate.

According to the aforementioned author's study conducted in Quito in the La Floresta neighborhood and the San Roque Market, the importance of analyzing public graphics in these two social spaces, as evidenced in the previous image, is based on the fact that it is feasible to document the variations in the use of graphics by analyzing the different spatial, economic, political and socio-cultural characteristics, as well as the needs and interests of the actors involved in the production and appropriation of these graphic representations.

More recently, Ariza and Caballero (2022), point out that, during the social protests in Colombia in 2021, numerous forms of linguistic expression that emerged in the course of this situation were evidenced. In addition, a wide variety of resources used for personal, group and social communication by youth movements were observed, among them Street Art, represented by graffiti and muralism. These elements become fundamental components that relate to the field of education through communication.

In this context, urban art is not only a matter of decoration that embellishes and gives color to cities, nor is it a simple matter of visual pollution; specifically, urban art is any form of artistic expression carried out in the streets that conceives the city as a compendium that can be mediated by a series of works related to urban culture and whose field of action are the societies themselves, which implies a field of socio-political transformation, and inclusive (Ariza and Caballero, 2022).

Furthermore, according to Ariza and Caballero (2022), urban art represents a paradigm loaded with meanings and social representations that not only invite the public to contemplate it, but also to reflect on it. Its objective is to communicate and express a visual message, and goes beyond simply transmitting information, seeking to generate critical knowledge through a universal language understandable to all.

For this literature review, different research works were initially approached, which included journal articles and available doctoral and master's theses, as well as the review of complementary documents referred to in these bibliographies. In this way, specific studies were selected which have allowed the analysis developed throughout the research, thanks to their relevance for the purpose established here; these works deal with issues related to urban art and cultural valuation.

Thus, it is noticeable that the researches consulted focus first of all on the analysis of the image, graphic art, debates and positions regarding politics, anti-hegemonic struggles, and, more recently, on the role of social media as a communicational complement to the activities of these collectivities and their role in politics.

That said, common aspects are evident in the studies consulted, which allow us to identify the following recurrent paradigms: graffiti as a political discourse of opposition and manifestation of identities and subjectivities, the criminalization of graffiti and cultural manifestation, and social networks as mobilizers of social protest.

However, these trends do not develop in isolation, rather, on the contrary, they show several coinciding themes considering that, for example, graffiti as a form of artistic expression is an essential feature of various social dynamics among which are political positions, identities, discourses, discernments, social mobilization, among others (Valladares, 2021).

As Valladares (2021) refers, when walking through any neighborhood, sector or community, it is common to observe images impregnated with the city and diverse artistic materials impregnated with colors and contents clearly evidenced as graffiti, vandalism, illegal, scratches, youth, terms that are related to the marginality denoted by these street expressions.

It should be noted that a great variety of artists have used their representations of protest with an important tone of repudiation against the existing regimes, such is the case of the previous image where a girl with a balloon is visualized in a mural made by the graffiti artist Banksy. The mural symbolizes a girl letting go of a red balloon in the shape of a heart. Banksy used a variant of this image in his 2014 campaign in support of Syrian refugees (Ariza and Caballero, 2022).

According to the aforementioned authors, a range of disciplines have focused their attention on this cultural phenomenon, citing mainly logical, anthropological, architectural, educational and visual artistic topics. However, according to the normal connotation of this urban practice, they are cultural manifestations with a democratic scope in the cultural valuation to know the city, the street and the community. That is to say, they have a democratic scope in cultural valuation by providing the opportunity to get to know the city, the street and the community from different perspectives. Through its artistic manifestations in public spaces, graffiti allows the voices and expressions of diverse groups to be visible and accessible to all.

At this point it is important to mention that it is normal to appreciate a common debate when citing topics referring to graffiti, urban art and street art, Street Art considering that authors such as Fernández (2018), explain that the latter is not the result of graffiti, but a contemporary phenomenon that includes different manifestations such as musicals or performance.

However, Martinez and Martinez (2021), argues the use of the various elements without requiring the differentiation of a single concept, in view of the fact that as psychosocial processes both expressions maintain a close relationship not coming from chance. In this sense, it encompasses the terms graffiti and Street Art to refer to cultural and playful urban practices such as graffiti, sticker, propaganda, among others.

According to the authors, urban art can be used as an example of communication and vindication. Through it, observers are able to see beyond the artistic representation and even beyond the author's own thoughts. There is the ability to relate it to everyday situations, with visualizations and videos of current events. Moreover, the technological and data development can represent an advantage, since, by being understood from the current social, political, economic and climatic reality, it promotes the progress of the activity and the

creation of relevant and innovative discussion groups to the problems of modernity.

In this regard, Pedroza (2019), points out that cultural practices that have been mostly stigmatized and categorized as vandalism or criminal acts, hardly result considered within the general concept of culture, essentially because they are considered as unproductive arising from leisure and young people. Specifically, emphasis is placed on graffiti and Street Art, which have brought to light different paradigms of thoughts characterized by behaviors, manifestations or a qualitative language that personifies their nonconformity with the existing conditions in the immediate environment that surrounds them.

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In this order of ideas, Sora (2018), adds that, despite their oppositional characteristics, such forms of thought do not cease to be culture as the guild has made think, according to the opinion of the aforementioned author, they are cultural manifestations that are part of society, of the world that surrounds human society and therefore denote a democratic scope in their cultural appreciation.

Now, the contextualization of this social phenomenon means to understand the atmospheres in which they are located and why they arise according to the features of protest and rebellion that characterize them, framed in a playful form of culture. That is, as Manzo (2018) explains, the marginality with which the graffiti movement was born, for example, was not decided to be that way, but rather, it was the environment and thinking of society that brought with it a new cultural expression; it was the resources and thoughts of each moment that characterized it in that way granting the environments for its generation and flourishing.

Likewise, Ariza and Caballero (2022), point out that these manifestations of Street Art emerged in different countries at specific moments in history. In the United States, during the 1970s, hip-hop graffiti stood out as a form of unauthorized street art. In Paris, in the 1960s and 1970s, graffiti was a fundamental element in student uprisings and was used to express political ideas with double entendre, irony or humor. On the other hand, muralism had its first practices in Mexico after the 1910 revolution, presenting itself as a public art inspired by the popular. In Brazil, during the 1990s, muralism was used as a pictorial technique to represent the political and social situation of the cities.

These processes, as explained by Temblores (2021), as well as the situations generated in Colombia in the year 2021, have allowed exploring and highlighting communicative actions and messages developed in these contexts, whose general characteristics refer to innate cultural values of the groups involved. As well as, they are related to Sustainable Development Goals exposed by the United Nations (2018).

We speak then of the field of education through communication, which aims to sustain forms of resistance and social transformation through the systematic search for the autonomy of the word, taking as a premise that the production of collective knowledge by popular movements and citizenships, aims to generate new tools that alter practices such as oppressive relationships, thanks to cultural practices that have been historically stigmatized and labeled as vandalism or criminal acts, actually have a democratizing power in cultural appreciation.

Conclusions

As it is possible to appreciate, urban art or Street Art has played a predominant role in the contemporary history of society, considering that through this type of artistic expression people take to the streets, using them as alternative communication scenes to express their political positions and their disagreements with authorities who do not listen to them through cultural expressions that have traditionally been labeled as criminal and vandalism and that have a democratic character in cultural appreciation.

While it is true that some gangs or vandal groups may use graffiti as a way of marking territory or communicating messages related to their criminal activity, this does not mean that all urban artistic expressions are linked to violence or vandalism. Many legitimate and talented urban artists use these art forms to express themselves, beautify the urban environment, and generate social and cultural dialogues.

It is important to approach each case individually and analyze the specific circumstances before making generalizations. The diversity of urban artistic expressions is broad and ranges from illegal graffiti to legal and collaborative urban beautification projects. It is essential not to automatically stigmatize these manifestations, but to understand that there are diverse actors and purposes behind them.

As can be inferred after concluding the research, the forms of cultural expression that have generally been associated with criminalization and vandalism, which in reality have an impact on cultural valuation, are also closely linked to the correspondence between graffiti and muralism as forms of urban art in conjunction with protest and collective action in the field of social movements.

Like dances, batucadas, performances, graffiti and muralism, as Street Art techniques, have served as means of social protest, cultural expression and memory; which have highlighted their contesting and anti-hegemonic character that are generally referenced as a combination of vandalism and civil disobedience given their background.

As a final point to this article, cultural expressions that have been commonly stigmatized and considered vandalism or criminal acts have a democratic impact on cultural valuation. This is due to the use of these artistic representations as sources of vindication and social awareness. This form of urban artistic expression has the capacity to democratize and broaden the appreciation and valuation of culture in society.

Therefore, it is important to be aware of the artistic, cultural and social value of Urban Art and the relevant role it plays in today's society. Therefore, the democratic appreciation of the use of Street Art as a model of cultural manifestation is inferred, as well as the use of murals as a means of communication of social reality as an element of debate and reflection.

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