
LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN URBAN PARKS: EXPLORING COMMUNITY, CULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENT THROUGH SIGNAGE AND ART

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the following research questions are formulated: To what extent does signage, graffiti, and public art in urban parks reflect community identity, cultural difference, and environmental beliefs? Thus, it was defined that the study aims at identifying how the three forms of expression under study contribute to the formation of audiences and interaction in the context of urban city. Non-probability, cross-sectional data collection methods involved field observations, and semi-structured interviews with park visitors, and photographing signs, graffiti, and public art in different parks across urban areas. The study also showed that in addition to regulation and environmental messages, signage is used explicitly as a form of inclusive representation through symbols of multilingualism. The graffiti then became a lively, captivating style of people's expression that responded to patriotic feelings, civic concerns and ecological initiatives unlike the often-rigid legislation of signage. Art signs arranged systematically and for their esthetic and symbolic appeal communicated the messages of cultural history, social cohesion and environmental consciousness, evoking audiences' pride and participation. This paper shows that these modes of communication complement each other to form a complex society that encompasses different identities and values of the urban population. As such, this paper offers evidence that in these expressions, urban parks are much more than leisure locations but points of cultural conversations and call for nature conservation. Further research is called for to analyze the effects of interactivity of digital signage and the changing role of graffiti in society and future research to investigate the continued influence of public art on societal perception and behavioral changes.

1. INTRODUCTION

City parks are lively and versatile greens with appealing uses for leisure and related communal purposes. In these contexts, the written and graphic language used on billboards, street paintings and other forms of public art give a great perspective on examining the community and cultural and environmental values of the community. These linguistic and visual artifacts are to date not passive signs that mark the spatial context of cities and its inhabitants but have agency in constitute the nature of urban environment and the dynamics of using it. Drawing on language use, this paper explores how identity construction

and representation happens in communities within cities. Signage is not arbitrary, as language and expression, and design to attract target markets must remain intentional to the corresponding cultural and linguistic demographics of the community Bonvillain (2019). Lighting or gradual changes in lighting may inform visitors that changing brightness is safe or may easily trigger their fears of experiencing another terrifying dark movie (Wright, 2018). While most of them are informative, giving direction or guidelines, the language used on signs becomes symbolic in instructing visitors on the

correct behaviors to display within urban parks and the acceptable ways of interacting capturing cultural and power relations in urban parks.

Graffiti is more rebellious and impromptu mode of social messaging. Almost always associated with defiance or protest, graffiti represents the oppressed or marginalized within society (Frabetti, 2015). It is by graffiti that many urban societies often make some of their main proclamations, complaints or demonstrations of ethnic pride. As election epithets or social, artistic, identity expressions on public space park walls or structures turns to a canvas, graffiti serve as a platform on which individuals and groups proclaim public ownership.

In this sense, people often refer to public art as occupying a space betwixt institutional art and automate expressions of art (Kwon, 2004). Sponsored or initiated in most cases, illustrated in the article public art in urban parks embodies shared visions and dreams, values and goals for society and communities (Meringolo, 2012). Art pieces such as sculptures as well as mural paintings and other art forms can convey whatever message about the environment, unity, or heritage of the society and hence can act as a history of the society's image (Coffey, 2012). Thus, it could be described that public art is somewhere between a formal and an informal communication since it has both an artistic look and symbolic significance.

The multivariate use of these forms of language in the social landscape of urban parks, depicts the complexity of life in the Urban setting. The urban parks are not simply green areas in cities but are sites in which meanings and performances of cultural selves are orchestrated, where environmental stances are contested, and where social worth is proclaimed and enshrined (Neal, Bennett, Jones, Cochrane,

& Mohan, 2015). Through analyzing the ways in which language is used in a physical context, in the form of signs and graffiti, and in the form of artwork it reveals the fine network that exists between citizens, their world and language.

The purpose of this study is to examine how language within urban parks, in the forms of signs, graffiti, and public art, constructs, performs, enacts, and inscribes community, culture, and nature. In this regard, the specifics of these communicative aspects have been explored in order to show how language is implicated in creating place and how, more generally, graphic expression of language supports presence in heterogeneous and changing urban contexts.

1.1 Objective

- To conduct a thorough evaluation of signage allows researchers to study its representation of community cultural backgrounds as well as environmental concerns and established local standards.
- To investigate graffiti through its strengths as an identity tool and independent form of artistic resistance as well as creative expression.
- To analyze how public art facilities community connection between local residents and environment and cultural expressions.

1.2 Research Questions

- How are the signage languages in the urban parks talked about in signage reflect on the cultural diversity, community loves and environmental values of the people around them?
- How can graffiti in urban parks acts as a medium to express community identity, resistance and creativity?
- What role does an urban park play in communicating public art that expresses shared cultural values, enhances social cohesion, and promotes environmental awareness?

2. Literature Review

As public spaces, urban parks are significant locations for investigating the network between language, culture and identity in urban contexts. The aim of this literature review is to lay out theoretical and empirical foundations of how signs and graffiti and public art reflect and shape community identity, cultural diversity and environmental attitudes. This review synthesizes previous research regarding the importance of these elements as communicative tools in urban landscapes.

Language and Community Identity of Odense people Community identity is dressed in language. Urban signage, which is often viewed as institutional language, conforms to overall sociolinguistic patterns and demographic composition of urban areas. García and Cristina (2007) found that multilingual signage promotes inclusivity and cultural representation (de Lobado García, 2022). Therefore, emphasis is placed on 'linguistic landscapes' which focuses on how visible 'language' in public spaces reflects power dynamics, social hierarchy and cultural values (Shohamy, 2012). In urban parks, signage plays a dual role: it can also give functional information, but sometimes also signal implicit messages regarding community priorities, inclusivity, and environmental stewardship (Sones et al., 2024).

We can further say that the design and language of urban park signs can also indicate environmental questions. More often, conservation and respect of nature is worded in such a way as to reinforce broader urban sustainability goals (Uzzel et al., 2002). Miller & Hobbs (2017) found that signage which frames environmental messages influences public behavior, and thus park visitors interpretation of environmental consciousness is shaped through signage found in urban parks

(Farrar, Kendal, Williams, & Zeeman, 2020).

Graffiti as Root Cause Expression

It is graffiti, often called a kind of subversive art, which is essentially informal and organic communication. Graffiti has been described as both vandalism and as a legitimate form of artistic and cultural expression, with the two uses being said to have complementary functions (Myllylä, 2018). Graffiti often shows up in urban parks as a vehicle for disenfranchised voices to play out a social critique, a political dissent, or cultural pride. Since graffiti is a transient and unauthorized medium, graffiti is sparsely creative and provides a dynamic medium for the documentation of community sentiments (Schmidt, 2021).

Graffiti has also been examined as a spatial practice in recent studies that contend that, like other urban practices in the urban informality spectrum, graffiti represents a challenge to the dominant narratives dominated stories that formal urban planning and design aspires to tell. Graffiti in urban parks projects the identity of local people, their struggles and aspirations. It also demonstrates a tension between institutional attempts to keep order and people's claims to ownership of public space (Mitchell, 2017).

The Status of Public Art in Representing Cultural Diversity

Public art is a curated form of expression that plugs institutional stories and grassroots voices together. Whereas graffiti is illegal and an unwanted feature for urban park managers, public art in urban parks is often sanctioned and paid for by local governments or community organizations. At the same time, it is a strong visual representation of common values, cultural heritage and of the whole. Public art has been proven to help create a connection to place and to make a place

feel like 'home' (Zebracki & Luger, 2019). The contribution of urban parks as sites for public art is especially important, because they aggregate mixed audiences and are a venue for the dissemination of cultural narratives. These spaces are used to celebrate local histories, honor environmental sustainability, supporting social cohesion, murals, sculptures, and installations (Hall & Robertson, 2001). Part of the role of public art is also to raise environmental awareness, using visual appeal to encourage action, advocacy. Relations between Signage, Graffiti and Public Art

Signage, graffiti and public art that are present in urban parks, interact in a way that generates a complex communicative landscape. Signage is frequently institutional voice, but graffiti and public art can bring depths of grassroots and cultural expression. The interplay between this is argued to reflect the negotiations to space and identity in urban environments (Bondi & Rose, 2003). For one example, graffiti could engage in, or against, the messages that official signage transmits, establishing a conversation that lays bare social tension or the recognition of shared beliefs. Like public art, it also brings institutional messaging and grassroots creativity together into one, serving as a bridge between these two ways of communication (Sharp, Pollock, & Paddison, 2020).

This interplay also brings out the dynamic criticality of urban parks as a space for cultural negotiation. The coexistence of these elements shows that urban parks are arenas where identities are built, contested and celebrated. Collectively, signs, graffiti and public art through their linguistic and visual components, all contribute to urban space's cultural and environmental ethos.

3. Methodology and Procedure

The research design adopts a qualitative

method to study how signage together with graffiti and public art creates and represents community identity terms of cultural diversity and environmental awareness within urban spaces. The research design merges field observations with visual analysis along with semi-structured interviews to study each linguistic and visual element in these urban locations.

3.1 Research Design

The research design involves exploration through which scientists examine the interactions that occur between urban signage and graffiti together with public art. The research analyzes cultural perspectives alongside environmental findings by studying them as examples within urban parks. The research method generates a comprehensive understanding regarding the role of language and imagery for building community identity combined with environmental awareness.

3.2 Data Collection Process

The research uses multiple data collection methods which include observing park facilities and conducting visual evaluations and structured interviews. The research implements a three-step method to study how urban parks put together community identity through signage and graffiti and public art to showcase cultural diversity while promoting environmental awareness.

3.3 Site Selection

The selection of urban parks stems from the variety of linguistic and cultural and environmental narratives they exhibit. A selection of three urban parks proceeds from the following selection parameters:

- Multilingual signage displays exist to show the diversity of spoken languages present in the area.
- The existence of visible graffiti as a form of grassroots expression.
- The inclusion of commissioned public art installations, such as murals, sculptures, or environmental art.

- Accessibility to the public for observation and interaction.
- The study uses different parks to observe neighborhood characteristics that affect both community art and language expressions across these locations.

3.4 Field Observations

Systematic direct observation takes place for signage and public art along with graffiti in the targeted parks. The observational process records all linguistic components and visual aspects as well as the spatial arrangement together with contextual meaning.

a. Signage Documentation

The observation process covers all formal signs such as informational and regulatory signage together with informal signs like posters and community announcements. The documentation method records information about how signs look, which languages they use and their design characteristics and their placement in the park area. The assessment process dedicates heightened focus on multilingual signs together with non-verbal elements such as symbols and pictograms to understand how they assist different community members.

b. Graffiti Documentation

The evaluation of graffiti focuses on three elements which include content matters along with artistic style and the site inside the park. Through graffiti people express four main themes which include identity and social issues and resistance and cultural pride. Researchers document graffiti quantity together with its location points (walls or benches or park structures) along with the available surface types.

c. Public Art Documentation

Visual composition of public artworks including murals and sculptures in addition to environmental artwork gets analyzed for material selection and visual elements (color and form). At the same time

thematic content is examined for cultural symbolism with nature-based imagery and historical references. The researcher examines artist statements together with curatorial notes when they become accessible to understand the expressions of cultural and environmental meaning. Observational field notes get recorded while taking photographs to document both beauty and context of every element during these assessments.

3.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher uses semi-structured interviews to complement observational findings by interviewing people who visit the park as well as local residents and graffiti artists and public art curators and park management officials. People interviewed through this method shed light on how recipients understand signage and graffiti along with their purposes for communication through public art.

a. Interview Participants

- Visitors at the park share their understanding of park signage along with their behavior regarding both graffiti and public art.
- Resident inhabitants of the area present their viewpoints regarding how these elements characterize their communal community and cultural identity.
- Through graffiti art practitioners convey how they derive their creative ideas along with their intended message in their work.
- Public art curators explain the objectives alongside the effects that public art displays generate.
- Park management officials describe community guidelines which address signage and graffiti together with public art installations throughout the entire community system.

b. Interview Format and Questions

The research methodology uses semi-structured methods that allow the

interviewer to discover new areas of focus.

Key questions include:

- What are the roles which signage, graffiti and public art play when installed in urban parks?
- The public installations convey which values and messages to society.
- Which elements within the area lead visitors to form their views about the park in addition to shaping their connection to the community identity?
- What part do these objects fulfill when it comes to building (or obstructing) environmental perception together with social engagement?

3.6 Data Recording and Management

Scientists document all observations and factual analyses of graffiti in addition to public artwork in dedicated research notebooks while taking digital pictures. The research database holds protected digital photos taken by a digital camera. Credibly anonymized transcripts from recorded interviews are developed for confidentiality purposes. The protection of participant privacy together with sensitive information needs follow ethical guidelines that determine data management approaches.

3.7 Data Analysis

Researchers used several developers to confirm the inter-rater reliability by comparing their coding themes. A preliminary coding session served to establish consistent coding practices which researchers resolved through discussion to reach agreement. The study adopted a structured method of qualitative data analysis that combined thematic coding along with content analysis and visual semiotics for the interpretation of field notes alongside photographs and transcripts and visual documentation.

3.8 Preparation of Data

The researcher arranged and prepared all data systematically before conducting the analysis.

- The researchers transcribed their field notes before recording the complete count of signage and graffiti along with public art pieces in every park.
- The data observations received direct alignment with photographs to facilitate accurate verification.
- Researchers applied coded themes to interview data using predefined categories from a structured codebook after removing all personal identifiers.
- The research employed triangulation by using observational findings to confirm the results obtained from public art assessments and interview respondent information.

3.9 Textual Analysis of Signage — Visual Semiotics

Much of the signage in the parks — both informational and regulatory — worked to send messages to park visitors. Our focus was on the signage language in terms of its tone, its formality and its inclusiveness. In this case, we were particularly interested in the use of multilingual signs, in terms of the languages used to address the heterogeneous park visitor. We compared multilingual signage for any variation in how languages were represented, and the equal acknowledgement of the diversity of the community's linguistic diversity.

We looked at the nonverbal element like pictograms and other symbols used on signs. Their communicative function such as symbols that promote affinity to environmental consciousness like symbols of sustainability or conservation was considered especially. We determined where in the park signage had been placed (in front of entrance or trails or play areas). So, we analyzed the strategic placement of these signs and how they directed, or reinforced, certain messages. In addition, we analyzed how these signs were used alongside, or in contradistinction to, other park elements like public art and graffiti.

The data of all the signage was coded to look for repeating themes such as inclusivity, environmental values, or social norms.

3.10 Content Analysis of Graffiti

Graffiti was a kind of unregulated expression, and it brought varying insights into the community's identity as well as the community's values. We categorized the graffiti by the themes it contained: political, social, cultural pride, environmental, etc. We also looked for resistance or activism in the messages. Analyzing the visual characteristics of graffiti, namely color, lettering style, and overall composition, we focused on these. So, we thought about the graffiti itself and how it conveyed the intended message and whether specific visual cues were related to urgency or rebellion, or subtle or reflective.

We mapped all the graffiti, placing it, and observing where it was most prevalent. We examined graffiti that was visible on benches, walls, and other park structures because of the high traffic, and we thought about how visible it was in relation to how it served as a commentary or resistance on public matters. We also explored whether graffiti reacted to—as opposed to interacting with— nearby signage or public art. To explore social, cultural, or environmental themes found in the graffiti across the parks, we applied content analysis which categorized these graffiti pieces, and mapped out patterns that occurred.

3.11 Public Art Interpretive analysis

Often, in urban parks there is public art that is curated for the public to express their values. In analyzing the public art installations, we used both visual and contextual interpretation. We analyzed the aesthetic parts of the public art (texts, colors, shapes, textures and visual overload). To give you an example, we

tested if the size or scale of a sculpture indicated civic pride, or if murals with environmental themes spoken of environmental consciousness. The thematic content of public art was examined looking at how cultural, historical, environmental symbols were embedded in this art. We studied murals and sculptures that referenced local heritage or nature and looked at how they added to the community's collective identity or natural values. When possible, we gathered information on the artists through plaques, artist statements, and with curators' interview. The artists had left us to wonder how their work should be read, and the goals of the park or more general cultural values. We looked at public art in the context of the signage and the graffiti, exploring the messages and themes conveyed through this variety of communication.

3.12 Thematic Coding and Triangulation.

For heuristics, we used thematic coding where we looked for patterns existing in the data and reporting them. As we analyzed the field notes, photographs, and interview responses, we developed key themes such as:

- Signage Themes: Environmental consciousness, community norms and inclusivity.
- Graffiti Themes: Resisting, cultural identity, social commentary, and environmental advocacy.
- Public Art Themes: Environmentalism, social unity, cultural heritage.

To assure the validity and reliability of our findings we applied triangulation which meant we checked data from more than one source for example, observations, grey analysis, public art analysis and interview responses. Such findings enabled us to make well-rounded conclusions about how the three expressions of expression (e.g.

Wall Signage, Graffiti, and Public Art) overlap in interaction and how to decode community identity, cultural diversity, and environmental attitude within the urban parks.

3.13 Final Interpretation

This research evaluates how the combination of signs and graffiti and public art sculptors the societal identity and diverse cultural aspects and eco-conscious thinking within urban park areas. Signs combined with graffiti and public artworks demonstrate the management of spatial areas as well as personal identity and public communication within urban social settings.

4. Findings

The analysis investigates urban parks communication by studying signages and graffiti together with public installations of art works while observing their influences on community values and environmental perspectives. The qualitative analysis establishes dominant patterns among communication through these three formats which reveal how they build a collective understanding of urban environments. The research findings group into three separate areas which focus on signage and graffiti alongside public art.

Signage: Community Identity and Environmental Values Representation

Urban parks mainly deploy signage for three main purposes which include regulations and information dissemination and maintaining the environment. The collected evidence revealed several essential patterns which pertain to improving inclusiveness and delivering environmental content alongside making facilities accessible.

4.1 Inclusivity and Language Use

Park markings are prepared in multiple languages which highlight an inclusive policy toward diverse neighborhood communities. Signage that includes both

English and Spanish language is present specifically in locations where Hispanic population numbers are high to provide residents with equal access to information. The Park signage in areas with low population diversity shows predominant use of English language. All Park signs featuring multiple languages demonstrate that the facility works to create a inclusive environment for visitors of diverse backgrounds.

4.2 Environmental Awareness

Multiple signs within the park system transmit sustainability messages to promote conservation activities while raising public awareness. Several Park visitors adopt environmentally conscious habits following the placement of pictograms regarding recycling bins together with water conservation symbols coupled with tree protection notices throughout the park. Visitors at playgrounds and picnic sites find environmental waste disposal instructions posted throughout these areas to support proper waste management practices.

4.3 Regulatory and Safety Messages

The regulatory signage system presents essential functions which sustain the order and safety conditions inside parks. Park regulations present three main warnings about smoking restrictions and leash control and daily entry regulations. The signs maintain a neutral formal language with the purpose of reducing uncertainty while following all park rules.

4.4 Placement and Accessibility

The most critical signage is installed for maximum visibility at key locations that include park entrances and restrooms as well as playground areas. Placing signs in distant park areas decreases their potential impact on visitor conduct. Environmental messaging in the park gets limited visibility which creates doubts about reaching visitors everywhere with these messages.

Graffiti: Cultural Identity, Social Commentary, and Environmental Activism
Public expression through graffiti appears as a sudden unmediated phenomenon that happens in urban parks. The evaluation tracks down three fundamental concepts which appear as cultural identity together with social commentary and environmental activism.

4.5 Cultural Identity and Social Pride

The art form of graffiti proves itself as an efficient means for local communities to shape both their cultural identity and show pride in their population. Artist-created graffiti works display cultural elements and named phrases together with personal cues which help express minority and marginalized group identities. Multiple building paintings located throughout the area serve to commemorate important figures from history while highlighting community members and regional cultural figures which demonstrates public space control by residents.

4.6 Political and Social Commentary

Through its use graffiti operates as a tool to make political statements and provide social critiques of the surrounding world. Several instances of graffiti address themes such as social inequality, government policies, and urban development issues. The area around park entrances displays graffiti containing statements about affordable housing together with messages about gentrification and political dissatisfaction. You can find numerous bold text pieces with eye-catching color schemes throughout this area in order to promote thought and encourage action.

4.7 Environmental Activism

Environmental awareness is a major subject that plays a significant role in graffiti activities. There are frequent appearance of environmental preservation slogans like "Save the Earth" and "Protect

Our Parks" as well as "Stop Pollution" which normally features illustrations including trees and animals together with natural landscape imagery. Urban parks function beyond recreational spaces since they create environmental advocacy platforms together with social and political space.

Location and Interaction with Park Elements
Park visitors discover graffiti primarily in hidden locations behind trees and next to fences and park structure backs. The selected areas of placement avoid direct conflict between artists and park authorities who maintain control of the park. Graffiti occasionally merges with both official park signage and public artworks to generate public discussion between administrative mandates and community artwork. The display of a peace-themed mural causes an arresting visual effect that stands in direct opposition to the "No Loitering" sign which functions as regulatory control.

Public Art: Community Pride, Cultural Reflection, and Environmental Consciousness

Different art collections comprising public artwork serve as representations of community ethics together with cultural elements and ecological values. The research reveals three dominant themes which dominate the analysis.

4.8 Cultural Reflection and Local Heritage

Local historical background along with cultural traditions and historical roots make up most public artistic displays. The artistic representations in numerous murals focus on showing historical locations and traditional cultural symbols in addition to major community accomplishments. Community parks showcase artworks dedicated to both indigenous heritage and immigrant communities through which all residents strengthen their sense of

collective identity.

4.9 Social Unity and Community Pride

The large-scale murals show different community members socializing peacefully to promote social unity among all people. The artwork finds positions in front of parking lots and main walkways to promote community participation.

4.10 Environmental Themes

The awareness of environmental issues remains a fundamental subject within public art display. Artistic representations of trees and rivers together with wildlife appear throughout murals while the works contain sustainability-focused slogans for conservation. The art installations implement both natural materials and recycled materials for demonstrating sustainable artistic methods.

4.11 Interaction with Visitors

Many artists develop interactive public art that enables viewers to actively touch artworks while sharing emotional engagement with the art piece. Visitors can actively experience art through sculptures when these artworks are strategically installed to promote hand interaction or allow pass-through or photography.

4.12 Summary of Findings

Signs mainly provide three important functions which include regulation and information delivery as well as environmental communication. Effective sign placement together with multilingual signage enhances both public inclusivity and accessibility and has an impact on public behavior.

Through grassroots means graffiti enables citizens to share their cultural ideas as well as raise political awareness alongside environmental advocacy concerns. Both signage and public artwork have binary relationships with official signage by contesting established institutional messages.

The faculties of Public Art consist of advancing community identity alongside

supporting cultural traditions and serving as an ecological sustainability tool. The use of interactive installations leads to increased public involvement which strengthens social unity between people.

5. Conclusion

The research explores how signage along with graffiti and public art use language to develop and display both social identification and cultural variety and environmental mindset within metropolitan parks. The institutional voice transmitted by signage helps reinforce public regulations and it promotes inclusivity and environmental awareness at the same time. As an unregulated form of speech graffiti stands as a self-motivated communication method which shows cultural affiliations with simultaneous display of opposition and activism. Through its inclusiveness public art links official and community sources to create social unity as well as cultural visibility and ecological understanding.

The examined findings show that parks in urban areas exceed their role as recreation facilities. The competition between signage and graffiti and public art demonstrates the conflict of regulating laws against freedom of artistic self-expression which determines how people will interact with their cities.

5.1 Recommendations

Future research could continue to grow by examining how digital or interactive signage may further include people and be environmentally aware in urban parks. Further investigation of how graffiti has changed its function as a tool of social activism in reactions to shift in political and cultural contexts would also be valuable.

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