

Graffiti's Spatial Contestation: An Observational Analysis on Church Street

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Abstract

Graffiti in India – what does it mean? The graffiti scenario in India is something that is measuring grounds. However, what exactly is happening with the diverse forms of graffiti in India? Graffiti in the West and Europe are recognised as cultural movement of their own. Does such impactful street and public art create cultural impact in India? Though research indicates the trajectory of graffiti artists is to have their art up-ended into museum and gallery spaces from streets and public spaces, the movement began in public spaces. In India there are studio spaces and galleries for Graffiti however, the public and street art of the same is rarely seen in its authenticity. The essentiality of graffiti is being transformed from a rebellious and daring self-expression within a public space to a more institutionalized, tailored and commodified essentiality of private spaces. Can this enclosed art space aid or create something of cultural impact? This paper aims to analyse tags in church street in Bangalore, Karnataka to be creating a spatial contestation, through its different types of graffiti present within its spread of 750 meters. By using Lefebvre's theory of The Production of Space, this article aims to understand the spatial relevance of Graffiti and tags in Church street, Bangalore, India. This spatial approach to understanding the graffiti and tags in church street helps in understanding the art practice better, as spatial analysis exposes their essentiality.

Keywords

Graffiti; Bangalore; India; spatiality; Church street.

1. Introduction

Church Street is listed as one of the places to visit in the city by various travel guides and websites. Church Street is considered one of the busiest and beloved streets in Bangalore (Holidify) where “It is lined with gift shops, music shops, bookstores, restaurants and cafes, some of them being the oldest in the city, all selling a wide variety of products and tasty treats. There are days when artists set up shop out on the streets and sell their work that includes paintings, photo frames, posters and handmade items. There are arcades for children and adults to play at and tattoo parlors too (Holidify). Yet, Church street ranks among many places to visit and not among important places to visit.

The renovation of church street five years back made it a place that gave importance to the interaction between pedestrians and the place (Naresh V. Narasimhan, 30).

“Church Street caught the imagination of the people because of the unique kind of public space it has become” (2018), says Narasimhan, design architect of the project. This renovation happened after an IED bomb blast that took place at church street in 2014. Post renovation, the street has become one of the top places that represents the nightlife of Bangalore. Church street is also listed among the spots that have street art in Bangalore (Roshni, LBB). However, church street consists of not just street art, it has tags as well. Church Street being one of the busiest hubs of night life, one of the must visit places in Bangalore and one of the places with street arts, this street prompts the relevance of tags, a subcultural element in one of the city's diversified spaces.

Since graffiti tags are fixed markings and don't have the nature of mobility, tags have become part of place observation which is a natural setting of an urban area. Obser-

vational analysis (Byrne, 2021) is used as a method of study to analyze the tags. Thus answering the question of “where to observe, what to observe, how long to observe, how to record observations, and how to analyze the data” this observation study consists of the observation of graffiti tags in church street on where it is placed and what it deciphers. The observation was carried for a day and the data is recorded as photographs.

1. Graffiti in India

The term graffiti always reminds the reader of a confusing question on whether is it art or is it vandalism? This questions prevails in Indian scenario as well. Graffiti as a popular art or as a street art representative of popular culture, is beginning to lay down its roots in India for the past decade besides this confusion. The practice of drawing images and words on public walls has been an age old practice. This is vouched for in certain research. An example of the vast number of practices prevalent in Indian public spaces, where “Cultural marking of the streets has long prevalence in all regions of the country, urban and semi urban. The mode of expression and manifestations have been quite unique, for example, hand painted Bollywood posters, typographic signboards, truck art, slogans, images of gods painted along sidewalks or tiles axed to walls to prevent people from urinating in public, painted advertisements by small businesses, and political graffiti” (Bhasin, 112). All of these practices of art in public places indicate multiple purposes of making art in public. They range from the art being made for advertisement, campaign, devotion, public cleanliness and so on. Ajantha cave paintings and murals on caves (Bhasin, 112) serve their historical and social purposes of existence. But, are they graffiti? The problem with classifying cave art as graffiti is that it assumes the social meaning of legality associated with graffiti, as cave art was never considered as vandalism. Also, cave paintings at the least had “something to do with ritual, and therefore was in part a community-sanctioned pastime” (Lewisohn, 26). Graffiti differs from cave painting in this very sense of legality, or the institution of law. Also, graffiti differs from cave painting and other forms of public art in terms of its cultural conundrum as well. The wall murals in Mumbai carry a sense of Bollywood pride, political propaganda and a reflection of social issues (Dahiya, 27) where it deciphers a sense of safety, pride and appeal within that public space (Dahiya, 21). Government’s effort

in beautifying public spaces resulted in further sanctioned practices of art in public spaces in Mumbai (Pilo, 28) as well as establishment of street art festival in Cochin (Abdurahiman 107). These efforts, though needed and appreciable, minimizes individualistic expressions through art in public space as well reduces the gravity of looking at graffiti as a cultural movement.

The afore mentioned practices, more importantly, not venturing beyond these practices, makes graffiti and street art just a “feeble way of retrieving classical architecture” (Lefebvre, 145). Graffiti, in its essentiality, through the visuality that it creates and demands, in public spaces, makes it dissimilar to other street art practices, sanctioned art in public spaces, cave paintings or advertisements of all forms. For, the intention, expression and the image/word symbolism related to the intention of the artist/graffitist also play a major role in distinguishing graffiti from other such practices. Though it does not deny the historical evolution of such practices, there is a need for distinction, arising from the fact that graffiti is more than self-expression. They are cultural symbols, symbols indicating a meaning against the semantic trope of a particular place. The acceptance of graffiti as art within museums and galleries and not just as vandalism (Pereira, 6) indicates the very fact that graffiti is against the semantic grain of a place, where it either challenges or establishes a new semantic trope. For anything that is accepted in public spaces will not require a space of its own to be practiced and showcased. Another reason for considering graffiti not in parlance with other street art forms, is because of its definition. For, the definition is always given from the end of the “detractors” (Pereira, 9) where the terms “ ‘tagging’ and ‘spraying’ are associated with ‘artist’ and ‘self-expression’ ”(Pereira, 9) rather as vandalism, indicating the softening of an individual’s claim over spatial semantics.

1.1. Types of Graffiti in India

The long history of art in public spaces, the evolution of graffiti in terms public art practices and resident opinions on graffiti (Verma, 2023) are articulated in recent research, emphasizing a deeper venture of and on graffiti practices in India. In India, what is understood as Graffiti can be classified into two types: murals and markings. Murals, can be further classified into two types based on the purpose of execution. The murals that are created upon invitation and those that are of free expression. In India the

first kind, murals put up with invitation or permission are of wide range. The government projects taken up in various parts of the country is an example of this kind. This can be widely observed in various cities of India (Verma, 2023). This reflects the cultural acceptance of graffiti as legal graffiti post 1989 in New York. This act have transformed the practice of graffiti within suburbs to other urban spaces (Kramer, 4). The problem with this approach towards graffiti is that these practices “inadvertently gives away the artist’s freedom of expression. The images created as a consequence are un-offensive and devoid of any strong meaning (Sharma, 2018)” (Bhasin, 113). The murals of free expression in India usually are inspired by the surroundings of the place. The artist creates their piece on the walls which later is whitewashed.

The second type of graffiti can be classified as Markings, which include tagging on public walls. In India, Bhasin states that, “As graffiti practices declined in Kolkata, a rise in tags could be observed in Delhi and Mumbai by artists like Yantra in 2006, Zine in 2007 and Daku in 2008 (Shukla, 2012)” (Bhasin, 112). Church Street, the place of study, contains tags as well as murals and street arts. Guesswho is one such graffiti collective operating in Bangalore and it has put forth a number of societal issues that are a mix of contradictions. Guesswho’s street art has been analyzed using semiotics (Rajan, 2021) reveals the meaning of the art put up in the street. A semiotic study on select graffiti in Bangalore reveals that these graffiti work as a “social commentary” (Suchitha, 71) exploring themes such as “feminism, women rights and transgender” discourses (Suchitha, 71). Graffiti in academic spaces has also been studied as graffiti aiding in political statements (Miladi, 2018). Research on Graffiti in India though is yet to be academically explored more, the exposure of the presence of graffiti and murals are made popular through newspaper articles. However, the understanding of graffiti in India is mixed up with the understanding of street art and murals where tagging and piecing are considered as vandalism while sanctioned practices are considered as graffiti and murals, which is subculturally absurd. For Graffiti “as we know it cannot exist without the tag. It is *the* essential component for learning, practicing and mastering the form of graffiti as vandalistic art” (Snyder 1).

2. Methods and Methodology

The objective of the study is to navigate the places of graffiti- tags, murals and markings, and thereby graffiti culture in church street from a spatial understanding of this particular urban space. The observation is carried over the tags and graffiti in church street and its relational positioning to the brand spaces and public spaces. The observation is carried out to determine the nature of the environment and the possible semantic trope of Bangalore’s graffiti culture. The study uses visual methods as part of addressing the rise in urban graffiti culture. Theoretical interpretations are made from graffiti theories and Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*. Also, Visual interpretive methods are used to study the cultural aspects of graffiti culture. For this study, graffiti tags are observed within church street. Since graffiti tags are fixed markings and don’t have the nature of mobility, tags have become part of place observation which is a natural setting of the urban setting. The observation was carried for a day and the data is recorded as photographs. The research by combining theoretical interpretations with observational analysis aims to establish an understanding of the tags in church street. Situating the information containing the photographs within Lefebvre’s spatial triad, the research aims to unearth the spatial meanings of tags within the location. The three parts of the social space Representations of Space (Space of scientists, urbanists and architects), Representational Space (Space of symbolic value given by its inhabitants) and Spatial Practice (Everyday routines and practices forming a subjective social space) (Lefebvre,79) will be denoted as RoS, RS and SP respectively in the analysis. The theoretical underpinning on Space and Spatiality of Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* is that, social spaces are produced (1991, 26) and thereby the social space produced by graffiti tags can be understood and deciphered by considering Graffiti tags as spatial markers. This study follows constructivist approach within the ontological paradigm that indicates there is no single reality to know about urbanism, rather based on interpretations of the observer.

3. Types of Tags in Church Street

Church street is nestled between St. Mark’s road and Brigade Road which comprises high end and popular brands of restaurants, hotel chains, clothing and many more that cater to an economically comfortable, if not privileged,

class. It has the famous and the busiest metro stations in the city, MG metro station situated in the middle of its 750 meters spread. This makes church street as one of the popular streets for shopping and as a preferred commuting spot as well. Since “writers practice their tags constantly and put lots of thought and energy into figuring out the best spots to put their names up” (Snyder, 2), the role of place in deciphering the relevance of tags and graffiti writing in an urban space becomes pivotal, thereby making church street an apt place for the study of graffiti culture. Also, “a writer’s knowledge of the city in which the writer paints—an intimate knowledge of back alleys, freeway interchanges, interconnecting rooftops, patterns of light and human movement, neighbourhood policing tendencies, lines of visibility, major routes of commuter travel, and phases of urban development and decay” informs “a writer’s participatory knowledge of the graffiti subculture, and from an understanding of the places and situations that members of that subculture imbue with *cultural significance*. (emphasis added) (Ferrel, 49-50) which in turn makes church street even more a qualified geography to understand graffiti practices.

Since Indian demography appreciates only sanctioned pieces as graffiti and considers rest of free expression in equivalence with vandalism, in this paper tags will be considered as essentially graffiti as they retain the spirit of graffiti writing. Tags in church street can be categorized spatially into three different types: claimed spaces (tags around mural spaces), restricted spaces (tags near brand private spaces) and practice spaces (tags near public spaces). For the onlooker, or the observer, the actual meaning behind tags cannot be deciphered. Hence it becomes imperative to understand tags not just based on the place of tagging, but also the spatiality of the place. Also, Tags within urban space are spatial markers in Lefebvrian sense. For, Space may be marked physically, as with animals’ use of smells or human groups’ use of visual or auditory indicators; alternatively, it may be marked abstractly, by means of discourse, by means of signs. Space thus acquires symbolic value. Symbols, in this view, always imply an emotional investment, an affective charge (fear, attraction, etc.), which is so to speak deposited at a particular place and thereafter ‘represented’ for the benefit of everyone elsewhere” (Lefebvre, 140).

3.1. Tags near Murals

The beginning of church street has Church Street Social, a popular restaurant, bar and workspace contains a mural on its shutters and is completely visible only when the shutters are closed. During the day time this particular place serves as a reminder of the mural and during night, when the shutters are rolled up, the meaning associated with the graffiti changes drastically into a subsided colorful wall. The tag marks here, as seen in fig 1., are those found in the opposite side of Church Street Social. The tags here are found on the electrical board boxes but not on anything else. The tags here represent two different letterings and signatures. Here the tags are simple and indicates the usage of spray cans to write on the electrical board boxes. Opposite to this tag one can find the mural painted on the shutters of church street social. This was an invited art by Muralkings as seen in Fig.2. This project was a tie up with the Netherland Embassy in India to mark the celebration of 75 years of friendship between the countries. This mural named “Roar of Freedom” is drawn from the symbolism of the lion being the national animal once upon a time in India as well as the lion representing the royalty in the Netherlands. The mural portrays “The King of Beasts’ traditionally symbolizes courage, nobility, royalty and strength and has now a prominent spot right in the heart of Bengaluru” (Mural Kings, 2022). The tags near this mural space on an electric board deciphers the claiming of space by the tagger via the public property, which is already a space designed and dedicated for public use. The mural indicating geopolitical ties on one side of the street vanishes during the night as the shutter rolls up while the taggers claim the public space alongside advertisements. The RoS associated with Church Street Social and the Postbox indicates entertainment and mailing. The mural containing a geopolitical value on Church Street Social berates both the SP associated with the mural and the users of the restaurant. On the contrary, the tags on postbox, the RoS, indicates a RS laden with power against the institution, thereby disregarded and becoming an insignificant SP. The underlying connotation of negligence in both RoS practices of Graffiti though appears insignificant, through the spatial claim of tags it creates a contesting spatial understanding of this particular spatial marker.



Fig1. Tags opposite to Church Street Social



Fig 2. The Roar of Freedom



Fig.3 The Marko Mural

On the side wall of the building hosting Church Street Social there is the Mural by Marko 93, an international artist. Church street social is a place of higher economic range and the presence of two murals indicates a subtle requirement of attention towards the mural which is unlikely. Murals and piecing are placed in higher visibility spots where the art is visible to everyone. Here one is placed on a shutter that rolls up during the highly crowded time and the other lies on the sidewalls hardly visible to the stroller on the street. Though the paint with light on the wall catches the attention of the stroller, most of the lower half of the mural is covered by the adjacent building's gate. These

two murals sanctioned by institutions, governmental and NGOs, indicate the inclusivity of art in urban spaces, to be specific, spaces owned by private institutions. These murals stand as a testimony for spatial claims of institutions which is very much unlike the graffiti subcultural practices. The tags placed opposite to these murals showcase a claim over public spaces and properties of the government as well as, dare say, poses a challenge of spatial claim of individuals in the same language.

3.2 Tags near Brand Spaces

The next tag visible is on the post box opposite to another high end restaurant: Hotel High Gates. The tag on this post box carries a different marking than the ones seen before. The lettering and the typography are different on the mailbox. The top part of the mailbox has residues of the older tag indicating layers of older tags. As one can see in fig.4, there are residues of an older poster torn off from the mailbox. This indicates an attempt made to cover the mail box and that, now that it has been ripped off, the tags are visible. Though the mail box is not in use the tag is still on a public property. However, there are no other advertisement posters on the mailbox except for the place where it was stuck to cover the tag. The tags on the

postbox yet again, reiterates the spatial claim of an individual on a public property. The attempts to repaint the tags on the postbox showcases regular attempts from the government's side to restore their property. The attempt to reclaim the space by the government or associated institutions, showcases the reiteration of SP and RoS despite the persistence of tags' RS, yet again, deciphering a contestational value to the tags.

Opposite to this place is where other set of the tags are seen on the electrical box along with advertisements near the famous landmark: Blossoms Book House as seen in fig.5. The tags here do not resemble the ones seen on the postbox. Here there are tags of "skar", "suko" and many

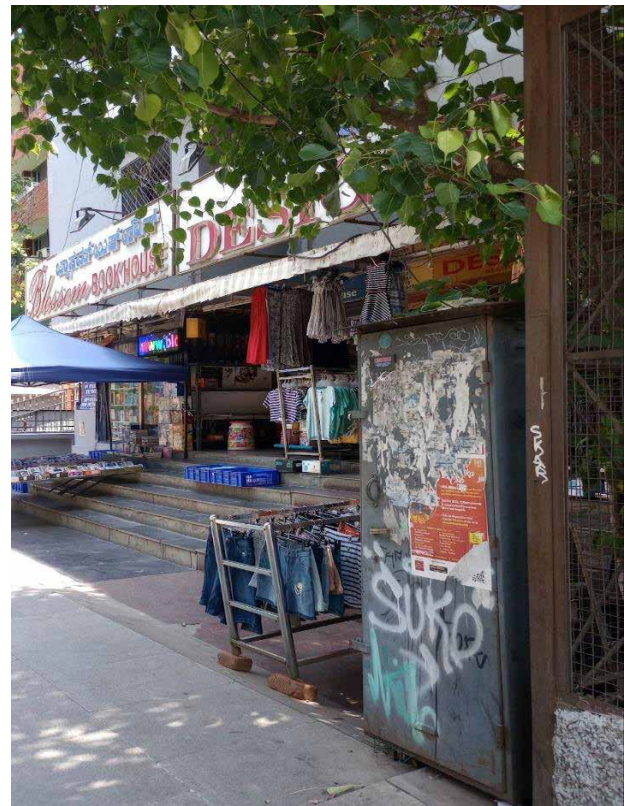
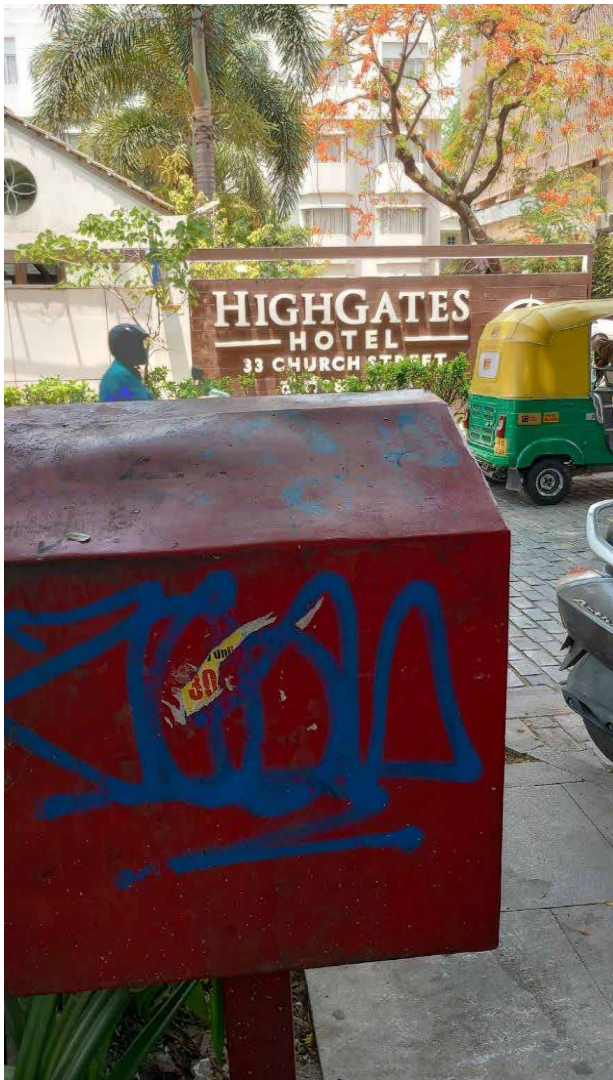


Fig 4. Tags on postbox

Fig 5. Tags near bookhouse

more whose letterings are complicated to decipher to the common eye. Also there are spray can letterings as well as markers that have been used to tag in this place. The presence of two tags opposite to each other indicate that this particular space opposite to Highgates Hotel is a well-known spot for tagging. However, this place is hidden behind a tree and it is not as visible as a perfect place to tag would essentially be preferred.

The tag seen in fig.6 is found on the wall of a residential building situated next to the compound of Sattva Aura showcases layers of tags on the wall covered by layers of paints. However, this place being a former spot of tags seems to have limited the activity as it contains only a singular tag. The wall here is within the premises of the residential house. It is actually astounding to see the limitation of tags on a residential wall unlike the post box. Though the reason behind this limitation could be subjective in nature, for the onlooker it gives a sense of unclaimed space equivalent to that of brand places, where the tags never exists. This layering of tags covered in paints is found not just on this residential wall. It is also found in electrical board boxes as seen fig.7 situated opposite to Amoeba,

a popular sports bar and arcade center which is another busiest spot on weekends. The opposing locations of tags to Restricted Space and besides Practice Space, in this part of the street showcases the hegemony of private spaces over public spaces, which opposes the renovation policies, RoS, of church street and its utility of public spaces. This particular placement of tags actually makes the tags more visible than the previous ones but it also deciphers the depth of privatization of church street's public space that extends beyond the penned RoS. Though the tag becomes a contronym in this case, it deciphers a hegemony in spatial claim.

As seen in fig.7, one can find tag marks on the electrical board boxes. One can also see that the new tags are of "suko" but the tags are in different style. Tags being the signature of the artists it tends to be mostly the same as it marks the territory of the artist. It is one of the first tags where one can see the same signature written in two different styles. Suko's tags are found in another well-known spots of church street: the dustbins. The street is filled with restaurants, pubs, shopping centers and many more



Fig 6. Tags on residential wall

which comes with necessary waste disposal facilities. However, there is a pair of independent waste disposals in the church street situated opposite to Amoeba. Here, there are tags of “suko” and with writings of “sleaz” and “freiz” written beneath the tag of suko as seen in fig.8.

er artist whose lettering styles are similar to that of “Zero” graffiti which can be seen a few yards after the tags on waste bins. The tags when read together as “Seize” “what” poses a rather seemingly innocent question: stop, what? However, it is interesting to notice that this dialogue does not comprise any punctuation marks. Also, it is interesting to see that the not so explicitly attention seeking places for a tag contains the tag of only two people, prompting the question, why not claim this space? Are waste bins, though highly visible, less attractive to taggers?



Fig 7. Tags over a period of time



Though the tags near the brand spaces are on public places, these tags draw attention to the onlooker as they are situated opposite to the popular pubs, restaurants and work spaces that carry a brand value to them. There are so many other electrical boxes in the street that are untagged. Combining these two observations within the street, it appears that the tags here showcase a supposed claim of spaces just like the places carrying brand value. The consistent repainting of the public properties and the private properties near and opposite to these places, unlike other tagged electrical boxes and public properties, showcases a diligent determination of spatial claim, SP of taggers. Moreover, it showcases an ongoing duel of signs over the public properties opposite to the brand places.



Fig.8 Tags on waste bins

3.3 Tags near/on public spaces

The tags on waste bins, a place garnering high visibility and less attention, showcases a dialogue happening between the taggers which can be seen on the side of the waste bins. The tag of “Seize” with a crown top is by another



Fig 9. Tags and Graffiti on Shutters

A few meters after those tags on waste bins, one can find the tags on a series of seven shutters as well as graffiti writing that states “7UP”, “Home” and many more. Unlike the mural on Church Street Social, mural which is visible only during the day and not during the opening of the resto-pub, these shutters remain closed. This line of shutters appears to be the ones dedicated to the space for graffiti writing, where the perpetually closed shutters offers visibility to the graffiti. But hardly, does anyone recognise these to be graffiti because of the content: a practice reinstating Pilo’s claim on “painting graffiti out of context is also quite pointless and tends to alienate those who are exposed to it daily (Pilo, 28). For, the vendors who sell thrift clothes during the evening hardly seems to have any customers, making their claim to the space challenging everyday. The lack of recognition of graffiti writing in this spot also exists because of the way in which murals and tags have been seen so far within the street: next to advertisements and near hidden and vanishing murals. Though these shutters comprise of tags and other pieces of lettering and tags, it does really confuse the onlooker on what does graffiti challenge here. The claiming of these spaces resembles more of the practice space showcasing the SP of graffiti artists and taggers familiar with church street, similar to the intent conveyed through tags on public properties.

A few steps ahead one can find a mural of “Spider Man: No Way Home” on the walls of a private printing house. This is the only space where the compound walls of a



private enterprise is filled with a mural apart from Church Street Social. The entire street, though it has different private enterprises, does not contain a single mural, graffiti or tag on its compound walls. Everywhere, the graffiti and tags are found on public properties. The places where the murals are present are the ones that were sanctioned by someone but not a free self-expression of the artist or their crew, yet again deciphering a contesting claim over space through SP and RoS.

A few yards after this graffiti lies the MG Metro which contains a four storey mural on the walls of its entrance. However, one can find the tag “seize” on the right side of the entrance. This mural was designed and executed by Shrishti school of design artists and students to create a new “Brand Bengaluru” (Swamy, 2016). The mural art creates a sense of RS over the RoS of a metro building, and interestingly not even becoming a photo spot, thereby lacking any graffiti SP related to it. This unique space, however, is quite popular in newspapers as one of the landmarks of church street, concretising the association of RS to its RoS. Opposite to the metro for a spread of 150 meters the walls adjacent to the pedestrian path are decorated with colorful art and installations on the pavements to uplift a sense of fun and easiness on the street. Towards the end of the street, one can find a cluster of brands clustered in one complex, one after the other. Here one can hardly find tags except on a electrical board box before Starbucks as seen in Fig.10.



Fig.10. Tags near brand spaces

Tags here indicates the difference in time it would have taken for the tagger to tag the place as the last tag was a few meters far away from this tag. Here, the tag is again on a public place adjacent to a popular private food chain. The street ends with popular brands joining the MG road which is one of the popular shopping destinations of Bengaluru. Interestingly, there are no tags or graffiti or murals visible in this junction of Church Street and MG road showcasing the tag's lack of introductory value to the entire stretch unlike its other end. Therefore, in all of these places, the tags create a sense of contesting spatial understanding of church street where it unravels the extent of monotonous private commercialized spatial claim while at the same time it deciphers a solid commemoration of individualistic expressions and claims of space, simultaneously not advocating vandalism because of its restricted markers of practice.

4. Conclusion

Graffiti from its cultural value clearly embodies and imposes the message of rebelliousness, challenge, authorship/ ownership, a high risk factor of self-expression, and a sense of accomplishment. The public space of church street is highly commercialized and compartmentalized. In such a public space the accessibility of goods or the emotive factor of owning certain experiences and goods is clearly segregated, rather bucket listed. In such a public space of highly driven capitalistic spatial connotations of meaning and identity, the ownership through tags on public spaces clearly makes the places tagged a pleasure principle. Graffiti in church street clearly expresses all those messages that are associated with tags. It also conceals the answers of why only public places are tagged. Though one can argue from the point of view of vandalism and make it known that it is a destruction of government property, tags near places carrying brand values will en-

lighten the dialogue happening via spatial claim by taggers and make the onlookers question the extent of curb on vandalism.

As a matter of fact, given that there are multiple walls and enormous private spaces, vandalism can extend to private spaces as well. In essence, these tags by showcasing vandalistic characteristics on public properties unlike private properties showcases a well- rooted opposing voice for the government and even more roar against private ventures, due to the spatial restriction (Lefebvre, 144) imposed in the name of pleasure principle.

Situating, the tags within the spatial triad, gives a clear understanding of the tags. In the spatial sense, the graffiti produces a space of its own, by using the representational spaces of the street. For, "The architect is supposed to construct a signifying space wherein form is to function as signifier is to signified; the form, in other words, is supposed to enunciate or proclaim the function." (Lefebvre, 144). Here in the presence of private and public architectures, which follow complex structures and rented commercial spaces, which can change the identity of place through the brands that encompass the place, graffiti tags produce a space while making the architecture and urban planning a repressive space nudging them to reveal as well as conceal the meaning behind their existence in that particular place.

By identifying graffiti as individualistic self expression through tags and by deciphering their spatial claim, it becomes evident that graffiti tags create a space of their own. But, why does graffiti need or create a space of their own? Lefebvre posits that considering graffiti to be less of a medium in deciphering social contradictions as, "Is it really possible to use mural surfaces to depict social contradictions while producing something more than graffiti?" (145). His observations cannot be completely denied nor completely accepted in the case of church street. For, Graffiti has also been addressed as a rightful way of expressing oneself within an urban space (Zieleniec, 2017). However, the presence of a negative perception of graffiti in an urban space is also considered an identity crisis (Đukić, 2020) of the place, in this case it becomes an identity crisis of spatial practices. While it is considered as an "interstitial space that provisionally fills the chasm between enduring (b)orders of legality and potentially alternative boundaries of legitimacy" (Bernardoni, 2013) (4), in church street, they

challenge Lefebvre's notion of graffiti being, just a graffiti. The murals upon invitation indicates a symbol of visual pleasure as well as the lack of self-expression and individualistic spatial claim. The tags within the street indicate restricted spatial claim of an individual, thereby exposing the social contradiction of accessibility to spatial practices, let alone places. "Its very insubstantiality brings forth the insubstantiality of the national, that set of spatial identity rules by which we all play but which have no other validity than within the bounds of the game" (West-Pavlov, 13). By playing within the spatial rules and through the unique spatial claim through tags alongside murals and letter pieces of graffiti writing, a combined symbolic value, tags create a depiction of social and spatial contestation, indicating a hope for the trope to becomes subcultural.

Conflict of Interests and ethics

The author(s) declare no conflict of interests. The author(s) also declare full adherence to all journal research ethics policies, namely involving the participation of human subjects anonymity and/ or consent to publish.

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