

Exploring Graffiti Art as a Catalyst for Placemaking in Malaysian Urban Spaces

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Abstract

Urban art, particularly graffiti, has the potential to transform city environments and enhance cultural identity, yet its integration into placemaking strategies in Malaysia remains underexplored. This study examines how graffiti art can be effectively incorporated into placemaking efforts to enhance urban spaces and foster community engagement. Despite its potential to foster cultural diversity and community dialogue, negative perceptions and lack of strategic frameworks hinder graffiti's acceptance as a valuable architectural element. This research aims to bridge this gap by developing comprehensive strategies and methods to integrate graffiti into placemaking initiatives. By exploring the connections between graffiti art and placemaking elements, the study seeks to transform urban spaces and enhance cultural identity in Malaysia. Expected results include improved urban aesthetics, increased community participation, and a stronger sense of local cultural identity. The study's contributions lie in providing actionable methodologies for leveraging graffiti art to create vibrant, inclusive public spaces in Malaysia.

Keywords: Graffiti Art, Placemaking, Urban Spaces, Cultural Identity, Community Engagement

Introduction

Urban art contributes to the transformation of city environments by incorporating current trends in architecture, landscape, colour and lighting solutions, advertising, and decorative and monumental art (Meseneva, 2020). The term "urban art" describes visual art forms that are created by and representative of city dwellers, including pieces in galleries, urban art installations are primarily integrated into the landscape (The Urbanist, 2023). Urban art contributes to city transformation by focusing on site-specific creative practices, often assisted by new advances in technology (Coe, 2019). Art in urban spaces promotes experience and perception capability, social participation, and relationship with context (Karimimoshaver et al., 2021). Creative ways of using public spaces, including artistic practices, are important

for implementing regenerative ideas, especially in an urban fabric that becomes strewn with unused and neglected areas, disrupting the integrity of the urban plan and “often transforming the public spaces into a residual and abandoned areas” (Amato & Bevilacqua, 2020). Urban art plays a significant role in a city's character development and is promoted through tourism services, promoting creative cities (Campos & Sequeira, 2020). Urban art is a form of social, political, and economic critique that is often ephemeral and accessible to all, despite the risk of arrest and vandalism (Augusto, 2019). However, there is limited research on how to strategically integrate urban art into urban planning and architecture. Existing studies often overlook practical methodologies and the preservation of urban art's cultural value and longevity.

Nowadays, human expression through art is playing a major role in the development of the urban landscape by shifting the old-fashioned paradigms of the rigid and static urban structuring and development, especially with the new urban trends floating on the surface (Ben Salem et al., 2021). Painting large artworks in public spaces ignites a direct interaction between spectator and mural (United Nations Regional Information Centre, 2021). Public art representations in architecture contribute to the identity of cities by enhancing social life, promoting equality, and fostering cultural exchange (Yavuz et al., 2020). Urban art positively impacts cities, places, and people's lives through placemaking, society, culture, economy, sustainability, wellbeing, wisdom, and innovation (Cheung et al., 2022). Artistic interventions in public spaces can either undermine local urban commons or foster social cohesion and sustainability, depending on their political implications and the context (Tartari et al., 2022). Urban art are often made bigger in scale to give a sense of place, especially at schools and on public walls to alleviate the street image as well as to revitalise a dull space or street (The Star, 2023).

Urban art in Malaysia primarily consists of graffiti art, full scale murals, small scale murals, and 2D rod iron sculptures, with Graffiti being the dominant forms (Muhammad et al., 2022a). Graffiti, seen as a form of artistic expression, has the potential to invigorate and enliven public spaces (Li & Liu, 2023). Graffiti can range from the most basic form of tagging, which only requires a quick, continuous one-line stroke of an aerosol spray can or paint marker to draw a name, to complex three-dimensional figures that need numerous line strokes, colours and angles to create the illusion of depth (The Star, 2023). Graffiti colours have chromatic structures similar to traditional paintings, with preferred colours near the yellow-blue axis and larger colour gamut due to synthetic pigments (Feitosa-Santana et al., 2020). In Malaysia, artists said that the scene has only been around for roughly 30 years, but it has now reached the status of a subculture where artists have found their own space of self-expression (Malay Mail, 2023). Graffiti should be seen as an intervention in daily urban life, which aims to use urban space to appeal to the public as well as an act of defiance (The Star, 2023). Through a series of practical features, such as interactive installations and community-driven projects, graffiti art in Malaysia can further enhance urban engagement and foster a stronger sense of community identity.

As of to date, the absence of a comprehensive understanding of the aesthetic implications of graffiti art on architectural spaces poses a significant challenge in shaping and experiencing architecture and urban environments in Malaysia. However, acknowledging the artistic value and potential of graffiti can lead to more inclusive and dynamic urban designs. By embracing

graffiti art as a legitimate form of architectural expression, architects can create more vibrant and engaging public spaces that reflect the cultural diversity and creativity of the community.

Problem Statement

Motivational Problem

The practice of placemaking has reversed the decline of many a neighbourhood, placemaking enables communities to bond, celebrate diverse cultural identities, and enjoy life in the city, thus offer opportunities for healthy, productive, resilient societies (Think City, 2024). In the Community Based Placemaking (CBP) the use of graffiti art, street murals and creative street furniture will be able to enhance physically the overall ambiance of certain sections of the community based placemaking but community driven placemaking needs to complement physical improvements which is challenged by the fact that a sense of community has yet to emerge (DBKL, 2019). Placemaking is a term that encompasses the diverse actions that seek to ensure people's surroundings offer them the best possible chances of thriving and fulfilling their potential in life (UN Habitat, 2020). Fundamentally rooted in community participation, the process of placemaking includes the planning, design, adaptation and management of public spaces (Think City, 2024). Placemaking is all about turning 'public' spaces into 'living' places that support the wellbeing of local communities and that can be managed and maintained by that community (UN Habitat, 2020).

There are signs that Malaysia's tourism industry is stuck in a comfort zone, existing tourism products are becoming "tired" and unattractive due to the lack of creativity and innovation, resulting from the over-dependence on the government and a silo mentality (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, 2020). Graffiti arts can potentially help the tourism industry by turning the areas into tourist attraction areas (Selangor.Travel, 2020). Apart from promoting the country's tourism, MOTAC also plays a role in introducing Malaysian culture and arts (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, 2023). Graffiti art has not only enhanced the city's aesthetic appeal but has also boosted tourism and local businesses (New Straits Times, 2024). The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) aims to promote the uniqueness of Malaysian arts, culture and heritage including tourism products as the main catalyst for the growth of the country's tourism and culture sector (Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, 2021).

In short, the motivational findings have portrayed a big picture that Malaysia's significant untapped potential in leveraging graffiti art to enhance urban spaces and propel the tourism industry forward. However, this potential remains largely unrealized due to the glaring absence of comprehensive strategies and frameworks tailored to seamlessly integrate graffiti art into community-based placemaking initiatives.

Research Problem

The aforementioned statements demonstrate that the Malaysian government is gradually committing to shaping Malaysia's cultural identity through graffiti art. Cultural identity is a complex and contested communication construct that influences individuals' self-perception and experiences in relation to others, influencing their understanding and experiences of the self in various contexts (Chen & Lin, 2019). Cultural identity is crucial for achieving psychological comfort, and art can effectively contribute to this process by reproducing ethnic and cultural identity (Shulga, 2023). Malaysian culture consists of material things and non-

material elements, including norms, symbols, knowledge, ceremonies, festivals, language, social institutions, and social structure (Muhamad et al., 2023). Promoting cultural identity through arts using local cultures as inspiration can help developing countries overcome globalization challenges and enhance their international relations (Salam, 2020). Graffiti art has evolved from criminal acts to profitable commercial forms, influencing social class, urban growth, cultural production, and consumerism (Gonçalves & Milani, 2022). Graffiti art contributes to urban identity by creating unique spaces and challenging the dominant role of city governments in public space use (Pogrmic & Đerčan, 2021). Consequently, there is a considerable void in acknowledging and fully embracing the significance of graffiti art as a valid and valuable contribution to the rich tapestry of Malaysia's cultural identity aspects.

Moreover, graffiti art serves as a catalyst for community engagement and social interaction within urban spaces, yet the extent to which it fosters a sense of belonging and inclusivity among diverse communities in Kuala Lumpur necessitates closer examination. In Malaysia, the development of graffiti art was rather slow (Abdullah & Mohamad, 2019). Urban art activities in Malaysia were only officially adopted in 2010 when Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) launched the KUL SIGN Festival. The event organized mural and graffiti painting activities along the Klang River, which is near to Central Market or Pasar Seni (Muhammad et al., 2022). Greater engagement in the arts predicts greater prosocial, such as volunteering and charitable giving, over a 2-year period, promoting a cohesive and sustainable society (Van de Vyver & Abrams, 2018). Graffiti art emerged from post-war social problems and has evolved to include self-expression, social protest, and political implications, with its main narrative being intervention in urban spaces (Dyomin & Ivashko, 2020). Graffiti has transformed urban art and cultural expression, serving as a catalyst for social change and transforming the aesthetic landscape of cities (Carollina, 2023). Graffiti, despite its negative connotation as vandalism, serves as effective alternative communication tools for marginalized groups, reaching a large audience through new media distribution (Kececi, 2021). Artworks that celebrate diversity, promote social justice, or convey messages of unity are more likely to resonate with a broader range of communities. Conversely, graffiti that is divisive, offensive, or exclusionary may alienate certain groups and hinder efforts to build a cohesive urban community.

One of the primary challenges posed by non-regulated graffiti in Malaysia is its perceived impact on the aesthetic integrity of architectural environments. Aesthetic understanding is essential for aesthetic virtue and developing it through provisional trust in testimony allows us to make informed aesthetic judgments (Hills, 2022). Aesthetic properties in art may have both subjective and objective aspects, and their relations to other properties may be complex and inseparable (Pećnjak, 2019). Graffiti art, through its repetitive use of coloured sprays, creates a visual impact and contributes to the public space (Semenov, 2020). The reason for a lack of focus on graffiti as an aesthetic object may be due in part to the sociological context within which graffiti is placed (Chamberlain et al., 2022). Graffiti art is perceived as more attractive by experts than non-experts, with image statistics predicting attractiveness ratings (Chamberlain et al., 2022). Graffiti art commodification in marginalized neighbourhoods of Lisbon has transformed the negative public image, but may also subjugate residents and perpetuate exclusion through aesthetic policies (Raposo, 2023). Graffiti and mural painting are increasingly relevant in urbanism and architecture, with their elitization and appreciation leading to increased exploration in areas such as interior/exterior architecture, product

design, advertising, and fashion (Masutti & Camargo, 2020). The absence of a comprehensive understanding of the aesthetic implications of non-regulated graffiti art on architectural spaces poses a significant challenge in shaping and experiencing architecture and urban environments in Malaysia.

However, the studies show that negative perception of graffiti art in Malaysia limits the appreciation of its social contributions to architectural spaces. Despite its potential to foster community dialogue, promote cultural diversity, and enrich the urban landscape with vibrant and dynamic expressions, the presence of non-regulated graffiti art raises several pressing questions about its impact on urban environments.

The research aims to address two primary questions. The first question explores how graffiti art can be effectively integrated into placemaking strategies to enhance urban spaces and foster community engagement in Malaysia. The second question focuses on how the elements of placemaking can be connected and integrated within graffiti art to transform urban spaces and enhance cultural identity in the country.

In line with these questions, the research objectives are twofold. First, the study seeks to develop comprehensive strategies for integrating graffiti art into placemaking efforts, with the aim of enhancing urban spaces and fostering greater community engagement in Malaysia. Second, it aims to explore and establish methods for connecting the elements of placemaking within graffiti art, with the goal of transforming urban environments and strengthening cultural identity in Malaysia.

Literature Review

The following section provides a comprehensive analysis of key studies related to graffiti art, its role in urban spaces, and its impact on cultural and community engagement. These studies explore various dimensions of graffiti, ranging from its artistic and aesthetic contributions to the challenges it poses in terms of public perception and territoriality. The table below summarizes the problem statements, research gaps, objectives, and conclusions drawn from each study, offering insights into how graffiti art has evolved as a dynamic form of urban expression. This review will help to identify existing gaps in the literature and highlight the need for further exploration into how graffiti art can be effectively integrated into placemaking strategies, particularly within the Malaysian context.

Document	Problem Statement	GAP	P.O.D.	Conclusion	Remarks
Dyomin (2020) - Street Art: An Artistic Message In The Modern Urban Environment	Street art emerged due to post-war social problems in poor New York neighbourhoods, allowing children to create new forms of entertainment. These forms spread globally,	However, it was also influenced by the demands of young artists' creative development in the absence of available financing, resulting in the formation of an art cluster due to the existence	For this reason, more research is being conducted on the intricacies of street art narratives, including the negative aspects often associated with this form of expression.	The story of street art is controversial and requires further investigation. Like previously said, street art, like natural art, is self-sufficient and does not require reinforcement	This study is a captivating exploration of the role of street art within the modern urban environment. Dyomin's analysis delves deep into the transformative potential of

	reaching both poor and rich countries, contrasting traditional art methods.	of a considerable number of underutilized industrial companies.		or replenishment through other artistic means.	artistic expression in shaping the cultural landscape of cities.
Karimimoshaver (2021) - Art in urban spaces	Miles referred to the dichotomy between the role of the aesthetics of the art in a space, and its semantic function, and believed that an attitude beyond aesthetic judgments should be considered to determine the role of art in the social and value areas of public spaces.	However, its role in urban spaces, relationship with these spaces and their users, has always been controversial. Debates often arise over the appropriateness and impact of contemporary art in public areas, with some viewing it as an enhancement that fosters community identity.	The study aimed to offer practical indicators to comprehend the impact of art on the meaning and perception of urban spaces. The research examines public art forms like murals and installations to identify elements that enhance the cultural, social, and aesthetic value of urban environments.	The presence of art in Tehran's urban spaces effectively forms spatial meanings, aligning with sustainability themes of personal/person, collective audience/community, and artist/authority/physical space, based on the conceptual framework presented.	This study is an illuminating exploration of the role of art in urban spaces. Karimimoshaver's research offers valuable insights into the multifaceted impact of artistic interventions on the dynamics of urban environments.
Shobri (2017) - Public Perception Towards Graffiti Art in Malaysia	Perceptions and opinions toward graffiti art varied significantly, influenced by individuals' knowledge and experiences. Some saw it as vibrant art, while others viewed it as vandalism, reflecting the complex nature of graffiti in urban spaces.	However, people always accuse graffiti art of damage and illicit activity. Graffiti without permission is considered vandalism in most countries and is punishable as such.	Therefore, the proposed of this study is to identify the community perception towards graffiti art in Malaysia by investigating the community knowledge, perception and appreciation to the graffiti art.	To summarize, there was a less sociological study supporting graffiti art relating cross-cultural context, which makes these differences neglected.	This study is a significant exploration of public perceptions towards graffiti art in Malaysia. Shobri's research provides valuable insights into the cultural attitudes and societal responses to graffiti within the Malaysian context.

<p>Abdullah (2019) - Incorporation and Exploration of Local Imageries and Identities In Malaysia's Graffiti Art</p>	<p>Graffiti art in Malaysia has grown slowly. It should be emphasized, however, that in the context of this paper, the authors employ the term 'artist' to refer to graffiti artists rather than the word 'writer', as the topic of this discussion is not restricted to graffiti style.</p>	<p>Local graffiti artists in Malaysia have incorporated local imageries and identities into their work, reflecting local identity and the development of modern art, a trend that has not been fully explored.</p>	<p>As a result, this article analyses the various tactics taken by Malaysian graffiti artists, namely how they incorporate and explore their visual concepts founded in hip hop culture and New York City subway graffiti with local imageries and identities.</p>	<p>Malaysian graffiti artists' efforts to explore local identities through their images are commendable, despite their newfound Western-style approach and commendable introduction of local identity in contemporary practice.</p>	<p>This study is a compelling investigation into the incorporation and exploration of local imageries and identities within Malaysia's graffiti art scene. Abdullah's research offers valuable insights into how Malaysian graffiti artists infuse cultural motifs and narratives.</p>
<p>Document</p>	<p>Problem Statement</p>	<p>GAP</p>	<p>P.O.D.</p>	<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>Remarks</p>
<p>Kececi (2021) - Graffiti as Alternative Communication Tools: Discussions of Vandalism and the Effects of New Media</p>	<p>The research on graffiti's historical process requires examining its evolution, modernization, and postmodern tendencies within modern art history, political history, and cultural history.</p>	<p>However, graffiti serve as powerful tools for minorities and marginalized groups to represent themselves and express their voices in public spheres.</p>	<p>Acknowledging the ongoing vandalism approach to graffiti highlights the persistent challenge of illegal tagging and defacement of public property by individuals who disregard the boundaries of artistic expression and community consent.</p>	<p>The debate over graffiti divided opinions on this newly emerging aesthetic form between those who saw it as a form of vandalism and those who see it as a new form of art with its own techniques, aims, audiences, and presentation style.</p>	<p>This study offers a thought-provoking examination of graffiti as alternative communication tools, exploring the intersections of vandalism and new media effects. Kececi's research provides valuable insights into graffiti's role in contemporary environments.</p>
<p>Feitosa-Santana (2020) - Art through the colours of graffiti: From the perspective of the chromatic structure</p>	<p>Graffiti's status as art or visual pollution remains contested. Negative attitudes toward tagging in public places are widespread.</p>	<p>There is no consensus in the language that represents this more art-related connotation, and this sort of graffiti is commonly dubbed graffiti</p>	<p>In this study, we are interested with the art expression, and the term graffiti will refer to paintings on public walls, either unsanctioned</p>	<p>Graffiti artists use chromatic patterns comparable to paintings, blending similar colours in proportions and close to the yellow-blue axis, using</p>	<p>This study provides valuable insights into graffiti art's chromatic structure, offering a nuanced understanding of how colour</p>

	Positive perceptions relate to their role in bringing art to the urban environment and the wellbeing of its inhabitants.	art, independent public art, or the most well-known and broad word, street art.	as in some definitions or sanctioned, as many are nowadays.	colour palettes that resemble natural settings.	influences its aesthetic appeal. Feitosa-Santana's research prompts reflections on the potential implications for colour theory.
Muhamad (2023) - The Development of the Malaysian Cultural Elements Framework	The reasons for performing this research in the first place include a scarcity of materials that critically evaluate Malaysian cultural aspects. This is because there are just a few accessible publications that focus on Malaysian culture through empirical research.	Nevertheless, there is a notable scarcity of authoritative sources or comprehensive analyses that delve into specific aspects of Malaysian culture, leaving significant gaps in our understanding of the country's rich and diverse cultural heritage.	This research aims to identify and explore cultural aspects in a general context, with a particular focus on understanding how culture shapes various aspects of society. The second objective will delve deeper into the specific cultural elements unique to Malaysian culture.	To fully grasp the complexity of Malaysian culture, it is essential to consider both traditional and contemporary perspectives. By examining traditional customs and practices alongside contemporary expressions, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of Malaysia's multiracial history.	This study is a significant contribution to the understanding of Malaysian cultural elements. Muhamad's research provides a comprehensive framework that sheds light on the diverse cultural heritage of Malaysia, offering valuable insights for architectural endeavours.
Chamberlain (2022) - Aesthetics of Graffiti: Comparison to Text-Based and Pictorial Artforms	Sociological analysis of graffiti has traditionally emphasized its social and cultural significance, exploring themes such as identity, subculture, and resistance. Compared to calligraphic art, relatively little attention has been given to aesthetic properties of graffiti.	However, previous research primarily focused on traditional forms of textual communication or visual art, overlooking graffiti tags or murals, which occupy a unique space between text and visual art.	The current study aimed to investigate the factors influencing attractiveness ratings of graffiti art by considering both low-level factors, such as image statistics, and high-level factors, including expertise and the social status of graffiti as a criminal act.	Graffiti art has picture features with traditional artworks, and these features may influence preference in the same way, although attractiveness evaluations are likely limited by graffiti art's cultural and social connotations.	This study is an insightful exploration of the aesthetics of graffiti, offering valuable comparisons to text-based and pictorial art forms. Chamberlain's research provides nuanced insights into the visual and conceptual dimensions of graffiti art.
Document	Problem Statement	GAP	P.O.D.	Conclusion	Remarks

<p>Radwan (2013) - Urban Street art</p>	<p>The built environment is susceptible to alterations that can either positively enhance its aesthetic value or negatively impact it. Positive alterations may involve the addition of aesthetically pleasing artworks that contribute to the cultural richness of a space.</p>	<p>Public art is widely acknowledged for its numerous benefits to the urban environment, including its contribution to innovation. This recognition has spurred the evolution of street art into complex interdisciplinary forms that transcend traditional boundaries.</p>	<p>The aim of this paper is to investigate the significance of urban street art as a fundamental element of the city's image, going beyond conventional definitions that often limit it to wall graffiti.</p>	<p>Urban art cannot exist independently from its surroundings; rather, it is intricately connected to the constructed fabric of cities and towns. Street artists utilize the physical structures and architectural elements of urban environments as their canvas.</p>	<p>This study is a foundational exploration of urban street art, offering valuable insights into its cultural significance and impact on the built environment. Radwan's research delves into the multifaceted nature of street art, highlighting its role as a dynamic form.</p>
<p>Mubi Brighenti (2010) - At the wall: Graffiti writers, urban territoriality, and the public domain</p>	<p>The various practices that interact with a wall in each context are often difficult to distinguish. For example, advertisements and graffiti writing appear to be on almost opposing footings.' somewhat elaborate on this.</p>	<p>Framing graffiti as territorial does not simply mean viewing it as a form of "turfing" or marking territory in a territorial sense. While graffiti may indeed identify a specific area as a turf, its territorial nature goes beyond mere territorial markings. Graffiti can be considered a territory, as it occupies ownership over physical space.</p>	<p>The primary research aim was to gain insight into how the community of graffiti writers perceives itself, including how it establishes its own identity, delineates its boundaries, and distinguishes its unique styles from those of other communities and practices.</p>	<p>Walls within urban environments are not merely physical structures but are also shaped by the strategic and tactical uses to which they are subjected, often forming distinct territorial formations within the cityscape. Territoriality, as a field of study, is concerned understanding the series of actions.</p>	<p>This study provides insightful analysis into the relationships among graffiti writers, urban territoriality, and the public domain. Mubi Brighenti's research prompts reflections on how graffiti influences urban space, power dynamics, and social identity.</p>

The literature review examines the multifaceted role of urban and graffiti art in shaping urban environments, focusing on social, cultural, and aesthetic impacts. Street art's origins in post-war New York's socio-economic struggles are highlighted, prompting further research into its complex narratives and controversies. Urban art's dual roles of aesthetics and semantics are explored, showing its potential to enhance community identity and social cohesion. In Malaysia, graffiti is perceived both as vibrant art and vandalism, reflecting its complex nature. Local graffiti artists incorporate Malaysian imageries and identities, showcasing graffiti's role in cultural identity and modern art trends. Graffiti is also seen as a powerful communication

tool for marginalized groups, despite its controversial status. The chromatic structure of graffiti is analysed, emphasizing its aesthetic appeal and similarities to traditional art. The scarcity of empirical research on Malaysian cultural elements is addressed by developing a comprehensive framework to understand the country's diverse heritage. Comparisons between graffiti and traditional art forms focus on aesthetic properties and social connotations. Urban street art's significant role in enhancing urban environments is emphasized, highlighting its interdisciplinary nature. Lastly, graffiti's territorial implications are examined, emphasizing its role in urban identity and power dynamics. These studies collectively underscore the intricate interplay between graffiti art, urban spaces, and cultural identity, highlighting the need for strategic integration into urban planning. They reveal gaps in understanding graffiti's aesthetic implications, its potential for fostering community engagement, and its vital role in cultural expression, underscoring the necessity for comprehensive strategies and frameworks. These strategies should aim to leverage graffiti art's full potential in enhancing urban environments, promoting cultural exchange, and fostering a greater sense of social cohesion.

Cultural, Social, and Spatial Dimensions of Graffiti Art in Urban Placemaking Conceptual Framework

Graffiti art plays a significant role in shaping the cultural, social, and spatial dynamics of urban environments, particularly in relation to architecture and placemaking. Malaysian culture, encompassing both material and non-material aspects, is deeply intertwined with objects, architecture, and art, reflecting the values, ideas, and understandings of its people (Muhamad et al., 2023). Culture is not only about preserving traditions or visiting heritage sites but also about engaging with the ways of life in a given area (Salau et al., 2018).

The meanings of urban spaces evolve over time, shaped by the interactions between individuals, communities, and the physical environment. In the cultural context, these meanings are often informed by the relationship between the person, the community, and the space itself (Karimimoshaver et al., 2021). Architecture responds to the built environment, while street art, as an expression of cultural identity, engages directly with these spaces. Urban landscapes, with their diverse morphology and typology, provide a canvas for street art, allowing artists to transform the built environment and contribute to the visual and cultural fabric of cities (Radwan, 2013).

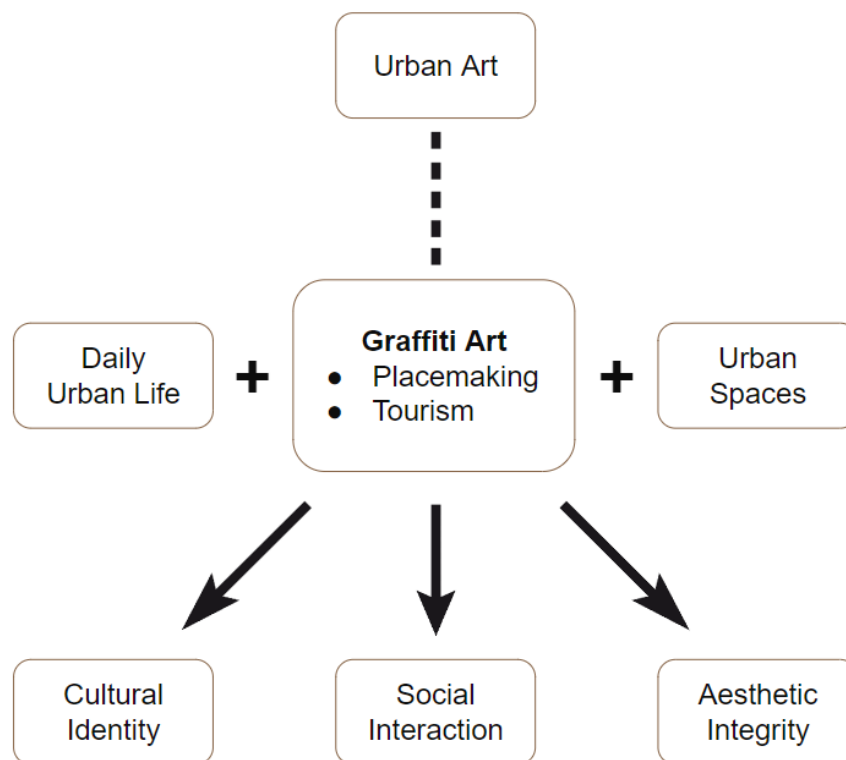


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Graffiti Art as a Catalyst for Placemaking

The conceptual framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between urban art, with a specific focus on graffiti art, and its multifaceted impacts on placemaking, tourism, and daily urban life within diverse urban spaces. It delves into the intricate relationships between these elements, elucidating how graffiti art serves as a dynamic catalyst for shaping the cultural identity of urban areas. By analysing the ways in which graffiti art integrates with the social fabric of cities, the framework explores its role in fostering social interaction and community engagement, thus enriching the daily experiences of urban dwellers.

Moreover, the framework examines the significance of graffiti art in the context of placemaking initiatives, highlighting its ability to transform underutilized urban spaces into vibrant cultural hubs. It considers how graffiti art contributes to the aesthetic integrity of urban environments, challenging conventional notions of beauty and enhancing the visual appeal of neglected areas. Additionally, the framework explores the symbiotic relationship between graffiti art and tourism, acknowledging its potential to attract visitors and stimulate economic activity. The framework considers the ethical and legal dimensions of graffiti art, navigating the complex terrain of public perception, governmental regulations, and property rights. It examines the tension between graffiti as an act of creative expression and its perceived infringement upon private property and public order. Through a critical analysis of the discourse surrounding graffiti art, the framework seeks to foster dialogue and understanding, advocating for inclusive approaches that balance the rights of artists with the needs of communities and authorities.

By synthesizing perspectives from urban studies, cultural sociology, and art theory, the conceptual framework provides a nuanced understanding of graffiti art's role within the urban landscape. It underscores the importance of recognizing graffiti art not only as a form of creative expression but also as a powerful tool for placemaking, cultural preservation, and community empowerment within contemporary cities.

Conclusion

The exploration of graffiti art as a catalyst for placemaking in Malaysian urban spaces uncovers a rich tapestry of possibilities where artistic expression converges with cultural identity, community engagement, and urban development. Through an in-depth analysis of both theoretical underpinnings and practical applications, this architectural thesis illuminates the intricate dynamics at play within Malaysia's urban landscapes.

At its core, graffiti art emerges as a potent force for transforming neglected and underutilized urban spaces into vibrant cultural hubs. By integrating graffiti art into placemaking initiatives, Malaysia stands poised to reinvigorate its cities, infusing them with a sense of vitality and creativity that reflects the diverse cultural heritage of its communities. Through strategic placement and thoughtful curation, graffiti art has the potential to serve as a powerful medium for community dialogue, social interaction, and cultural exchange, thereby fostering a greater sense of belonging and pride among residents.

Amidst the potential for revitalization and cultural enrichment, the thesis also confronts the challenges posed by non-regulated graffiti in Malaysia. Concerns about its impact on architectural integrity and public order underscore the need for nuanced approaches that balance the rights of artists with the needs of communities and authorities. By navigating these complexities with sensitivity and foresight, Malaysia can harness the transformative potential of graffiti art while mitigating conflicts and ensuring the sustainability of placemaking efforts.

Moreover, the thesis emphasizes the role of graffiti art in challenging conventional notions of beauty and reclaiming public spaces for communal expression. Through its bold and dynamic visual language, graffiti art not only redefines urban aesthetics but also amplifies marginalized voices and narratives, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable urban environment. By celebrating cultural diversity and embracing alternative forms of artistic expression, Malaysia can cultivate a truly dynamic and authentic urban landscape that reflects the vibrancy of its people and their stories.

In essence, this architectural thesis advocates for a reimagining of Malaysian urban spaces as dynamic, inclusive environments where graffiti art serves as a catalyst for placemaking, cultural preservation, and community empowerment. By embracing graffiti art as a legitimate and valuable form of artistic expression, Malaysia can unlock new avenues for urban revitalization and create spaces that resonate with the richness and diversity of its cultural heritage. Through collaborative efforts and innovative strategies, Malaysia has the opportunity to shape its cities into vibrant hubs of creativity, connectivity, and cultural exchange, ensuring a brighter and more sustainable future for all.

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