UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

SCHOOL OF THE ARTS AND DESIGN

Conceptualizing Graffiti as a Tool for Social Change in Nairobi

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This Project Report is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Master of Arts in Design, Department of Design, University of Nairobi.

May 9th, 2019

DECLARATIONS

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I Oscar O. Otieno do hereby declare that this project report, presented in fulfillment for an award of a Master of Arts degree in design (MA DESIGN), is my own unaided and original work. The work has not been presented in this or any other university for academic qualification. Furthermore, the research provides my own opinions and not necessarily those of The University of Nairobi.

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as the student's supervisor.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project report to my family members who have made great sacrifices both materially and financially. Their overwhelming support, motivation and the encouragement have always kept me going. The inspiration and the inner strength I exhibit have always come from them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My first and foremost gratitude goes to my supervisors Dr. Amollo Ambole and Dr. Betty for their tireless effort, dedication and sacrifice in guiding me through this study. Special thanks to my classmates for their meaningful support, assistance and their academic contributions.

ABSTRACT

Graffiti is an art form that is steadily growing yet still widely misunderstood in Nairobi. There are, however, positive messages that graffiti artists intend to communicate in their work. These messages may not reach the intended audience due to the misconceptions that they hold.

The purpose of the study was to contest the misconceptions that exist about graffiti and highlight it as a serious creative art form which can be used to inspire social change. The specific objectives were to analyze the use of graffiti to communicate social issues in informal settlements within Nairobi, to establish clear categories of graffiti within Nairobi and to demonstrate the potential of using graffiti as a tool for instigating social change in informal settlements within Nairobi. This study will provide vital information to authorities, scholars and anyone else interested in graffiti as an art form.

A snowball sampling technique was used to select artists for interviewing while a purposive sampling method (Heterogeneous sampling) was used to sample locals from the selected areas for interviewing. Primary data was collected through interviews, field studies, review of documents and archived records.

A case study method was used and this allowed for an in-depth study of graffiti within Nairobi. This revealed that clear categories of types of graffiti within Nairobi didn't exist, several misconceptions about graffiti still existed among residents due to lack of information on the art form and these misconceptions hindered communication between graffiti artists and Nairobi residents.

To tackle these challenges, the study shed light on graffiti as an art form in Nairobi. Several photographs of graffiti were collected within Nairobi, analyzed and relevant categories of graffiti were then established. Interviews were conducted with graffiti artists and Nairobi residents to demonstrate the potential of using graffiti as a tool for instigating social change.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Graffiti	In this paper, the term graffiti refers to drawings or writing which are written, painted or scratched either illegally or legally on a surface such as a wall and is usually within public view.
Social Change	In this paper, social change is the significant adjustment of cultural patterns and social structure over time.
Vandalism	In this paper, vandalism is the deliberate destruction of private or public property.
Misconceptions	In this paper, misconceptions are commonly held beliefs, views or opinions that are wrong because they are based on faulty understanding

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The early stages of graffiti can be placed back to prehistoric times with carvings on stone walls used to demonstrate landmarks or maps, and cave paintings that were used mainly for communication and decoration. The graffiti found during the Roman Empire was known for discussing a several topics, from homosexuality to politics and poetry. These different varieties of mark creating on walls subsist all around the world throughout time (Gottlieb, 2008).

Graffiti are currently found everywhere in urban areas. The purpose for creating graffiti usually differs from one graffiti artist to the next. According to Lannert (2015), there is a rebellious and artistic characteristic to graffiti art which evokes two opposite reactions from society. Graffiti is perceived as destruction of property, a gang related activity or some sort of revolt. At the same time, graffiti art is present in galleries and museums as valued art. It is much to dismiss a name that has been scribbled on a dust-bin than to take a closer look and wonder why it has been written there.

The effect that graffiti has on its audience is possibly the most noteworthy input to the graffiti culture. Graffiti has been referred to as a voice of the public that allows them to speak out in a witty and brief manner on social, economic or political issues. The issues portrayed are usually very significant and are capable of inspiring surprise and amusement within a graffiti observer who may have bumped into graffiti art unexpectedly. The graffiti subculture has grown immensely in previous years, largely due to the simplicity of access through social media (Bates, 2014).

Graffiti goes past the lines of class and race; it is not restricted or limited to a specific socioeconomic or ethnic group, in both the audience and the graffiti artist's circles. Although graffiti originated amongst teenagers from harsh backgrounds, it has stretched out to include

artists from all kinds of backgrounds. It is this quality that makes it a powerful tool for anyone to communicate.

For the most part, graffiti is often a person's channel for expressing themselves. It is a channel that is mostly supposed as blocked or suppressed by society as a whole. Self-expression is central to the graffiti artist during the creation and maintenance of his or her identity. Graffiti art usually occurs as an after-effect of society limiting or blocking an individual's self-expression outlet (Lannert, 2015).

Graffiti artists are often very secretive about their identities. The art itself is usually practiced secretly or at times illegally. It is this nature of graffiti that makes society draw misconceptions about the art form. Getting a graffiti artist is also not an easy task. Their secretive nature forces anyone interested in contacting one to know someone within the sub-culture who will act as the gate-way to the artists (Unknown, 2014).

Graffiti, however, can be used to encourage social change. In 2013, Boniface Mwangi alongside artists from Pawa 254 painted huge murals that portrayed the Kenyan political class as greedy vultures (Erenrich, 2017). This is just an example of how graffiti can be used as a tool for social change.

When secondary school students feel like other avenues of voicing their concerns have been blocked by authority, they usually turn to graffiti to communicate. Communicative strategies such as irony, short forms, humor, symbolisms, abbreviations and acronyms are used by the students when they write or paint their graffiti. School administrators have a divided view on graffiti. Some view it as a nuisance while others feel it is a very important avenue for gaining insight into the student mind (Mwangi, 2012).

1.2 Problem Statement

Several misconceptions still exist among residents of Nairobi in regard to graffiti. It is often labeled as vandalism, an art form practiced by hooligans, an art form that is bad for the community and gang related.

The biggest reason why graffiti is misunderstood is because the art is usually done illegally and secretly, while the graffiti artists themselves are very secretive in nature. The secretive nature of graffiti artists leads residents to believe that they are hooligans. In addition, several gangs within Nairobi and all over the world use graffiti to mark their territories and at times to get their slogans and beliefs out to the public. This gives rise to the misconception that all graffiti is gang related. Those who view graffiti as an art form that is gang related naturally believe that it is an art form that is bad for the community.

Most graffiti are viewed as vandalism of property by those in authority. The fight for space by graffiti artists in a bid to get their work to the public sees graffiti artists using spaces with high pedestrian traffic. It is usually a calculated move since such spaces allow more people to view the artists' work as they walk past. Regrettably, some of these 'prime' spaces usually do not welcome graffiti thus any form of markings or art are deemed illegal. This means graffiti artists do not have much public space to communicate their messages effectively as most zones within Nairobi prohibit graffiti.

There is little knowledge on the distinct categories of graffiti. This study elevates graffiti into an art form with clear categories, while also addressing the misconceptions that surround graffiti.

1.3 Research Questions

- How is graffiti used to communicate social issues in informal settlements within Nairobi?
- To what degree can graffiti within Nairobi be grouped into typologies?
- How can graffiti be used as a tool for inspiring social change?

1.4 Objective of Study

- To analyze the use of graffiti to communicate social issues in informal settlements within Nairobi.
- To establish typologies of graffiti within Nairobi
- To demonstrate the potential of using graffiti as a communication tool for instigating social change in Nairobi.

1.4.1 Conceptual Framework

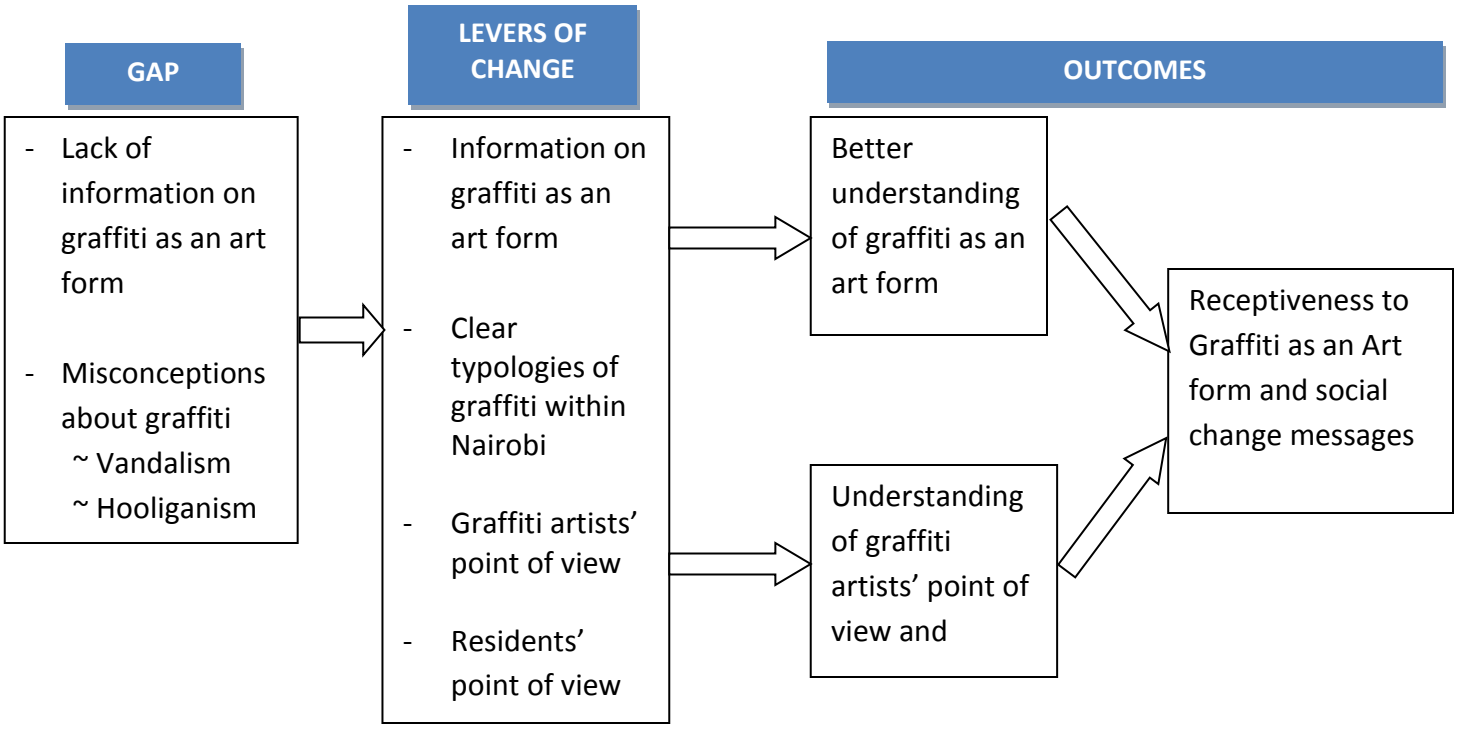

Fig 2.1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was adopted from Emily A. Greenfield's model which started by highlighting an existing gap. The levers of change were then applied to fill the gaps leading to outcomes, both immediate and extended, that resulted from this action.

1.5 Justification of the Study

From existing literature, it is evident that several misconceptions still surround graffiti as an art form. Graffiti however is a very powerful tool for communication. These misconceptions usually are associations to the negative side of graffiti such as vandalism and hooliganism. The free nature of graffiti that gives it power is the same characteristic that allows it to be used for vices in some cases. Lack of information on this art form prevents society from getting messages that graffiti artists intend to pass.

This study therefore seeks to provide information on graffiti while debunking misconceptions that surround the art form. It also demonstrates the potential of using graffiti to instigate social change.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in Nairobi CBD, Kibera and Mathare informal settlements. The areas of study were chosen due to the social issues usually communicated by graffiti artists in the areas. A total of 55 residents and five graffiti artists were interviewed.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Misconceptions about Graffiti

The very mention of the word graffiti can kick up a storm. Some love it, others hate it, others feel it's a crime while some think it is about freedom of expression. One certain thing though is that graffiti plays a huge part in modern culture. Perhaps this is because graffiti gives ordinary people the power to share their thoughts and messages in a visual way. Graffiti can also be a tool for delivering messages of peace (Gogerly, 2012).

While graffiti might be debated as art or crime, it is much more than both and an indicator of important groups and subcultures that operate amongst us on a daily basis. Graffiti itself demonstrates the strong differences that can occur amongst people, as well as the difficulty of catering to the needs and demands of people who hold radically opposing views and beliefs. Graffiti is much more than just art, it is a voice for channeling opinions about the beliefs that we cherish namely our rights to private property, good governance and freedom of expression (Sechrest & Olson, 1971).

Halsey and Young (2002) try to concentrate on showing the challenges of eradicating graffiti legally. Law enforcement officials claim that the criminal elements within the sub-culture create a challenge in tackling graffiti. Graffiti is usually viewed more as vandalism than it is viewed as art. Halsey and Young conclude that intimidation, deterrence, and hefty fines are unproductive methods of eliminating graffiti from society. The most successful ways of abolishing graffiti in their opinion, are through art education programs in schools and youth centers.

Mundano says graffiti is still viewed as vandalism by most people and that is why in most cases a graffiti artist has to seek authorization before creating a piece or mural on a wall. He says the illegal graffiti must also be preserved and if possible, allowed to some extent just so that freedom of speech is fostered within the community (D'Arcy,2018).

The impression that street art and graffiti is exclusively connected to crime and defacement is one that is vanishing quickly. Graffiti had been associated to criminal activities due to its use by gangs as a way to mark territory (Bates, 2014).

Graffiti can be a deviant art form although not all graffiti is deviant or rebellious in nature. The question of why and when specific types of graffiti are perceived as a criminal act by a section of people is still an open question. Many criminologists as well as authorities, are predisposed to view graffiti as a sign of crime or even impending mayhem. According to Lannert (2015), graffiti is usually associated to youthful gangs who take part in activities that are criminal and are marked as 'deviant' by the society and authorities. They use graffiti in public spaces to communicate to each other. However the reality is that graffiti artists do not exhibit signs of an organized gang. They are not aggressive in nature and they do not use graffiti art to get material or financial possessions.

2.2 Graffiti as an Art Form

Graffiti are symbols, drawings or writings that have been painted, scribbled or scratched onto walls or other surfaces and are often within public view(Gottlieb, 2008). There are several forms of urban graffiti, however four predominant forms exist. Tags are the most basic form and are artists' signatures composed of one colour(See *Fig 2.2*).

Fig 2.2: **A tag.** *Image courtesy wikiwand.com*

Throw-ups come after tags and are more advanced. They consist of one colour outline and one colour fill (See *Fig 2.3*).

Fig 2.3: **A Throw-up.** *Image courtesy of en.parisinfo.com*

Pieces come after throw-ups and are more complex and advanced. They are usually three dimensional and incorporate several colors as well as effects (See *Fig 2.4*).

Fig 2.4: **Graffiti Piece.** *Image courtesy of standardmedia.co.ke*

Murals are the most advanced form of graffiti (See *Fig 2.5*). They usually cover whole walls and incorporate several colors and effects (Martinez, 2009).

Fig 2.5: **A Graffiti Mural.** *Image courtesy of staging.graffiti-artist.net*

The name or signature incorporated into graffiti art marks their identity and alter ego. An alter ego is an identity that the graffiti artists create for themselves. A graffiti artist's signature can be given to them by another artist or be created by the artist themselves. The graffiti artist's alias can symbolize something, hold a meaning that is significant to them or just be a combination of their preferred letters (Lannert, 2015).

Graffiti usually combines several different modes of visual communication which often include symbols, pictures and writings. People who associate or belong to certain groups usually create and adopt a specific style of graffiti that is understood only by the members of that particular group. This form of graffiti is purely for communicating and connecting members of that

particular group while intentionally excluding the masses. Street art on the other hand is mainly intended for communicating to the masses with the aim of engaging rather than excluding the masses ("Visions of protest", 2018).

The incidences above further outline the use of graffiti as a tool for communication. The first incident illustrates how graffiti is often used to create identity among certain groups. The second incident shows how graffiti can be used to engage the masses.

Broader categories of graffiti exist around the world. Gang graffiti is graffiti that represents a specific gang while also indicating the artist's gang affiliation. This type of graffiti usually employs symbols and colors related to the gang in question. It is mainly used to communicate to gang members and rival gangs (See *Fig 2.6)*.

Fig 2.6: **Gang Graffiti (South Side Locos 13 Gang).** *Image courtesy of flickr.com*

Immediate graffiti are the random graffiti found on washroom walls (See *Fig 2.7*).

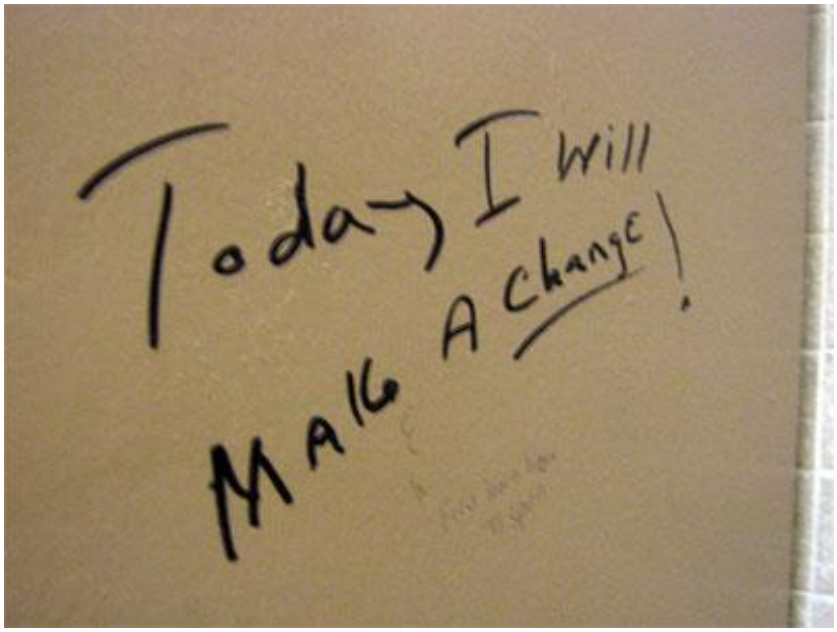

Fig 2.7: **Immediate graffiti in a washroom.** *Image courtesy of fiveprime.com*

They usually occur unplanned as the artist impulsively gets an idea and puts it on a surface. Graffiti art is a more common form of graffiti. It is more artistic and much thought goes into the creation process. They are commonly referred to as murals (Lannert, 2015).

Street art is another category of graffiti that is usually associated with murals. Artists who create street art are often referred to as muralists. Street art is usually brightly colored and covers a large space on the surface it is painted on. It is usually neat and easy to read hence it is more socially acceptable as compared to the other broad categories of graffiti (See *Fig 2.8*).

Fig 2.8: **Street Art.** *Image courtesy of uk.businessinsider.com*

Street art is still considered illegal unless it is commissioned (Lannert, 2015).

According to (Lannert, 2015), there is another category of graffiti referred to as Immediate Graffiti. This category of graffiti is more common and random. It is usually created when an individual feels inclined to write something. Due to its spontaneous nature, it is common in public bathrooms and other public areas with poor visibility.

2.3 Graffiti for Social Change

A graffiti artist by the name Banksy once said “Graffiti is one of the few tools you have if you have almost nothing. And even if you don’t come up with a picture to cure world poverty you can make someone smile while they’re having a piss” (Gogerly, 2012). From this statement we see the positive side of graffiti and why the art form should be validated. Graffiti has the potential to bring life to dead or ugly spaces, express political or social statements and

encourage diversity. Graffiti has the power to make people happy. It adds color and excitement to what would otherwise be plain and gray, art has the power to make people feel alive.

Mundano who is a Brazilian street artist uses street art for social change. He says “Graffiti is a powerful tool to communicate social and environmental issues, because it’s a cool language, and it is art; art can touch people in a different way.” He uses graffiti to talk about recycling; something which people consider ‘boring’ hence graffiti is a cool and fun way of conveying such messages. He says the best thing about graffiti is that it is public and everybody can see it. It is very different from museums and exhibitions that are not easily accessible and are often hidden away from a large percentage of the public. Graffiti is therefore democratic (D'Arcy, 2018).

Falko One who is an internationally celebrated graffiti artist believes being preachy is not the right approach when trying to inspire social change. He says nobody likes being told what to do, especially if a stranger came to the neighborhood and started telling people what to do, nobody would respond. He says graffiti offers a valuable medium of communication and allows one to instigate social change without coming off as too “preachy”. Falko one believes graffiti is more un-official and free hence it is easily accepted by most people without judgment (D'Arcy, 2018).

According to Chinoy (2017), good art has the power to educate and create empathy. It is empathy that brings change. Freedom of expression thrives only where the arts thrive. Art has the ability to empower the most vulnerable members of society directly. Chinoy uses film to tell stories of vulnerable members of society and he believes that stories of resilience and injustices are all over the world and waiting to be told and not only in Pakistan. He narrated the ordeal of women who were victims of acid attacks in Pakistan’s Punjab province. His film attracted worldwide focus and made the local Punjabi government support the victims by engaging more. Victims’ cases are currently handled faster through special anti-terrorism courts. It used to take years to bring the criminals to justice; now it just takes a few months.

Shulman (2013) says, when art is compared to the social injustices and ills that are far too present in the world, it is easy to discharge art as an unnecessary waste of resources and money. The whole point of art would be missed in the first place if this was done. Art exposes issues of social justice and solves them by doing this. It humanizes the grievances and emotions of people who may not have anywhere else to voice their concerns. Art pushes us to take action when necessary. What art depicts and communicates can bring out an instinctive reaction.

In 2005, a graffiti artist by the name Banksy produced a piece titled Rage, the Flower Thrower. In this work, a man dressed up in riot gear with a bandana hiding his face and his cap facing backwards is depicted. The stance he appears in is similar to that of a person who is about to throw a petrol bomb. Instead of the petrol bomb, he is seen holding a bunch of flowers. The bunch of flowers is the only colored part of this work (See *Fig 2.9*). Banksy uses this piece to spread the message of peace in an area known for conflict. The graffiti is located on a wall in Jerusalem on the main road to Beit Sahour in Bethlehem (Duncan, 2018).

***Fig 2.9*: Rage, the Flower Thrower**. *Image courtesy of blogs.buprojects.uk*

The work also sends a message that peace is only achieved through active hard work. This case is an example of how graffiti can be used to bring about social change. Graffiti has the same potential to be used as a tool for social change.

Banksy created another piece in August 2005 on the Israeli-Palestinian West Bank barrier. The piece depicts two young boys playing with shovels and buckets. The boys are seen looking at the viewer and one boy is standing while the other boy is seen kneeling. Above the boys, Banksy created a photorealistic illusion of a tropical beach that appears as though seen through a broken section of the wall. The piece was titled Unwelcome Intervention (See *Fig 3.0*).

Through this artwork, the artist attempts to imply that a better political environment may only exist once the wall is brought down. The wall separates the Israelis from the Palestinians and while the Israelis see the wall as protection against terrorism, the Palestinians feel that it is a tool for racial segregation. The artist also tries to bring to the viewer's attention the toll that the conflict takes on the innocent by using children in his work (Duncan, 2018).

***Fig 3.0*: Unwelcome Intervention**. Image courtesy of blogs.uoregon.edu

During the creation of this piece, Banksy was confronted by Israeli forces who at some point even fired shots into the air. A Palestinian man also approached him later and told him he was painting the wall and making it beautiful. Banksy thanked him and he replied by stating that they did not want the wall to be beautiful because they hate the wall. He then told Banksy to go home. The resistance from both sides during the creation of this piece lent it its name.

In 2007, Banksy created a piece titled One Nation Under CCTV. The piece shows a child in a red jumper at the bottom right corner painting the phrase 'One Nation Under CCTV' while a policeman and a dog watch from the bottom left corner. (See *Fig 3.1*).

***Fig 3.1*: One Nation Under CCTV**. Image courtesy of alchetron.com

This work aimed to criticize the excessive surveillance both through CCTV cameras and on other platforms such as the internet. The piece itself was painted right in the line of sight of a CCTV camera. The Westminister City Council stated in October 2008 that the work would be painted over as it is illegal graffiti. The work was ultimately painted over in April 2009 (Duncan, 2018).

2.4 Graffiti in Nairobi, Kenya

In the early 1990s, youth in Nairobi joined the hip hop subculture as a way of expressing themselves. They felt like they finally had a platform to express themselves against the confines of societal norms as a group. Public service vehicle (PSV) owners noticed they could attract this group by brandishing their vehicles in bold graffiti and playing loud music. This resulted in school-going youths waiting for PSVs they preferred for hours at the bus stop (Oganda & Mogambi, 2015). From this scenario, it is clear that graffiti has great potential as a tool for influencing behavior and communicating to a target group.

The matatu culture in Kenya incorporates aspects of hip hop which include graffiti and music. This attracts mostly youths while older commuters term them as a nuisance (Falola & Fleming, 2012). The case above indicates highlights misconceptions about graffiti by older commuters.
Secondary school students usually do not have an avenue to express themselves. They may not even have a say in matters that affect them directly. Usually the most available avenue to these students is graffiti. It is through graffiti that they can express themselves fully and openly due to the privacy and anonymity graffiti provides (Kariuki, Yieke, & Ndoro, 2016). In the research carried out by (Kariuki, Yieke, & Ndoro, 2016), it was found that students use graffiti to express social issues that they would not feel comfortable expressing before school authorities. This further proves that graffiti can be used to address social issues.

In early 2013, Boniface Mwangi and graffiti artists from Pawa 254 used graffiti as a form of public protest. They drew murals that portrayed MPs as vultures which were preying on the citizens (See *Fig 3.2*). The movement called MaVultures, which consisted of Boniface Mwangi and artists from Pawa 254, painted several of such graffiti within Nairobi's Central Business District. This was a move that aimed at pointing out social and economic injustices by elected

MPs(Erenrich & Wergin, Grassroots Leadership and the Arts for Social Change, 2017). The Ma Vulture movement used graffiti as an element for conducting civic education.

***Fig 3.2*: Graffiti depicting Kenyan leaders as vultures**. *Image courtesy of bbc.co.uk*

The Peace Train Project saw several graffiti artists work together with the Kibera Walls for Peace team to create a massive peace mural along an entire side of a commuter train which passes by Kibera (See *Fig 3.3*). This project was especially important because Kibera slums saw rioters tear up and destroy the train tracks during the 2007 post-election violence. The artwork displayed messages of peace for the upcoming election with the main phrase, "Tuwache Ukabila, Tuwache Ubaguzi, Tuishi Kwa Amani" ("Paintings on the wall", 2014).

***Fig 3.3*: Peace Train Project.** *Image courtesy of Pinterest*

Nancy Chelagat Cherwon also known as Chela is a Kenyan female graffiti artist (See *Fig 3.4*). She earns her living from graffiti. Chela states that when she started staying out late to do graffiti, she created a rift between her and her family. Her parents did not approve of her change in behavior while some of her uncles appreciated her work. She spends most of her time at The Dust Depo which is a studio for visual artist located in Nairobi Railways Museum. Most of her graffiti contain anti-violence messages and she does her pieces in areas considered poor or violent. She however says her graffiti is not political (De Fazio, 2017).

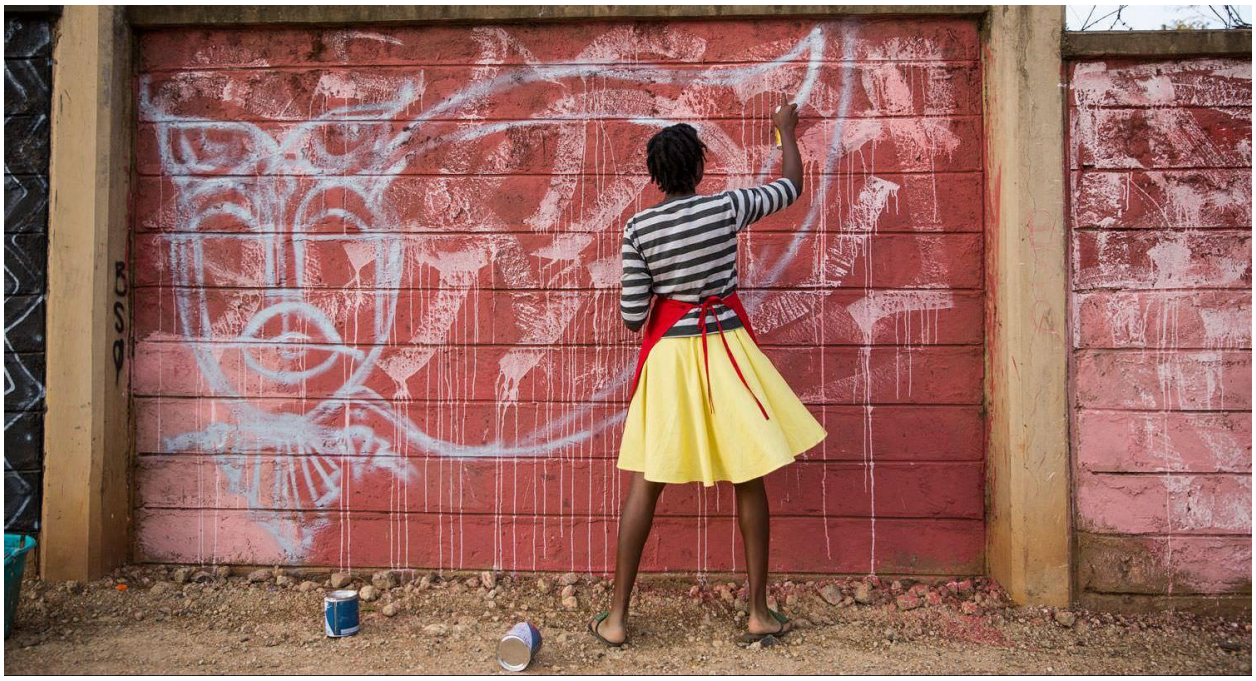

Fig 3.4: **Nancy Chelagat (Chela) painting graffiti**. *Image courtesy of positive.news*

Chela's story clearly illustrates the two distinct attitudes towards graffiti. We see uncles who appreciate her work but we also see parents who do not approve of her change of behavior because of graffiti. Chela also uses graffiti to spread peace messages while making a living from her paintings and illustrations. This further suggests graffiti as a viable source of employment and also as a tool for communication and driving social change. A political theme in graffiti also emerges when Chela says she does not classify her graffiti as political. It becomes evident that graffiti can be categorized and one of the categories is political graffiti.

Art critics from abroad usually portray Kenya as not having an art movement that is worth talking about. However, a look at Kenyan matatus and exhibition walls and even street walls, one cannot ignore the heavy presence of graffiti. Swift Elegwa who is a graffiti artist in Kenya says graffiti is not permanent. It is interesting how a mural can take months to complete only to stay up for a week before the wall is brought down. Despite this, Kenyan graffiti artist continue painting and expressing their passion, a clear indication that graffiti is here to stay.

Kerosh, who is a coordinator of an exhibition that took place in at Railways Museum and was dubbed “Street Diaries”, says there is a distinction between graffiti art (graffiti exhibition) and street art (street graffiti). He says that one is more community based and filled with social /street commentary while the other is usually more semi-abstract and beautified. Both are equally eye catching (Gacheru, 2016).

From Kerosh’s statement, two graffiti themes emerge. Street graffiti, which contains more message and is community based. We also see graffiti art, which is more abstract and beautified.

Brutal images of a woman cowering as a man beats her and of a terrified girl in chains were sprayed on the walls of Kenya’s Mathare slum by the charity HAART (Awareness Against Human Trafficking) Kenya to get people talking about modern slavery (See *Fig 3.5*). Winnie Mutevu, a project officer with the charity, believes that trafficking is all around us but people are not aware. HAART Kenya supports survivors of human trafficking and they did the graffiti piece in Mathatre because they believe, “A simple picture or graffiti showing one of the many forms of slavery can be a powerful way to catch people’s attention.”(Reuters, 2018).

Fig 3.5: **HAART Kenya anti-trafficking graffiti**. *Image courtesy of the-star.co.ke*

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design is a qualitative research.

A case study research design was employed for an in-depth study of the research problem since there are few academic studies on the phenomenon (graffiti).

3.2 Study Area

This study was conducted in Nairobi County. It is the smallest of the 47 counties in Kenya yet it is the most populous with a population of 3.375 million (2009). Its populous nature translates to numerous social issues and rise of subcultures such as graffiti and hip hop. The graffiti artists thus use graffiti as one of the avenues to voice the social issues and this translates to numerous graffiti within the area; making it a suitable study area.

The specific areas of study are Nairobi Central Business District, Mathare and Kibera informal settlements.

3.3 Study Population

The study population consisted of participants form the study areas selected. The participants of the study included locals and graffiti artists.

3.4 Sampling Design

The locals were sampled using purposive sampling technique which is also referred to as non-probability sampling, purposeful sampling or qualitative sampling. In this method, a sample is selected based on the characteristics of the population and the objective of the study based on the researcher's judgment (Crossman, 2018).

A specific number of respondents is hardly required in this sampling technique. The Heterogeneous or Maximum variation sampling, which is a purposive sampling technique, will be used. This sampling method allows the researcher to select participants with diverse

characteristics. Heterogeneous sampling will allow the researcher to gather as much insight as possible on the phenomenon under study.

A snowballing sampling technique was used to select graffiti artists to interview. The snowballing technique involves identifying one graffiti artist then getting more graffiti artists through the first artist. This method is the best for sampling graffiti artists since they are not easy to contact due to their secretive nature.

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Questionnaires

Structured questionnaires were administered to the study participants. This helped gather information on participant's opinions on graffiti. *Table 3.5* below shows some of the questions that will be asked.

Table 3.5: Questionnaire sample

Questions	Responses		
Artists' Questions	Yes	No	Comment
How would you define graffiti?			
What is the purpose of graffiti?			
Are there rules when doing graffiti?			
Where can you paint?			
Explain the artistic and stylistic component of graffiti.			
What does 'vandalism' mean to you?			
Is graffiti about the individual or society as a whole?			
How do you think society feels about graffiti?			
Are there design processes you follow when painting?			
What are you trying to accomplish			

through graffiti?			
What do you feel graffiti should be used for?			
Do you believe graffiti can be used to instigate social change? If so, how?			
Public's Questions	**Yes**	**No**	**Comment**
What do you understand by the term graffiti?			
Have you ever encountered graffiti?			
Has graffiti ever influenced your mood or changed your thoughts?			
What do you understand by the term 'vandalism"?			
What is your general feeling about graffiti?			
What are some of the messages you have seen in graffiti?			
Do you believe there is a positive side to graffiti?			
Do you believe graffiti can be used to communicate?			
Do you believe graffiti can be used to instigate social change?			

3.5.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted on the study participants. During the interviews, the artists were requested to explain the intentions behind some of their graffiti. This helped in linking the artist's work and their reasons for painting the graffiti in question. The interviews with the artists provided vital information on the design process involved in creating graffiti. The information derived from these interviews portray graffiti as communication design and not just an art form.

3.5.3 Photographs

Photographs of the graffiti present in the study areas were taken and categorized according to the messages the graffiti contain and the artists' intentions. Artists who were interviewed had photographs of some of their graffiti discussed so as to understand their intentions for the pieces.

3.5.4 Examination of Documents

Documents were examined to get existing information on graffiti. The information gathered from the documents was useful when studying common misconceptions about graffiti, establishing typologies of graffiti and understanding how graffiti can be used to instigate social change.

3.5.5 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to Nairobi CBD, Mathare and Kibera due to a limited budget. In future studies, a wider geographical area may yield more valuable information on graffiti as an art form within Nairobi. In some cases, residents did not understand what graffiti as an art form is all about hence they were unable to give opinions and contacted graffiti artists kept cancelling on the scheduled meetings. They would eventually stop responding to communication altogether. This translated to loss of potentially valuable information.

3.6 Logical Framework

Table 3.6: Logical Framework

TOPIC: CONCEPTUALIZING GRAFFITI AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN NAIROBI				
	Objective	**Outcome**	**Output**	**Research Activities**
Goal 1	To analyze the use of graffiti to communicate social issues in informal settlements within Nairobi	Provide an insight on how social issues are communicated using graffiti in informal settlements to locals, authorities and scholars within 5 months	Scholars, authorities and parties interested in graffiti gain an in-depth understanding on how social issues are communicated using graffiti in informal settlements within Nairobi	Identify graffiti within the selected areas and analyze them. Analysis of the graffiti to be done using the photograph checklist.
Goal 2	To establish typologies of graffiti within Nairobi	Highlight typologies of graffiti within Nairobi for locals, authorities and scholars within 5 months	Clear categorization of graffiti within Nairobi into typologies	Identify graffiti within the selected areas and analyze them. Analysis of the graffiti to be done using the photograph checklist. Analyzed graffiti to be coded and grouped according to similarities.
Goal 3	To demonstrate the potential of using graffiti as a communication tool for instigating social change in Nairobi	New findings on the potential of using graffiti as a communication tool will be available for locals, authorities and scholars within 5 months	Clear demonstration of how graffiti can be used as a tool for social change in Nairobi	Identify graffiti within the selected areas, analyze them and interview graffiti artists. The interviews are to be conducted following a set of pre-determined questions and questionnaires.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

4.1: Fieldwork Progress

The selected areas of study were narrowed down to Nairobi CBD, Kibera and Mathare informal settlements. Photographs of graffiti were to be taken from all the selected areas for categorization then graffiti artists based in Kibera and Mathare were to be located for interviewing.

A research assistant by the name Waweru Jason was identified to help navigate Mathare during the data collection process. A second research assistant by the name Slavey was been identified to help navigate Kibera.

4.1.1: Kibera Data Collection

With the help of Slavey I managed to visit Kibera and scout the area for graffiti. I was also accompanied by Vista, a graffiti artist, who helped with the camera and provided valuable information on the phenomenon.

Fig 3.6: ***Graffiti artist Vista and Slavey at Fort Jesus (Kibera)*** *5-01-2019*

Fig 3.7: ***Slavey and I at Fort Jesus (Kibera)*** *5-01-2019*

A total of 37 residents were sampled and interviewed. The results to the questions are as shown in the table below (See **Table 3.7**)

Table 3.7: Kibera Questionnaire and Results

Questions	Responses		
Residents' Questions	**Yes**	**No**	**Undecided**
Do you understand the term graffiti?	26	11	0
Have you ever encountered graffiti?	35	2	0
Has graffiti ever influenced your mood or changed your thoughts?	22	15	0
Do you understand the term 'vandalism"?	22	15	0
Do you feel like graffiti is vandalism?	19	12	6
****What is your general feeling about graffiti?**	-	-	-
Have you ever seen messages in graffiti?	22	15	0

Do you understand the messages you have seen in graffiti?	22	15	0
Do you believe there is a positive side to graffiti?	22	15	0
Do you believe graffiti can be used to communicate?	20	11	6
Do you understand the concept of social change?	12	25	0
Do you believe graffiti can be used to instigate social change?	12	11	14

The two most trivial questions that elicited heated debates were 'Do you believe graffiti can be used to communicate?' and 'Do you believe graffiti can be used to instigate social change?'.

For the question on the possibility of using graffiti as a communication tool, 20 respondents agreed that graffiti can be used as a communication tool, 11 disagreed while the remaining 6 could not pick a side.

This question generated interesting views especially from the respondents who disagreed strongly. It was clear that the group that agreed and the group that disagreed with the statement viewed communication differently. The 11 that disagreed viewed communication in the traditional sense. One of them argued that 'if they needed to communicate with their son to send them to the retail shop to buy a loaf of bread, they wouldn't pick up a spray can and paint the instructions!'. The undecided 6 also had a problem with the word 'communicate'. Some argued that to an extent, graffiti could be used to pass short phrases, however there are several limitations such as geographical coverage that would not make it an ideal communication tool.

In an attempt to make the debate interesting, I described to them the case of a graffiti artist called Eljay who I have been in contact with. He does his graffiti on digital media and has a YouTube channel and social media pages where he posts his work. It was argued that this would reach a wider audience but it still wouldn't communicate like more traditional methods.

For the question on the possibility of using graffiti to instigate social change, 12 of the respondents agreed that graffiti can be used to instigate social change, 11 disagreed while the remaining 14 could not pick a side. The views on the concept of social change were the main factor in how the respondents answered this question and there were a lot of debates on this.
The 12 who agreed with the statement had a general understanding of the concept of social change. A section of the 11 respondents who disagreed simply believed that graffiti is just art and not many people really take what they see to heart. The other section of the 11 respondents seemed to use personal past experiences to measure social change. One respondent gave an interesting comment saying "I have always seen graffiti artists paint right after the campaign period before voting. They paint so many peace-charged art all over the place but people still engage in violence and robberies."

The undecided 14 respondents that remained undecided felt that on a personal level, they could pick positive messages from graffiti. However they did not believe that society could do the same, judging from the way vices are still practiced despite the presence of graffiti in their neighborhoods.

Another interesting question for discussion was 'Do you feel like graffiti is vandalism?'.
All the respondents (the 12) who disagreed with the statement that 'graffiti is vandalism' had interestingly also responded positively to the first three questions which were 'do you understand the term graffiti?, have you ever encountered graffiti? and has graffiti ever influenced your mood?. They seemed to have a deeper understanding of graffiti.
Of the 37 respondents who had this question posed to them, 19 agreed that graffiti is in fact vandalism since the artists do not own the property or surfaces they paint on.
The remaining 6 respondents argued that in some instances, graffiti is vandalism while in other instances they are not.

After careful analysis, the three controversial statements were revised and rephrased. The first question now read 'Do you believe graffiti can be used to pass short immediate messages?' to

which 12 of the 18 respondents agreed while the remaining 6 disagreed. The six who disagreed had also earlier disagreed to being able to understand the messages in graffiti let alone being able to identify the messages in graffiti.

The second question now read 'Do you believe graffiti can be used to influence change in society over a period of time?', to which 12 respondents agreed. The six respondents who disagreed had also disagreed to the previous question.

The question on whether graffiti is vandalism saw 14 respondents disagree with such claims, while the remaining four respondents agreed that graffiti is vandalism. The respondents who disagreed pointed out that graffiti was not destructive, instead it should be practiced more to beautify the environment.

4.1.2: Unexpected Discoveries

During the interviews and collection of photographs, there are certain discoveries that the research revealed that had not been foreseen.

One of these discoveries is the changing cycle of the type of graffiti produced, usually shaped by politics. During one of the interviews, one of the respondents made an interesting point. This particular respondent initially had no knowledge of what the term graffiti meant. On explaining to him, he acknowledged that he now knows graffiti and that initially he did not know the paintings he saw were called graffiti. He further stated that he usually sees several political slogans and names painted on walls during the campaign period then afterwards, just before ballot day, he sees more colorful paintings increase in number around the neighborhood. I posed this observation to the other respondents after each interview just to get their opinions and all the respondents agreed to having witnessed that pattern. Political graffiti with slogans such as "Otiende for MP" and "Vote Otiende" are common during the campaign periods (See **Fig 3.8**).

Fig 3.8: "Owade 2017 Woodley MCA" ***Graffiti by an unknown person (Several of these were painted in various parts of Kibera)****5-01-2019*

After the campaign period, graffiti calling for peace and harmony increase in number (See **Fig3.9**). It is almost as if politics gets residents so charged up that graffiti artists feel the need to remind them to live in peace and harmony.

Fig 3.9: ***Graffiti by Solo7 calling for peace (Several of these were painted in various parts of Kibera)****5-01-2019*

Another discovery was that in some cases, graffiti on certain walls gave rise to vices. Slavey narrated that several graffiti had been painted over recently because there were cases in which music artists used the painted walls to shoot their music videos. The downside to this was that the video vixens that were sourced to appear in the music videos dressed provocatively and performed obscene dance moves in broad daylight in residential areas with children watching. The residents could no longer tolerate this and as a result several graffiti were painted over (See **Fig 4.0**and **Fig 4.1**)

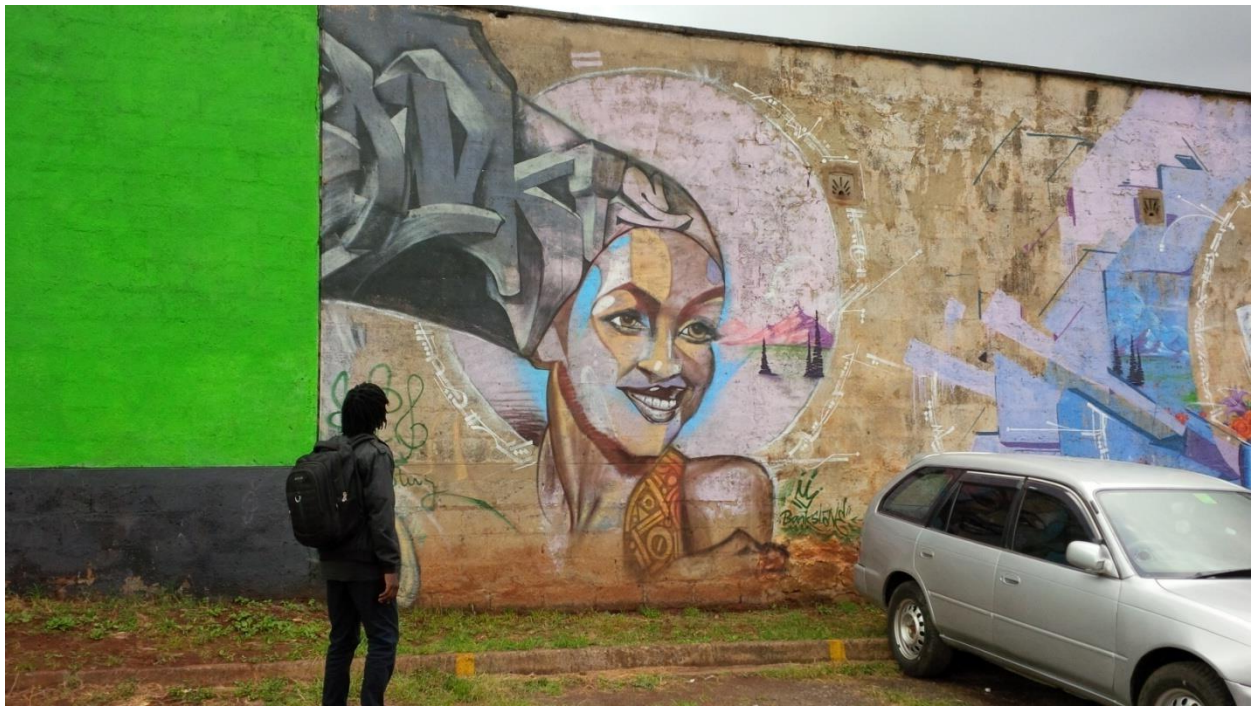

Fig 4.0: ***Graffiti by Bankslave (The area painted green next to it used to have graffiti)***

5-01-2019

Fig 4.1: ***Graffiti painted over (The area painted green used to have graffiti)****5-01-2019*

Certain secluded areas that had graffiti also attract youth who refer to these places as 'base' where they sit idly and harass passers-by especially ladies.

4.2.1: Mathare Data Collection

With the help of Jason Waweru, I was able to scout Mathare for existing graffiti and interview a few residents.

Fig 4.2: ***Research Assistant Jason Waweru****(15-02-2019)*

Unlike Kibera, Mathare had fewer graffiti painted due to the dense house arrangement and type of houses (See **Fig 4.3**).

Fig 4.3: ***A view of Part of Mathare****(15-02-2019)*

A total of 18 residents were sampled and interviewed. The table below shows the results (See **Table 3.8**).

Table 3.8: Mathare Questionnaire and Results

Questions	Responses		
Residents' Questions	**Yes**	**No**	**Undecided**
Do you understand the term graffiti?	11	7	0
Have you ever encountered graffiti?	14	4	0
Has graffiti ever influenced your mood or changed your thoughts?	7	11	0
Do you understand the term 'vandalism"?	13	5	0
Do you feel like graffiti is vandalism?	4	14	0
****What is your general feeling about graffiti?**	-	-	-
Have you ever seen messages in graffiti?	12	6	0

Do you understand the messages you have seen in graffiti?	12	6	0
Do you believe there is a positive side to graffiti?	14	4	0
Do you believe graffiti can be used to pass short immediate messages?	16	2	0
Do you understand the concept of social change?	15	3	0
Do you believe graffiti can be used to influence change in society over a period of time?	12	6	0

The two trivial questions 'Do you believe graffiti can be used for communication?' and 'Do you believe graffiti can be used to instigate social change?' were rephrased for ease of understanding by the residents.

The first question now read 'Do you believe graffiti can be used to pass short immediate messages?' to which 12 of the 18 respondents agreed while the remaining 6 disagreed. The six who disagreed had also earlier disagreed to being able to understand the messages in graffiti let alone being able to identify the messages in graffiti.

The second question now read 'Do you believe graffiti can be used to influence change in society over a period of time?', to which 12 respondents agreed. The six respondents who disagreed had also disagreed to the previous question.

The question on whether graffiti is vandalism saw 14 respondents disagree with such claims, while the remaining four respondents agreed that graffiti is vandalism. The respondents who disagreed pointed out that graffiti was not destructive, instead it should be practiced more to beautify the environment. The respondents who agreed with the statement argued that rarely do graffiti artists get permission to draw on the surfaces onto which they do. Rather, they take the cover of darkness and the next day everyone wakes up to graffiti on private property.

Mathare also had several political graffiti urging residents to vote for certain individuals. The graffiti that was produced after the political season carried messages of peace and love. Waweru, my research assistant, vied for a Member of County Assembly seat in the previous election in which he lost narrowly. He narrated how the political reason got residents so charged up that prior to ballot day, several residents moved upcountry for fear of violence. Graffiti bearing his name were still visible on several structures around Mathare. He says his political followers did all the painting, perhaps a clear indicator of how charged up politics gets people. In his opinion, the graffiti artists play an important role in reminding residents of the value of peace and harmony even as they may not share the same opinions when it comes to politics.

4.3.1: Artist Interviews

The first graffiti artist to be interviewed was Gideon Masiga whose street name is Vista. He is a graffiti artist and a rapper although his focus leans more towards rap than graffiti. Vista explains that he got into graffiti while still in high school. At the time, he wasn't practicing graffiti so as to communicate. He was more drawn by the fame and the celebrity status that came with mastering the skill. It was after high school, when he joined Karatina University to study IT that he discovered the real potential of using graffiti as a communication tool. He and some of his friends made it a practice, especially during campus election period, to inform students on the right candidate choices. He practiced graffiti for a while then shifted his focus to rap music. Vista says graffiti is an important component of the hip hop culture and he believes it is almost as powerful as rap music. Below are his responses to the interview (See **Table 3.9**).

Table 3.9: **Vista Interview**

Questions	**Responses**
Artists' Questions	**Comments**
In your opinion, what is graffiti?	It is an art form that is a component of the hip hop culture
What do you feel is the purpose of graffiti?	To communicate and speak out on societal vices

Are there rules when doing graffiti?	Yes. Several in fact. Some include no painting over other artists' work unless taunting them is the objective, in which case a hierarchy is considered. For example no painting over a Piece using a Tag or Throw-Up.
Where can you paint?	Anywhere, as long as you don't get caught! (Laughs)
****State some of the artistic and stylistic component of graffiti that you are aware of? (Expound and discuss with respondent)**	Line and colour mostly
What does 'vandalism' mean to you?	Destruction of property like we see during riots
Is graffiti vandalism?	In my opinion it is not. It's all about communicating. If an artist paints on a wall that painting on has been prohibited, then he must have weighed the consequences and decided the message he is trying to pass is greater than that wall so everyone better pay attention to graffiti of such nature.
Is graffiti about the individual or society as a whole?	It is definitely about society as a whole. The messages are meant for society
How do you think society feels about graffiti?	I think from some of the comments I have heard, most people still don't understand graffiti
Are there design processes you follow when painting?	Graffiti involves a lot of work, especially the big pieces. From sketches to the final painting which requires a keen eye so as to balance the piece on the available space, getting the colours right and knowing which colour works well in a given situation. We graffiti artists are the greatest designers! (Laughs)
What are you trying to accomplish through graffiti?	Speak on societal vices and inspire change in society
What do you feel graffiti should be used for?	For speaking out on wrong-doings
****Do you have an understanding of the term social change? (Explanation if not)**	-
Do you believe graffiti can be used to instigate social change? If so, how?	Yes it can. I believe by educating the masses on what graffiti is and continuously painting graffiti that communicates to the masses, graffiti can inspire social change, one wall at a time!

Another graffiti artist who was interviewed goes by the street name Sketch. He says he picked an interest in graffiti after joining Karatina University and meeting Vista. In high school he was interested in art and was good at calligraphy. He used to get paid for labeling student's books, envelopes and certificates using calligraphy. The fame that came with his talent in high school is what kept him interested in art in general. While in Karatina University, he worked on graffiti alongside Vista and fell in love with the culture. He also shifted his focus to music and interestingly produces Vista's music currently although he says his love for graffiti never died. The table below shows the interview questions and his responses (See **Table 4.0**).

Table 4.0: **Sketch Interview**

Questions	**Responses**
Artists' Questions	**Comments**
In your opinion, what is graffiti?	Graffiti is an artistic mode of communication using pictures and words
What do you feel is the purpose of graffiti?	To communicate various information to society
Are there rules when doing graffiti?	Yes. For example, painting over another artist's work is prohibited
Where can you paint?	Unless an artist has been hired to paint a specific spot, it is best to paint in areas with high traffic
****State some of the artistic and stylistic component of graffiti that you are aware of? (Expound and discuss with respondent)**	Colour and lines
What does 'vandalism' mean to you?	Destruction of private property
Is graffiti vandalism?	Very tricky question. In my opinion I feel it depends on the situation. If it is painted on private property without permission, it is vandalism.
Is graffiti about the individual or society as a whole?	It is about society as a whole. The artist usually paints so that society can get his message
How do you think society feels about graffiti?	I think society is split into two when it comes to graffiti. There are people who are okay and even support graffiti, then there are people who hate graffiti for some reason.
Are there design processes you follow when painting?	Yes. Just basic stuff like mixing colours, making sure the painting is proportional and looks

	perfect.
What are you trying to accomplish through graffiti?	I don't paint as much as I used to but when I used to, I was just trying to inspire people to do right
What do you feel graffiti should be used for?	For inspiring society
****Do you have an understanding of the term social change? (Explanation if not)**	-
Do you believe graffiti can be used to instigate social change? If so, how?	Yes it can. I believe that if positive messages are communicated using graffiti, with time society will finally change for the best

Mutua is a practicing graffiti artist running his own brand (Mutua Arts). I was referred to him by Kevin Oyugi of Pawa254. Mutua usually works with Pawa254 on social change projects that use graffiti as the main media. The table below shows the interview questions and Mutua's responses (See **Table 4.1**).

Table 4.1: Mutua Interview

Questions	**Responses**
Artists' Questions	**Comments**
In your opinion, what is graffiti?	Graffiti is street art defined by materials used (spray cans)
What do you feel is the purpose of graffiti?	To express ideas and feelings in the streets and also to make the streets colorful
Are there rules when doing graffiti?	There are no rules as every graffiti artist has his/her own principles and standards that guide them
Where can you paint?	I have no boundaries. I can paint anywhere, but at the right time and with the right reason
****Explain the artistic and stylistic component of graffiti that you are aware of? (Expound and discuss with respondent)**	Examples of styles that I am aware of are abstracts, fonts, portraits or mixed media
What does 'vandalism' mean to you?	It is a crime that involves destruction of private property
Is graffiti vandalism?	Graffiti is not vandalism, although it can become vandalism if the artist paints on property without permission
Is graffiti about the individual or society	It depends on the artist's goal. Most of the

as a whole?	graffiti in informal settlements talk about what the community is facing
How do you think society feels about graffiti?	The community appreciates graffiti a lot. This is evident in the number of commissioned graffiti that people sometimes ask us to do in their personal spaces (homes and offices)
Are there design processes you follow when painting?	Yes. Prepare the surface, come up with sketches, selection of colours to be used, drafting a budget and finally executing the work
What are you trying to accomplish through graffiti?	Just trying to add colour and life to the streets
What do you feel graffiti should be used for?	To express ideas and feelings
****Do you have an understanding of the term social change? (Explanation if not)**	-
Do you believe graffiti can be used to instigate social change? If so, how?	Yes I do. If an artist communicates his/her ideas using street art, the community can get messages from this and change with time

Table 4.1

Below are some of Mutua's graffiti (See **Fig 4.4 –Fig4.6**).

Fig 4.4: Mural on a Wall to Brighten the Area

Fig 4.5: Commissioned Thomas Sankara Portrait

Fig 4.6: Commissioned Art to bring Life to the Space

Another graffiti artist I was referred to by Kevin Oyugi of Pawa254 is Nancy Chelagat who goes by the street name Chela. She too works with Pawa254 on social change projects that involve the use of graffiti. Below is a table that shows the interview questions and Chela's responses (See **Table 4.2**)

Table 4.2: Chela Interview

Questions	Responses
Artists' Questions	**Comments**
In your opinion, what is graffiti?	Graffiti is an art form that uses pictures and words to convey messages
What do you feel is the purpose of graffiti?	The purpose of graffiti to me is to communicate
Are there rules when doing graffiti?	Yes there are rules like where to paint and what to paint
Where can you paint?	Anywhere as long as it is permitted
****Explain the artistic and stylistic component of graffiti that you are aware of? (Expound and discuss with respondent)**	I am aware of the use of colour, lines and form to create pieces that attract the viewers' attention and tell a story
What does 'vandalism' mean to you?	Vandalism simply is the destruction of private property
Is graffiti vandalism?	Depends on where it is done and if it is permitted
Is graffiti about the individual or society as a whole?	I believe graffiti is about the society as a whole because most of the time, the artist is merely a vessel through which societal issues are raised
How do you think society feels about graffiti?	Generally speaking, part of society is receptive of the art form while the other part denounces the art form
Are there design processes you follow when painting?	Yes. All of my designs start with sketches after which I prepare the surface and sketch on it too before executing my idea
What are you trying to accomplish through graffiti?	I believe graffiti has the power to change lives and I would just like to be a part of the force that drove the change
What do you feel graffiti should be used for?	Graffiti should be used to better society as a whole

****Do you have an understanding of the term social change? (Explanation if not)**	-
Do you believe graffiti can be used to instigate social change? If so, how?	Yes but only if done right. Graffiti can be used to spread messages and ideologies that in turn would bring about social change eventually

Eljay is a graffiti artist who focuses on sharing his art online and giving tutorials to aspiring graffiti artists. His YouTube page (Eljay Graffiti) has several subscribers who are all interested in graffiti as an art form. Below is a table that shows the interview questions and responses from Eljay (See **Table 4.3**)

Table 4.3: Eljay Interview

Questions	**Responses**
Artists' Questions	**Comments**
In your opinion, what is graffiti?	Graffiti is a form of art that strives to pass a given message
What do you feel is the purpose of graffiti?	The purpose of graffiti is to act as a voice for the voiceless
Are there rules when doing graffiti?	Not that I know of. Graffiti is an unconstrained form of art and that is what gives it power
Where can you paint?	Anywhere
****Explain the artistic and stylistic component of graffiti that you are aware of? (Expound and discuss with respondent)**	I know of the use of lines especially when making outlines, the use of colour for dramatic impact and the use of geometric shapes to create abstract art
What does 'vandalism' mean to you?	Destruction of property
Is graffiti vandalism?	Depends on where it is painted. If an artist paints on a surface where painting is prohibited then that counts as vandalism
Is graffiti about the individual or society as a whole?	Graffiti is both about the individual and the society. A graffiti artist may express their frustrations through art and also at other times express society's frustrations
How do you think society feels about graffiti?	I feel like graffiti is hated and loved in equal measure. There are those who love graffiti and those who cannot stand graffiti
Are there design processes you follow when painting?	Yes. Sketching is usually my first step. After that, the next big task is execution

What are you trying to accomplish through graffiti?	I am trying to mentor a generation that acts for change
What do you feel graffiti should be used for?	To express ourselves
****Do you have an understanding of the term social change? (Explanation if not)**	-
Do you believe graffiti can be used to instigate social change? If so, how?	Yes it can be. By creating graffiti that expresses society's needs, I think a lot can change.

Below is a piece that was done by Eljay (See **Fig 4.7**). He explained that the pieced was aimed at reminding society about the value of Love.

Fig 4.7: A Reminder of Love by Eljay

4.4.1: Graffiti Photographs Analysis

Several photographs of graffiti were collected to help in categorizing the graffiti in Nairobi into typologies. As more and more photographs were collected, clear categories into which most graffiti fall, begun to emerge. Below are the typologies of graffiti within Nairobi.

Political Graffiti

These carry political messages and increased in number during political seasons. They are mostly used to communicate campaign slogans and to urge residents to vote for a particular candidate.

Political Graffiti 1 *- 5:01:2019 - Kibera*

Political Graffiti 2 *- 15:02:2019 - Mathare*

Commercial Graffiti

These graffiti usually aim to promote a product or service. They are mostly commissioned and done on high traffic areas.

Commercial Graffiti 1 *- 5:01:2019 - Kibera*

Commercial Graffiti 2 *- 5:01:2019 – Kibera*

Inspirational Graffiti

These graffiti usually created to encourage positivity. They usually contain positive messages or could even be created to brighten dull spaces.

Inspirational Graffiti 1 *- 5:01:2019 - Kibera*

Inspirational Graffiti 2 *- 5:01:2019 – Kibera*

Destructive Graffiti

These graffiti deface property without passing any purposeful message.

Destructive Graffiti 1 *- 7:02:2019 – Nairobi CBD*

Destructive Graffiti 2 *– 5:01:2019 – Kibera*

4.4.2: Discussion

Misconceptions about graffiti exist because of lack of comprehensive information on graffiti as an art form. This is the main gap that this study sought to fill. With lack of information and several misconceptions still existent among Nairobi residents, the messages that graffiti artists try to communicate in their pieces usually aren't received.

To fill this gap, the study used levers of change which involved providing comprehensive information on graffiti as an art form, coming up with clear typologies of graffiti that exist within Nairobi and getting artists' and residents' views on graffiti in order to demonstrate the potential of using graffiti as a tool for social change.

To get typologies of graffiti within Nairobi, several photographs of graffiti were collected and analyzed in terms of the messages they carried and their intended purpose. Four categories i.e., **Inspirational, Political, Commercial and Destructive graffiti**, emerged from this analysis. Inspirational graffiti carried positive messages. Murals that were painted to brighten up dull spaces also fell under this category. Political graffiti are those that carried politically charged

messages while commercial graffiti are those that sought to promote a product of service. Destructive graffiti are those that deface public property without passing any real messages.

The graffiti artists' interviews revealed that the pieces they create are usually geared towards passing messages. They confirmed that graffiti to them is not just a random process but a carefully planned one that is intended to communicate positive messages. When asked the question 'What do you feel is the purpose of graffiti?", all five artists implied that they believe graffiti is a communication tool. Another question that allowed the artists to express their beliefs about graffiti is "Is graffiti about the individual or society as a whole?". To this question, the general opinion from the five artists was that graffiti is about both the individual and society as a whole. Graffiti artist Chela for example feels that graffiti is about the society and that the artists are merely vessels through which social issues are communicated while Eljay is of the opinion that graffiti is about both the individual and society. He expressed that an artist may at times create art that is influenced by their moods or frustrations.

Interviews with residents revealed a side that was already a bit receptive to graffiti. If educated on the art form, they would be more receptive to social change messages passed through graffiti. Of the 55 residents interviewed, 62% agreed to having seen messages in graffiti, 53% agreed to having had graffiti influence their mood at some point while 65% believed that graffiti can be used to pass short messages. This further demonstrated the potential of using graffiti as a tool to communicate social change messages.

With these levers of change, the gaps stated above are filled to achieve better understanding of graffiti as an art form and understanding residents' and graffiti artists' point of view in regards to graffiti. This leads to a general receptiveness of graffiti as an art form and a serious tool for instigating social change through communication of social change messages.

CONCLUSION

Graffiti as an art form is steadily becoming more popular in Nairobi. Residents are gaining awareness on the subculture while graffiti artists are extending the geographical areas in which they paint. Misconceptions about graffiti and lack of knowledge on the sub culture prevent the general public from getting the intended messages from graffiti.

The study demonstrates the potential of using graffiti as a tool for communicating social change messages by highlighting both the artists' and residents' point of view in regard to graffiti. The graffiti artists that were interviewed see graffiti as a tool for communication and confirm that they usually have messages they intend to pass in every piece they create. This means that the messages and processes that go into graffiti creation are deliberate. Majority of the residents interviewed on the other hand agreed that they have been influenced by the messages contained in graffiti at one point or another. They also agreed that graffiti can be used to communicate social change messages, thus the potential of using graffiti to instigate social change is evident in the receptiveness of a majority of residents and the deliberateness of graffiti artists in their creation process.

The study also establishes clear typologies of graffiti within Nairobi by analyzing the photographs collected and grouping them based on the messages they communicate.

By highlighting the use of communication of social issues using graffiti and providing background information in the art form, this study seeks to provide alternative views in regard to graffiti.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The general public needs to be educated and provided with information on graffiti. If this is done, there may be a better understanding of the messages that graffiti artists intend to pass. This research is a step in that direction. Graffiti art shows and events could also be organized to allow for interaction between graffiti artists and Nairobi residents. This could also give residents an insight into the graffiti sub culture while allowing graffiti artists to get societal issues from residents and tailoring their messages and artwork to reflect society's needs.

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