

YOUTH IN THE MEDIA CITY

JOHANNA SUMIALA & ANNALIINA NIITAMO (EDS.)



BELONGING AND CONTROL
ON THE MOVE

YOUTH IN THE MEDIA CITY

Belonging and Control on the Move

YOUTH IN THE MEDIA CITY

Belonging and Control on the Move

JOHANNA SUMIALA & ANNALIINA NIITAMO (EDS.)

Finnish Youth Research Society/
Finnish Youth Research Network
Internet publications 137

FINNISH YOUTH RESEARCH SOCIETY
FINNISH YOUTH RESEARCH NETWORK



KONE FOUNDATION

Editors: Johanna Sumiala & Annaliina Niitamo
Language check: Maria Lyytinen
Cover photo: Patrik Rastenberger
Layout: Kaskas Media / Inka Asikanius
Funded by Kone Foundation

© Finnish Youth Research Society and authors

2019. Finnish Youth Research Society, Finnish Youth Research Network,
internet publications 137

ISBN 978-952-7175-75-0
ISSN 1799-9227

Orders:
The Finnish Youth Research Society
tilaukset@nuorisotutkimus.fi
www.youthresearch.fi/publications

Contents

Foreword <i>Johanna Sumiala & Annaliina Niitamo</i>	5
Introduction <i>Johanna Sumiala, Leena Suurpää & Päivi Honkatukia</i>	8
RESEARCHING IN THE CITY Young People's Everyday Metro Experiences <i>Heta Mulari, Nadezhda Vasileva & Yana Krupets</i>	14
LISTENING IN THE CITY The Underground Wind <i>Taina Riikonen</i>	25
PLAYING IN THE CITY Mobile Gaming, Digital Sociality and Control <i>Arseniy Svyntarenko & Anastasia Sablina</i>	26
SPINNING IN THE CITY Belonging in the Circus Community <i>Heta Mulari</i>	41
STICKERING IN THE CITY Sticker Artists Re-defining Mobile Urban Space(s) <i>Yana Krupets & Nadezhda Vasileva</i>	50
PAINTING THE METRO Performing Graffiti Masculinity <i>Malin Fransberg</i>	61

Foreword

Johanna Sumiala & Annaliina Niitamo

Welcome underneath the surface of mobile, urban subcultural phenomena.

The essays of this collection are written and visualized by researchers and artists of the Digital Youth in the Media City (DiMe) project. The purpose here is to bring forth topics of the project and to inspire new readers to explore in-depth texts, visuals and sounds that hail from research. We have created a multisensory piece where you as a reader are able to explore essays on youth subcultural phenomena in Helsinki and St. Petersburg, get acquainted with urban phenomena, enjoy visuals in the form of photographs and listen to urban soundscapes.

The multi-sensory piece is available at www.youth-in-the-media-city.org. You are welcome to visit the webpage, where – in addition to the essays – you will be able to enjoy all of the photographs and audio art created for the research project. This pdf and printed version is to offer a lasting place for the texts, that hopefully last beyond the stirring waters of different digital formats of the future.

The idea to study youth, media and the city came about in one unofficial meeting of a group of sociologists, youth researchers and media scholars who liked to hang out together in Helsinki. Some of us knew colleagues in St. Petersburg who might be interested in joining us – and so they did.

We all agreed that despite the widespread use of digital media technology, there was still surprisingly little research on young people's mundane engagements in today's digital media cities, particularly with regard to the shaping and reshaping of urban youth cultures. One key aim of the DiMe project is to begin to fill this gap.

Our DiMe team includes scholars from three universities and the Finnish Youth Research Society in Helsinki. Johanna Sumiala is a media scholar from the University of Helsinki. Leena Suurpää and Päivi Honkatukia are sociologists and youth researchers who have conducted pioneering research affiliated with a variety of institutions in Finland,



including the University of Tampere and the Finnish Youth Research Society. Johanna, Leena and Päivi co-direct the project.

Also, the researchers in the project represent various fields and institutions: Heta Mulari (cultural analyst and historian) and Arseniy Svyrenko (sociologist) work at the Finnish Youth Research Society, and Malin Fransberg (sociologist) represents the University of Tampere. Research assistant Annaliina Niitamo (University of Helsinki) has a background in media and urban studies. Olli Haanpää participated in fieldwork as part of his internship at the Finnish Youth Research Society.

Researchers from The St. Petersburg Higher School of Economics include sociologists Yana Krupets, Nadezhda Vasileva, Anastasia Sablina and Margarita Kuleva. The Russian team also consists of senior scholars such as Elena Omelchenko and Guzel Sabirova who have given valuable insights during the three-year academic journey we have shared together. We thank Elena and Guzel for their contribution.

From the very beginning of the project, our transdisciplinary team saw that it was important to communicate our research findings not only to an international academic community, but to a broader public as well.

In DiMe we believe that communicating research is an ethical act. This essay collection continues this thought. Research is not only about new knowledge but about creating space for broader societal and cultural discussion and encounters with broader publics. Research should inspire and stir up thoughts about our society and the world that may not always go along the lines of what we are used to.

This said, research on the city, media and youth should not only limit itself to the written words. The photographs for this project and this essay collection were created by the photographer and anthropologist Patrik Rastenberger, and urban soundscapes were created by sound researcher and artist Taina Riikonen. Without the audio-visual stimuli our experience of youth lives in the media city would be so much poorer. For these audio-visual experiences, please visit www.youth-in-the-media-city.org.

No scholarly or artistic effort is possible without financial and intellectual support and material resources. We wish to thank the Kone Foundation for making this project possible. The visual design and layout for the essay collection were produced by Kaskas Media, and we want to thank them for their insight, enthusiasm and encouragement during the process. We thank Maria Lyytinen for proof reading these essays. We also

wish to thank all those young people in Helsinki and St. Petersburg who have explored the media city with us as our local guides, informants and co-researchers. The city of Helsinki, The Helsinki Art Museum, HAM, as well as the Street Art Museum of St. Petersburg have provided valuable support. Last but not least, we want to thank our colleagues in our home universities, institutions and research centers, as well as all those academics and artists in seminars, workshops and conferences who have commented on and encouraged us to think of our project in new ways.

Johanna Sumiala & Annaliina Niitamo
Helsinki, September 2018



Introduction

Welcome on a Digital Journey through Helsinki and Saint Petersburg!

Johanna Sumiala, Leena Suurpää & Päivi Honkatukia

In today's world we live digital media lives. This is to say that our lives are saturated by digital media.

As part of our normal daily routines we use our smartphones or other portable digital devices to look for information, entertain ourselves, search for help or connect with other people. By doing this, we shape our identities in and via digital media.

And yet, our digital lives are not only lived in the virtual worlds. We constantly travel between offline and online worlds, and simultaneously occupy both physical and virtual spaces, as we sit, for example, on a bus or in a metro car and follow someone's Instagram page via our smartphones.

Digital lives are not only lived, but also constantly managed and controlled by different institutions and organizations. Our actions and connections – what we like, where we are and with whom we engage and communicate – are digitally monitored and influenced by various agents, both in the public and commercial sectors, and used for diverse purposes. These monitoring activities may include digitally targeted advertising as well as surveillance to identify deviations from norms.

This said, digital lives are never lived in a vacuum. They are lived in certain spatial, temporal and ideological conditions.

In this collection of essays, we wish to shed light on the different ways in which digital lives are lived in the media city, in particular by young people. In her book, *Media and the City* (2013), media scholar Myria Georgiou reminds us that the media city exists through its representation and our imaginations of the city. This is to say that the media create and distribute images of the city; hence, it is much more than a location or a distinct phenomenon. Today, the image of a particular media city is created through a complex network of different actors in which professional actors, such as journalists, PR professionals and creative directors

in the advertising business create this image alongside the people living in or visiting a media city.

The media city is also always intensely connected. It is linked by people, technologies, institutions and societal structures. As a global city, the media city can be described as a node of multiple social and cultural networks that exist simultaneously. What is more, they may be mutually inclusive, and in some cases highly exclusive. To have connections is to have social capital in a media city.

We explore two media cities, Helsinki and St. Petersburg. The two cities are connected – and also separated – by their histories. Many historical sites in Helsinki were built during the Russian rule. In more recent history, after the second world war and during the cold war that followed and lasted until the 1990s, the inhabitants of these two cities have been geographically close but socially distant from one another, e.g. due to strict border control regulations between the two different societal systems. The two cities are very different also when it comes to their scale: while Helsinki is populated by only some 650,000 inhabitants, St. Petersburg is a metropolis with around five million city dwellers.

STARTING THE JOURNEY: ON A METRO

We wish to take, what we call, a mobile street level view of the above-mentioned media cities. We will start our exploration by studying a particular form of transportation that exists in both cities, namely the metro, tube, subway – however you wish to call it. For us, the metro involves some key elements of the media city we wish to understand: its high level of automation and digitalization reveals many central aspects about the mediatized realities of contemporary cities. In the closed space of metro cars moving through tunnels underground, human interaction with various technological objects (travel card readers and mechanical doors) becomes an important part of the metro experience. Moreover, the Internet, digital technology and mobile devices are also deeply embedded in the everyday life of the city dwellers on the metro, as they are often immersed in their virtual networks through their gadgets while travelling. Metro cars and stations can be considered spaces for complex emotional



and sensory experiences, social engagement and self-expression, of which mechanical and digital devices are essential parts.

While connecting different parts of the city, the metro is used by diverse individuals and groups of people, and is therefore rich with cultural meanings related to mobility, sociability, virtuality, norms, surveillance and control. Not only does the metro transport people from one place to another, but it is also a thoroughly social urban space filled with a plethora of emotions and interactions of which digital devices and virtual realities form an essential part in both cities.

While the metro follows mundane rhythms of city life and offers daily transportation, it also implies and provides a space for communication, meeting with friends, a shelter from the cold winter weather, a place for games or musical performances or collective struggles. Our bodily experiences of a media city are shaped by the physical construction of metro cars, as well as by the time-space routines of the cities: busy rush hours on weekday mornings, lazy Sunday mornings, and noisy late evenings at weekends. The metro connects people and locations, but it also reveals many divisions in the contemporary media city, those between the young and the old, or between passengers occupying diverse gendered, racialized and socioeconomic positions. As such it allows us to both observe and rethink contested dynamics between centers and peripheries.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ENGAGEMENTS IN THE MEDIA CITY

Our goal is to grasp diverse moments of young people's digital media lives on the metro and elsewhere in these two media cities. We regard youth as a relatively loose category of people who are in a stage of life between childhood and adulthood. For us, youth is by no means a clear or universal category, but instead something that is constantly being defined and labelled by both peers and adult society, with often anxious undertones as to the public role of the youth: young people are frequently depicted simultaneously as problematic, unstable or untrustworthy and as vulnerable, something to be concerned and worried about. These contested representations have consequences on how young people are treated also in the context of the media city, and on how they respond to these categorizations.

Young people's urban engagements are often framed as more or less spectacular acts of particular youth cultures. Since the 1970s, scholars in the field of youth studies have discussed these youth formations as subcultures. And since then, the concept has been used, albeit in contested ways, to describe young people's diverse collective activities as resistance to adult norms and expectations, or as solutions to cultural contradictions or structural problems, such as poverty, racism or the lack of various resources for success, that they in very concrete ways experience together in their everyday lives. At first, subcultures were studied mainly as male working class phenomena – as young men's reactions to class-based norms and restrictions imposed by middle class society. In this collection, the essay that relates most to this tradition, is Malin Fransberg's piece which discusses graffiti subculture as a masculine phenomenon.

Young people's collective formations and commitments have recently been discussed more and more as being situational and constantly changing, instead of forming distinct or consistent subcultures. Neither youth cultural action in general, nor subcultures in particular, are necessarily stable, coherent or recognizable by their characteristics, boundaries or conditions for belonging. Media technologies also profoundly shape the way in which young people engage in their everyday sociocultural environments, belong to diverse groups or draw boundaries between different groups of people.

In this book, we conceive youth cultures in a broad sense as social spaces for testing, forming, claiming and contesting group belongings and engagements. What inspires us are the very mundane elements of the youth cultures in the context of the media city. As such, they may be difficult to catch and categorize – both for the researchers and to anyone trying to make sense of young people's engagements. Recognizable or not, youth cultural engagements convey important meanings, choices, necessities and experiences for young people themselves, as the essays of this book highlight.



FIVE SCHOLARLY GAZES ON YOUTH CULTURES IN THE MEDIA CITY

Heta Mulari, Nadezhda Vasileva and Yana Krupets begin the book with a dialogue based on their experiences of studying the metro as an everyday space for young people in Helsinki and in St. Petersburg. They tackle the challenge of studying and problematizing the everydayness, and reflect together on the diverse methods and concerns they have used and had in making sense of the media city as a youth space - grasping visible in the invisible, and particular in the ordinary. The discussion between the researchers exemplifies the complexities involved when they are balancing on the border of triviality and meaningful knowledge production. As well as requiring skill, craft and sensitivity from the researcher, it also demands an ability to shift between being close to and maintaining an analytical distance from the field being studied.

Arseniy Svyarenko and Anastasia Sablina have carried out ethnographic studies on playing Pokémon Go in Helsinki and in St. Petersburg. In their essay, they focus on how mobile gaming is always to some extent defined and constrained by societal forces, and emphasise the particularities of the public discussion surrounding the Pokémon Go game in the two cities. When as in Helsinki and in Finland the discussion has revolved mostly around nuisance caused by players, the Russian media seems to be more alarmed about alleged security threats related to digital gaming. Svyarenko's and Sablina's research reveals the nature of the media city for young people as an arena for play, fun and creativity, but simultaneously as a site of constant struggles in the political contexts conditioning and controlling youth cultural play.

In her essay Heta Mulari discusses a young people's circus and flow art community in Helsinki. The circus community members distance themselves from the values that are understood to be enforced upon young people by adult society, such as individual success, competitiveness or a demand to grow up efficiently. What seems to be important for the participants is the creation of alternative and convivial spaces for young people inside the city, and issues such as joy and mutual support in the city. At the same time, Mulari's careful ethnographic analysis also reveals that the community is not free from internal processes of belonging vs. being left behind, or inclusion vs. exclusion.

Yana Krupets and Nadezhda Vasileva also reveal the importance of approaching youth cultural phenomena at a very mundane and everyday level, trying to grasp the meanings of youth cultural engagement in the ways that those participating in it experience it. They have studied a group called sticker artists in St. Petersburg. Even if these young people and their outputs (stickers) are barely visible to other city dwellers, the young people themselves attach many crucial meanings to these engagements - also in terms of the course of their lives. For them, making and gluing stickers is definitely one way to express their engagement as active citizens in the media city.

Similarly to the sticker artists in St Petersburg, graffiti writers in Helsinki also constantly negotiate the meanings of their actions in relation to the fact that they are defined as crimes by the society and hence controlled by authorities. Malin Fransberg discusses how illegality is an essential element of the graffiti subculture as a masculine field. Furthermore, Fransberg makes sense of the participants' thinking of their subculture's position in terms of its transnational roots vs. being almost patriotically protective of Helsinki as their own location. This illustrates interesting contests between local and global attachments vis-à-vis the media city. Another constant concern for the participants is how to preserve authenticity of their subcultural engagements in spaces and places which have become increasingly digitalized and commercialized. As Fransberg shows, it takes a great deal of subcultural creativity to be able to balance between these complex requirements.

So, welcome on this journey of two media cities to explore young people's lives and cultures on the move in these environments and landscapes! You may dive into partly hidden urban youth subcultures: encounters in an urban circus, active player communities of Pokémon Go, the redefinition of the city by sticker artists or debating gender in graffiti subculture. Take a look at just one essay or read them all as a book. Or you may focus solely on the ponderable photos or drift away by listening to mesmerizing metro sounds in the digital version of this book at www.youth-in-the-media-city.org.



Researching in the City

Young People's Everyday Metro Experiences

Heta Mulari, Nadezhda (Nadya) Vasileva & Yana Krupets

This essay engages in an urban dialogue between two cities and two local research groups about doing ethnographic research in the mobile, mundane metro space. Understanding the metro as part of today's digital media city and as a specific urban space with its own norms were the key perspectives, as the researchers stepped into the metro in Helsinki and St Petersburg. Researchers in both cities look at the challenges of locating themselves in the metro: not only as ordinary passengers but as researchers of this ordinariness.

Field work took place in Helsinki in May 2016–June 2017 and in St. Petersburg in May–October 2017. In addition to the authors, field research in Helsinki was also carried out by Arseniy Svyrenko, Päivi Honkatukia and Olli Haanpää.

HOW CAN ONE BECOME A STRANGER ON THE METRO
AND MAKE THE MUNDANE STRANGE AND VISIBLE?
WHY IS IT WORTH DOING?

Heta:

My metro ethnography began on a warm and sunny afternoon in May 2016, as I walked to the University of Helsinki metro station close to the city centre. As I was riding down the escalator, I was thinking about how to place myself differently in the metro car in comparison to my everyday use of the metro, and how to become aware of my own role as a researcher.

The Helsinki metro was opened in 1984 and it consists of one simple, forked line that connects the eastern, suburban parts with the city centre. Since October 2017, it has been possible to reach the neighboring city of Espoo with the western extension of the metro, too. Visually, the Helsinki

metro is characterized by its dominant orange colour, visible both on the metro walls and the plastic seats.*

**Nadya:* “In contrast to Helsinki, the trains in St. Petersburg are blue on the outside and white on the inside. I assume that the colors and visual components of the metro can be very important for how this urban site is perceived and can affect the emotions of passengers. Orange color, on the one hand, can be considered a signal for attention or danger, on the other hand, for me it also symbolizes fun, boldness and warmth. At the same time, blue and white remind me of calmness, relaxation, freedom and coldness.”

For me, at the core of doing metro ethnography was trying to make everyday interaction, urban movements and encounters between people strange and visible. Theoretically, following feminist and queer theory, I was thinking of ‘queering’ the metro and reading it against the grain: trying to make normative interaction strange. This could mean, for example, trying to break my usual patterns of choosing a certain seat, or keeping my privacy with the help of my phone and headphones*.

**Yana:* “I did another experiment during my fieldwork. One day I chose one random young person from the crowd and followed him. My goal was to try to catch the everyday routes that metro passengers take. I thought that by this act I was breaking the person's privacy, but the complete anonymity of the passenger to me and the public place gave me the moral legitimacy to try this method of 'following'. And it yielded very interesting results, but not as much about the routes, as about the importance of rhythms and their individuality, the ways of detection of persons in the crowd, and the destinations that were clear for someone (so it was not a flaneur walk) but not for me (which somehow provoked in me a great sense of insecurity).”

It felt very strange indeed to observe people instead of keeping to myself. I noticed that observing on the metro as a researcher meant constant balancing between following the internalized norm of keeping one's privacy and consciously challenging and breaking it by observing people – and travelling without going anywhere.



My question was how to study interaction in a context where the lack of interaction with other people is the norm? This approach demands constant reflection and a multisensory approach. The pages of my field-work diary were filled with observations of everyday movement and of staying still: people walking in and out, choosing a seat or remaining standing, doing push-ups, running in the aisle, looking out of the window, leaning closer to watch a YouTube video from a friend's mobile phone. These observations turned into reflections on official control (such as signs, announcements or guards)*, invisible, unspoken rules shared between passengers and various ways of twisting or challenging the rules. Indeed, the social codes for acceptable behaviour became visible only if somehow challenged.

**Yana:* “The St. Petersburg metro is full of signs and announcements – and all of them are in very 'official' language. I would try to imagine (analytical experiment) how the atmosphere on the metro would change, if these announcements would be made more informally (in everyday 'human' language), with humor and without long bureaucratic statements. It is almost impossible for me to imagine this style. The currently used language creates such a great distance between the technology/metro authorities and passengers, and also works to alienate metro users. Thus, the change of announcement style could become an indicator of structural transformation of the whole system.”

Nadya:

So, what can be interesting in everydayness? Routines make up most of our life, but we usually consider them as something insignificant or, even worse, as detrimental. As for me, the time I spent on the metro seemed wasted, stolen from me by the big city*. I used to live at one end of St. Petersburg and had to go to the university, located at another end. Every day I overcame this distance by metro during the rush hour. Every day I suffered physically and emotionally because the car was usually crowded and encounters with others were too frequent and too intensive.

**Yana:* “It is interesting how differently the metro can be experienced. For me it was never 'stolen' time, but actually 'free' time when I could read or just relax after work.”

My personal perception of the metro provides me with the methodology. My observations and diaries look like self-ethnography because I describe myself in my 'habitat'. I followed the logic of 'reflexive sociology', implying an analysis of values and attitudes of the researcher as a member of society. I tried to experience the metro as an ordinary passenger and analyse this experience as a stranger. So, I wanted to understand why I feel the way I feel on the metro.

However, some time ago I was an actual stranger on the metro because I moved to St. Petersburg from another city. I captured my first metro experience in my diary, and it is amazing how much it differed from my current emotions:

I like to study people on the metro, it seems that St. Peterburgers are much more interesting than city dwellers in my hometown. The metro is a place where, when it is moving, no one is in a hurry. This makes it possible to observe the passengers in detail, but without being noticed, of course. Trips on the metro allow you to learn the peculiarities of the "Petersburg way of life", to socialize, to adopt the habits of the inhabitants. I think that I perceive the metro as an element of metropolitan life, and my practices of using the metro are for me a way to overcome my provinciality*.

– Passage from researcher's diary, St. Petersburg

**Yana*: "This was also the case for me – I thought I could feel like a local, when I knew how to use the metro 'fluently': knowing stations, routes, the 'right' places in the metro cars, etc."

Rereading this diary passage, I understand how the everydayness of the metro was important for me at the time when I was a stranger, dreaming of becoming an ordinary passenger. The social values and norms are embodied in metro life, so studying the mundane experience creates an opportunity for revealing them.

*Yana:*

I will begin my answer with the last part of the question: why is it worth for the researcher to become a stranger on the metro? To tell the truth, it was not so obvious to me at the beginning of my fieldwork. I thought I was quite professional at doing observation, so I could ‘see’ the everyday interactions of metro users without any special preparation or tools to do it. I entered the St. Petersburg metro one morning with a clear research plan in my mind, notebook in my bag, my smart phone’s camera ready. And... I failed completely: I watched the people around me and tried to catch something worth writing in my notes. But I could not understand what I should write. Everything seemed so obvious, banal, well-known and not worthy of mentioning. At that moment, I felt so clearly, how difficult it would be to break through the everydayness, which is like silicone and a swamp at the same time. And I understood that I would need to figure something out, otherwise I would not be able to complete my data collection.

The first thing on this mission was to try to remember how I was feeling myself when I visited the St. Petersburg metro for the first time – being a newcomer and a stranger.* It was over 10 years ago, so my memory had clouded lots of details: I remember being surprised by how deep it was, by how I liked the smell, and how I had problems with orientation in the St. Petersburg metro compared to the Moscow metro, which seemed to be more familiar to me at that time. I put these memories in my field diary and added a comment: ‘ask young people to compare the St. Petersburg metro with other metros from other cities’.

**Heta*: “I think this is a very important point. For me, the metro has never been a part of everyday commuting, and several metro stations in Helsinki were indeed new and strange locations, as I started doing ethnography. In one of my field diary entries, I had written about my first impressions of the Helsinki metro which I got from the music video *Freestyler* by Bomfunk MC’s (1999), while I was still a teenager and living in Western Finland. This multisensory memory shows how the metro space is deeply mediated and how popular conceptions can have a powerful effect on how people place themselves into the space. This is also where our metros differ so much (thinking about the long history of the St. Petersburg metro).”

Now I can see that these notes already provide some material for thinking: about the *materiality* and *technological structure* – the depth of the metro, the rhythm of the escalator, the signs and maps – that influence the ways of using the metro and patterns of movement in it. The signs and instructions that should help with the orientation in the metro space sometimes just confuse newcomers and become unnoticed for locals. There is also the *'sensory' dimension* – smell, sound and temperature – that produces (dis)comfort for passengers and boundaries for communication. However, I was not very happy with these observations I made 'from memory'. It seemed to me that I had not observed the empirical reality but the image of the metro that I *myself* have. And this is the trap that everydayness prepares for the researcher: it looks so familiar that you are tempted to analyse it without observing.

Trying to escape this trap, I went to the metro again, and again, and pushed myself to continue observation: I walked around, changed stations, lines, metro cars, I observed passengers, guards, musicians. I allowed myself to add anything banal to my notes hoping that during analysis I would be able to get something from this 'bunch of banalities'. During one observation, already desperate, I was tired and sat on a bench and spent 20–30 minutes without going anywhere. After some time just 'sitting', I felt that I am separated from the people around me – I became 'immobile' compared to moving passengers. At that moment I felt that everyday life became less mundane for me, and I could observe it from a distance. This allowed me to discover the *importance of rhythm* for metro users and the constant mobility that constitutes the passenger.

For me, the most effective way to become a stranger on the metro was to do something that I don't normally do as an ordinary participant of the observed setting.*

**Heta*: "I definitely agree here. For me, doing something out-of-the-ordinary meant adapting to the idea of travelling without going anywhere. Since the Helsinki metro line is so simple and relatively short, during one afternoon I could ride from the beginning to the end several times and sit at the final stop, waiting for the next train, sometimes all alone. I think I wrote most of my field diary entries while waiting for the train and feeling detached from the metro rhythm (being alone at the station outside rush hour, not having a destination)."



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A YOUNG METRO USER?

Heta:

In addition to doing observations, writing field diaries and recording sound, we interviewed 16–17-year-old young people on their experiences of using the metro. The responses became lively narrations of everyday life on the Helsinki metro, filled with descriptions of friendships and youth cultures, intergenerational control by adult passengers and guards, having a moment just for oneself (and one's earphones), pleasant and unpleasant encounters between fellow passengers.

“But is it somehow different to travel on the metro as a young person? * How is it for adults?” pondered one of our informants, thus perceptively challenging our key idea of focusing on young people's experiences of the metro space.

**Nadya:* “In my opinion, this is a very important question. Moreover, it is also a question of how we define who is a young person and who is an adult. In St. Petersburg we initially tried to distinguish two groups of young people, based on their age. The first group were 18–23-year-olds, the second were 24–30-year-olds. We assumed that the experiences of these two groups would be different. However, during research, we found that age is not the factor which defines the experience. Gender, ethnicity, subcultural capital, as well as the duration and intensity of use of the metro (for example, someone can only start using the metro because he/she moved to St. Petersburg from another city) determine the travel on the metro. So, I think that, in general, there are no massive differences between young people and adults on the metro, but by focusing on young people, we can identify other factors that determine the experience of metro users.”

**Heta:* “This is, indeed, a very important point. In Helsinki, all our informants were 16-18-year-olds, so they were younger than your informants in St. Petersburg. Most of them recognized the different forms of formal and informal control directed at them because of their age on the metro and on other public transport. Thus, the metro very often became a space of intergenerational control and distrust. However, I do agree with you, Nadya, that we shouldn't only look at age but also analyse age in the intersections of class, gender and ethnicity, for example. The experiences of getting unwanted attention from adults, for

instance, were highly gendered. On a more positive note, the metro car was also a space that allowed young people to hang out and spend time freely without any pressures to do something productive. Our informants mentioned that in public spaces they felt constant pressure not to appear to just be hanging out, since adults saw this as unwanted and meaningless.”

According to our interviews and observations, I would say that, yes, age and other social categories, such as gender and ethnicity, affect how people are approached and how they situate themselves in the metro.

Stepping into an urban space with its own hierarchies meant for many of our informants a pressure to monitor their behaviour, even appearance, to avoid unwanted contact or unwanted remarks. One of our informants in Helsinki who identified as gender fluid, described their experience of encountering strangers on the metro:

I try to avoid eye contact because people are scary and I can't, I don't know how to be with people and I feel very uncomfortable if someone comes to talk to me. I don't know, what I've noticed is that I get quite a lot of, like, people look at me somewhat strange, just because of what I look like, but well, you learn to live with that.

The Helsinki metro was, however, also an urban arena for claiming one's own space.* This could mean, for example, occupying one's own compartment in the busy metro car with friends or creating your own digital bubble with your smartphone. Young people also talked about challenging the norms and rules in creative ways, such as listening to music, dancing – and even inviting a metro guard to join them to dance!

**Yana:* “This is a very important point. Our project is about young people's right to the city. And the examples of such youth creativity and courage to change and redefine such structures as the metro system are very valuable when we are thinking about different types of social changes and innovation.”

**Heta:* “Definitely. In our interviews, young people voiced the need for loose spaces for hanging out in the city: spaces without predefined purposes or age limits. Occasionally, the metro car turned into a mobile, in-between space that allowed creativity, hanging out and being social, both physically and digitally.”

*Nadya:*

When speaking about young people on the metro, it is important to mention the special characteristics of the metro system in St. Petersburg. The metro was built in the period of the Soviet Union, and in addition to its pragmatic function, it also had an ideological one. The stations were constructed as underground palaces, which aimed to demonstrate the power and glory of the state. Today we see the museification of the metro – this space is represented as cultural heritage, as well as a unique part of the Soviet era that is preserved. Moreover, the metro is of strategic importance and protected in a special way. The control and security system is designed to oversee the large flow of people and their contacts with technology, and to prevent possible terrorist attacks. This system also defines what or who is “dangerous” and what or who is not.

The metro appears to be a highly formalized system, in which the behavior of passengers is regulated quite strictly, like in a museum or at a military facility. Especially young people are under informal control of other metro users, who have specific expectations about their behavior. An example: young people are expected to give their seats to elderly people or to those who may need them more. This rule supports a “moral order” on the metro that is articulated not only verbally, but also physically. One of our informants in St. Petersburg said:

And then there are the types of passengers, like the “babushka” who stands but cannot ask – she will kick you there – or somehow constantly try to touch you with her knee or her cart, in order to get your attention and awaken your conscience.

However, young people are not submissive passengers who follow ‘metro norms’ which embody existing power hierarchies and social inequalities. This subordination is probably more visible to young people on the metro than in other urban spaces, because of intensive control, abundance of informal rules and formal instructions, which expose and highlight the unequal distribution of power. Thus, young people negotiate their position in the metro through their ways of using it, through reinterpretation of this space, not only in terms of utility, but also as a place for fun, creativity, friendship, love, education and support.

Yana:

I was quite shocked when I discovered during observation that the St. Petersburg metro is a space that routinely categorizes metro users in terms of gender, age and ethnicity.* When you enter the metro, you are immediately 'scanned' and 'classified' - by guards, by the police, and by other passengers. I didn't notice this performative power before these encounters happened underground: passengers are constantly 'singled out' by metro authorities and by other passengers: 'young man, please, give up your seat', 'you, go for an inspection' (which means: "you look like an immigrant").

**Heta:* "I definitely agree here. The situation was very similar in Helsinki: young people talked about various forms of informal urban control, based on age, gender and ethnicity – also discrimination, harassment and racism. However, I do feel that the question of guards and other authorities differs between these two cities. Many of our informants felt that guards were seldom visible on the metro, and they even wished to have more official control in the form of friendly and easily approachable guards, especially in the evenings."

In this context, being a young metro user means, on the one hand, being repeatedly produced as 'young' and as a 'boy' or a 'girl' by official and unofficial control. Maybe even more often than above ground. On the other hand, the metro can be a space of creativity for a young passenger: they can glue stickers, play on the metro by taking funny pictures, listen to music, become competent metro users who know how to adapt the metro to their needs by choosing the best routes and the right place to sit, and use different methods to maintain a distance from others or to communicate with others in the noisy metro car.



SO, WHY SPEND HOURS AND HOURS UNDERGROUND IN THE METRO?

During our ethnographic fieldwork in both cities, we discovered that studying everydayness and routine actions can tell a lot about our society: about its norms, rules, power relations, identities, inequalities. In Helsinki and St. Petersburg, we found out that gender, ethnicity, age and other social characteristics are produced, contested and problematized in the metro space. By travelling on the metro, young people do not just move from one point in physical space to another, they also learn how to be a part of the society in which they are living. They are spontaneous ethnographers, who study themselves and others around them, observe and interact with people and technology, negotiate their identities.

Studying routine actions is a tricky task. Different characteristics of society are ‘hiding’ in the light of everyday life, but it is possible to discover them, if the ethnographer has the courage and patience to break through routine, draw from their own metro experiences, perceptions and attitudes, and analyse them as products of existing social order. In this case, a ride on the metro can give you valuable insight into life in contemporary cities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adey, Peter & Bissell, David & McCormack, Derek & Merriman, Peter. 2012. Profiling the passenger: mobilities, identities, embodiments. *Cultural Geographies*, 19(2), 169–193.
- Ahmed, Sara. 2000. *Strange Encounters. Embodied Others in Post-coloniality*. London: Routledge.
- Ahmed, Sara. 2004. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bissell, David. 2010. Passenger mobilities: affective atmospheres and the sociality of public transport. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 28(2), 270–289.
- Georgiou, Myria. 2013. *Media and the City. Cosmopolitanism and Difference*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Kennelly, Jacqueline. 2017. ‘This Is the View When I Walk into My House’ Accounting Phenomenologically for the Efficacy of Spatial Methods with Youth. *Young*, 25(3), 305–321.
- Zaporozhets Oksana. 2017. “Mobile methods”: studying life in motion. *Sociology: Methodology, Methods, Mathematical Modeling*, 44, 37–72 (in Russian).

Listening in the City

The Underground Wind

Sound piece

Artist *Taina Riikonen*

The Underground Wind is a sound work commissioned by the DiMe research project. The material of the work consists of sounds from the Helsinki and Saint Petersburg metros gathered with the project's researchers: the sounds of the St. Petersburg metro are recorded by researchers on their field trips while the Helsinki metro sounds are recorded by the artist.

The piece aims to sonificate the multisensory experience that traveling by the metro entails. The metro tunnel has a specific fragrance, strong lights flash as the metro approaches, the rails begin to ooze a subtle screech, and a gust of air hits your face as the metro comes to a halt on the platform. The wind in the tunnel is not subject to the low pressures of the atmosphere, nor the changing temperatures of sea currents; it is instead produced by machines, motors and mechanical kinetic energy. This particular atmospheric space, the gusts of air produced by underground trains and ventilation systems mixed with underground odours, is one of the core themes of the sound piece.

This audio art piece can be listened to at www.youth-in-the-media-city.org.



Playing in the City

Mobile Gaming, Digital Sociality and Control

Arseniy Svynarenko & Anastasia Sablina

Since a few years ago, it has been common to spot a group of people staring intently into their smartphones on a city street corner or landmark. The Pokémon Go mobile game has sparked broad public discussion on the norms that regulate public places in the city. Less than 400 kilometers separate two European cities, Helsinki and St. Petersburg. Despite the globalization of technologies and youth cultures, the normative production of urban space differs significantly in these two cities.

The dominant political and cultural norms find their reflections in how societies, governments and local actors react to players who suddenly became vividly visible on the streets of these cities.

This essay discusses the aspects that Pokémon Go players in Helsinki regard as important in playing the game: spending time outside exploring neighbourhoods, personal achievement, effective communication and building communities. In St. Petersburg, players are particularly concerned about the freedom of movement and assembly in public places, building relations between players and those who want to control the city streets: the online and offline spaces and communications.

A NEW STEP IN MOBILE GAMING

In July 2016, Niantic Inc. released The Pokémon Go game. Children, young people and older generations started playing the game on the streets of cities. When the hype faded, teenagers were the first to abandon the game. Like many social media platforms and apps, Pokémon Go was not cool anymore because parents, grandparents, younger sisters and brothers started to play it. Nonetheless, in 2018 the game still remains very popular in Helsinki and St. Petersburg albeit in different meanings. Players have formed many communities and regularly meet on the streets to play their favorite game together.

I opened the Pokémon Go app on my smartphone and saw on a game map that a battle was going on at the nearest Gym. In a few moments, I was there. A young man in his 20's swiftly defeated all Pokémon at the Gym. The Gym turned Red. Player was from Red "Valor" team. Now I could see his avatar, level and the nickname appearing next to a strong Pokémon he assigned to defend the gym. A few hours later, I joined him and a group of his friends (all of whom he had met playing the game) for a three-hour long walk in their neighbourhood. Players knew where to find rare Pokémon, they have planned their route for a project of painting the virtual map of neighbourhood in red color of their team. After 10 PM, we bumped into a group of players from the competing team, a tension could be felt in the air. "Hi!", they didn't answer our greetings and silently passed by looking at the screens of their smartphones. Gamers are focused on individual aims, they move a lot, the game is social, and the community is developing its own rules for online and offline encounters.

– Passage from researcher's field notes, Helsinki

WHAT IS POKÉMON GO? Pokémon Go is a mixed reality mobile game which is played in physical and virtual spaces. The game uses GPS to geo-locate and track a player on a digital map of the actual city. The aim of the game is to walk on the streets of cities and use the mobile app to catch Pokémon, to collect gaming resources from Pokéstops and Gyms, to evolve and power up one's own Pokémon, to build a community of players for playing jointly at the Raids or overtaking Gyms – the battle arenas. Virtual Gyms and Pokéstops can be attached to permanent physical objects like landmarks, memorials, etc. These can also be temporary objects like stickers and graffiti, fixed in the virtual realm of the game long after the original graffiti or sticker was removed. Progress in the game also depends on interaction with other players. Co-operative play makes it easier to win Raid battles and complete "projects", like overtaking and keeping all virtual gyms in the physical space of neighborhoods under the same team and color.

As an urban game, Pokémon Go has successfully brought together individual and community, digital mobile gaming and urban mobility, learning the local sights and participating in global events. The biggest disadvantage of the game is that the virtual Pokémon are urban dwellers, and the further the player goes from the city, the less possibility there is to play the game.



“I USED TO PLAY AT HOME ON MY PC AND CONSOLE,
BUT NOW I SPEND A LOT OF TIME OUTSIDE”

The fast development of ICT during the past decade and the falling prices of mobile broadband internet, accompanied with relatively high living standards in Finland and in Russia have brought on a new situation in which the majority of young people have smartphones. This opens up space for using a wide range of applications for chatting, listening to music, playing or navigating in a city, functions that almost all work only when connected to the Internet. The majority of young Finns are constantly connected to the Internet, their everyday life being ‘appified’¹ (they use mobile apps for a constantly increasing range of life activities) and gamified (meaning both playing casual mobile games and interweaving game principles into non-game situations).

I used to play at home on my PC and console, but now I spend a lot of time outside ... I think that the purpose of the game is just to get the kids outside.
– *Ron*, 19 years old, interviewed on Suomenlinna island, Helsinki

In the past years, the most popular mobile games were either individual (single player), like Angry Birds, Piano Tiles or Subway Surfers, or social (multiplayer with teams of players and communication between them), like Clash of Clans and Clash Royale. None of these games would require face-to-face interaction between the players or going to the streets to play. There were often companions for players in the city, but not a reason for being in the city. Pokémon Go brought the online and offline activities together. It motivated players to go outside, to explore the city. On the streets and at home players remain connected to gaming communities. Now they also have to deal with real life situations, setting new rules for gaming in mixed reality.

“THE HOTTEST APP RIGHT NOW. A MOBILE APP THAT MAKES YOUNG PEOPLE RUSH TO THE STREETS”

So read a headline in the newspaper *Ilta-Sanomat* (*Ilta-Sanomat*, 2016). In 2016 the urban landscape changed as it got new virtual layers and inhabitants.

In different local and national contexts, the city and state have reacted in different ways to Pokémon Go players who suddenly became visible. Playing a mobile game is no longer an exclusively intimate experience to a player, who plays alone or in an online community of often anonymous players. A usually invisible ‘magic circle’ of a Pokémon Go game becomes visible when groups of players suddenly appear on the streets to play in Raids and then disappear blending in to a crowd. The boundaries between virtual and physical spaces are blurred, they are merged into one common playground accessible through an app in a smartphone. The city is a playground and the players are visible and invisible at the same time. The anonymous players hidden behind avatars become de-anonymized when they join groups to play in the city.

Society responded to Pokémon Go gamers in different ways, and these responses reflected the dominant political and cultural norms in given regional or national contexts. The case of Pokémon Go game illustrates how globalized media and gaming cultures set in very diverse national political contexts. Society and players had to rethink the norms and rules for urban public places. Was it safe for children online and offline to talk to unknown adults who are also playing the game? Was it acceptable that crowds of people with smartphones in their hands would suddenly appear in urban public places and then suddenly disappear? Normally a cemetery or church wasn’t a place for playful activities but was it now acceptable to play in restricted places if a mixed reality mobile game did not fit into the definition of classical outdoor games? Finland’s open society and democratic political system makes way for players and citizens to find their own answers to these questions and negotiate the rules for the new phenomenon. Russia’s less open society and non-democratic system portrays attitudes shaped by dominating conservative narratives. These conservative narratives mix both religious traditionalism and soviet totalitarianism that strive towards control of the public sphere.



PLAYING POKÉMON GO IN HELSINKI BENDS NORMS OF ACTING IN THE CITY

Young people whom we interviewed in Helsinki told us that one of their main concerns when they are in public places was informal control by adults, who often complained of young people being too noisy. Adults, however, reacted positively to young people who were silently staring at their smartphone screens. Young people said that they often use smartphones to build a “bubble” of privacy around themselves in public places. Playing Pokémon Go may look like a person is just silently staring at the smartphone screen in a public place, a practice generally acceptable by all generations, it presumes privacy and at the same time the sociality of the gamer.

Institutions like the police and church took part in public discussions about rules for the new phenomenon. The police issued a statement that there were no obstacles to playing in public places like shops, graveyards, bars, and in the courtyards of an apartment buildings (YLEX, 2016). The Finnish Lutheran church also voiced its views on the game. For instance, pastor of local parish in the Kallio district of Helsinki Visa Viljamaa said in his interview “And first of all we can at least welcome the players. When passing by we can pay attention to the players, maybe chat with them, let them know that we know what they are doing and that they are welcome” (Kirkko ja Kaupunki, 2016). Furthermore, Pokestops and Gyms could be found around most churches and cemeteries. For instance, in the Old Church park in central Helsinki, Gyms are located at the entrances of the functioning church building. Also the church is surrounded by numerous pokestops. Therefore, playing there requires that a player walks in the churchyard or stands next to the entrance of the church or walks around it.

We conducted one of our interviews with players at the entrance to the Old Church in central Helsinki, where a group of players were competing for the control of a Gym. Neither the interviewees, nor the church visitors were concerned that players could somehow interfere with the wedding ceremony that was taking place there at the time of the interviews:

Interviewer: “What kinds of attitudes towards players have you noticed?”

T: “No one has ever approached me with any negative intentions. Someone, not a player, would come and ask: ‘Are you playing Pokémon?’ – ‘Yes!’, – ‘Is this place intended for playing?’ – this person has probably seen people playing here. No one ever approached me asking me to leave or questioned what I was doing there.”

M: “Or just like when there are Raids at the same places, they might bring together several dozen players, they stand there and then they go. Sometimes someone would come and wonder what was going on.”

– *Tomas and Mikko*, both aged 30, interviewed at the Old Church Park, Helsinki

In spring 2018, a news stories discussed a case where a priest in Lappeenranta complained that players had showed lack of respect towards the funeral guests during a funeral ceremony as they played on the steps of the church (YLE Uutiset, 2018). Players in Helsinki were aware of this incident and discussed it in social media channels.

Nonetheless, in one of the interviews in Helsinki, an informant told us that there was some kind of a ‘grey area’ in the norms of conduct in the city. There were situations when players thought about the boundaries of appropriate behaviour in the city. For instance, players told us that they were concerned about whether it was acceptable to climb over the fence of a closed botanic garden in the winter, to follow an employee to restricted premises of a private company, or to walk into a yard of a private estate, which previously served as a railway station but where a Pokémon Gym was now located.

The main difference comparing predecessor game Ingress is that Pokemon Go immediately became very anarchistic, players had no rules. In the Ingress community it was very important that nobody was cheating... cheaters were quickly excluded from the community. When Pokemon Go came it was immediately out of control... there were so many players that there was no one to take care about players. ... there was a lot of negative situations in Pokémon Go because some of the pokestops and gyms are on construction sites or other restricted areas. ... in Pokémon Go it was very anarchistic, players would climb over the fence, or spoof (their GPS location).
– *Ilkka*, 32, interviewed at the Huopalahti Church, Helsinki



NEGOTIATING NORMS IN ONLINE DISCUSSION GROUPS

Pokémon Go is played by a wide range of players: old, young, children, experienced gamers and casual players. Most of them use the same social media platforms. WhatsApp and Facebook rapidly became the most popular channels for communication between players in Helsinki especially because this messenger is popular among children, young and old players. Probably every neighbourhood in Helsinki has its own WhatsApp or Facebook Raid-group (Finnish, English speaking or mixed).

When local Pokémon Go communities appeared in WhatsApp and Facebook, players began to negotiate and set their own norms for playing in the city. There are now online groups and communities dedicated to various aspects of playing: public groups about Raids, reporting rare Pokémon spawns or research task locations, game news. There are also closed local groups of players of the same team. Online groups usually have a set of unwritten rules and strict control from those who volunteer as moderators. Fair play and keeping up a positive atmosphere are important inside the groups, as well as resolving rare conflicts and supporting players.

When players meet in parks and streets for a Raid or an event, it has become common practice for often unknown people to share power banks and cables, give advice to new players, share experiences and show off one's own achievements (100IV or Shiny Pokémons). In these offline discussions players also talk about the norms of the community. For instance, about the punctuality of players during raids, spoofing GPS or playing with multiple accounts. Discussions continue in open and closed groups in social media.

Several players we interviewed were very concerned about the absence of anonymity in WhatsApp or Facebook groups. Usually the real name and a phone number (in case of WhatsApp) were visible to all members of a group. There were cases of inappropriate content or contacts with other players online. In spring 2018, moderators of Pokémon Go social media groups in Helsinki joined together to move all groups of Pokémon Go community to Discord – a communication platform that can ensure anonymity, security and more control over content but is usually used by PC gamers. In the interviews players also saw it as a somewhat problematic move that may strengthen a digital divide between generations. Discord is a flexible and secure platform. Most importantly, the unified

platform may unify rules and norms for the Pokémon Go community and make the informal control more effective.

PLAYING POKÉMON GO IN SAINT PETERSBURG IS LIKE PARTICIPATING IN POLITICS

I could never have imagined that this research case would be difficult to conduct in the conditions of modern Russia – I didn't expect that the Pokémon Go theme would be tied to politics and security.

– Passage from researcher's field notes, St Petersburg

Since the first mobile games became available for phones and smartphones, playing has always been associated with inequalities between those who own mobile phones of different brands and operating systems, between those with powerful and expensive smartphones and those with basic smartphones, between those who are always online and those who have limited or expensive internet connections, between those who can spend money for in-game purchases and those who can't. The era of Pokémon Go has added a few new lines of divisions and tensions to this already long list. For economic and political reasons such as government surveillance, censorship, control over online mapping apps, some games are not released in certain countries. In these countries, millions of players have to learn how to overcome these institutional obstacles. Two years after its worldwide launch, Pokémon Go was officially launched in Russia without any announcement in mid-September, 2018. In other countries like China, Iran the game is prohibited or not available yet.

In Russia, a cautious attitude towards players has spread widely. Among the broadly disseminated narratives that appeared in the Russian mass media in summer 2016, one was titled “Major General of FSB: Western special services can spy on Pokémon Go players” (KPRU, 2016). In the southern cities the local cossacs (a conservative traditionalist community) that patrol the cities along with police also announced that they will try to convince Pokémon Go players not to play this game. Because strict regulations are imposed on gatherings in public places in St. Petersburg and in all other cities in Russia, many Pokémon Go players said that they were concerned about whether their group of 15–20 players would trig-



ger a negative reaction from the police and other fellow citizens on the street. Some players raised the question of whether they should continue or stop playing the game in an increasingly hostile political environment.

During the past few years, the government has also intensified its control over the Internet and made significant progress (a so-called “Yarovaya law package”) on diminishing online privacy by setting up a massive system of internet traffic surveillance and demanding that messaging services (VKontakte, WhatsApp, Telegram) must hand over full access to users’ messages. A popular social network VKontakte (VK) hosts thousands of Pokémon Go communities. There is a growing number of court sentences² given to VK users for commenting, liking and re-posting even non-public posts³. These posts may be political commentaries, historical photos or caricatures. Privacy is almost non-existent in VK. During the spring of 2018, the Russian government in an attempt to close a half a dozen Islamist channels banned the entire Telegram messenger – perhaps the most popular messaging service among Pokémon Go players. Further legal restrictions on the use of social media and messengers are discussed in the Russian Duma and Government.

Besides government and some nationwide or local conservative associations also parents often impose strict control over children’s activities online. This is probably a result of the above mentioned measures, a low IT literacy level and a neo-conservative turnaround⁴ followed by the growing influence of clerics and communities representing the official religions. In 2017, the media broadly publicized a sensational case against Roman Sokolovsky, a video-blogger who was eventually sentenced to three and a half years probation for insulting the religious feelings of believers. Sokolovsky is now also on the government’s ‘list of individuals involved in extremist activity or terrorism’. This happened after he played Pokémon Go in a church in Yekaterinburg and openly expressed his atheistic views in his vlog.

In interviews in St. Petersburg, players noted that the presentation of the Pokémon Go game in the media was biased from the very beginning. Even the reports made by Russian national TV channels in other countries were very straightforward: “First victims”, “Five minutes of common sense”, “Unexpected threats”, etc. Most of the moral panic about the game was disguised as “concern about the safety of children and young people” as a Pokémon may appear in a dangerous place

(abandoned buildings), and the distraction caused by playing can result in a traumatic or life threatening situation.

This reputation was built up from scratch by the media. Well, here's the thing, we had a place where in the first weeks, months, all the players just gathered. There were thousands of people in that area. Both the grass and the foliage of trees were destroyed. And then journalists came to all this "triumph" ... they did not hesitate to speak with all the players, well, to discuss what they would be reporting on next. And there, for example, journalists of the TV channel "*****" were like: "Damn! Yesterday a guy ran after the Pokémon and a car almost hit him. Wish something like this would happen again!" And people who were near heard it, all this discussion, and looked at them [journalists] erratically.

– *Oleg*, 22, active player and owner of the Telegram channel for Pokémon Go.

Additional risks were presented concerning unauthorized public events, rallies, to which 'people (with the help of the game) will be lured to protest actions or to take part in other illegal events'. Pokémon Go was seen as a technology to organize a revolution, a coup. It was interesting that most of the moral panic was over 'using' young people and their enthusiasm for playing the game in order to involve them in unauthorized public events.

Other risks mentioned were the use of the game to collect personal information about the players and potential harm to children – "if people can generate [Pokémon], they can lure children anywhere". Moreover, there was an attempt to ban the game through legislation – the Federation Council tried to approve a law banning the game at least on the premises of religious institutions, prisons, hospitals, cemeteries and monuments. The author of the law, Deputy Chairman of the Defense Committee, Franz Klintsevich, commented on the game as follows: "There is a sense that the devil came through this mechanism and is simply trying to break us spiritually from the inside... It seems that this is imposed from the outside by people who know exactly that after a couple of years the consequences will be irreversible." The law was not adopted, but Pokémon Go was now discussed in the context of already existing articles of criminal and administrative code.

Besides intense institutional control that seems ever-present with the prohibition of Telegram and the Sokolovskiy case, Pokémon-catchers face more "individualized" control in public spaces. A somber reason for



why players may be getting more attention on the streets is more related to the last terrorist act in the St. Petersburg subway (3 April, 2017) and other acts of terrorism in several European cities that increase anxiety about personal safety in city spaces. These events can be seen to have significantly influenced general intensesness in urban public spaces. The Raid hunts of coveted Pokémons requires the participation of groups of players who stand together on the streets playing. This may cause increased attention of passers-by.

Also we stood in a crowd, probably, there were 15 people. The man was walking, he asked what you were doing. After knowing that we were playing Pokémon Go, he began to capture us on video ... Another time it was a woman who was walking with two children, she walked and looked, walked and looked. She asked: "And what are you doing?". I said 'nothing, please, do not pay attention'. She was like - no, I saw that you are poking into your phones!

– *Olga*, 45, active player

Particular attention is paid to players when they use above-ground public transport, so Pokémon Go players try to avoid the game in any transport except their own cars. One of the interviewed players had to explain in detail to the conductor that he was just playing Pokémon Go and that is why he had to use the tram for more than two hours to improve his game level. The player had to emphasize that he was no threat to anybody's security or the tram's work: "I'm sorry, I'm just playing, please calm down ... I am not a terrorist and I will not blow anything up", he convinced. Strangely, Pokémon Go players who encountered employees of high security facilities while playing around these facilities went much better.

Even if we come to the high security facilities, people with dogs [employees] walk around in the middle of the night, they come up to us and ask: "What are you doing?" – "We are playing Pokémon Go" – "Good". And the man with the dog goes away.

– *Egor*, 27, active player and Pokémon Go chat manager [in Telegram]

Pokémon Go players face not only increased attention from bypassers but also attention from the players' immediate environment. Family members and coworkers actively react to and influence the Pokémon

cathers' playing behavior and patterns. Besides the intensifying parental control over underage and young players, adult players also face non-reciprocity of their interest in Pokémon Go from their coworkers, partners and children. It is quite similar to reactions people get who are "ageing inside subculture". In public discourse passion for games is defined as something inherent more likely to young people and their leisure activities in post-Soviet countries. For this reason adult players face reactions that playing Pokémon Go does not "suit" their age, marital status or professional status.

Well, he was telling his wife for a long time that he has gone with a friend to drink beer after work [while he was participating in Raids], but he has come home sober, therefore, his wife got carried away. I persuaded him to tell her the truth for a long time while he said that he could not do it and his wife would not understand.

– *Elena*, 30, active player and owner of the Telegram channel for Pokémon Go

The above-mentioned cases significantly influence playing behavior and patterns of Russian Pokémon Go players, both their online and offline communication and how they are trying to set their own norms of playing and just being in the city. Being in such securitized and controlled space(s) – both online and offline – means that Pokémon Go players only have a limited amount of resistance tactics and practices available to them. Most of the players come together within the self-regulation and self-censorship mechanisms of online communication to reduce communication in real urban spaces. Members of the community create bots in chat rooms on Telegram to determine the number of players, where the gatherings take place and who will take part in the raids, essentially reducing all communication to its online form. However, communication within the framework of Telegram nowadays fits into the general format of so-called 'digital resistance' (organized by Telegram's owner Pavel Durov), which began with the blocking of Telegram and also as a reaction to the laws concerning the collection of private information by mobile operators and messengers for security services. We are, thus, witnessing an 'exile' from real urban spaces into virtual ones, the disintegration of the community into small mobile groups, which are characterized by a high degree of self-coordination. In addition, administrators of online



communities send out notifications to players with guidelines about the safety of players and information on (non)dangerous zones and possible offenses in connection with the game. This contributes to the legal literacy of players and helps them to avoid possible conflict situations. We see how the Pokémon Go players in St. Petersburg are 'inside' the securitized and forbidding discourse(s), but they continue to play, participate in the actions of the 'digital resistance' and temporarily 'discover themselves' in the physical public spaces of the city. Such tactics help accumulate the resources of the community, to avoid possible conflicts with the non-gaming city and to move away from public supervision. This in turn leads to strict internal regulation of the community and the establishment of rules, where a violation causes exclusion from the Pokémon Go community in St. Petersburg.

While looking for interviewees, our Russian researcher team faced a situation in which the researcher sent a message on social media to a player whose age was not indicated, and consequently the young man's father answered this message saying that he had filed a complaint to the police because strangers were trying to talk to his son online. Perhaps this is due to the strong parental control of adolescents – both online and offline – or concerns about the criminal prosecution of Sokolovsky. It is interesting that not only parents, but also the players themselves are very concerned about their safety. One of the potential informants was very worried about the possibility of meeting the researcher for an interview near his home – he was afraid that he could “wake up somewhere without a kidney”. In a closed chat on the social networking service Vkontakte, the players discussed how to refuse being interviewed and speculated that the researcher might actually be working for the FSB [Federal Security Bureau] – “the FSB agents are even here [in a closed chat]”. In this regard, we can say that the players develop mechanisms for individual self-control and group self-censorship because they fear for their own safety, due to the possibility of criminal prosecution.

A GAME THAT SHAKES THE CITIES

The case of Pokémon Go vividly illustrates the contemporary trend towards gamification, mediatization and digitalization of everyday urban life where the virtual realm is inseparable from the nonvirtual realm, online and offline are mixed and continuations of each other. A mobile game can foster the formation of communities, and encourage both online and offline public activities. Pokémon Go, in particular, triggered broader discussions on the regulation of relations between growing numbers of gamers and the rest of society. Communities of players faced the challenges of re-defining the norms of conduct in urban space and norms of interaction between the players. On the one hand, the game facilitates mobility and communication between players. On the other hand, players face the issues of normative regulation and parental and government control. The study of Pokémon Go communities in two different political and cultural contexts opens up a view on the broader issues of control in a city, attitudes towards young people and digitalization and young people's rights to the city. In one given context, the mobile urban game may look like it is mostly just joyful play. In another context, society may perceive it as a threat that will trigger repression and condemnation.

Names of interviewees are changed for anonymity.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bennett, Andy. 2015. Youth culture, ageing and identity. *Routledge handbook of cultural gerontology*. London: Routledge, 2015. 375–382.
- [2] Bogush, Gleb. 2017. Criminalisation of Free Speech in Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies*, Volume 69 (8).
- Hjorth, Larissa & Richardson, Ingrid. 2015. "Mobile games and ambient play." *Social, Casual and Mobile Games: The changing gaming landscape*. Ed. Tama Leaver and Michele Willson. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. 105–116.
- [1] Merikivi, Jani, Myllyniemi, Sami & Salasuo, Mikko (toim.). 2016. *Media hanskassa. Lasten ja nuorten vapaa-aikatutkimus 2016 mediasta ja liikunnasta*. Valtion nuorisosiain neuvottelukunnan julkaisuja 55 & Nuorisotutkimusverkoston julkaisuja nro 184. Helsinki: Opetusministeriö & Nuorisotutkimusseura.

NEWS ARTICLES

- Ilta-Sanomat. 2016. Kuumien sovellus juuri nyt! Uusi kännykkäpeli saa nuoret ryntäilemään kaduille Suomessakin
- Polygon. 2016. Is Pokémon Go available in your country?
- [3] Радио Свобода. 2018. Срок за репост.
- [4] Своё ТВ. 2016. Казаки против покемонов.
- KP.RU. 2016. Генерал-майор ФСБ: "Западные спецслужбы могут шпионить с помощью Pokemon Go".
- YLEX. 2016. Saako kaupassa tai hautausmaalla pelata? Poliisi antoi ohjeet Pokémon-jahtiin.
- Yle Uutiset. 2018. Kirkkoherra suivaantui hautajaisia häirinneille Pokemon-etsijöille – Toivoo lisää kunnioitusta hautajaisia kohtaan.

Spinning in the city

Belonging in the circus community

Heta Mulari

This essay discusses how an urban circus and flow art community reclaims urban space and struggles for belonging in Helsinki. The community's shared subcultural values are ever-present as a researcher embarks on a journey of participatory ethnographic research among circus artists.

ORIGINS OF CONTEMPORARY CIRCUS. Especially since the early 2000's, contemporary circus has gained growing attention as a form of art and urban street culture, as well as a tool for critical pedagogy and social work. The roots of contemporary circus are often located in the French cirque nouveau movement of the 1970's. The multidimensional nature of circus can be seen in the countless props, techniques, styles and locations: circus is constantly changing according to the artistic, social and political contexts.

INTO THE FLOW

I received an image in my email from one of my informants. In the image, there is a young woman who looks past the camera with a determined look on her face and her long dreadlocks pulled back from the forehead. Above her shoulders she carries a heavy, metallic stick called a dragonstaff. Both ends of the prop are on fire. The young woman is wearing a light brown skirt and matching leg warmers.

The image seems to capture a moment of deep concentration before a fire art performance. Further, the image delivers visual cues about a specific way of practising circus, belonging to a certain community, and repeating visual aesthetics I had seen before on many Instagram accounts. This recognizability reflects our digital era, in which arts such as circus are increasingly transurban. Situational circus acts and performances actualize simultaneously in local urban spaces and on transurban, virtual spaces, such as Instagram and YouTube. These creative forms of reclaiming physi-



cal and virtual spaces are closely linked to the formation of communities both locally and globally.

So what do I mean by circus or flow art? Upon my first arrival to this particular research field, I had little knowledge of this urban activity I was now getting to know. Soon I began to notice the specific elements that intertwine in creating different acts and using props – each prop, as well as the urban spaces occupied, reclaimed and used by the community, and lifestyle choices within the community, carried considerable subcultural* relevance.

*Subculture is a concept very frequently discussed in cultural youth studies. Much of the research tradition refers to the Birmingham School theorists of the 1970's who understood subcultures as class-related resistance, and emphasized the understanding of subcultural authenticity (especially against mainstream media). In this chapter, I mainly refer to a later (sometimes called post-subcultural) research tradition, especially Sarah Thornton's understandings of subcultural ideologies and capitals. By subcultural ideology, I am referring to the way in which the circus group discussed their own social group against others and saw their group as distinctive in terms of style, conventions and values. By subcultural capital, I refer to the embodied and communally learned conventions, knowledge, style and social connections.

In the interviews and field observations, I noticed constant balancing and negotiation between using the concepts of circus and flow art*.

*Flow art is a concept often used about different forms of movement-based disciplines, such as juggling, dance, object manipulation (with props such as poi, hula hoop, contact ball and dragonstaff) and fire-spinning. In flow art, movement, props, choreographies and improvisation are deeply intertwined. Further, contact improvisation in the form of juggling or spinning poi together is an important part of flow art.

“I don't think I will start juggling. It reminds me of real circus type of circus,” commented *Lotta* (22), who was practicing with poi and identified as a hippie girl. Further, many informants pondered upon how poi is often seen as a prop quite strongly linked to flow art, psychedelic trance and hippie subculture. Certain props, such as poi, hula hoop and dragonstaff were also used together with music, dance and other forms

of embodied arts. Many informants talked about ‘getting into the flow’ when referring to doing tricks, or through certain kind of music, often psychedelic trance or other electronic dance music. For example, *Jubo* links his initiation into circus to psytrance:

I used to go a lot to these psytrance parties, these subcultural parties where fire is very strongly present. So-called hippie circus and then hippie parties, they fit well together, so already then I was looking at it, like, wow this is something super cool, like... It is... fire is just so magical and then if I’m controlling something that magical, it’s quite a cool thing.

– *Jubo*, 25

THE LEGACY OF HIPPIES

It is dusk in the park and the trees cast shadows on the grass. Music streaming from the loudspeakers is electronic and instrumental, the bass is very loud. Poi spinners are gathered in pairs and small groups, everyone has poi in their hands, spinning it around in complex sets of choreographies and dancing to the music. In the twilight, the spinning led poi create psychedelic shapes in the air. I remember one respondent’s definition of poi spinning being dancing with the prop.

– Passage from researcher’s field notes

During the time I spent doing field research, my mind often wandered back to sociologist Sarah Thornton’s thoughts on rave and club cultures in the 1990s in Britain and the US. According to Thornton, becoming authentic, gaining recognition and becoming distinctive against other youth groups were essential aspects of club cultures. Thus, subcultures are negotiated in nuanced ways in relation to other youth groups, which reveals something about the power used in the subcultures in order to create a shared understanding of the community. These understandings can include, for example, shared creative practices, conventions and style, as well as political opinions.

In most interviews, hippie culture was mentioned as a source of sub-cultural identification. The interviewees’ understanding of what being a hippie meant was a local adaptation, deeply tied to the cultural and



political contexts of the 2010s' Helsinki, while simultaneously citing the historical legacy and values of the movement.

The definition of a hippie was discussed in every interview from contradicting perspectives. Many identified closely as hippies, but some also wanted to distance themselves from the concept. Identifying as 'a circus hippie' meant first and foremost belonging to the community, which included values such as physical closeness (exemplified by hugging everyone), peer learning, environmental thinking, communal living and the overall explicit emphasis on empathy and harmony between people, following the legacy of the hippie movement. Juho (25) commented on the definition of hippie as belonging that is related to style, community, values and urban space as follows:

Juho: "It [hippie] is only a word for me. Of course, it describes me quite well. Like, I have tangled hair [points to his dreadlocks] and I use these kinds of clothes and now I've found my own place there. Before I didn't really have my own place in society so I think this hippie word describes it to a degree. And it's nice to belong to a group. Some people don't like it [the word hippie] but for me it only describes belonging to a certain group. And that's a good thing."

Heta: "Are there any values linked to it?"

Juho: "Green values and such for sure. On the whole, being empathetic and sympathetic are the two most important things that are linked to being a hippie and to [the rehearsal space] in general."

However, the participants also talked about negative values linked to 'hippies', especially within the wider circus field. They felt that the concept was too frequently used in a downgrading way, signalling unprofessionalism, lack of circus skills and a lifestyle that criticized the societal ideals of individual success and competition.

In contrast to these ideals of never failing, being competitive and having individual success, which were discussed as essential aspects of living in Finland as a young adult, the community members emphasized shared conventions, such as peer teaching and peer learning. The participants described it in terms of learning from each other, encouraging one another and finding the courage in the learning process to face failures.

These implicit conventions can be understood, following Thornton, as elements of subcultural ideology, shared in the community.

In addition to balancing between these contradicting definitions coming from within and from without, the community had its own implicit hierarchies and orders. Sociologist Anni Rannikko points to subcultural respect as a key issue in the inner order of alternative urban sports, such as circus, parkour or roller derby. While the rhetoric of these sports includes a principle of ‘everyone is welcome’ and takes a stand against hierarchies based on gender, sexuality or ethnicity, the subcultures include their own unspoken rules and power relations.

Some of the unspoken conventions in the group were linked to everyday rituals, such as physical closeness and hugging. While many of the participants talked about hugging in a positive tone (“During one night you can get more hugs here than an average Finn gets during one year,” says Laura, 24) hugging could also occasionally turn into a selective and excluding act. Some informants pondered about the difficulty of entering the rehearsal space and spending the evening in the group – while the space was rhetorically open and free, it was not always easy to access socially. Importantly, gaining a sense of belonging to the space and community required learning the embodied, unspoken and social conventions and values regarding peer teaching and proximity.

CREATIVE COUNTERACTIONS

It is an unusually hot evening in May and I’m sitting on the ground in front of a community centre in Helsinki. The wide open space is surrounded by industrial buildings, now taken over by different cultural actors and industries – a phenomenon familiar from very many European capitals. My juggling balls are scattered around me; I’m taking a break. People are rehearsing and teaching each other, hugging, chatting and having snacks. I can smell lamp oil and sense the excitement; a fire jam is about to begin.

– Passage from researcher’s field notes

Media scholar Myria Georgiou (2013) writes about how different groups of people become part of a global, digital city. As she states, “[– –] the city is a site of struggle”, both for symbolic and material resources. In



the circus community, the struggle was quite concretely visible in local and global ways: in addition to the concrete occupations of rehearsal and gathering spaces, the community took a stand on urban politics.

In a circus act, urban space becomes transformed: certain parts of the city are turned into subcultural arenas and pockets of counteraction. For example, one informant described her view in a lively way on the anarchistic elements of a circus act:

I guess it takes a stand on... I don't know, Helsinki is a city of many rules [...] it is anarchistic in a certain way. To go and spin fire without any permission, in the park. Or, wherever, on a parking lot.
– *Alisa*, 35

Alisa's words about anarchism and circus echo Rannikko's research, in which she discusses alternative sports through the concept of counter space, aiming for rethinking and challenging conventional uses of urban spaces. For the circus group, creating counter space was especially visible during the summer in one specific park in Helsinki. Located around 3 kilometres from the city centre, the circus group frequently named the park as a key location, as a place temporarily taken over by their community and art. In their discussions, this specific park had a reputation for being a 'hippie park', thus including considerable subcultural and community-building relevance.

Furthermore, the community took a clear stand on official urban planning and conventional uses of spaces, thus creating a counter space both concretely and metaphorically. Terhi voiced her wish for alternative spaces as follows:

I'd hope there would be more places, spaces, urban spaces in Finland for... People spending time and developing themselves. It annoys me a lot that there's a certain purpose for each space and especially public outdoor spaces. They want to put fences around each space, they want to control them, they want to... they want to limit their use.
– *Terhi*, 29

Occasionally practising circus and flow art was also used as a means of criticism and protest. While not all community members participated

in protests, many of them had been doing circus in, for example, Pride or events for environmental issues and human rights.

In May 2017, I interviewed Juho in a pub close to the city centre in Helsinki. From the pub window we could see the railway square, which had during the spring become a symbol of political polarization and strengthening of the far right movement, but also solidarity with the asylum seekers. At one end of the square there was a protest camp set up by asylum seekers, and at the other end, a camp of the extreme right movement, Finland First.

Juho told me that he had visited the protest camp for asylum seekers several times with the circus community.

And about circus in general, when they had these protest camps for asylum seekers here at the railway station, so we were often there [- -], just doing circus and bringing joy and playing with children and... Children come from difficult circumstances and they've found joy in it. That's been very nice to see.

– *Juho*, 25

When looked at from the outside, flow art often manifests itself as playful reclaiming of urban space, of taking over parks for activities, such as poi spinning, acrobatics with hula hooping, or even park raves. However, the activities of the group researched here also included elements of concrete counteraction, of creating different spaces through performances and protests. Thus, circus and flow art can be understood as artistic means of reclaiming the urban space, experiencing belonging and creating a temporary stage for situational performances, flash mobs and protests.

TEMPORAL BELONGINGS

The park has emptied for this evening and everyone's heading back home. Many Instagram accounts repeat what's been going on in the evening: learning new tricks, encounters between community members, spinning individually and together in the urban space. On different social media platforms, temporal performances and spatial occupations gain an afterlife and become digital, local adaptations of a global circus and flow art community.



During my time spent with the circus group, I often pondered upon different meanings of belonging. For most respondents, the sense of belonging came from the different forms of circus art. Choosing a specific prop was a route to experiencing belonging to a certain art form and to people who were playing with the same prop. Further, for many, finding their own space in the city was deeply connected with the community: its subcultural values, practices and conventions.

This essay is informed by fieldwork in two research projects, Digital Youth in the Media City and PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement. PROMISE has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

PROMISE has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 693221. This chapter reflects only the views of the author; the European Commission and Research Executive Agency are not responsible for any information it contains.

Names of interviewees are changed for anonymity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- D'Andrea, Anthony. 2007. *Global nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Countercultures in Ibiza and Goa*. London & New York: Routledge.
- O'Dell, Tom. 1996. Hippies and Swedish Modernity: Constructing Global Identities in Local Settings. *Young* 4(2).
- Purovaara, Tomi. 2005. *Nykysirkus: aarteita, avaimia ja arvoituksia* [transl. Contemporary circus: treasures, keys and puzzles]. Helsinki: Like.
- Rannikko, Anni. 2018. *Kamppailua kunnioituksesta. Vaihtoehtoliikunnan alakulttuurien moraaliset järjestykset*. [transl. Struggle for respect. Moral orders of alternative sports.] Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto/Nuorisotutkimusseura, julkaisu 201.
- Salasuo, Mikko & Poikolainen, Janne. 2012. Johdanto – monimuotoinen katukulttuuri. [Introduction – multidimensional street culture] In Mikko Salasuo & Janne Poikolainen & Pauli Komonen (eds.) *Katukulttuuri: nuorisoesiintymiä 2000-luvun Suomessa* [Street culture: young people in Finland in the 21st century]. Helsinki: Finnish Youth Research Society, 7–32.
- St. John, Graham. 2009. *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures*. London & Oakville: Equinox.
- Tait, Peta. & Lavers, Katie. 2016. Introduction: Circus perspectives, precedents and presents. In Peta Tait & Katie Lavers (eds. 2016) *The Routledge Circus Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1–12.
- Thornton, Sarah. 1995. *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*. Cambridge: Polity Press.



Stickering in the City

Sticker Artists Re-Defining Mobile Urban Space(s)

Yana Krupets & Nadezhda Vasileva

This essay discusses the phenomenon of sticker-art in Saint Petersburg. The researchers demonstrate the role of stickers for young people and the city. Stickers are helping young Petersburgers build special relationships with the city, transforming it into their space: their home, their gallery, redefining the "act of vandalism" into the civil action.

You go out. The usual wind and the fresh frosty air awake you and make you dream about a warm, comfortable home. The noise of the city is annoying, so you put on headphones and turn on the music. Familiar sounds set the pace, making your path more bearable. You start to move and fall into the city stream. You pass by the local store, stop at traffic lights and wait for the green to turn on. Your eyes wander, trying to capture and to merge the fragments of a grey urban landscape. You look up and stare at the backside of the road sign next to you. You see the advertisement offering help to drug addicts, the call to vote in upcoming elections, the female name with a telephone number and several small stickers with bright pictures and characters. This combination of visual materials, bizarrely placed next to each other on an ordinary grey urban surface, is a detail that caught your eye and makes you smile, or curious, or furious, but it got your attention and you begin, at least for a moment, to think about these stickers. The road sign became a space for urban encounters, where different agents communicate with each other and with you as a city dweller. And even if some messages are quite clear to you, others are not. What are these bright sticky pieces of paper? What do they mean? Who put them there? And for what?

Sticker artists often depict their own character, symbol or nickname on the stickers*; for instance, an ice cream, a dove, a cat, a fruit or something else. As our informants told us, the image or design on the

*A sticker is a small sticky piece of paper, approximately 7x7 cm, with a picture or a slogan, although slogans are much less common (in the case of Russia).

sticker does not generally carry any secret meaning – it is just something beautiful, positive, bright: “stickers are kindness”. Compared to graffiti, the stickers in St. Petersburg are not very politicized or focused on social problems. They are not about politics, but about fun and beauty. The production of stickers can differ, it depends on the sticker artist’s skills and resources. Stickers can be drawn by hand, for example, and for this purpose an artist can use wide tape, stolen from a hypermarket, in which this tape is applied for making price tags. The tape is sticky on one side and white on the other. Alternatively, stickers can be created on a computer, using various graphic editors, and then printed in a printing office. And, finally, sticker artists can even use the linocut technique, which is a way to create engravings using linoleum. The artists cut out the layout of a picture on a sheet of linoleum, and this design is then colored and imprinted on paper. Each sticker is valuable to sticker artists, no matter how it was produced, but as a rule, handmade stickers are considered more authentic, because they are always unique.

However, the most crucial elements of stickering are not the image or content or the home-made production process, but the spreading and visibility of stickers in the city. Stickers should be distributed in the city as much as possible. Their presence on the street (even for several hours or minutes) makes them valuable and builds their creator’s reputation among the community of sticker artists.

“JUST A PERSON WHO STICKS STICKERS”: BECOMING A STICKER ARTIST

But who are these people producing stickers? We were told that anyone can do it, regardless of age, gender or economic resources. You do not even need special skills in drawing, you do not need money, you just need the imagination, the desire and the courage to put a sticker on the wall. We’ve met sticker artists who were 10–11 years old, we’ve met students, we’ve met professional illustrators and designers, we’ve met experienced graffiti writers, we’ve met a pilot, an advertiser, a salesperson, and a meteorologist, all sticker artists.



Sticker art is often considered by our informants to be a part of ‘hip hop culture’, a subculture which contains many forms of youth action: hip hop music, graffiti, street art, breakdancing, etc. And indeed, there are a lot of sticker artists concurrently making other forms of street art (posters, murals, etc.) or those who have a background in graffiti. There are a lot of similarities between stickering and graffiti, as well as street art – all these practices are creative, illegal, and transform the city environment. At the same time, there are significant differences: according to our informants, it is ‘easier’ to make stickers, there is no need to draw fast (you can do it at home), and, in general, stickering is safer (the police is not so strict about stickers) and more accessible.

Interviewer: “And tell me, please, is it difficult to become a sticker artist?”

Sticker artist: “No, it's easy. You just draw stickers and stick them somewhere. It's easy.”

That is why a lot of those who cannot do graffiti (because of age, physical condition, drawing skills), can do sticker art and become a part of the community. Moreover, stickers can in a way be a ‘hobby’ (also for graffiti artists) which brings young people pleasure and joy, and can help them develop their artistic skills.

All these factors affect the status of sticker art in the street art or graffiti scene. Stickering is considered a peripheral practice, and, as a result, sticker art does not produce an autonomous identity inside the street art and graffiti communities. As one informant mentioned:

Well, mostly stickers and posters – but they are still secondary. Most of these guys are doing graffiti, there are not so many of those, who are exclusively engaged in stickering.

– *Female, 24*

However, this activity is valuable through its peripheral character (subjectively not so significant or dangerous as street art and graffiti, nor as central for subcultural or professional identity construction), because it brings people the joy and freedom of creativity.

Some sticker artists acquired their skills not only on the street, but also in classical art or design education. Professional interest leads them into the graffiti and sticker art world, where they can exercise their attained skills in an unfamiliar way (using new instruments and working with unfamiliar surfaces) and receive new experience. However, subcultural capital and knowledge gained on the street, can also contribute to professionalization in art or design among sticker artists, who do not have formal art education. Stickers provide an opportunity not only to learn something new, but also to demonstrate the talent and mastery of their creator and become a kind of business card. Through stickering, a sticker artist can find an audience, potential employer or customer, and commercialize his/her skills.

For me it's, well, frankly, I've been thinking a lot about this topic, well, it still remains ... like 'Vasya was here'. But I leave my style here on the streets, I leave, I write this 'Vasya was here' in as cool a style as possible so that...the people will see that I can do it. Well, I mean, I'm showing my skill, I'll admit that (laughs), my abilities through stickers and them ... well, the more I glue them, spread them, the more people know about me as a person who can create...different stickers. Well, that is, I don't know, for me it is like advertising my name. Uh ... well, and at the same time I try to make it as interesting, cool and noticeable.

– *Male, 23*

'DEVELOPING'* COMMUNITY: SOLIDARITY, SUPPORTED BY STICKERS

Developing community – this is the solidarity that sticker artists seem to share. This term is used to refer to situational visibility and appearance of community: we cannot really claim that the community exists all the time in the offline world (people making stickers usually have other communities to which they have close connections and in which they participate daily), and it would, therefore, be more accurate to say that it appears in some situations. This community is situational in nature because it is formed through situational practices (joint stickering, print-

*'Developing' here is used in the sense of 'developing film': community becoming visible in some situations, and invisible in others.



ing, exchanging stickers), virtual communication (via social networks, through photographing each others' stickers) and key spaces/events that constitute solidarity and links between different people (temporally, virtually, performatively). Sticker artists are not woven into a network of strong ties, but most of them do know each other 'virtually', and keep in touch via social networks.

In contrast to graffiti communities, sticker artists describe their community as positive and conflict-free, without pronounced competition or fights. They take care of any stickers, exchange stickers with each other and sometimes create them together. Such friendliness and absence of struggles for status or "possession" of the territory are the "norms" of this community. Sticker artists are not each others' rivals, they can share a common goal to improve urban space, and also share an understanding of how to do it. Moreover, they attempt to have fun, enjoy the stickering process, and quite often send positive and peaceful messages through their stickers: fun and beautiful images, bright colours, almost no politics.

It's ...a kind side of street art.

– *Male*, 23

In stickers there is no hostility. There is no danger, put them where you want, put what you want, yes. And well, another sticker artist will not tell you anything, he will be pleased, take a photo!

– *Male*, 23

At the same time, this open and friendly community still has a predominantly 'male' face. There are not so many girls involved in it (inheriting the traditional gender division from other street art communities). And for those few girls and women in the community, participation in stickering is sometimes restricted to the private 'safe' space: creating stickers at home, but not spreading them around the city. In narratives, stickering is represented as a more 'scary activity for girls' because it is illegal and the police or some angry inhabitants can catch or offend sticker artists.

Actually, basically I glue her stickers for her. But it's okay. She also sometimes does it herself. But it's scary for her. She, well, let's say she's a girl, but there are all kinds of thugs who can say something to a girl and [they can] I don't know, even use force on her. And I think this is a natural fear for a girl. Because she, well, the princess [smiles]. That is, she's scared. I think many have fear.

– *Male, 23*

Some sticker artists are certainly more successful on the scene than others. Fame is directly related to the degree of intensity and involvement in stickering – in other words, it depends on how active you are in sticker production, how many stickers you spread in the city and how often you do it. Sticker artists note that there are, at least, two strategies for how to achieve high status in the community: by spreading a great number of stickers around the city or by making high quality stickers (interesting design, professionalism in drawing). But in any case, status is not a dominant characteristic of this community; fun, positivity and creativity are more important. A particularly significant value among sticker artists is their attitude towards the city as a place for stickers and for themselves.

THE CITY AS HOME

Young people and especially teenagers can experience the city as an alien and frightening place. And in this case, small sticky pieces of paper become their instruments for overcoming estrangement in the city through adventure, fun and exploration. Exploration is a very important part of stickering, linked to the process of finding places for stickers, researching urban surfaces, walking, staring, smelling, testing and experiencing the city. Sticker-artist activity can be harmoniously interwoven into everyday routes or become an excuse for a trip to a new unknown place. Young people may collect places (in the sense of 'check-in' locations, showing that you have been somewhere), and leave traces in the form of stickers, which contribute to their symbolic appropriation of city space making it familiar. So, for example, on a question of where he usually walks, the informant answered:



In the city centre, but when we have already gone around the whole city centre, it has become boring and we are thinking about where to go next. Also, we walk on roofs, in abandoned buildings, construction sites, cellars and yards. <...> we've made a combo of stickers on every roof I've been to, I made the combos".

– *Male*, 12

By creating and visualizing unique or everyday routes, sticker artists assemble the city, building connections and relationships between different places. They produce their own maps of the city, on which stickers are the marks, embodying intersections of physical space and memories.

Sometimes you go out to a distant area, somewhere in *Kudrovo** – put a sticker there. Over time someone sends you a photo and is like: 'Oh, what did you do here?' [Laughs]. It's funny, it's funny. Sometimes a few years later ... I hardly use paper, I use vinyl. Sometimes after two years, you walk in this place and [...] 'Oh, really? I was here?' You look and remember that day, what you did that day. It's like such nostalgia, back in the past.

– *Male*, 23

Stickers are found in sticker artists' private spaces: rooms, flats, houses, where they are living, on their computers, mobiles phones, longboards, notebooks. At the same time, stickers are distributed on the streets. Thus, through stickers, sticker artists blur for themselves the boundaries between "home"/ intimate space and urban/public space. Personal space seems to extend to the whole city.

In spite of the public presence of stickers, for the majority of people living in St. Petersburg these small items are invisible. This leads to the emergence of a new inner city that can only be seen through special optics, supplemented with inclusion into social relations and the ability to read meanings of spatial practices. Without immersion in the context of the sticker-art community, stickers in the city frequently remain just beautiful pictures or useless stains. Sticker artists become urban conspirators with unique knowledge about their own city, in which stickers transmit messages and signals to others. Shared experience, feelings and ethics that forbid or allow sticker artists to do something in the city, produce

*Kudrovo – suburban area in Leningradskaya oblast' near St. Petersburg.

a sense of solidarity among sticker artists and help to overcome urban alienation, make the city more familiar and homelike.

“THE STREET IS MY GALLERY”: STRUGGLE FOR THE CITY

Officially, sticker artists’ interventions in the city space are considered vandalism – according to law, stickers damage property. Such stigma is the result of the existing distribution of power in the city, as a result of which sticker artists (and young people in general) do not in most cases have the opportunity to participate in decision making processes and influence the city space legally. Under such conditions, authorities and adults give themselves the moral and legal right to prohibit stickering and blame those who practice this activity by defining it as vandalism or hooliganism.

The urban fabric can be considered as an imaginary battlefield, where the struggle does not only take place in physical space, but also in the space of meanings. In spite of the dominant representation of sticker art as destructive and as an act of hooliganism, sticker artists declare their stickering activity to be a creative process, a kind of contemporary visual art form that is valuable and substantial. They attempt to change the lens through which the city dwellers view stickers and the way they perceive them.

As to the city... Well, it's just that I was always amazed in Europe that this is treated normally and considered a form of art, it's like going to a museum. You, for example, saw a combo [combination of stickers], stood up, looked at it, realized which sticker you like, and then left. For you, it was like a mini museum of street art. <...> Because for now [in Russia] street art is not recognized in the same way as classicism or realism. Now it is considered hooliganism. Here, well, if at all, in principle, Russia is lagging behind by many years even in fashion, I don't know, even in technology, even in lifestyle, yes. Also, Russia falls behind in art.
– *Female*, 24

Sticker artists interpret their activity as art. This understanding leads them to the redefinition of the city space as a ‘museum’, in which streets are canvases and city dwellers are spectators.



NEW TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CITY: SENSE OF CARE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Redefinition of city space in terms of ‘museum’ and ‘home’ contributes to the emergence of a new type of relationship with the city space among sticker artists. Love, responsibility and care are the feelings that sticker artists begin to experience towards the city. St. Petersburg is represented by them as a city with a rich cultural heritage and a great history that should be saved and added to. Sticker artists try to follow the logic of urban space – interact with the city and place stickers in the appropriate (in their interpretation) spatial contexts, complementing urban aesthetics, rather than destroying it. Sticker artists attempt to insert a sticker into the city landscape painlessly, sometimes picking locations that will help them tell a story or draw the audience’s attention to something (objects in the city, surfaces, details of urban fabric).

St. Petersburg is important to me, so I feel responsible for the places where I put stickers or draw.

– *Male, 22*

Representations of the city, shared by sticker artists, have an impact on their urban identities, which, in turn, influence their civil position and activity. They exercise their citizenship through keeping up the beauty of the city (in the way that they understand its beauty) and by getting rid of objects that spoil the city space. They articulate their goals as ‘making the streets brighter’ (male, 19) and ‘just sharing goodness’ (male, 26).

STICKER ARTISTS AS CITIZENS

Sticker artists are young urban explorers, who through fun and creativity assert their interests in the city. Frankly, they only make a small contribution to the formation of the visual appearance of St. Petersburg. The majority of city dwellers do not notice stickers in the city. These small items dissolve in the stream of urban visual information (advertisements, signboards, graffiti, posters), and usually become visible only to those, who know where to look for them. Stickers are hidden on the reverse

side of road signs, on roofs, in the metro cars and on stations, on fences and pillars. Stickers are very important. They fulfill an educational function and help sticker artists professionalize their design or art, as well as contribute to the formation of solidarity between young sticker artists. Sticker art is a step towards democratization of urban life, particularly due to the transformation of the perception of urban space among those who produce stickers and distribute them in the city.

Sticker art is a way of transforming one's status in the city from a passive follower of the existing city order to an active creator, who constructs another city image and representations through which other behavior models of artist and citizen are produced. Sticker artists reinterpret the city as a 'museum', in which a sticker is an art object and a sticker artist is an author. The metaphor of a museum gives the city special value, which is reflected in sticker artists' citizenship through a rhetoric of care and responsibility for the city. The continual exploration of the city and interaction with the urban space, and involvement in urban communications with other sticker artists, contribute to domestication of city space and reinterpretation of it in terms of home. Both these metaphors illustrate how sticker artists reconfigured the optic through which they perceive the city, and saw, that the city can be different.

Through stickering practices, young people develop strong emotional links to the city, which stimulate the emergence of their civil position in relation to the city. It is the way for them to negotiate their status in the city and contribute to development of urban horizontal communication between people living in St. Petersburg, unfolding in public spaces.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- De Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. 1974. Trans. Steven Rendell. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Fairey, Shepard. 1990. *Manufacturing quality dissent since 1989*.
- Geertman, Stephanie & Labbé, Danielle & Boudreau, Julie-Anne & Jacques, Olivier. 2016. Youth-Driven Tactics of Public Space Appropriation in Hanoi: The Case of Skateboarding and Parkour. *Pacific Affairs*, 89(3), 591–611.
- Keys, Kathleen. 2008. Contemporary visual culture jamming: Redefining collage as collective, communal, & urban. *Art Education*, 61(2), 98–101.
- Lefebvre Henri. 1974. *The production of space*. Trans. N. Donaldson-Smith. 1991. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1968. *The right to the city*. Trans. E. Kofman & E. Lebas. 1996. Writings on cities, 63–181.
- Shirvane, Lily. 2006. Locative viscosity: traces of social histories in public space. *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*, 14(3).

Painting the Metro

Performing Graffiti Masculinity

Malin Fransberg

What does the increasing transnationalism in the graffiti subculture mean for the local graffiti writer? As the graffiti subculture is a complex phenomenon, this essay will focus on the illicit train and metro graffiti writing scenes in Helsinki. Through the researcher's ethnographic fieldwork, the intention is to articulate some of the ways of constructing graffiti masculinity in the Helsinki metro. The author looks at how local identities are influenced by the digitalization of graffiti.

METRO AND GRAFFITI HISTORICALLY. Trains and subways have been seen as the main targets of graffiti writers ever since graffiti art originated as a youth culture in 1970's Philadelphia and New York. Painting moving objects can be considered as having a hegemonic position in the graffiti subculture, and guarantees a sub-cultural belonging almost anywhere a graffiti writer is present. In Helsinki, painting graffiti on trains began by the end of the 1980's, after certain North American hip hop documentaries were shown in Finland. During the summer of 1984, *Wild Style* (1982) was spread via video rental shops, and *Beat Street* (1984) had its premiere in movie theatres. As was the case of many other European cities, the graffiti revolution arrived in Helsinki and became an active youth phenomenon.

Today, graffiti and street art are some of the most important contemporary youth cultures performing resistance and contesting the society's boundaries for youth creativity in urban milieus. It is, therefore, not surprising that there have been attempts to control graffiti in many western cities' through harsh politics. As in other Nordic capital cities, during 1998–2008 the municipal-led campaign “Stop Töhrville” (Stop graffiti) in Helsinki introduced zero tolerance as a means of eliminating the whole graffiti phenomenon. All graffiti and street art were prohibited and many young offenders were given harsh sentences in court, including imprisonment and obligations to pay large sums in compensation for vandalism. Ten years after the end of the zero tolerance era, Helsinki City is more liberal



towards graffiti than ever, and promotes domestication of the urban youth culture through encouraging young people's engagement in art projects and by offering legal walls for graffiti painters. Moreover, many of the city's significant museums and galleries have had graffiti thematic exhibitions, for example Helsinki Art Museum's *Graffiti* (6.4.–9.9.2018) and Kunsthalle Helsinki's *Egs: Writing My Diary* (13.1.–25.2.2018).

Despite the recent celebration of graffiti and its cultural legitimization, it seems to be rooted in its untamed character, as illegal graffiti continues to construct the essence and foundation of the movement itself. In Helsinki, some graffiti writers still desire to paint on the city's metro. The Helsinki metro has been globally defined by graffiti writers as one of the most controlled systems, making it hard to paint there, and it is, thus, seen as an attractive and challenging objective.

Furthermore, in research the graffiti subculture has been documented as an extremely male centered youth culture, making it a lucrative space for performing hyper masculine identities through the fight for local urban spaces. In addition, the recent celebration of graffiti has challenged the ideals of local belonging and locally performed 'authentic' identities. In the era of the media city, graffiti subculture has been moving on from a locally spatialized subculture to a globally mediated and digitalized subculture, where sharing video clips and pictures of painted metros online can reach everyone, regardless of one's geographical location. In this process, the locally constructed graffiti subculture is less controllable from a 'localist' perspective and becomes more transnational in its definition.

THE COSMOPOLITAN COCKTAIL OF GRAFFITI MASCULINITIES IN A DIGITAL ERA

Street cultures have typically been cultivated by young men. With their own particular social relations and practices of recognition, they provide an important platform for performing diverse masculine identities. In graffiti studies, graffiti masculinity has typically been built on ideas of 'protest' and 'outlaw' masculinities, where young people construct a rebellious identity through graffiti, resisting the authorities in the city, taking risks in challenging the surveillance of the urban space and thus gaining status in their own community. Moreover, graffiti masculinity

has been noted to embody white ideals of 'black' hip-hop and working class masculinity, which opens up some important perspectives on the globally contested graffiti masculinity today.

The global and transnational graffiti subculture represented in various digital and online forms shows how graffiti writers travel all over the world and conquer foreign subway systems in distant and 'exotic' locations. The most typical example of such graffiti writers would be Utah and Ether, sometimes known as graffiti's very own 'Bonnie and Clyde', a white American couple who travel the world to paint on different subway systems and frequently post online documentaries of their conquests. Their adventures around Asia, 'hitting' the metro systems and 'cracking' the nets of cities' surveillance, can be read symbolically as acts of subcultural colonialism and graffiti heroism.

These 'cosmopolitan' graffiti writers present a very different perspective on the graffiti subculture compared to many of the locally active graffiti writers I followed in Helsinki. Since 2011, I have been doing ethnographic research on the train writing scene in the city among a group of young men. Their lifestyle is not defined by labor, but by graffiti, and they are passionate about painting trains. These men construct identities that embody a certain type of masculinity and that are characterized by the knowledge of train writing, that is knowing how to paint trains. The graffiti subculture in Helsinki is clearly male dominated, and the performing of their masculinities should be understood in relation to the city's specific time, space and history. Moreover, the increasing digitalization of graffiti contests the boundaries between global and local identities, sometimes understood as 'glocal', and thus produces complex cocktails of graffiti masculinities.

During the field observations, I often sat with the graffiti writers in their cars, driving from one train station to another, in order to catch and photograph graffiti painted trains. These men were mostly focusing on old commuter trains in Helsinki. However, painting the metro was occasionally brought up in discussion as a rare and sanctified subject:

"Usually people think that it's impossible. Or that it's hard to do. Yes it is, but it's not impossible. It's just such a small system, there are not so many spots, but if you know what you are doing, then it will work out", Kari, my informant, explains to me.



The car driver explains to me that in other parts of the world people believe that it's impossible to paint on the Helsinki metro. I wonder why, because I have seen pictures of metros in the Finnish graffiti magazines.

“Yeah, but they're usually pretty old pictures, it used to be easier. People have just heard some horror stories, that if you just take a picture on the station, you will for sure end up in a cell for a few weeks. Tourists don't wanna take that risk, and when they don't know what's up here, they don't dare do anything. They've just heard that we have a really bad vandal squad* and that nobody even does the metro here.”

“Well how often is it done then?” I ask.

The guys fall silent and just stare out the window. Eventually the driver says that within one year we would talk about a few dozen cases, as the commuter trains are done in hundreds.

The actual group of local graffiti writers who have painted the metro in Helsinki is small and hard to find, and as Kari explained, the chances to paint the metro are scarce. Thus, it is interesting to look at how the local graffiti writers interact with a transnational scene of metro graffiti writers, or “graffiti tourists”, as Kari defines them. The concept of graffiti tourist can be understood as persons who travel to other countries in an attempt to paint graffiti or enjoy graffiti in other ways. Often graffiti tourists meet local graffiti writers through common networks, but sometimes graffiti writers travel alone. It is when they travel alone and without a local contact that they are treated as intruders by the local graffiti writers. Even if the Helsinki metro has a bad reputation, some graffiti tourists have traveled to paint the Helsinki metro and documented their achievements in train graffiti documentaries, such as *I love trains* (2011), *Interrail* (2012) and *Papas 4* (2018). Even if the Helsinki metro is a small system, knowledge of the possibility of painting it has reached the transnational scene of train writers.

*A unit in security/police that is specialized in catching graffiti writers.

I asked why they did not want to have any tourists here to do the metro. Kari says:

“Fuck, none of those tourists need to come here, if one of them makes it, then soon everyone will be here raping this spot. The crowd has seen a small scene in some movie where the Polish guys do a fucking hasty panel which is not even finished, and then they even brag that they are ‘making the impossible possible’. Fuck, there’s just so few opportunities that others don’t need to come here.”

The graffiti movie Kari was talking about is called *Hamaz 2*. There is a short scene of graffiti writers running towards a Helsinki metro train which is standing on a reverse track, and the graffiti writers quickly paint a graffiti piece on the side of the train.

It is this kind of local ‘graffiti knowledge’ that becomes valuable when doing acts that represent identity and masculine ideals in particular scenes. Graffiti knowledge is utilized in the everyday practice of performing graffiti masculinity on the Helsinki metro. That is to know how, when and where to paint graffiti on the metro. However, local scenes are losing the mastery of their knowledge in the emergence of new, fluid and virtual subcultural scenes that become not only city-wide but transnational in the processes of digitalization. Now it is not only the locals who represent graffiti in Helsinki, but many graffiti tourists, too. As the local graffiti writers are no longer exclusive performers of this specific type of masculinity, in other words, to be able to paint the Helsinki metro, they lose their sense of authenticity and uniqueness. The local ideal becomes contested and negotiated within the transnational and ‘online’ ideals of graffiti masculinity. These negotiations are presented here in the following sections that illustrate the ongoing symbolic struggle for the hegemony of the Helsinki metro.

COLLECTING SYSTEMS AND DIGITAL FAME

Train graffiti writers collect systems. “He is a true system collector”, my friend Jan once explained when a visiting graffiti tourist was on his way to Helsinki. To collect systems is to paint graffiti on different train and subway models, and to document these by photographing and filming. These documented collections of graffiti pieces objectify a graffiti writer’s



cultural capital and are deposited in graffiti writers' private archives. Thus, the online/offline publication of graffiti pieces represents the achievements and produces subcultural fame for the writer. But there are different perspectives on 'fame':

I asked Lauri, another informant, what he thought about social media and what it had to do with graffiti and especially with fame.

"I think the word fame is actually quite stupid. Maybe it used to be a reason for why I started, but it really doesn't mean that much to me anymore. It's a thing that is repeated in the media."

Lauri explains that there are different approaches to fame in different countries, and that there are so many different writers in the subculture, that everyone forms their own practices.

The concept of 'fame' is often said to be a core reason for graffiti writing; it acts as a measure for how well-known a graffiti writer's name is on the streets, and how much respect and status one gains within the subcultural scene. Gaining recognition on the streets has moved into the digital world and out of the local context. There is no longer a need to experience the graffiti 'live' in its physical milieu, as pictures of graffiti are published, re-blogged and distributed on the Internet. Thus, the understanding of fame and its definition is more complex today than it was in the 1970's New York or in the 1980's Helsinki. Now there are informal rules on how, where and when to publish graffiti pictures, as labels such as 'digital-fame', 'insta-fame' or even 'selling out' can be attached to people who publish too many or the wrong type of pictures. Moreover, controlling pictures that produce certain type of graffiti knowledge becomes relevant. As a Helsinki based graffiti writer explains in the book *Graffiti in Helsinki* (Tuulikangas 2018, 69): "Through social media you can easily identify the location of a piece and exactly when it was painted, which tends to attract more writers to the same spot."

Documenting and collecting pictures of graffiti pieces is particularly important to graffiti writers, as illegal graffiti is often a temporary piece of art that is quickly washed off. The policy of the local transport company in Helsinki is that graffiti painted carriages are removed as soon as possible, as it is believed that visible graffiti invites more graffiti writers

to paint the metro. Thus, very few citizens actually witness graffiti on the metro offline, as painted carriages are taken out of traffic quickly. In graffiti writers' mind, the invisibility of metro graffiti serves the sense of locality and control of locally produced graffiti knowledge, as only a few are aware of when and where graffiti is painted on the metro. Therefore, publishing pictures of the painted metros was not typically done by local graffiti writers, but by 'outsiders' or 'tourists':

I told Hesse, an informant, that I saw a picture of graffiti writers posing in front of the Helsinki West metro in a subway tunnel on an international graffiti Instagram account. His happy mood changed and he became all red in the face, although he already knew about the picture. He was almost screaming:

"I got so mad when I saw that picture! I told the guys a million times not to put pictures out on the Internet, and what happens when the guys get home? All of a sudden you have those pictures out on the net! I called them straight away and asked them: what the fuck is that, take that shit away! Yeah, they apologized and yeah the picture disappeared from the internet."

Many graffiti writers I met tended to avoid online publishing in favor of keeping knowledge of the painted metros only within the subculture. In this process, visibility becomes less expedient, as the struggle for unique subway graffiti becomes more important. The personal collection of pictures and movie clips is therefore concealed and kept away from the public eye. The visibility loses its importance, as its authenticity becomes discordant. But, as graffiti is a phenomenon that in the end always exists through its visuality, Lauri points out the harsh reality: "If you don't want to be seen, then you should not paint".

The concept of graffiti tourist can be understood as persons who travel to other countries in an attempt to paint graffiti or enjoy graffiti in other ways.

The invisibility of metro graffiti was a benefit for the local underground metro graffiti scene. Therefore, showing the global graffiti audience that it is 'possible' to paint the small metro system in Helsinki was not received as a favor. The aim to control the ownership of the local graffiti scene was expressed through language that reflected xenophobic discourses, as the local graffiti writers explained that they needed to 'protect' their metro



as it would otherwise be ‘raped’ by ‘foreign’ graffiti writers. Guarding the Helsinki metro from graffiti tourists shows an ethos of regarding it as ‘our’ metro that only belongs to the locals.

However, not all graffiti writers in Helsinki share a fully hostile attitude towards graffiti tourists. Many graffiti writers stated that without graffiti, they would never have so many friends in different countries. The network of graffiti writers worldwide provides them with a local contact and a couch to sleep on wherever they travel. Although, nothing comes for free, as some graffiti writers stated. The use of local graffiti knowledge was transferable capital that enabled mobility in the global graffiti scene:

The tourists asked if it would be easy to paint trains in Helsinki.

“Yes, it’s possible. But inform me maybe two weeks before you come, so we can organize everything,” said Hesse. The tourists said yes and promised to send a message at least two weeks before they would arrive. They didn’t say much about their country, except something about prejudices against graffiti. Nothing about Hesse visiting them. Hesse told me afterwards that he expects to be helped by them in return, and if not: “well, at least they should not expect any further help from me then.”

AUTHENTIC GRAFFITI MASCULINITY

Who belongs to the Helsinki metro graffiti scene? Who has the right to represent local graffiti masculinities? These questions arise due to the increasing mobility of young people in the West, not only through social digitalization but also because people physically travel more. This situation reveals interesting perspectives on gender identities in local scenes and globally defined youth cultures. Graffiti writing on the metro is today both local and transnational, and as discussed earlier, the graffiti knowledge becomes particularly important in practices that construct graffiti masculinity in Helsinki. The old-fashioned outlaw masculinity based on violence and physicality is replaced by intelligence and cleverness in increasingly digital information exchange.

However, there is one characteristic that remains from the somewhat stereotypical graffiti masculinity that refers to traditional working class ideals. It is the sense of locality and territoriality. Here, there are context specific nuances that may be typical of certain local scenes. In Helsinki, the metro system is small compared to many other global cities, which makes it difficult to paint trains. Local graffiti writers tend to protect their metro from foreign writers, thus representing a type of subcultural localism, even to a patriotic extent. In performing graffiti masculinity, authentic identification and being unique compared to others become important. As the graffiti subculture becomes commodified and celebrated, not only by cultural institutions, but also by the subcultural practices of digitalization, the actions that signify the subcultures as authentic are challenged. The authentic is something sacred within the subculture, as the Helsinki metro is seen to be for the local graffiti writers. In this process, the visibility and the fame become secondary in the battle of performing authentic identities, as graffiti writers literally aim to stay underground.

Names of interviewees are changed for anonymity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Høigård, Cecilie. 2002. *Gategallerier*. Oslo: Pax forlag.
- Isomursu, Anne & Jääskeläinen, Tuomas. 1998. *Helsinki graffiti*. Helsinki: Kustantaja Matti Pyykkö.
- Lombard, Kara-Jane. 2013. 'Men against the wall: Graffiti(ed) Masculinities'. *The Journal of Men's Studies* 21: 178–190.
- Macdonald, Nancy. 2002. *The Graffiti Subculture: Youth, Masculinity and Identity in London and New York*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Monto, Martin & Machalek, Janna & Anderson, Terri. 2012. 'Boys Doing Art: The Construction of Outlaw Masculinity in a Portland, Oregon Graffiti Crew'. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 42 (3): 259–290.
- Tuulikangas, Sanna. (ed.) 2018. *Graffiti in Helsinki*. HAM Helsinki Art Museum publications 140.

Welcome to the journey of two media cities, Helsinki and Saint Petersburg, to explore young people's lives and cultures on the move in these environments and landscapes! As a reader, you may dive into partly hidden urban youth subcultures: encounters in an urban circus, active Pokémon Go player communities, sticker artists redefining the city, or debating gender in graffiti subculture.

Take a look at just one essay or read them all. Or you may want to focus solely on the ponderable photos, or drift away by listening to the mesmerizing metro sounds in the digital version of this book, available here: www.youth-in-the-media-city.org.

Finnish Youth Research Society
Finnish Youth Research Network

ISBN 978-952-7175-75-0
ISSN 1799-9227