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Post-industrial heterotopias: Art clusters as fluctuating spaces between marginality and aestheticisation

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Abstract. The research relevance is determined by the need to determine the spatial transformations of post-industrial territories in the context of cultural dynamics and aestheticisation of marginal artistic practices. The study aimed to analyse art clusters as fluctuating post-industrial spaces that exist between marginality and aestheticisation, to reveal the mechanisms and stages of their transformation from countercultural initiatives to cultural and commercial objects. The methodological basis of the study included an interdisciplinary approach that combines philosophical, cultural and urban methods of analysis, as well as the case study method and visual and semiotic analysis. The study combined the concepts of Foucault, Lefebvre, and Baudrillard to analyse the cultural transformation of art clusters as post-industrial spaces, which not only described changes in the urban environment but also critically reflected on the processes of legitimising marginal cultural content. The author's typology of art clusters was presented based on the peculiarities of the formation. The analysis has revealed that art clusters of the 1st type “underground transformations” (according to the author's typology of art clusters) function as dynamic spatial constructs in which marginal initiatives are transformed into legitimate cultural practices. Spatial interventions, in particular street art, serve as semiotic markers that form a new identity of a place and contribute to its aesthetic redefinition. At the same time, the study established that the processes of commodification and symbolic appropriation lead to the loss of authenticity of protest practices, transforming them into simulacra. The practical value of the study is determined by the possibility of using the results for critical analysis of urban development policies, cultural planning and reconceptualisation of public space in the context of post-industrial transformation

Keywords: artistic environment; gentrification; street art; semiotics of space; commodification of culture; simulacrum

INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, cities saw a growing number of creative formations emerging on the territories of decaying industrial sites. Art clusters have emerged as urban phenomena that combine marginal cultural initiatives, street art, and tools for aestheticising post-industrial space. As O. Ivashko (2021) noted, the emergence is driven by the activities of informal movements (including squatting) and is at the same time accompanied by gradual legitimisation within urban development strategies, which indicates a complex dynamic between counterculture and official cultural policy.

Contemporary studies, such as the study by T. Tunali (2021) on the policy of cultural regeneration in urban spaces, have focused on the contradictory nature of art clusters. On the one hand, they function as spaces of free creativity, where new forms of cultural communication are unfolding. On the other hand, their integration into the city's cultural economy leads to gentrification processes that displace authentic initiatives and turn the space into an aestheticised commercial product. The need for rethinking such spaces as unstable, fluctuating environments was substantiated by M.N. Marino *et al.* (2023). The concept of heteroto-

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pias by M. Foucault (1986) provided a methodological framework for considering art clusters as “other spaces” that have the potential to transform social and cultural meanings through spatial organisation. It is also worth highlighting the modern adaptations of this concept, in particular the analysis of spatial hybrid practices in post-industrial cities by U. Gultmair (2021).

In the context of rethinking the role of street art, the study by P. Bengtsen (2019), where street art acts as a marker of the identity of a place, contributing to the formation of an “urban narrative” that affects both the perception of the environment and social practices in it, is noteworthy. The study by M. Kalashnyk (2024) showed that street art has become a powerful means of visual expression of social and political issues, influencing public opinion and stimulating social change. In addition, the researcher noted that the integration of street art into the gallery space can help preserve its cultural value and enhance its social impact. In turn, A. Zbarazhska (2020) studied the artistic life of the squats of the 1990s, which is also important for understanding the origins of modern art clusters.

The problem of commodification of cultural protest was analysed by T. Tunali (2021), emphasising the risks of turning authentic marginal practices into elements of commercial attractiveness for urban tourism strategies. The issues of social justice and cultural gentrification also remain relevant. The critical analysis of the visual environment of the post-industrial city presented in the studies by A. Baldini (2020) on the analysis of the décor and marginal landscapes as spaces of aesthetic conflict and symbolic violence are notable. Thus, the space of art clusters functions as a polyphonic field of struggle between marginality and commercialisation. Similar observations were also made in the study by C. Yang & Q. Zhu (2023), who analysed the social conflict associated with cultural gentrification in China.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the study by S. Zukin (2020) on the analysis of the “culture of cities” as a process of symbolic and economic control over space. The study emphasised that cultural industries, in particular art clusters, are becoming a tool of soft power, which forms the image of the city as a creative centre, while deepening social hierarchies. The creation of an attractive urban façade is accompanied by the displacement of less privileged communities, which indicates the ambiguous role of creative spaces in urban development processes. As noted by S. Zukin (2020), in this case, culture in the city turns into a commodity that serves the interests of capital, while marginalising local practices. M.K. Demessie (2024) confirmed the important role of art objects in shaping the architectural environment of a modern city, in the context of the interaction between public space and residents. The study emphasised that combining art objects into conceptual groups creates a recognisable image of the

city, reflecting its cultural identity and promoting the development of public space as a space for communication and interaction.

The study aimed to examine art clusters as dynamic spaces on the verge of marginality and aestheticisation, as well as to explore the processes and stages of their evolution from countercultural practices to cultural and commercial phenomena. The objectives of the study were to identify the theoretical foundations of the conceptualisation of art clusters in the context of philosophical and cultural approaches; to identify signs of commodification and simulacra in the space of art clusters; to explore the role of artistic interventions (including street art) in shaping spatial identity; to analyse the impact of gentrification on the transformation of marginalised environments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

During the study, the case studies of art clusters located in the post-industrial districts of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Warsaw, Lodz, and Berlin were selected using the case study method. The key criterion for selecting the cases was the presence of spatial transformation of former industrial sites into cultural centres that demonstrate signs of both marginal and institutionalised cultural space. The analysis of these cases was used to trace general patterns and differences in the functioning of art clusters in different socio-cultural contexts.

A set of qualitative research methods was used to collect and analyse the material. An in-depth visual and semiotic analysis of the spatial elements of art clusters was conducted, with a special focus on street art, architectural solutions, graffiti and temporary installations. This identified the mechanisms of forming the symbolic identity of a place and the spatial redefinition of the post-industrial environment. The research also involved the analysis of documents from open sources: official websites of art clusters, social media pages, policy documents, curatorial manifestos, as well as publications in local media and academic journals. This approach traced the narrative construction of clusters as part of urban cultural policy.

Theoretical sources on urban transformations in post-industrial contexts were studied. The research strategy involved a chronological and comparative analysis, which was used to reconstruct the dynamics of the transformation of a marginal environment into a legitimate cultural space. The findings were interpreted within the framework of critical urban studies, emphasising the mechanisms of cultural appropriation, commodification of protest practices, and aestheticisation of marginal space. This approach presented art clusters as fluctuating spaces that manifest an ambivalent interaction between alternative culture, institutional recognition, and the socio-economic pressure of gentrification.

The methodological basis of the study was an interdisciplinary approach that integrates philosophical,

cultural and urban analysis methods. In particular, the research was based on the philosophical concepts of heterotopia by M. Foucault (1986), production of space by H. Lefebvre (1991) and simulacra by J. Baudrillard (1994), which were interpreted in the context of spatial transformations of post-industrial territories. This revealed the contradictory nature of art clusters as fluctuating spaces that balance between marginality and aestheticisation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dynamics of transformation of art clusters as fluctuating post-industrial spaces

Art clusters that emerge in post-industrial areas are not only spaces for artists' self-expression, but also complex cultural and economic entities that interact with social, economic and architectural processes (Orlenko & Ivashko, 2017). An art cluster is a post-industrial space adapted for cultural and creative activities, often based on abandoned industrial facilities, which combines art studios, galleries and other functional areas for the development of creative industries. The specificity is determined by the ability to operate on the borderline between legality and illegality, cultural autonomy and institutionalisation, protest and commercialisation. They are defined as creative spaces that emerge in converted industrial buildings or underutilised areas, often under the influence of artists looking for affordable places to create. Artists often squat in abandoned industrial buildings, creating the phenomenon of industrial squatting, an informal use of space without official permission (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Artists in the Kyiv squat "Parkomuna"
Source: A. Zbarazhska (2020)

They usually occupy studio space, and over time, these spaces transform into structured cultural centres that influence urban renewal. In this process, successive stages of development can be identified, but not all art clusters go through them. Therefore, the study identified two main types of art clusters according to the way they are socially and culturally formed. The first type of art cluster is underground transformations that

emerge through industrial squatting. The formation begins with the unauthorised occupation of abandoned industrial spaces by artists and creative communities, who gradually turn these territories into informal cultural centres. Over time, such clusters can become institutionalised and partially commodified. Examples include the Artzavod Platform and Ostkreuz in Berlin. The second type is managed creative zones, which are formed with the support of city authorities or cultural institutions. Their creation is part of urban reconstruction and cultural development strategies, and the art clusters themselves have institutional support and clearly defined functionality from the outset. Examples of such clusters include the Dovzhenko Centre in Kyiv and the Shoreditch area in London.

The study addressed the art clusters of underground transformations, for which specific stages of their socio-cultural development have been identified. Thus, an art cluster is located only on the post-industrial territory and goes through certain stages of socio-cultural development that affect further scenarios of its transformation. The first stage of art cluster development is abandonment when former industrial facilities (factories, warehouses, etc.) are no longer used for their intended purpose and are in poor condition due to prolonged decay. This is followed by the stage of industrial squatting, when artists illegally occupy these spaces, setting up studios and organising cultural events. Thus, the formation of art clusters usually begins with illegal artistic interventions by artists looking for accessible spaces for creativity, taking over abandoned industrial facilities and turning them into centres of artistic experimentation and alternative culture (Hnatiuk, 2020). Such space becomes marginalised, but continues to develop, passing through the next stage of spontaneous cultural colonisation, when art space attracts the attention of creative communities and becomes a place for informal initiatives, which contributes to the organisation of the first cultural events. Although this space remains marginal, it begins to interact with a wider audience. The next stage is the aestheticisation of the space, where the art cluster is transformed into a well-organised cultural environment with improved infrastructure and artistic design. This process contributes to the renewal of abandoned areas and objects, which attracts wealthier residents and businesses but can lead to the displacement of the original residents. Gentrification is the next, and most fundamental stage, which transforms a space into a desirable area through artistic and architectural changes. It is key in transforming art clusters from marginal countercultural spaces to legalised cultural centres. At this stage, according to L. Hae (2011), art clusters can "balance between alternative practices and the onslaught of capitalist commodification". For instance, the Florentin district in Tel Aviv (Fig. 2), which became a centre of alternative culture thanks to artists and

squatters, gradually went through a process of gentrification and transformed into a commercialised space with cafes, galleries and boutiques aimed at a wealthier audience.

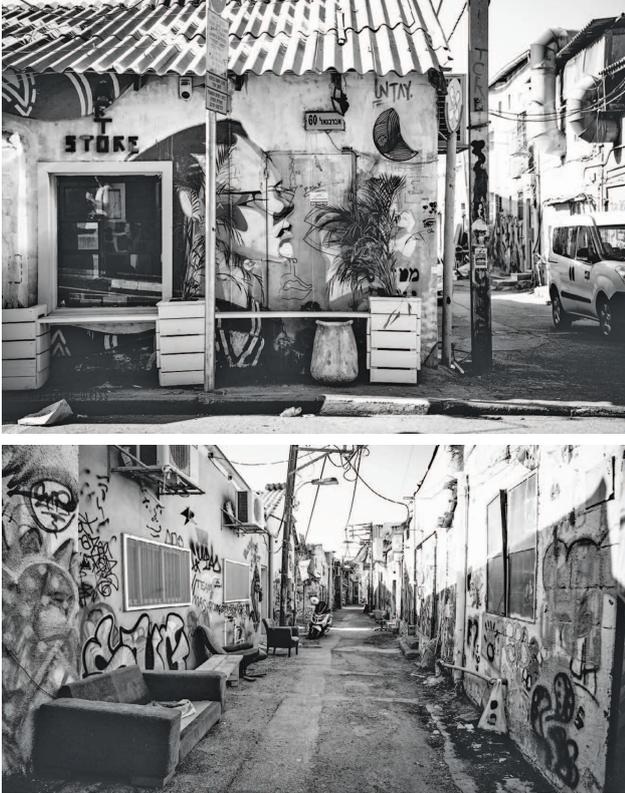


Figure 2. A fragment of the exterior of a building located in the Florentine district of Tel Aviv

Source: M. Weiss (2022)

Gentrification also changes the architectural appearance of space. Spatial interventions by architects create the effect of an “aestheticised ruin” of industrial heritage that retains its historical authenticity but at the same time becomes commercially attractive. According to A. Baldini (2020), this aestheticisation of ruin can turn a protest space into a commercial object. This is present in Berlin, where the Kreuzberg district, known for its alternative culture, has gradually turned into a space of galleries, cafes, and designer shops, displacing the artists who formed its original identity. The architectural elements of the history – brick facades, industrial windows, metal structures – serve as markers of memory, but at the same time acquire new meanings in the context of contemporary urban design. Ricardo Bofill’s La Fabrica (Fig. 3) in Barcelona is an example of the changes in historical space at the stage of gentrification. The project combines industrial heritage with new functions, which shows how industrial architecture can be transformed into a multifunctional art space that combines cultural heritage and the latest trends in contemporary art and architecture.



Figure 3. A fragment of the exterior of the current state-of-the-art cluster “La Fabrica” by Ricardo Bofill in Barcelona

Source: La Fabrica (n.d.)

The gentrification stage is followed by the cultural capitalisation of the art cluster, a process in which art spaces and events begin to acquire economic value, becoming part of economic activity. For example, in the case of the Station Nord art cluster in Copenhagen, the first art events in abandoned industrial areas were illegal, but gradually cultural institutions and businesses became interested in these spaces, which led to their legalisation and gentrification. Marginality, which initially appeared as a sign of radicalism and alternative, is becoming a marketable commodity. Thus, artistic initiatives in post-industrial areas often become catalysts for urban change, despite their initial marginality (Hae, 2011). For instance, former squats turned into galleries or cultural centres are integrated into the tourism sector, and their graffiti-covered walls become part of sightseeing routes. In this sense, gentrified art clusters become a kind of “museum heterotopia” where the authentic spirit of marginality functions as a symbolic resource for tourists but loses its original meaning as a protest gesture.

All of this leads to a change in the socio-cultural scenario: artists and alternative cultural groups that contributed to the creation of the art cluster may be displaced by rising rents and commercialisation. According to the study by L. Lees & C. Melhuish (2013), art clusters often face the risk of institutionalisation and loss of authenticity, which can be observed at this stage of development. As a result, the art cluster goes through the stage of social marginalisation of its original inhabitants, but retains its symbolic importance, moving to the stage of stable functioning. For example, in the case of the aforementioned Florentin district in Tel Aviv, the process of gentrification has led to artists being forced to leave the area due to rising rent prices, which characterises the phenomenon of social marginalisation of the original residents.

Thus, art clusters are constantly in a state of transformation and adaptation to changes in the cultural and social environment. Sometimes they can remain at the

stage of industrial squatting and act as countercultural spaces of underground art. In most cases, art clusters reach the stage of gentrification but do not develop further to the stage of cultural capitalisation, playing the role of “threshold” places between underground and mainstream culture. Sometimes art clusters develop rapidly, passing through all stages of development up to the stage of social marginalisation of the original inhabitants, where a period of stability begins, which does not last very long. Economic problems and “decline” can occur, which brings the art cluster back to decline, and then the area becomes attractive to squatters again. For example, the Metelkova art cluster (Fig. 4) emerged in the early 1990s as a squat on the territory of former military barracks. Artists and activists occupied the abandoned buildings, turning them into a centre of alternative culture. Over time, the space became popular with tourists and underwent gentrification. However, despite its institutionalisation, Metelkova retained its countercultural identity. At the same time, another squat in Ljubljana, Rog, was closed by the authorities, which shows the different fates of similar initiatives in the context of urban transformation.



Figure 4. A fragment of the exteriors of the Metelkova art cluster in Ljubljana

Source: Metelkova (n.d.)

Such dynamism, rhythmicity, as well as variability and dialecticity of art clusters, were used to address art clusters as fluctuating spaces, i.e. those that are constantly changing, being in a state of transformation, adaptation and fluctuation. They are not static but are characterised by dynamism, in which their content, functions, use and social roles can change depending on many factors. The fluctuation of art clusters is a concept that describes the unstable, changing and transient nature in the context of urban and socio-cultural transformations. From the initial stage of marginalisation (industrial squatting, in this case) as a place for alternative and countercultural initiatives to the stage of legalisation and commercialisation (gentrification and cultural capitalisation), art clusters are constantly changing, which preserves the relevance and attractiveness for different social groups.

In this context, the marginality of art clusters is manifested through interaction with illegal artistic interventions such as squatting movements, namely industrial squatting, the occupation and use of abandoned or disused industrial buildings and areas that have no official owner or remain empty, to create alternative cultural, social or artistic spaces, often in protesting commercialisation or urban change. An example of an art cluster as a fluid space is Villa Road in London, which became a place of alternative culture in the 1970s and was initially inhabited by artists, musicians and other creatives illegally. The marginality and protest nature of art clusters are also expressed through street art and graffiti, which has become an important expression of this marginality, as it articulates protest sentiments, political messages, and alternative narratives. Graffiti and street art not only emphasise the alternative nature of such spaces but also serve as a means of communication addressed to both the internal audience of the cluster and the external society. For example, in London’s Shoreditch district, graffiti has transformed the space from a neglected industrial area into a popular art tourism destination, where commercialisation has gradually replaced the spirit of protest. In this context, examples of the integration of marginal art into the art cluster space should be highlighted. Informal exhibitions in non-traditional spaces, such as abandoned warehouses or temporarily vacant buildings within an art cluster, can be used to organise informal exhibitions of marginal artists, providing an opportunity to see art that rarely comes to the attention of the public. In addition, owners of studios or workshops in the art cluster can use elements of marginal art in the design of their workspaces, paint walls, use found objects as decorative elements and display the works of original artists. Another example of integrating marginal art is the creation of art objects from recycled materials and the creation of ‘art courtyards’ with elements of naive art, which add a sense of informality to the space.

However, along with being marginalised, art clusters also attract official cultural institutions such as galleries, museums, and educational institutions. This leads to an internal conflict between the autonomy of artists and institutionalisation, where independence and alternatives can be partially lost through integration into formal cultural structures (Orlenko & Ivashko, 2017). An example of this is the Christiania art cluster in Copenhagen (Fig. 5), which initially existed as an illegal space for self-expression but later turned into a tourist attraction, causing conflicts between artists and the local administration (Shkoliar, 2021). This balance between marginality and integration into the official cultural space is crucial for determining the phenomenon of art clusters as specific post-industrial heterotopias.



Figure 5. A fragment of the building on the territory of the Christiania art cluster in Copenhagen

Source: M. Hesp (n.d.)

In general, the processes of abandonment, industrial squatting, cultural colonisation, aestheticisation, gentrification, cultural capitalisation and social marginalisation of industrial squatters reflect the complex dynamics of the transformation of art cluster spaces. They demonstrate how marginal countercultural spaces gradually lose their original radicality, becoming objects of cultural capitalisation and commodification (Shkoliar, 2021). The commodification of culture is a process in which cultural objects, ideas and symbols that may have previously had social, spiritual, symbolic or aesthetic value are transformed into goods or services that are bought and sold on the market for profit. The main aspects of the commodification of culture are highlighted:

1) The transformation of the intangible into the tangible is when ideas, traditions, knowledge, artworks, symbols, and even identity can be packaged and sold as commodities (books, music records, souvenirs, tourist packages, etc.).

2) Standardisation and mass production for the sake of achieving higher profits, can lead to the loss of uniqueness and authenticity of cultural products.

3) Marketing and branding to promote cultural elements in the marketplace, influencing their perception and value.

In other words, in the last stages of its development, an art cluster radically changes due to commodification, which once again illustrates the fluctuation of objects of this type. Thus, from an artistic and urban point of view, art clusters may well form a fluctuating space. From an urban point of view, this is manifested as a change in the functional purpose of the industrial zone, as well as the presence of informality and flexibility in the use of urban space. Informal galleries,

street art, and temporary installations appear, which can come and go, creating a fluctuating visual and functional landscape. From an artistic point of view, fluctuations in this type of space can be attributed to the fact that art clusters often emerge organically rather than according to a clear plan, and their development can be non-linear and difficult to predict, characterised by periods of rapid growth, stagnation or even decline of individual elements. In addition, art clusters usually unite different types of art, artists with different styles and approaches, as well as different types of creative institutions (galleries, workshops, studios, informal spaces). This internal diversity is constantly changing, with new players emerging, old ones disappearing, and new collaborations and conflicts emerging, leading to fluctuations in the artistic landscape. Moreover, some of the artistic initiatives within the cluster may be temporary, such as seasonal exhibitions, performances, and workshops, which adds an element of fluidity and fluctuation to the cluster space.

For a broader determination of how these fluctuating processes affect the spatial identity of art clusters, the philosophical concepts of space by M. Foucault (1986), A. Lefebvre (1991), J. Baudrillard (1994), in particular, Foucault's concept of heterotopias, is notable. These approaches can be used to view art clusters not only as physical territories but also as complex social and cultural constructs that are in a constant process of fluctuations between marginality and the aesthetics of the dominant culture.

Philosophy of space in the context of art clusters

M. Foucault (1986) described spaces that are alternative to conventional social environments and can change their functions depending on socio-cultural transformations. The study coined the term heterotopia to describe places that go beyond the usual social norms and offer alternative forms of existence and interaction. According to M. Foucault (1986), several types of heterotopias can be distinguished. Heterotopias representing other places are spaces that reflect real or fictional places, creating certain conditional or mirror images of the world (for example, museums, libraries, parks). Time heterotopias are spaces that change or distort human perception of time. These can be buildings that have gone through several stages of change, or places for meditation and relaxation that interrupt the usual rhythm of life. For example, in the La Fabrica art cluster, Bofill used industrial elements of the complex, such as concrete towers, pipelines and huge brick facades, to create interiors, and instead of completely reconstructing the building, the decision was made to preserve its ruins, providing them new functions and meanings.

In 1973, the Spanish architect Ricardo Bofill came across an abandoned cement factory near Barcelona, a giant industrial structure with concrete towers, pipes and the remains of huge machines (Fig. 6). Instead of

demolishing the ruins, Bofill saw the potential to transform them into an artistic space that exists outside the usual concepts of architecture (Fig. 7).



Figure 6. The state of the abandoned La Fabrica cement factory in 1973. Exterior

Source: Architectuur (2014)



Figure 7. The state of Ricardo Bofill's La Fabrica art cluster after revitalisation

Source: ArchDaily (2023)

The architect preserved some of the factory's brick facades, concrete towers, and metal pipes and redeveloped them into living quarters, studios, offices, libraries, and exhibition halls (Fig. 8). Some of them remained intact, covered with greenery as a kind of architectural palimpsest. This created the impression of being suspended between times: the space was neither fully modern nor historical, but rather timeless. The factory lost its industrial function but retained its traces as an architectural memory. Thanks to this approach, La Fabrica is not only an artistic cluster but also a heterotopia of time in Foucault's sense, where different temporal, spatial and cultural layers intersect. The next type of heterotopia is crisis heterotopia, spaces that provide shelter to people in exceptional situations, such as hospitals, prisons, shelters or even bars, where people seek temporary help or a changed social status. Heterotopias as countercultural spaces or heterotopias of illusion are places that emerge out of protest against mainstream social norms. They can be amateur cultural spaces that reject traditional

urban norms. According to the classification, art clusters can be defined as heterotopias of illusion. They change the urban space, create new opportunities for cultural interaction, and act as alternative temporal-spatial structures that change traditional urban dynamics. Thus, art clusters are both marginalised in the context of gentrification and social change and aestheticised through artistic interventions, gentrification and cultural capitalisation.



Figure 8. A fragment of the interior of an office inside Ricardo Bofill's La Fabrica art cluster after revitalisation

Source: La Fabrica (n.d.)

In the context of the philosophy of art clusters' space, the approach of H. Lefebvre (1991) is also important in theoretical terms, as the study addressed space not only as a physical reality but also as a social construction that is formed through practices and interactions in it. In the concept of "space production", art clusters can be seen as spaces where various social practices, including artistic ones, transform spatial forms and functions. A. Lefebvre emphasised that space is not only a place for activities but also an active agent in creating social interactions and cultural identities.

The transformation of art clusters as fluctuating spaces from marginal to aestheticised within the gentrification process is also explained through the concept of simulacra by J. Baudrillard (1994). The simulacrum is a concept introduced by Jean Baudrillard that

describes the phenomenon when reality is replaced by its reflection or copy, which has no connection with the original. Baudrillard emphasises that in the context of contemporary capitalism, cultural phenomena that emerge in such spaces become not only signs or representations but also independent objects of consumption that are deprived of their original context. Graffiti and other forms of street art, originally aimed at protesting and criticising existing social structures, often turn into elements of a “cultural brand” that lose their radical nature in the process of aestheticisation and commodification. Such a change in the social context of a space leads to its “pseudo-reality”, where the authenticity of protest practices is lost, turning into a symbolic commodity. In the context of art clusters, simulacrum manifests itself through fake identities and ideas, and what was once an authentic expression of protest or marginality becomes part of the cultural production for tourists or part of the “fake” culture.

For instance, street art that protests against social norms can be commercialised and simplified to meet the demand for style and aesthetics. Protest practices that were once aimed at criticising society are aestheticised, turning into an aesthetic phenomenon that no longer serves social criticism but becomes a commodity. This creates the illusion of “authenticity” and can refer to the perception that a certain place is an “alternative”, although in reality it is already commercialised. An example is the Victoria district in Manchester, where the initial illegal artistic activity has become a marketing tool to attract investors and tourists. In Shoreditch in London, graffiti and street art, which began as illegal acts of protest, have become part of the area’s tourist attraction, losing their authentic protest character.

In this context, it is possible to define simulacrum and marginality in the process of gentrification as an important stage in the formation of art clusters, which stands on the verge of the duality of the social functions of an art cluster. As mentioned earlier, industrial squatting, which is a marginal phenomenon, precedes the gentrification stage, but given the fluidity of art clusters, it is possible to conclude that marginality and aestheticisation are invariably dualistic components of an art cluster. Gentrification turns marginal spaces into objects of cultural appeal, which leads to the loss of their underground character. Paradoxically, art clusters retain their aesthetic and cultural role in urban space but are increasingly becoming simulacra, losing their significance as places of social change and protest.

A significant contribution to understanding the transformation of space was made by R.M. Balzarotti & S. Moroni (2022) in an exploration of the political dimension of architecture and activism through design. The study emphasised that architectural and visual solutions are not only aesthetic but also political, marking the conflict between the spontaneity of marginal initiatives and the controllability of cultural policy, which

directly relates to the communication of street art in art clusters with visitors, as well as the impact of street art on various aspects of culture.

Thus, art clusters, as post-industrial heterotopias, function in a twofold dimension: on the one hand, they are spaces where social and cultural practices express their marginality, and on the other hand, in the processes of aestheticisation and commercialisation, they become part of the cultural industry. In this context, art clusters are fluctuating spaces that are located between the poles of marginality and aestheticisation, creating new opportunities for transformations of public space in the post-industrial city. Commodification and simulacra in art clusters are manifested through the processes of transforming authentic, often protest or marginal cultural practices into market products and cultural images that lose their original meaning. This creates an “illusion” of originality and counterculture.

Semiotics of space and the role of street art in shaping the identity of art clusters

The semiotic analysis of art clusters described the complex interaction between the aestheticisation of space and its marginality in greater detail. As noted earlier, in the context of M. Foucault’s (1986) heterotopias, art clusters can be regarded not only as places of physical interaction but also as symbolic structures in which social, cultural and political meanings intertwine and transform. Such spaces are multidimensional, where each element has a unique cultural and social load, and the transformation in the context of marginality and aestheticisation is one of the important aspects of the development of post-industrial territories.

Street art, in particular graffiti and street art, act as the main semiotic tools in the processes of marginalisation of art clusters and subsequent aestheticisation. In the marginalised context, graffiti functions as a form of protest, expression of alternative views and struggle against the commodification of space (Kalashnyk, 2024). This type of art, according to Kalashnyk (2024), is an effective tool of visual protest, capable of mobilising social movements, broadcasting socially significant messages and shaping cultural consciousness in public space, and is the “visual voice” of those who are on the periphery of the dominant culture and seek to express their views through radical interventions in urban space. An example of such use is spaces such as Tacheles in Berlin, where graffiti served as a manifesto questioning the city administration and private developers, acting as a powerful tool of protest (Hnatiuk, 2020). V. Mehrotra (2021) highlighted that an important aspect was that graffiti in these spaces not only expresses protest but also serves as an “empty” semiotic sign that can acquire new meanings depending on the context.

Over time, with the process of cultural capitalisation of art clusters, graffiti and street art may lose their original protest essence, turning into an aesthetic attribute

that supports the “cultural brand” of the art cluster. As noted by V. Molnar (2018), the process of aestheticisation and commercialisation of street art leads to the fact that these practices become part of consumer culture, which in turn leads to the loss of original critical function. This process can be seen in contemporary art clusters, where graffiti becomes an element of the city’s tourist image, transforming from a symbol of protest into a symbolised aesthetic of the urban environment.

The duality of protest and commercialisation corresponds to the concept of Foucauldian heterotopias, where marginal and institutionalised practices coexist. Street art in art clusters can be regarded as a “threshold practice” that lies on the borderline between radical self-expression and an attempt to integrate into official culture. In particular, the aestheticisation of marginal spaces through street art contributes to the change in the socio-cultural identity of art clusters. For example, the Tacheles art cluster in Berlin (Fig. 9), where street art is becoming an important tool for expressing local identity, protesting against social injustice, and engaging with marginalised groups (Tartari, 2019).



Figure 9. Staircase with graffiti in the Tacheles art cluster in Berlin

Source: U. Gultmair (2021)

Thus, a semiotic approach to the study of street art in art clusters has revealed the complex processes of transformation of marginal spaces into culturally significant and aestheticised environments. In this context, street art acts as an intermediary between illegality and legitimation, protest and commercialisation, authenticity and marketing strategies. As a result, after the stage of marginalisation, i.e. industrial squatting, the development of art within the art cluster leads to the stage of aestheticisation and cultural capitalisation, which causes the transformation of the space from a countercultural environment to a cultural centre, losing its status as a heterotopia. For example, the Platforma art factory in Kyiv (Fig. 10), which emerged on the territory of a former industrial zone, has become a venue for major festivals and exhibitions. However, as O. Ivashko (2021), this process has also led to

gentrification, displacing the original residents and marginalised groups who were the first to make this space culturally significant.



Figure 10. A fragment of the interior of the hall of the Platforma Art Factory art cluster in Kyiv

Source: Artzavod Platforma (n.d.)

Based on the analysis of art clusters and the literature, it is possible to argue that street art performs an important semiotic function, transforming from a means of protest to an instrument of cultural capitalisation. It reflects the dynamics between marginality and institutionalisation, playing a key role in shaping the identity of post-industrial spaces. Art clusters emerge as heterotopian environments where authenticity and commercialisation coexist, and street art becomes a marker of cultural transformation and rethinking of urban values.

CONCLUSIONS

The study analysed art clusters as fluctuating post-industrial spaces that simultaneously accumulate features of marginality and aestheticisation. Using an interdisciplinary approach, the study determined that such spaces are not stable structures, but are constantly changing under the influence of social, economic and cultural processes. Art clusters go through a series of stages from industrial squatting to cultural capitalisation, while their marginality is gradually aestheticised and institutionalised. In this process, authentic protest practices lose their original function, transforming into simulacra that serve as elements of the cultural industry. There are 2 types of art clusters: “underground transformations” and “managed creative zones” that emerge either as a result of industrial squatting (type 1) or support from cultural institutions (type 2).

Street art is crucial in the transformation of art clusters, as it is both a tool for a semiotic redefinition of space and a marker of its changing identity. Graffiti and street art serve as “threshold practices” that illustrate the dynamics of the transition from countercultural to commercialised space. The philosophical concepts

of Foucault's "heterotopia", Lefebvre's "production of space" and Baudrillard's "simulacrum" were used to critically reflect on the mechanisms of cultural appropriation and symbolic redefinition of the post-industrial environment. Thus, art clusters can be interpreted as heterotopias of a new type, fluctuating spaces that constantly balance between the opposite poles of marginality and institutionalisation, spontaneity and control, authenticity and simulation.

Promising areas for further research include analysing the impact of art clusters on local communities in the context of gentrification, studying inclusion/exclusion policies in the context of cultural planning,

comparative study of the fluctuating nature of such spaces in different socio-cultural contexts, and delving into the essence of art clusters of the 2nd type of "managed creative zones" in the urban and artistic dimensions.

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Постіндустріальні гетеротопії: арт-кластери як флуктуаційні простори між маргінальністю та естетизацією

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Анотація. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена необхідністю осмислення просторових трансформацій постіндустріальних територій у контексті культурної динаміки та естетизації маргінальних мистецьких практик. Метою статті був аналіз арт-кластерів як флуктуаційних постіндустріальних просторів, що існують між маргінальністю та естетизацією, розкриття механізмів та стадій їх трансформації від контркультурних ініціатив до культурно-комерційних об'єктів. Методологічною основою статті був міждисциплінарний підхід, який поєднав філософські, культурологічні та урбаністичні методи аналізу, а також метод кейс-стаді та візуально-семіотичний аналіз. У роботі запропоновано поєднання концепцій Фуко, Лефевра та Бодрійяра для аналізу культурної трансформації арт-кластерів як постіндустріальних просторів, що дозволило не лише описати зміни в урбаністичному середовищі, а й критично осмислити процеси легітимації маргінального культурного контенту. Подано авторську типологію арт-кластерів відповідно до особливостей формування. У результаті аналізу виявлено, що арт-кластери 1-го типу – «андеграундні трансформації» (відповідно до авторської типології арт-кластерів) функціонують як динамічні просторові конструкти, у яких відбувається трансформація маргінальних ініціатив у легітимні культурні практики. Просторові інтервенції, зокрема вуличне мистецтво, виконують роль семіотичних маркерів, що формують нову ідентичність місця та сприяють його естетичному переозначенню. Водночас встановлено, що процеси комодифікації та символічної апропріації ведуть до втрати автентичності протестних практик, трансформуючи їх у симулякри. Практична цінність дослідження полягає в можливості використання результатів для критичного аналізу політик міського розвитку, культурного планування та реконцептуалізації публічного простору в умовах постіндустріальної трансформації

Ключові слова: мистецьке середовище; джентрифікація; вуличне мистецтво; семіотика простору; комодифікація культури; симулякр