Unveiling the Nature of Graffiti Disapproval in NYC: A Novel Mapping Method for Defining the Trends of Graffiti Complaints

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There has been a great divide in perception of graffiti, from an artform to vandalism. However, as this binary begins to blur in present day, there is currently minimal analytical research for people, business-owners, and governments to use in understanding graffiti psychology amongst urban populations. To bridge this gap, graffiti-related complaints to New York City's 3-1-1 non-emergency hotline were compiled from the Department of City Planning, and visually portrayed using a novel mapping method within ArcGIS Pro. Data was statistically analyzed with American Community Survey (ACS) factors, in order to discover potential relationships between demographics and geographical factors, and graffiti complaint trends. Furthermore, Google Street View was utilized as an innovative method to estimate graffiti prevalence throughout NYC, and compare graffiti prevalence with graffiti complaints to obtain a strong grasp on urban graffiti psychology. Graffiti complaints were found most frequently in areas with abundant industrial zoning (p<.001) and gentrifying neighborhoods, while scarcest in heavily residential areas with older architecture. A geographical pattern was observed, where graffiti complaints become less frequent the further from Manhattan they originate. Together, these findings unveil that physical and geographical factors have a greater impact on graffiti disapproval, compared to personal demographics, which didn't find any relationships within my analysis. This research allows graffiti taggers to know where their pieces are better received, and also provides urban governments with a novel and innovative database to decipher graffiti psychology, and thus utilize graffiti as an urban economic development tool.

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