



Drawing and user experience in public space design.

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Abstract

This article reflects the research on how drawing can be used to include urban space user experience on the drawing based, planning professions such as design or architecture. The participation of the users on the public space configuration, it's here interpreted as catalyst for social change. The emphasis of the research is made on "how drawing can be used to include user experience".

This research is made on the context of an empirical and speculative interpretation of a fact based reality: Imagine that the tax payers support the budget of the continuously city wide cleaning process aimed to erase signs of usage, graffiti or misplaced objects (considered as trash). Note to be made, that this operations are parallel, not nuclear, to the conventional sanitation collection services of waste and other disposals.

Imagine that part of this budget is used for "mediation processes", namely with some of the people that claim to intervene illegally in the city. Programs such as "trucks of art", "city canvas" or other "legalization" initiatives. Initiatives with good intention, apparently in the correct direction, but that at the same time induce in error, create the illusion (or reality in some cases) of an art market around signs of human need that have to be addressed elsewhere (better jobs, education, housing and healthcare).

Imagine that for this budget owners "art in the city" will only occur when it's sanctioned, unaware of the oxymoron: what's illegal cant be sanctioned, or if it's sanctioned it's not illegal.

Now imagine that ready made art is a reality, that art is everything, that life it's art, that the city can be a playground and that our architects and designers are up to the task of including everyone in the process of design and maintenance of our public spaces.

In this specific context, asking how drawing can be used to include user experience, we found a chronological and geographical kaleidoscopic journey trough tools for including users in the design and maintenance of public spaces. In particular the digital user experience maturity and broad usage, allied with systemic design approaches are creating conditions of better inclusion of user needs as best practise.

Hope that this article will help on the best "mediation processes" budget usages, and how to better involve users in the sustainable, conception and maintenance of public spaces.

Keywords: mediation; graffiti cleaning; drawing; participation; design; architecture.

1 – Introduction

This article reflects the research on how drawing can be used to include urban space user experience on the drawing based, planning professions such as design or architecture. The structure of this oscillates between drawing and user experience as knowledge fields. These are placed in contact with drawing based professions that are responsible for the built environment.

2 - What's (context, state of the art)

2.1 - Drawing;

Drawing theories got their first proponents in the Renaissance. Giorgio Vasari called drawing, or *disegno*, “the father of our three arts: architecture, sculpture, and painting”. Ingres (19th century) affirmed that “drawing is the probity of art,” giving space to its role in visual thinking.

In modernism, Paul Klee (1925) in *Pedagogical Sketchbook* and Wassily Kandinsky (1926) in *Point and Line to Plane* affirmed drawing as a language by its self right.

In the 20th century Semiotics with authors as Roland Barthes (1964) and Umberto Eco (1976) drawing emerges as a “visual sign system” codes with cultural interpretation.

Nelson Goodman (1968), in *Languages of Art*, identify notational and non-notational systems. Comparing with writing systems, drawing its dense syntactically and semantically, slight changes in a drawing alter meaning drastically.

Michael Baxandall (1985) in *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*, suggests that drawing is not only physical but mostly a cognitive and perceptual process of visual information organization. “Drawing is the structured inscription of optical information onto a surface, translating perceptual input into graphic marks that function both as representations and as instruments of visual cognition”.

E.H. Gombrich (1960) in *Art and Illusion* identified how drawing is conditioned by perception and John

Willats (1997) researched how drawing work as visual models creating the distinction between projection and expression.

Recent embodied cognition (Noë, 2004) concept, identifies drawing as an “enactive process”, placing material resistance and bodily interaction as responsible for shaping the cognitive engagement with form.

In contemporary neuroscientific studies (Zaidel, 2014), indicates that drawing activates brain areas related to motor function, memory, and spatial reasoning, this way, drawing is more than an image-making process it's more like a thinking tool.

With the digital realm, algorithmic and procedural dimensions, research (Paul Duncum, 2010) indicate that digital interfaces transform the haptic and material aspects of drawing, altering the “traditional” mediums, and AI-assisted drawing is redefining the role of the author (Hansen, 2015).

2.2 - User Experience

Workplace optimization and human factors engineering with scientific approaches from Frederick Winslow Taylor (*Scientific Management*, 1911) and Frank and Lillian Gilbreth (*Time and Motion Studies*) opened the pathway to early ergonomics. In World War II, aviation and military equipment design usability was critical, leading to the formal study of human-machine interaction (HMI). Cognitive psychology (Chomsky, Neisser) and cybernetics (Wiener, Ashby) in the mid-20th century gave us new perspectives over human perception, memory, and decision-making. Stuart Card, Thomas Moran, and Allen Newell (*The Psychology of Human-Computer Interaction*, 1983) and Donald Norman (author of *The Design of Everyday Things*, 1988) started using UX designation in HCI research, in reference to mental models, affordances, and usability heuristics in interface design. In the 1990s with World Wide Web and graphical user interfaces (GUIs) emerged methodologies for digital usability. Jakob Nielsen, a key figure in usability studies, emphasized heuristic evaluation and interaction design principles, shaping UX as a formal discipline within digital design.

As UX matured in the digital space, its methodologies began influencing non-digital experiences, particularly in service design, architecture, retail environments, and public spaces. The focus on multi-sensory experience, behavioral psychology, and participatory design has driven new applications beyond software and web interfaces.

UX lexicon, such as wayfinding, affordances, and spatial cognition, is also shared conceptually and applied in designing the built environment to optimize movement, interaction, and emotional engagement. Public space UX should be the one where designers study social ergonomics, cultural behavior, and user needs to create inclusive and participatory urban spaces.

But industries like retail and tourism are the ones that have adopted UX principles to enhance physical customer journeys. Concepts such as emotional design, cognitive load, and frictionless interaction are applied in: store layouts, customer flow optimization, and the integration of digital touchpoints; hotel and restaurant design focusing on intuitive service interactions and atmosphere optimization.

2.3 Professions Shaping the Built Environment and Public Space and their relationship with drawing

As described above, drawing work both a conceptual framework and a communicative medium. Drawing is central to the dialogue between imagination, technical precision, and human interaction with space. Architects, urban planners, landscape designers, and civil engineers rely on drawing to visualize, analyse, and construct spaces that define human experience.

In the context of the built environment design, and looking at drawing as a cognitive and communicative tool, one can identify in it a way to explore spatial relationships, movement patterns, and human-scale interactions. On other hand it also serves as a tool for collaboration and decision, transforming ideas into understandable visual language for stakeholders, or ensuing clarification of constructive detail.

Each profession, that use drawing in public space design, has a different approach to it. Some architects can use drawing to conceptualize buildings and their relationship to public spaces. Urban designers can draw for example to define spatial hierarchies or flows. Techniques such as site analysis drawings, master plans, and street sections help visualize scale, density, and accessibility within urban contexts.

For Landscape Architects drawing can be used for designing green spaces, plazas, and naturalistic environments within urban settings, hand sketches can help visualize the interplay between vegetation, user, architectural and urban design elements.

Civil Engineers and Infrastructure Planners use technical drawing (CAD, GIS mapping) for example to plan and implement transportation networks, drainage systems, and public utilities, diagrams and sectional studies ensure safety, efficiency, and structural integrity.

Beside all these, and sometimes in relationship with them, we can find professional artists or community mediation professionals also using drawing as expressive and communicative medium, for example as a participatory tool.

2.4 - Participatory practices

In pre-industrial societies most public squares, markets, and streets were designed through direct local engagement. The peoples need shaped the peculiar (today touristic attractions) narrow street intricate design of the European medieval cities, more or less distorting the regular roman foundation when existed.

With the rise of industrialization came the modern urban planning in the IXX and early XX centuries. Urban design became increasingly centralized, expert-driven, and detached from local voices. The need of the people became dissociated from the direct construction of physical public space. The peoples need became mediated by bureaucratic instruments such as zoning regulations.

Planning often ignore social and cultural dynamics, resulting in alienating public spaces and the

displacement of local communities. The demolition of vibrant neighborhoods in favor of highways and housing projects (e.g., New York's urban renewal projects in the 1950s-60s) led to significant backlash and the demand for more inclusive and participatory approaches.

Unfortunately, this "hard core" only for profit real state reasoning still thrives in XXI century, allowing it to be possible to use this kind of approach to war speculative global real state logic not only ignoring social and cultural dynamics but entirely neglecting ethnic groups, governments and nations.

2.4.1 The Rise of Participatory Design (1960s-1980s): Challenging Top-Down Planning

Increasing advocacy for bottom-up urbanism, during the 1960s and 1970s, marked a turning point in public space design. This period saw the rise of activist urbanism, community planning, and participatory methodologies in response to urban renewal projects that often displaced marginalized populations. Some groundbreaking works should be mentioned to this purpose.

Jane Jacobs (1961), in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, critiqued modernist planning for disregarding local knowledge and everyday urban experiences. She advocated for "eyes on the street", mixed-use development, and walkability—principles that remain central to participatory urbanism. Christopher Alexander (1977) introduced *A Pattern Language*, a toolkit for designing human-centered spaces with input from users. His work emphasized designing from the ground up, where people shape their environments based on lived experiences.

Sherry Arnstein (1969) developed the Ladder of Citizen Participation, a framework illustrating different levels of community involvement in decision-making, from token consultation to full empowerment.

Advocacy planning also emerged, with professionals working alongside communities to ensure their needs were represented in urban policies. In cities like Porto Alegre, Brazil, early experiments with participatory budgeting allowed citizens to influence how public funds were allocated for urban improvements.

In some places, during 1990s and 2000s, participatory practices had become more structured and institutionalized. Governments and urban planners increasingly recognized the value of community engagement in public space design. Key developments included two main trends.

Tactical urbanism (2000s): Short-term, community-led interventions—such as pop-up parks, street painting, and DIY placemaking—demonstrated how quick, low-cost changes could improve public spaces. This approach, popularized by groups like Better Block and Rebar (Park(ing) Day), emphasized hands-on participation rather than waiting for large-scale planning processes.

Technology-enhanced participation: The rise of GIS, digital surveys, and online engagement platforms made participation more accessible. Interactive mapping tools allowed citizens to propose public space improvements, influencing decision-making at the municipal level.

Cities worldwide now emphasize "right to the city" approaches, ensuring that public spaces serve diverse communities, rather than reinforcing exclusionary urbanism.

The evolution of participatory public space design reflects a broader shift from top-down urbanism to community-driven place-making. While early practices emerged as resistance to modernist urban renewal, contemporary methodologies leverage digital tools, tactical interventions, and social activism to create more responsive, inclusive, and sustainable urban environments.

3 - User experience, affordances and graffiti

3.1 - Affordances in UX and the Built Environment

The idea of "affordances" comes originally from James J. Gibson's work in ecological psychology (1977), where he used it to describe the potential actions that an environment or object makes possible. Later on, Donald Norman took the concept into the realm of design—particularly in *The Design of Everyday Things* (1988)—to explain how users intuitively understand what they can do with an interface or object.

When we apply this thinking to urban space, affordances shape how people move through and make use of the built environment. A bench invites sitting, stairs invite climbing, and a wall might signify a boundary. But these interpretations aren't static. People push against them. Graffiti and street art, for example, challenge these intended uses—transforming surfaces meant for separation or order into canvases for expression, dialogue, or protest.

3.2 Graffiti as an Act of Re-Affordance

Graffiti writers, taggers, and street artists often reclaim elements of the urban landscape, using them in ways that disrupt their intended purpose. This act can be seen as a kind of “re-affordance”—a reinterpretation of how an object or space can be used, often through creative or subversive intervention.

Take walls and facades, for example. These are typically associated with boundaries, privacy, or containment. But once marked with graffiti, they become platforms for visibility and expression. Billboards, designed to project commercial messages, are frequently hijacked—through tactics like subvertising or culture jamming—to provoke thought rather than sell products. Even public transport, like trains and subway cars, which are meant to move people from place to place, have been transformed into mobile galleries or statements of territorial presence.

In each case, the way we experience the city shifts. These interventions force commuters, pedestrians, and city officials alike to rethink what urban surfaces are for—and who gets to define their meaning.

Graffiti isn't simply about marking walls or breaking rules—it's a way of engaging with public space that challenges conventional ideas of how the support should function. Where, for example, urban design typically emphasizes order through signage, wayfinding systems, and visual consistency, graffiti introduces a grassroots form of interaction.

Graffiti writers become intimately familiar with the physicality of the city—understanding how different

surfaces absorb paint, how spray cans behave in various weather conditions, and how textures affect mark-making.

Artists are increasingly blending analog and digital methods to create layered urban experiences that go beyond the visible mark.

4 - The resources for processing the change

Many cities allocate significant financial resources to continuous urban cleaning programs, aimed at erasing graffiti, signs of wear, and misplaced objects in public space. While these efforts are framed as necessary for urban maintenance, tourism appeal, and public order, they often function as misallocated financial expenditures that could be redirected toward participatory and community-driven urban interventions.

For example, instead of treating traces of public interaction as nuisances to be erased, cities could repurpose these budgets toward mediation, dialogue, and participatory drawing practices that engage communities in the co-creation of public spaces.

Many cities spend millions annually on aggressive graffiti removal, pressure washing, and public space sterilization, often contracting private companies with short-term, repetitive solutions that fail to address the root causes of public space markings.

For example, Paris and London each spend more than €20 million annually on graffiti removal, yet new pieces reappear almost as quickly as they're scrubbed away. In São Paulo, the controversial “Cidade Linda” program focused heavily on visual tidiness, often at the expense of more inclusive urban policies—targeting street art and informal expressions in ways that disproportionately affected marginalized communities.

Instead of investing in local engagement or fostering dialogue around public space and expression, public funds are repeatedly funnelled into short-term fixes that ultimately change little.

4.1 An Alternative Vision: From Erasure to Engagement, an Illusion of Inclusion

For example, cities like Melbourne and Montreal have legalized street art in designated zones, using former graffiti removal budgets to fund public art initiatives or Berlin's Urban Art Funding supports community-led murals that incorporate local histories and narratives. Other examples one can find on Amsterdam's Graffiti Dialogue Project offers training to young artists, integrating their work into official city commissions or in Bogotá's "Graffiti Tours" program transformed previously criminalized street art into a recognized cultural asset. The examples are everywhere.

As urban cleaning expenditures often reinforce top-down control rather than fostering co-creation. Rather than viewing public markings as problems to be erased, in some cases cities recognize them as expressions of urban life that can be managed through participation rather than repression. Redirecting cleaning budgets toward mediation, participatory drawing, and community engagement ensures that public space remains dynamic, inclusive, and reflective of the people who inhabit it.

As cities worldwide implements mediation programs designed to bridge the gap between unauthorized urban interventions — such as graffiti, street art, and informal public space occupations — and institutionalized urban aesthetics. At first glance, these programs appear to move in the right direction, acknowledging the creative potential of street-level urban interventions and integrating them into municipal planning.

However, a critical analysis reveals fundamental contradictions: rather than addressing the root causes of why people intervene illegally in the city, these programs often create an art market illusion around signs of deeper social and economic inequalities — such as lack of access to housing, education, employment, and healthcare. In doing so, they divert attention from structural issues while simultaneously commodifying acts of dissent.

Mediation programs often take the form of "legalization" initiatives, where city governments, corporate sponsors,

or cultural institutions invite those who were previously considered illegal actors to participate in controlled projects.

While these mediation efforts may seem progressive, they ultimately misdiagnose the core issues that lead to unauthorized interventions in the city. They offer temporary recognition, but not structural change.

Many mediation programs provide artists with visibility, commissions, or grants, but do not address the precarious conditions that led them to intervene in public space in the first place. Artists remain vulnerable, dependent on periodic projects rather than stable economic conditions.

Unauthorized markings, graffiti, and occupations often emerge as manifestations of social and economic distress. Programs that frame them as artistic assets transform signs of protest, necessity, and survival into decor, making them profitable for the very system they criticize.

The presence of distressed urban spaces, abandoned buildings, and economically marginalized communities creates a spectacle that cultural markets can extract value from. In many cities, street art has been fully absorbed into the art and tourism economy, while the people who originally shaped those spaces are displaced by rising rents.

The real challenges affecting those who intervene illegally in the city—lack of jobs, access to education, housing instability, and police repression—are rarely addressed by these programs. Instead, they function as "social pacification tools," offering limited inclusion in cultural programs while avoiding more difficult economic and political reforms.

4.2 Alternative Approaches: Beyond Mediation, Towards Structural Change

If mediation programs are to have a meaningful impact, they need to move beyond aesthetic legitimization and contribute to systemic urban improvements. Instead of spending millions on graffiti removal, beautification, and "art-washing" programs, cities should redirect funds

to accessible housing, education grants, and micro-enterprise support for cultural workers.

Instead of selecting which urban expressions are acceptable, cities should implement policies that decriminalize public markings while addressing the social conditions behind them. Rather than framing graffiti and informal urban practices as problems to be solved, cities should view them as indicators of spatial needs—where are people marking, gathering, and repurposing spaces, and why? Design policies should emerge from participatory processes, not top-down cultural initiatives.

It's not easy to clarify the relation. What do the decision makers really think? The question itself assumes that decision-makers possess a unified or clear stance on a given issue. However, it could be questioned whether decision-makers are as informed, coherent, or consistent as the question implies. Decision-makers are often influenced by a mix of political, economic, and social pressures, which may lead them to mask their true opinions or even be unaware of the contradictions in their own positions. Moreover, what they say in public (e.g., advocating for certain policies) may differ significantly from their private views or their actual decision-making motivations. Are they genuinely concerned about the community, or are they simply navigating power dynamics, public opinion, or economic interests? What if their views are based on stereotypes, biases, or incomplete understandings of art, culture, or urban dynamics?

By framing art as something that can only “exist” or “matter” when authorized by the state, the statement ignores the history and contemporary reality of public, often unsanctioned art—such as street art, graffiti, or guerrilla installations.

The assumption that art in the city should be sanctioned overlooks art's potential to challenge the status quo, question authority, and provoke thought. Public art doesn't have to be state-approved to be meaningful; often, the power of art lies precisely in its ability to exist outside or in opposition to official boundaries.

What's illegal can't be sanctioned, or if it's sanctioned it's not illegal. This oxymoron points to the inherent contradiction in the idea of “illegal” art being “sanctioned” by authorities. If art is illegal, it cannot simultaneously receive official approval, as the act of sanctioning would negate its illegal status. But what happens when art is initially illegal, but later the law or policy shifts to accommodate it? This raises deeper questions about the fluidity of legal and cultural norms—what constitutes “illegality” in art, and can such boundaries change? How do we measure the value of art, and does its “legality” or “illegality” affect that value?

4.3 Final framing

Imagine a world where the notion of “ready-made” art is not merely a provocation from the early 20th century, but a lens through which we understand the entire urban landscape. A reality in which everything has the potential to be art; where everyday life is not only lived but composed; where the city becomes a platform for experimentation, play, and co-creation. In this world, the built environment is not merely designed for the people—it is created with them. Architecture and urban design are reimagined as collective, inclusive practices, with citizens acting not only as users but as authors of space.

This conceptual reframing finds its roots in the radical impulses of the early 20th century avant-garde. Marcel Duchamp's subversive gesture of placing a urinal in an art exhibition (Fountain, 1917) remains one of the most influential acts in the redefinition of art. By asserting that context and intention could confer artistic status on ordinary objects, Duchamp and the Dadaists disrupted the art world's gatekeeping mechanisms and challenged the separation between artistic production and daily life (Camfield, 1989; Kuenzli, 1989).

The Dada movement, born out of the disillusionment of World War I, was as much a social critique as an aesthetic one. It mocked the rationalism and order that had led to mass destruction, instead promoting spontaneity, absurdity, and anti-art. The movement's rejection of traditional form parallels our current need to re-evaluate urban design practices that prioritize order, control, and profit over community and creativity (Richter, 1965).

Later in the 20th century, Jean Dubuffet's conception of Art Brut—art made by outsiders to the cultural establishment, including psychiatric patients, prisoners, and self-taught individuals—expanded this critique further. For Dubuffet, authentic creativity was not bound by convention, and often emerged from those excluded from dominant cultural narratives (Peiry, 2001). Translated to urbanism, this insight suggests that informal, unsanctioned, or marginal forms of expression—such as graffiti, spontaneous memorials, or improvised shelters—should be seen not as signs of disorder, but as vernacular forms of art and citizenship. Meanwhile, the rise of performance art and happenings in the 1950s and 60s offered a framework for understanding public space not as a backdrop, but as an active site of encounter. Allan Kaprow's happenings, often staged in streets, shops, or other non-art spaces, blurred the boundaries between performers and audience, artists and participants (Kaprow, 1993). They echoed Situationist concepts like the *dérive*—a drifting walk through the city guided by affect rather than function (Debord, 1958). Together, these practices called for an art that was ephemeral, participatory, and deeply embedded in the rhythms of everyday life.

Such ideas resonate powerfully with the more recent field of socially engaged and participatory art, in which the line between artist and community member is intentionally blurred. Claire Bishop (2012) argues that these practices emphasize process over product and social interaction over aesthetic autonomy, a dynamic well-suited to rethinking public space. Rather than treating the city as a neutral container or functional grid, participatory art treats it as a medium in its own right—a canvas of collective meaning-making.

This vision is also aligned with a shift in urban theory toward co-creation and the democratization of design. Henri Lefebvre's seminal notion of the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996) argued that urban space is not just something to be consumed, but something to be produced collectively. It is a social product that belongs to all, not just the powerful. More recently, theorists like Jane Rendell (2006) have explored the intersections between critical spatial practice and feminist thinking,

proposing that architecture and public art must become responsive, dialogic, and situated—always aware of whose voices are included and whose are silenced.

Inclusive urbanism also draws on community-based practices, where the process of design becomes a means of empowerment. Initiatives that include residents in shaping parks, plazas, and playgrounds challenge the top-down logic of urban planning. They echo the participatory ethos of artists like Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, whose interactive works in 1960s Brazil invited audiences to become co-creators, embodying an ethics of shared authorship and embodied engagement (Basualdo, 2004).

Play, too, emerges as a vital component in this reimagined city. The Situationists famously viewed the city as a site for *dérive* and psychogeography, exploring how urban environments affect our emotions and behaviors. More recently, artists and architects have developed playgrounds, installations, and interactive interventions that invite exploration and joy. Projects like Theaster Gates' Dorchester Projects in Chicago or Raúl Cárdenas Osuna's Torolab in Tijuana turn neighborhoods into laboratories of social creativity—where design, art, and community action are inseparable.

In such a context, the role of the architect or designer becomes not that of a sole author but of a facilitator, mediator, or even host. This redefinition aligns with the principles of co-design and design justice, which advocate for participatory processes that foreground marginalized voices and redistribute power in the design process (Costanza-Chock, 2020). It asks professionals to be humble, to listen, and to build capacity rather than impose solutions.

5 – Final Considerations

This article has explored how drawing can be mobilized not only as a representational and communicative tool within design and architecture, but also as a participatory practice capable of integrating user experience into the configuration and maintenance of public space. At the intersection of cognitive engagement, embodied practice, and visual communication, drawing offers a

dynamic medium through which spatial knowledge is produced, shared, and contested (Baxandall, 1985; Noë, 2004).

When situated within broader frameworks of user experience (UX), drawing acquires renewed relevance. UX theory, historically rooted in ergonomics, human-computer interaction, and cognitive psychology (Norman, 1988; Card, Moran & Newell, 1983), has evolved into a robust methodological field concerned with empathy, affordances, and systemic inclusivity. These principles are increasingly being translated from digital domains into the physical design of urban spaces—guiding principles for inclusive environments that reflect user needs, behaviours, and affective responses (Duncum, 2010; Zaidel, 2014).

In this light, drawing offers more than a visualisation tool for designers: it becomes an interface for co-creation. Participatory drawing practices—whether in the form of collaborative sketching, community mapping, or informal markings like graffiti—highlight the city as a shared surface where different forms of knowledge and ownership intersect. These practices challenge the top-down, expert-driven logic that has historically dominated urban planning (Jacobs, 1961; Arnstein, 1969), and instead invite modes of engagement that recognize the right of all urban inhabitants to shape their environments (Lefebvre, 1996).

However, this inclusive potential is often undermined by paradoxical public policies. As discussed, municipalities frequently allocate substantial budgets to erase the very signs of public interaction—graffiti, wear, improvised structures—that reveal how people actively engage with urban space. These “cleaning” operations, though positioned as urban maintenance, are often more about aesthetic control and exclusion than sustainability or civic care (Hansen, 2015). Even when such funds are reallocated toward mediation programs or “legal” art zones, the initiatives often remain superficial—repackaging expressions of social need or dissent into commodified forms that benefit cultural markets without addressing the structural conditions that generated them (Bishop, 2012; Costanza-Chock, 2020).

The speculative question posed in this article—what if drawing were used to include user experience rather than erase its traces—opens a path toward reframing urban design as a site of negotiation, not imposition. This shift would mean recognizing the city not as a finished product, but as a continuous process shaped by collective life. It would mean engaging drawing not only as a technical skill or artistic form, but as a language of participation, protest, imagination, and care.

Historically, movements such as Dada (Richter, 1965), Art Brut (Peiry, 2001), and performance-based public interventions (Kaprow, 1993) have expanded the boundaries of what counts as art—and who gets to make it. In urban space, these legacies resonate with informal practices that blur distinctions between art, activism, and everyday life. The rise of participatory design, tactical urbanism, and co-creative planning strategies reflects a growing awareness that public space must be made with people, not just for them (Alexander, 1977; Rendell, 2006).

Drawing, in this expanded frame, is not only a way to represent space—it is a way to understand and transform it. It allows professionals and non-professionals alike to think through space, to communicate across expertise, and to imagine alternative futures. As systemic design and UX principles become more embedded in physical urban contexts, drawing can serve as a bridging tool: one that translates between individual perception and collective spatial agency.

In closing, this article advocates for a broader and more intentional use of drawing as a tool for inclusive urban engagement. If adopted as part of mediation processes, participatory planning, or even urban maintenance strategies, drawing has the potential to democratize decision-making and give visibility to those often excluded from shaping the built environment. Rather than policing or aestheticizing urban traces, cities should learn from them—treating informal inscriptions as data, protest as insight, and participation as design.

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