Frequency and distribution of protest stickers: An ethnographic study at a university city in the south-west of England

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Abstract
Protest stickers, as a form of street art, can be located in city areas of high footfall. Individualised interpretation of protest stickers relies on the conflation of semiotics and active subjectivity. This paper outlines the results of an ethnographic study detailing the frequency and distribution of stickers around a university campus. The paper draws on cultural criminology's verstehen to subjectively explore four stickers from differing political domains describing how their presence is interwoven with the societal and geographical landscape of the site of study. The limitations of the work are discussed and possibilities for future studies to address these are provided.

Keywords
Protest stickers, street art, semiotics, active subjectivity, cultural criminology, verstehen.

1. Introduction

Protest stickers, as a form of communicative street art (Chaffe, 1993; Clough, 2011; Hundertmark, 2003; Lewisohn, 2008; Riggle, 2010) are ubiquitous ephemeral objects that can be viewed, if we choose to 'see' them, mainly in urban areas, especially cities where pedestrianisation is high. Locations such as streetscapes around retail space, the periphery of train and bus stations, and university campuses are all fertile hunting grounds. (Gerbaudo, 2014; Velikonja, 2021). The messages that the stickers convey are decoded or interpreted by the viewer (Hansen and Flynn, 2015; Tedford, 2021; Collins, 2022; Bodden and Awcock, 2024).This individualised interaction with and reading of the message is reliant on the text, images, culture and symbols being popular in mainstream discourse, for understanding to be internalised and will already be part of the everyday lexicon of ordinary language of the viewer. Of course, we all possess differing linguistic and cultural vocabularies, so the more subtle the message, the greater the possibility for alienation or reinforcement of ingroup and outgroup bias (Nouri et al, 2017).

This pervasiveness of protest stickering draws on both a cultural and historical dimension of communication. Cave drawings, artefact symbology, paintings recording people, places and events could all be classed as the precursors to the protest sticker (Chaffe, 1993). Somewhat later in the advent of image making, decalcomania (the etymology of the modern 'decal') was invented in the 1800's (McCormick, 2010). More contemporary iterations of this material media can still trace their lineage to over one hundred years ago with the advent of the silent agitators produced by the Industrial Workers of the World which were used to mobilise awareness against poor employment practices and encourage unionisation (Tedford, 2019). Today, protest stickers that seek to advance non mainstream political agenda span the political spectrum espousing their support for multiple political domains including left wing, anarchist and single issue causes (LASIC); extreme right wing ideology (XRW); environmental activism (EA) and international conflicts (INTER).

My introduction to protest stickering was spawned in May 2008 following a presentation I received regarding the rich sociopolitical picture that could be gained from such stickers. Following this input I became a casual observer with a passing interest in any that caught my eye, although I did not go looking for them. Fast forward to January 2022 and I had my first encounter with three far right stickers. The appearance of these in the left leaning cosmopolitan metropolis that I frequent was in stark contrast to all other ephemeral offerings. It was at this point that I moved from casual observer to primary data collector resulting in a database of 235 protest stickers (and still growing) collected within a quarter mile radius.

In this paper I attempt to answer calls, both direct and indirect, from academics such as Awcock (2021), Bodden and Awcock (2024), Cole (2021), Feigenbaum (2014) and Nouri and Morgan (2023), to expand academic enquiry through scholarly research centred around street art: in this case the sub genre of protest stickering. Specifically, it is Awcock's (2021, p.528) suggestion of four areas of future research that I respond to, with her third suggestion of "frequency and distribution of protest stickers across different towns and cities" capturing my interest. I am further guided in my approach by emulating Bodden and Awcock's (2024, p.2) "studying political stickers *in action*, as lively landscapes of everyday political expression". This is not to omit the importance of semiotics as a way of understanding sticker attributes, and I expand on this in the subsequent discussion on the theoretical framework I propose. Consequently, I seek to demonstrate in this paper that protest stickering as significant indicators of political activism across multiple domains is flourishing.

I will first provide a theoretical framework. I will then detail the methodology of my research design, data collection and analysis, followed by my ethical considerations. I will then introduce the ethnographic study concentrating on one sticker from each of the four political domains outlined above. A conclusion section will then ensue with implications from the study and also outlining future research possibilities.

2. Theoretical framework

I situate my work on protest stickers within cultural criminology and edgework, albeit from a disembodied stance. Lyng's (1990) seminal writings about edgework recognised some individuals freely commit illegal acts in pursuit of their interests. This concept was developed by Ferrell (1998) investigating illegal street art practices, specifically graffiti. In the UK, fly posting, which includes stickering, on any available surface without the permission of the owner, is a criminal offence. Specific laws, namely, the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, The Highways Act 1980 and the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 are all relevant in this regard. My disembodied perspective aligns with my fieldwork being undertaken after the stickers had been displayed, without the stickerist being present. Whilst gendered criticisms of edgework being male dominated, such as that posited by Newmahr (2011) are relevant, applying such criticisms to this work without being able to know the gender of the stickerist, would be problematic. I further expand on my cultural criminological situatedness in my methodological section below.

Evaluation and meaning making of protest stickers is an individual construct. When faced with the sticker material, any text included, symbols, pictures and images displayed and even online references for further exploration (the signifiers) of the message conveyed (the signified), a plethora of information is visible (Sebeok, 2001). Let us explore just one element: a raised fist for instance, which could signify solidarity. To others the fist may represent defiance or even disobedience. How such elements are interpreted has often relied on semiotics to provide an explanation. Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce are, amongst others, credited with significantly contributing to the study of modern semiotics (Yakin and Totu, 2014). Contemporary works by academics such as Jaworski and Thurlow (2010), Visgo (2010), Reershemius (2019) and Cosmeleata (2022), to cite just a few, have all used the semiotic framework to offer explanations on protest stickers. In contrast to this approach, Umberto (1978) questions the sole use of semiotics to interpret stickers. For instance, issues relating to interpretative

variability, cultural and contextual dependency as well as ideological bias from the interpreter have all been raised as limitations of semiotics.

What additional approaches allow for protest sticker evaluation? Rather than viewing stickers as acquiescent, the interaction with stickers by the viewer, to construe meaning can be multifaceted in response with no set method of meaning-making. Geographies of protest stickers (Awcock, 2021); political stickers as a form of protest (Awcock and Rosenberg 2023); and active subjectivity of sticker meaning-making (Bodden and Awcock, 2024) are such alternative approaches. The celebrated sticker artist Shepard Fairey (2010, p.9) states "the more I put up stickers, the more I thought about how they created interactions and how these differed from the interactions people typically have with urban environments". In addition, Betancourt (2010, p.283) states stickers "introduce elements that promote reflection, reaction, or offer passers-by a space in which to engage with ubiquitous urban advertisements". This is not to suggest that every sticker has such active processes of engagement. Clough (2011, p.9) identifies that "people coexist with stickers every day, but most were totally unaware of their existence". In support of this, Invader (2019, p.9) discusses sticker awareness and recognises that "only about one in a thousand might notice them".

For those that are aware of protest stickers, what theoretical framework would lend the most value for analysis? I believe that a conflation of semiotics and the active subjectivity of viewing stickers in action, would offer a rounded approach. Semiotic analysis can be undertaken in isolation and without active subjectivity however active subjectivity needs to coexist with semiotics. Therefore, I posit that the conflated lens of semiotics and active subjectivity is my theoretical framework of choice for protest sticker analysis.

3. Methodology

In this section I try to provide a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of my endeavours or, as I have since come to, quite literally and figuratively term it, a rich picture of my work. The ethnographic fieldwork I undertook to gather my primary data occurred between January 2022 and June 2024 around the publicly accessible areas of the Clifton campus of the University of Bristol which is located in the southwest of England. I undertook once fortnightly tours of a quarter mile radius spanning outwards from a central building known as Senate House, visually documenting, by photographing using my mobile phone camera, new findings of protest stickers with date and location. Once saved I would add a quick footnote to each picture offering my initial interpretation of political doctrine that I believed the sticker promoted, along with any other pertinent information. I undertook this process usually commencing at 0800 hours so consistency of both my geographical movements and daylight during the darker winter months was achieved. Each tour lasted one hour. During the thirty months undertaking the fieldwork I committed sixty five hours to the research. I began to notice which stickers were no longer present and which had started to weather. I also became aware of those stickers that had been partially removed or defaced. What I was not aware of were any stickers that were placed and removed in between my fortnightly tours. I will return to this later.

I utilised the consistent morning approach to try and remain as unobtrusive as possible (Webb et al, 1966; Kellehear, 1993). However, data gatherings were not always achieved on the first sighting of a new sticker. Occasionally I had to loiter close to the new find, pretending to be interacting with my phone or simply sitting on a nearby bench or wall drinking my coffee to try not to arouse curiosity of others who were transiting through the locality. Most of the time this patient approach paid off although there were a few occasions when my days' commitments were fast approaching and I undertook the best discreet shot I could obtain whilst walking slowly past the new offering. Where this occurred and the text was not entirely in focus, I added an additional footnote to the saved picture replicating the text in case of any future ambiguity during subsequent analysis.

The sites of data were attached to the exterior of buildings, street furniture and areas of buildings that allowed public access at the university campus, which is integrated into

the local community. The street furniture consisted of litter bins, lampposts, street signs, postboxes and utility structures. The external areas of buildings examined were those accessible to the public and were either building or periphery walls. The areas of buildings that allowed public access were cafes and entrance spaces. I recorded 235 protest stickers and these were categorised into one of the four political domains of LASIC, XRW, EA and INTER. In terms of data, I have categorised 143 as LASIC; 7 as XRW; 54 as EA, and 31 as INTER. By photographically recording each fluid moment in time, the context of each protest sticker is archived for future semiotic and active subjectivity analysis. This approach captures the essence of the moment to enable the process of analysis to be undertaken (Reershemius, 2019).

I am conscious that my field research of protest stickers, and my role documenting such, will be subjective and formed from my own perspective. Within the established methodologies of cultural criminological and edgework fieldwork, such subjective accounts can be both critical and reflexive whilst still providing a fervent narrative. This has been encapsulated by Weber (1978, p.4) and his concept of criminological verstehen detailing "interpretative understanding and sympathetic participation". My establishing of a rapport with each of the protest stickers will assist with my understanding and analysis of the criminal act of displaying each sticker. Or, put another way and to quote Geertz (1973, p.5) "my analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning". My objectivity is achieved by my careful and consistent data gathering whilst my emotional attachment, semiotic interpretation and analysis is, as per my research design, purely subjective.

My shift in status from a casual observer of protest stickers to a primary data collector in January 2022 was centred around one incident. On spotting three far right stickers, two on a lamppost and one on a litter bin, without applying a critical lens, I set about removing them as quickly as I could and depositing them in the same litter bin that was displaying. This was the first time I had removed any sticker. The stickers were #IOTBW, 88 and Hundred Handers. It was only later when reflecting on the finds that I began to think deeply on my actions. I did not photograph them in situ before removal. I felt annoyed that such stickers, and by extension, stickerists were in my locale. It was then that I began to understand that my own bias to these political stickers had served to be rash in my actions and by doing so I had lost an important moment of visual ethnographic data collection. As Becker (1967, p.239) states "the question is not whether we should take sides, since we inevitably will, but rather whose side are we on." I had displayed my ideological bias, a fact recognised in my theoretical framework and cautioned against by Umberto (1978). Side stepping any ethical arguments, I had taken the position of not giving the XRW a voice and as a researcher, to deny the empirical evidence invalidates the very ethos of my undertakings.

From this point on I decided to be non judgemental in my recording actions of political stickers and resolved to transfer this non judgementality from recording to subsequent analysis, albeit tempered with my interpretation of each sticker, in keeping with my methodological approach of cultural criminological verstehen. In the following section I document one protest sticker from each of the four political domains already outlined above.

However, before I get to this stage, I also acknowledge that my choosing of which sticker to present in this work would also be inherently subjective. So, to overcome this bias and introduce an element of objectivity, I assigned each of the stickers in the LASIC, XRE, EA and INTER political domains a number, corresponding to the amount of data in each category. I then used an online random number generator to select one number from each of the recorded domains to choose which sticker to present. The numbers generated were LASIC 107, XRE 6, EA 19 and INTER 21. This random sampling approach of the complete population of protest stickers I had collected is a recognised rigorous method of enquiry (Brown, 2023). As my collected data is comparatively small, this process was manageable, cost effective and not too time consuming. I do recognise that my complete population of protest stickers may not fully represent what was actually present

during the period of data collection. As already alluded to, there may have been stickers that were both put up and removed in between my fortnightly tours. However, I will never know if this did or didn't occur.

4. Ethical considerations

As an independent researcher, I am not currently attached academically to any university. I undertake this work from a cultural criminological practitioner perspective to inform the academic study of cultural criminology. Whilst I am bound by my professional association's ethical code of conduct, I have no corresponding formal academic obligations. Although that may seem to hark back to the founding days of the Chicago School of Criminology, the reality is, recalling such necessities of ethical conformity from both my under and postgraduate studies, it is crucial, maybe even more so without recourse to formal structures of academia, that I include my ethical position in this work.

Undertaking this fieldwork necessitated that I was involved with criminality. This criminality though had already been undertaken and I was neither present nor partook in the law breaking. I undertook the fieldwork in a post criminal ethnographic capacity.

Therefore, to guide all elements of my research from inception to completion, I was both cognisant of and compliant with the British Society of Criminology's statement of Ethics and used it as a frame of reference to guide my complete approach. This dovetailed into my professional association's ethical code of conduct. I abided by both.

Additionally, when I consider academics that have already published in this area (for example see Awcock, 2021; Awcock and Rosenberg, 2023; and Bodden and Awcock, 2024), they were all attached to academic settings so would all have needed ethical clearance for their work. As my work is of a similar nature to theirs, I believe that my ethical stance is within acceptable parameters.

5. Protest stickers

5.1 Left wing, Anarchist and Single Issue Causes – LASIC

This political domain is home to a number of causes. It includes those who have left wing views as well as anarchists who oppose capitalist society. In addition, single issue causes such as animal rights, veganism, and stances against transport infrastructure projects and mass vaccinations fall within this category.

Figure 1. LASIC protest sticker. Source: Steve Hill

The text on this sticker at Figure 1 states 'Patriotic Alternative?' at the top of the picture and 'Eat Shit Nazi Scum!!' at the bottom. The top right of the picture shows the Anti-fascist Action double flag. The central image shows a white skinned individual wearing a mask, with blond hair and long earrings and holding a handgun in their right hand. The image is in black and white and the text type, font and size is the same throughout.

The combination of Patriotic Alternative (PA) with the Anti-fascist Action (AFA) double flag juxtaposes the two differing ideologies. PA are a prominent white nationalist fascist group who focus around anti-multiculturalism and immigration issues. AFA actively opposes far right ideology

and groups. The use of a question mark after PA suggests that this sticker is asking viewers if they are members of or support this organisation. As the viewer takes in the image, their gaze moves to the bottom statement of 'Eat Shit Nazi Scum'. Along with the AFA double flag, the whole context of the sticker changes. The viewer probably now realises that this sticker is supporting the opposition of fascist ideology and membership.

The use of just black and white in this image is interesting. The AFA double flag usually has one of the flags coloured red with the words Antifascist Action placed around the circle containing the flags, top and bottom respectively. The non-inclusion of these words seems to be a deliberate ploy to not alienate the viewer until the full message is received. Also, as I expand on below, the use of only black and white is often associated with XRW material.

This is one of the images where I included a footnote to capture all the text due to the size of the sticker and the small post it was displayed on. Although the question and exclamation marks can be identified when the image is examined closely, they would just the same have been easy to miss during analysis. The other note I made on this image, taken outside an iconic University of Bristol academic building on July 14th 2023, is that whilst I considered taking a panoramic shot from two angles to capture all the text, due to the footfall passing and having already waited sometime for cessation, I eventually captured the image as displayed in accordance with my unobtrusive fieldwork approach.

5.2 Extreme Right Wing – XRW

This category covers a loose grouping of those that do not represent a single body who are often fragmented although espouse a similar ideology to further their cause.

Figure 2. XRW protest sticker. Source: Steve Hill

The main text on this sticker in figure 2 is in Italian, 'Me Ne Frego', which translates as 'I don't give a damn' although this translation has been disputed and there are multiple other, even vulgar, possibilities (Salemi, 2005). There is other text on the helmet, just below the symbol. Both of these texts are in different types, fonts and sizes. This text on the helmet states 'ATP' and is an English acronym for Albanian Third Position. The symbol on the helmet is of three vertical lines which represent multiple interpretations of politics and identity with the oblique line providing unity of associated meaning (ATP, 2023). The third position came to signify neo-fascist political movements in many European countries during the twentieth century. The image is of a skull wearing a helmet with a knife clenched between the teeth. Intriguingly, the swastika on the knife's handle is in the original Hindu or Buddhist left facing design as opposed to the right facing design which has been appropriated by far right ideology. The image is solely in black and white and these colours are used mainly by far right groups, although not always (for instance Atomwaffen Division and Pepe the Frog are two examples of right wing groups who use additional colours). Additionally some Islamist Extremist Terrorist Groups also use just black and white in their propaganda, for instance Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Ansar Al-Islam.

The use of a skull mirrors other far right group symbology such as Feuerkrieg Division (FKD), Combat 18 and Totenkopf - all proscribed organisations under the UK's Terrorism Act 2000. The phraseology of Me Ne Frego references Italian Fascism (Yabla, no date).

At first glance this sticker caught my attention due to the skull and knife and I presumed it was XRW related although the inclusion of non English words needed interpretation. As I analysed more of the sticker it became apparent that the numerous information presented, complemented its overall ethos and multilayered meaning.

I located this sticker by chance and recorded the method of finding it in the picture's footnotes. It was a cold and wet February morning (25th, 2024) and I was nearing the end of my fortnightly tour which until this point had been devoid of new protest stickers. Craving some warmth and a coffee, I went into one of the University's cafes that cater to members of the public in addition to their own community, in a building that is set amongst retail establishments. Whilst using the conveniences, I saw this sticker had been placed on an external cubicle partition within the male toilets. It was the only sticker present and it seemed an attempt had already been made to dislodge it. So, I recorded it, adding it to my database. However the nature of an Albania/Italian XRW sticker at this location was somewhat of a mystery as it didn't appear to fit. On exiting the cafe, there are quite a few street signs present and examining these for any last minute offerings, nothing political was present, just football related material. On closer examination, stickers of FK Partizani had been placed multiple times on the rear of multiple signs. FK Partizani is a football club based in Tirana, the capital of Albania. As Velikonja (2021) notes there is a symbiosis of football fan stickers relating to the cultural and political. Maybe I had found the link between the solitary political internal sticker and multiple football external stickers.

5.3 Environmental Activism – EA

There are a multitude of groups that fall under this political domain, all promoting their specific causes driven by their linked ideology. Groups such as Just Stop Oil, Extinction Rebellion, Climate Justice are amongst those that correlate to this category.

Initially, this sticker at figure 3, seemed out of place - why would anyone stick up aeroplane safety instructions not inside an aeroplane? On closer reading of the text it becomes apparent that the message is about environmental activism. Although this message could also be construed as falling within the LASIC political domain due to the single issue of preventing greater transport at Bristol airport, the overriding theme is that of EA.

This is a form of subvertising (Somerville, 2019) where the original corporate display is repurposed to deliver the activists message. The use of recognised airline imagery to communicate an anti flying message seeks to draw on the viewers familiarity with the supportive visual instructions contrasted with the subversive text, that of taking action to stop Bristol Airport's expansion plans.

In this colourful image, taken from a Finnair DC10 1990's safety card (CCPLUSMEDIA, 2016), the headline text is the same type, size and font throughout. The text accompanying each of the six pictures also has consistency. The imagery used is uniform throughout each of the pictures. What is interesting though is the choice of imagery from the 1990's where a lone female, joined in one picture by a child, is used to convey meaning of instructions in the pictures and possibly used by the subvertisers to elicit a differing emotional response (for an excellent perspective on advertising, gender and society see Zawisza-Riley, 2019).

I took this picture without any hindrance on 17th November 2022. It was displayed on a notice board outside an academic building at the University of Bristol and had been placed on top of other protest stickers. On the surrounding street furniture were more stickers promoting the same message about preventing Bristol

Figure 3. EA protest sticker. Source: Steve Hill

airport's expansion however they used completely different iconography, acronyms, text and sticker size. This was the only area within my search radius that displayed these stickers which in itself is telling as often, many identical stickers from all political domains appeared in multiple locations. Perhaps there is one individual that attends this building that has a particular interest in this cause.

5.4 International – INTER

This political domain covers international events. Stickers found in my search area relate to the Israel/Gaza conflict, the Syrian civil war and the Chinese diaspora in the UK challenging their grievance of state political interference.

At first glance this sticker at figure 4 looks homemade, as if coloured pencils were used to produce it. Whilst that may be the case, the sticker is one of five that are free to download from the Riseup4Rojava (no date) website. This is a sticker where interaction with the text leads the viewer to obtain more information on the conflict in Rojava: a case where the offline and online worlds are concomitant. The picturing of armed female soldiers in military fatigues is not a usual sight, as maleness is more often associated with constructs of violence. The picture is also reminiscent of the famous Marx Engels Lenin Stalin bust pose of staring into the distance. Whilst that image is usually found in black, white and red, the use of softer, pastel colours in this sticker may be reflective of the feminist stance sought. Further, I would suggest that this image replication was an active choice of the designer, as the Rojava autonomous region has been described as a socialist utopia (Sunca, 2022) so allegiance signals left wing political doctrine.

Figure 4. INTER protest sticker. Source: Steve Hill

The YPJ insignia on the female's shoulder flashes; the representation of this insignia with other seemingly unrelated street art, namely graffiti, in the wider Bristol area; and the positioning of this sticker in Bristol as a sign of defiance, need unpicking.

The Yekineyen Parastina Jin (YPJ), or Women's Protection Unit is the female-only brigade of the Yekineyen Parastina Gel (YPG), or People's Defense Units. Both these groups are made up of ethnic Kurds, Arabs and some foreign fighters. Their aim is to resist Turkish military intervention in the geographical area they consider their autonomous

homelands (The Kurdish Project, no date). One of these foreign fighters was a British female, Anna Campbell. Anna had a connection with Bristol being employed in the city and participating in the activist scene of anti fascism and animal rights. Anna joined the YPJ, and in 2018 was killed by a Turkish airstrike. Turkey considers the YPG/YPJ to be a terrorist organisation alongside the Partiya Karkeren Kurdistane (PKK) or Kurdistan Workers Party. Whilst the UK government has proscribed the PKK as a terrorist organisation under the Terrorism Act 2000, despite recognising ideological similarities between YPG/YPJ and PKK, the YPG/YPJ has not been proscribed (Parker, 2019).

Following Anna Campbell's death, multiple graffiti messages appeared across Bristol (Smith, 2018) commemorating and supporting Anna's activism. And, one of the companies that are allegedly supplying Turkey with arms to attack the Rojava area, MDBA, has a footprint in the Bristol area. This company has been the subject of protest (Bristol Kurdistan Solidarity Network, 2020).

So, what may appear to be a homemade poster has contextual, multiple layers of complexity especially when displayed in this location and viewed through the prism of active subjectivity.

This picture was taken outside another of the University of Bristol's iconic locations that has a strong connection with feminist protests lasting over a century (University of Bristol, 2018), so the siting of this protest sign is in keeping with the location. The picture was taken on 25th September 2023 and I was able to get an unobstructed shot as the morning scene was unusually quiet. The only footnote made was that of the political domain to which I categorised the sticker.

6. Conclusions

I have presented four protest stickers from the inventory of 235 that I have. If spatial limitations were not present, the remaining 231 could also be analysed in their individual contexts. Alas, being realistic, this is beyond the scope of a journal paper. I believe I have captured the frequency and distribution of protest stickers within the geographical boundaries outlined, thereby answering Awcock's (2021) call, and by doing so, I have demonstrated that protest stickering as significant indicators of political activism across multiple domains is flourishing.

To get to this point, my adoption of the criminological verstehen methodology via ethnography and subsequent interpretation using the theoretical framework of semiotics and active subjectivity, may be disputed. Indeed, I would encourage such criticism as although I have justified the choices I made, I am fully aware that there are other theoretical frameworks, methodologies and methods that could be used to interrogate the data I have gathered. What I have sought to undertake by contextualisation, was to give a voice to the protest stickers that are on display in this work. To do so my subjectivity has been crucial and this itself has been formed through working over thirty years in the wider criminology field.

Are there limitations with my work? Of course there are. I outline some of them above. In addition, my sole semiotic analysis and active subjectivity does not take account of the intentions of the stickerists displaying protest stickers. Nor does it explore viewers' understandings and interactions with these protest stickers. Finally, it has taken only one approach of documenting frequency and distribution without considering if such political stickers cross other thresholds of criminality. These three areas though can form future research possibilities to continue with the expansion of scholarly enquiry into protest stickers as a sub genre of street art.

Conflict of interest and ethics

The author declares no conflict of interests. The author also declares full adherence to all journal research ethics policies, namely involving the participation of human subjects anonymity and/or consent to publish.

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