The Banksy Way or Are AI-tools a threat for Political art?

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Abstract

An AI-generated photo on Instagram with some Banksy effect shows two children watering an olive tree. The boy is wearing a yarmulke, the girl a Palestinian shawl, a keffiyeh. The photo serves as a starting point for this presentation in a discussion about the possibilities and risks of K1 in terms of the relationship between knowledge/information and the transmission of values. In doing so, I want to contribute to a richer picture of how political opinion changes in times of crisis by asking how visual meaning-making takes shape in an intense news flow. Digital platforms offer new and valuable ways to share opinions and information, while also enabling the spread of false information (Schirrmacher & Mousavi 2024, 2). Here, the viewer believes that it is a photograph of a street art work by Banksy and attributes a certain authenticity and value to it. In the viewer's co-creative gaze, the photograph become a communicative act, a technical medium of display (Elleström 2021), and as such perhaps even an intervention in an ongoing conflict (cf. Källström 2023).

With AI-tools it is possibly to create a picture like the one of the two children watering an olive tree. Some may argue that this kind of art lacks originality, creativity, or soul. That it is just copying existing data without understanding or meaning. Taking off from Aristotle's *hylomorphic modell* (Manning 2013), we could stress that it lacks content (*hyle*), being just form (*morphe*). Other may claim that AI-art expands our horizons and challenges our perceptions. It is said that, although the internet has democratised access to information and publishing, it also brings about communication methods that threaten democratic processes (Schirrmacher & Mousavi 2024, 2). Harvard scholar Shoshana Zuboff argues that digital technologies threaten democratic societies in her book on "surveillance capitalism". Zuboff defines "surveillance capitalism" not only as a "new economic order" but also as "an expropriation of critical human rights". This warning points to the necessity of addressing the

role of communication in contemporary society and in particular, how networks serve as spatiotemporal performative space in which communicative events can take place. It also makes it necessary to re-emphasise the active role of the media user in an attempt to emphasise the ethical implications of aesthetics (see Källström 2023; cf. Bäckström, Führer & Schirrmacher 2021, 217).

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