

# Designated Graffiti Area

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A PHOTO ESSAY ON STREET ART, SCAFFOLDING AND SPACE

Upasana Bhattacharjee

PhD Student, Faculty of Information

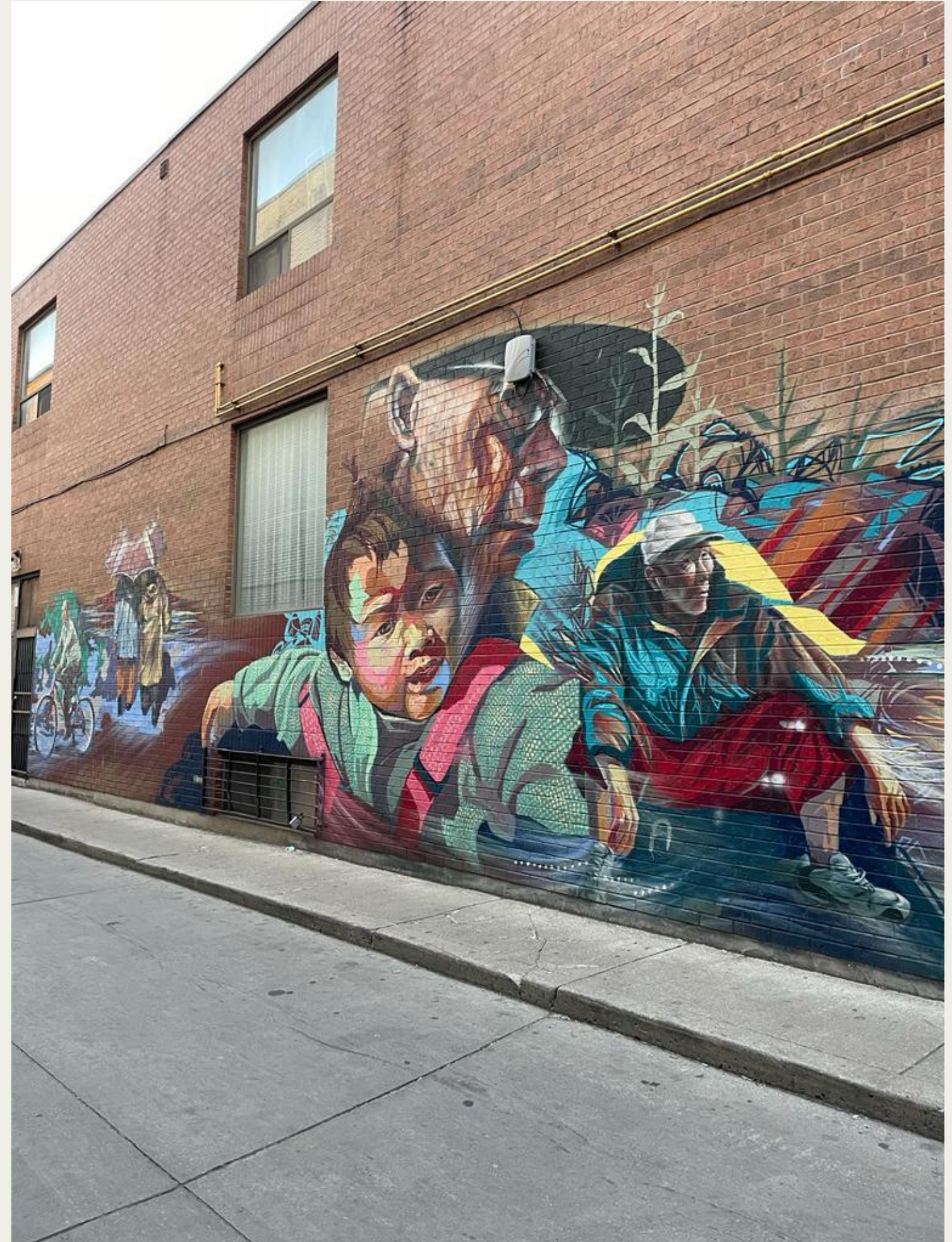
Graduate Fellow, School of Cities

and Creative Communities Commons

University of Toronto

# Street Art: Murals

Murals are a collective artistic process. In Toronto, where neighbourhoods are ethnically segregated, murals are an artistic practice of celebrating community identity. They are often sanctioned by state bodies and community development associations. They are usually painted on public/outside-facing walls and alleyways.



# Street Art: Graffiti

I use graffiti to denote tags, writings, posters and stickers. Politically, graffiti is understood as a way to claim or assert rights over space. It speaks to the specific politics of a place and time period.



# GRAFFITI AND INTERACTION

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Graffiti trades in attention. Its impact and capacity to make a political statement and disrupt existing social orders can be gauged through moments of attention and contestation, often visible in how quickly it is painted over or erased.

# Site: Bloor & Dufferin



# GRAFFITI AND INTERACTION: BLOOR & DUFFERIN

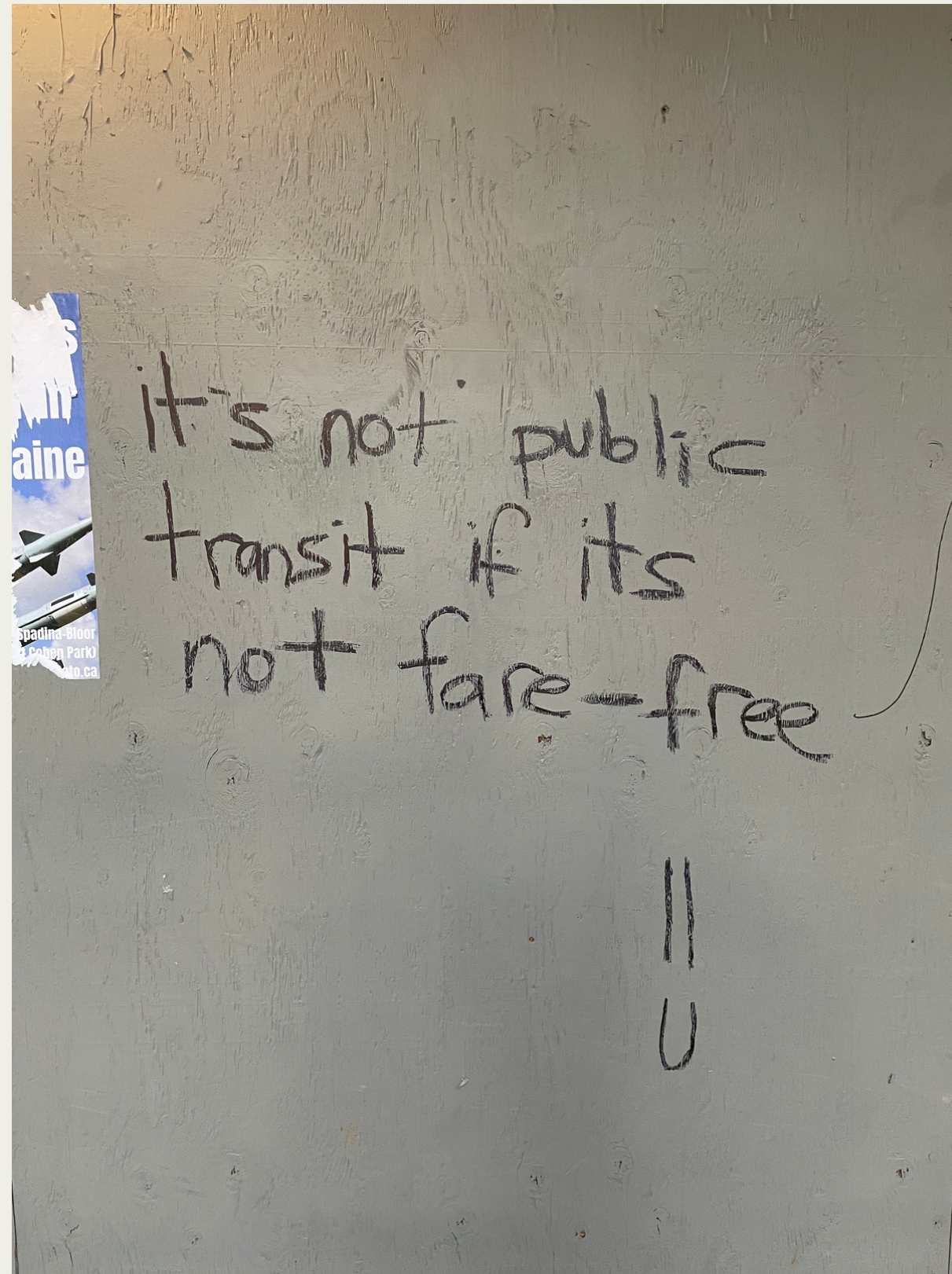
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The Bloor Dufferin intersection has a scaffolding/hoarding along the pavement that helps/hides the ongoing construction. Designated Graffiti Area is a section of the hoarding/scaffolding that conceals the ongoing construction at the Bloor and Dufferin intersection. It is written in chalk, amidst other (random) messages, advertisements and posters.

# DESIGNATED GRAFFITI AREA

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Over time, I've noticed it be home to punk bands asking passersby to listen to them, information about rallies, ads for events, and for speaking about political values.

# DESIGNATED GRAFFITI AREA AND INTERACTION

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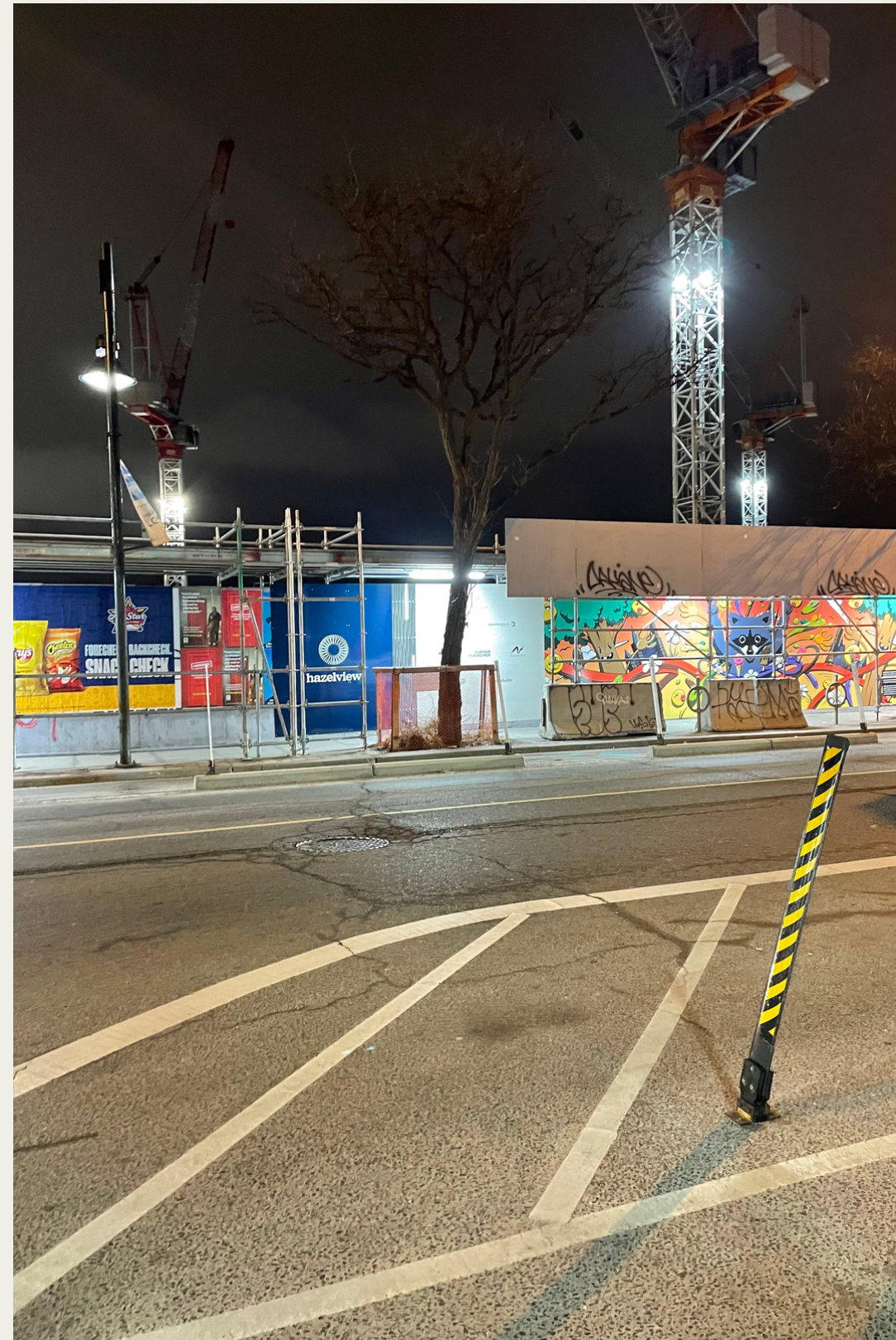
Eventually, designated graffiti area was scribbled over. Literally, as shown here, but also symbolically, as I explain later.

The choice to designate something as impermanent, replaceable, and instrumental as scaffolding/hoarding as a graffiti area marks a shift in how we understand inscriptions in the city. Instead of locating them in the permanent built environment, durable plaques, and monuments, this marks a shift in how politics becomes visible in transient and changing spaces.



# IMPOSED/SANCTIONED ART

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In the last few months, part of the hoarding that was “designated graffiti area” was covered by a piece of digital art celebrating raccoons as Toronto’s identity. This is an instance of how the hoarding has become a site of contestation between graffiti as a claim over space and enterprise-sanctioned art.

# ART IN THE CITY

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## **Community identity**

claiming space and right to the city

murals, collective art and the celebration of community identity

inscriptions and interaction

## **Enterprise-sanctioned art**

construction and changing built environment

art mediating relationship with space, changing space, memory and navigation

art: content, expression

art: medium, material, form, durability

# The Production of Space

Inscriptions in the city are often understood through their permanence and durability. But exploring them as temporary – in their site, material composition, and messaging – is an intervention into our association and goals of permanence as relevance in the city.



It is through the interplay of these facts that I define this as a site of contestation: scaffolding/hoarding hiding the construction at a prominent intersection; this hoarding becoming the “designated graffiti area” using chalk; advertisements on the hoarding; political calls and messaging becoming visible in a site as everyday, replaceable, instrumental and impermanent as hoarding.



# Learning the City

What if we are attentive to inscriptions (as Shannon Mattern reminds us to be) and consider seriously the prospect of treating ephemera as evidence (as José Esteban Muñoz urges us to)? How does that make us attend to our city?



How do you notice your city?

How do you see it inscribed?

How do you attend to it?

How do you wish the city forward?

