

# Green Street Art: Innovation to reach legality and limit pollution<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Although graffiti has earned its reputation for a long time already in some people's hearts, some refractory persist to say that it is illegal pollution on the walls of raging strangers' properties. Indeed, the law makes no differentiation between graffiti and tags. It will be ideally necessary to reach agreements of such clauses within contracts for helping prevent further visual pollution and defend real street art in our environment.

This paper analyzes all the different alternatives using a multi-criteria decision analysis method. The author suggests that the best solution for graffiti artists who want to be seen as real art makers is to start creating green street art masterpieces. However, the possibility of stimulating people to sustainable art ensure a win-win approach towards starting a legalization process thanks to contracts allowing the sharing of public places between green spray-painted masters and individuals supporting sustainability.

**Key Words:** Sustainability, Art, Public, Protection, Pollution, Commission, Control

## INTRODUCTION

*"The greatest crimes in the world are not committed by people breaking the rules but by people following the rules. It's people who follow orders that drop bombs and massacre villages."*<sup>2</sup>

Banksy may be right, for instance, according to French law, graffiti is criminal. Condemned by the law, it is considered a deliberate degradation or deterioration of property belonging to another. Graffiti writers who are caught in the act are liable to a fine ranging from 1500 € up to 30 000 € and 2 years of imprisonment in case of heavy damage.

Indeed, in several countries, the law makes no differentiation between authentic performances suspended in museums and those spray-painted on raging strangers' properties. Nevertheless, for concerned individuals, there is a difference: commissioned artworks are "graffiti" and illegally implanted images are "tags". Who says true and who says false? Although graffiti has earned its reputation for a long time already in the heart of certain circles, some refractory persist to show that it is an illegal act that pollutes the walls of all neighborhoods and it is even called "metastasis". According to them, graffiti would have a depraved, abandoned visual aspect and would be a sign of mismanagement on the part of the authorities. Moreover, letting

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<sup>2</sup> Banksy (2006). *Wall and Piece*. Retrieved October 21, 2017 from <https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/28811.Banksy>

graffiti artists perform where and how they wish would be a sign of neglecting, also indicating a lack of interest in one's own fellow citizens.

Finally, it is less the physical form of the graffiti which disturbs; except if tags are included; that the subjectivity which it lets guess: the individual arrested by graffiti can give free course to his imagination and his anxieties to draw the portrait of his author. Thus, graffiti contributes to the feeling of insecurity that affects urban centers. However, one thing is certain: it is not because graffiti is able to find a place in art exhibitions that it will disappear from the walls and buildings of cities.

To ensure the urban artists and the protecting citizens have a win-win approach towards having public spaces aesthetically spray-painted with masterpieces, it will be ideally necessary for both parties to reach agreements of such clauses within contracts for helping prevent further visual pollution and art critics into our environment.

## **STATED PROBLEM**

How contracts can allow artists to practice in public places without being considered as visual polluters?

## **FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVES**

1. Develop and highlight the concept of "Reverse graffiti"
2. Start the legalization process with "legal" graffiti spots
3. Sensitize artists and public to green street art

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE OUTCOMES**

### **1. Develop and highlight the concept of "Reverse graffiti"**

Reverse graffiti, also named clean graffiti, is a method of creating temporary images or message on surfaces by removing dirt from it. Cloths or high-power washers can be used to remove dirt on a larger scale. This usage has been controversial and its legality depends on jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, reverse graffiti has been used many times as a form of advertising by businesses. For the marketing team of those businesses, it is a new and sustainable way to bring attention to their products, launch new ones, highlight future events or just increase brand awareness. There are strong benefits to create reverse graffiti: highly targeted geographical placement and lack of competing media in the same space. Even though it is not real art, it can also be done by removing dust with the fingertip from windows or other dirty surfaces, such as writing "Wash me" on a dirty vehicle.

### **2. Start the legalization process with "legal" graffiti spots**

Despite the lack of freedom, it could include, some graffiti artists cooperated with cities' councils to establish a network of walls on which they can legally create public art. Basically, it consists of legal walls where they can create their graffiti without fear of prosecution. Mayors of the authorizing cities hoped that a network of legal spots; mostly walls; would stop the cat-and-

mouse game artists often playing with the police, and increase the quality of the work. The mayor of Bristol affirmed artists will be able to spend more time on their work and that: *“It will create a stronger sense of joint ownership and responsibility, whilst encouraging the continued development and vivacity of the graffiti and street-art scene.”* (Mayor Rees, Interview by The Guardian. *Legal graffiti walls of Bristol*, 2017). However, many graffiti artists call it a stratagem to know their identity and make them stop practicing their art because it is not legal enough.

### 3. Sensitize artists and public to green street art

On the one hand, graffiti can spread a strong message to make people aware of the harmful impact of people on earth. A very interesting example of how art can influence and change our perception of our planet is a concept that brings together oceanic environmental issues and urban art. On the other hand, there is a main environmental issue of doing graffiti. Indeed, using chemical spray paints as a medium can defeat the message. For many activists, sustainable street art is the solution. It can be graffiti made with moss or mud. They are more ephemeral but graffiti artists want their work to make an immediate impact given its ephemeral nature.

### SELECTION OF A CRITERION

To select the best alternative, we will conduct a Multi-Attribute Decision Making Analysis. This is a qualitative analysis of the feasible alternatives assessed against the best attributes identified to solve the problem.

| Duration to set up |   |
|--------------------|---|
| High               | 1 |
| Medium-High        | 2 |
| Medium             | 3 |
| Medium-Low         | 4 |
| Low                | 5 |

| Cleanliness     |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Worst           | 1 |
| Slightly worst  | 2 |
| Same            | 3 |
| Slightly better | 4 |
| Better          | 5 |

Figure 1 – Quantitative analysis of the alternatives evaluated against interests

| Alternatives<br>Attributes | Alternative 1 | Alternative 2 | Alternative 3 |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Feasibility                | 3             | 3             | 5             |
| Duration to set up         | 4             | 2             | 2             |
| Cleanliness                | 5             | 2             | 4             |
| Public Appraisal           | 3             | 2             | 5             |
| Control                    | 3             | 1             | 3             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>               | <b>18</b>     | <b>10</b>     | <b>19</b>     |

1- Poor / 2-Fair / 3- Good / 4- Very Good / 5- Excellent  
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## FINDINGS

If we look at Figure 1, the best alternative seems to be the alternative 3, we can go deeper in our analysis to produce MADM ratio scale.

Figure 2 – Quantitative analysis of the alternatives evaluated against interests in ratio scale

| Alternatives<br>Attributes | Alternative 1 | Alternative 2 | Alternative 3 |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Feasibility                | 0,6           | 0,6           | 1             |
| Duration to set up         | 0,8           | 0,4           | 0,4           |
| Cleanliness                | 1             | 0,4           | 0,8           |
| Public Appraisal           | 0,6           | 0,4           | 1             |
| Control                    | 0,6           | 0,2           | 0,6           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>               | <b>3,6</b>    | <b>2</b>      | <b>3,8</b>    |

By

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### **Selection of the preferred alternative**

Using the MADM analysis in ratio scale above we can now say how much better or worse an option is when compared to one of the others.

According to this analysis, the alternative 3 is  $(3,8/2 = 1,9 \times 100)$  190% much better than the other alternatives. Then, our best option is to sensitize artists and public to green street art as the feasibility and cleanliness are very important, the public appraisal will be effective immediately. However, the duration to set up the alternative is hard to define clearly, other attributes have high grades.

However, according to all attributes except feasibility, the second alternative presented about starting the legalization process with “legal” graffiti spots is the less interesting for graffiti artists and for the public. Indeed, there are still too many issues in progress in the actual society about it and even though this alternative might be respected someday it would not improve many things quickly enough.

Thus, my recommendation for graffiti artists who want to perform in public places and be seen as real art makers is to start creating green street masterpieces.

### **Post-evaluation of results**

Enforce a graffiti artist to do green street art in public places to avoid being viewed as a criminal is difficult to analyze because all artists are different such as every people watching street art. Besides, it is complicated to impose to all those street art makers who are victims of the society to follow this alternative and not another one.

After the analysis made, the best alternative found is the third one: sensitize artists and public to green street art. Obviously, other alternatives are possible but they can be a failure. The

good thing is that if a chosen alternative doesn't work, you can go for another alternative and do that as many time as you want until you are satisfied.

## CONCLUSION

The problem statement of this paper was to ask ourselves how contracts can allow artists to practice in public places without being considered as visual polluters. An analysis was made of all the different alternatives so sensitize artists and public to sustainable and green street art seems to be the best solution. We can't be categorical and say this alternative is definitely the best because all alternatives can be tried and defined as the best one for a specific situation.

However, the possibility of stimulating people to sustainable art ensure a win-win approach towards starting a legalization process thanks to contracts allowing the sharing of public places between green spray-painted masters and individuals supporting sustainability. Such clauses within contracts could help prevent further visual pollution and art critics into our environment.

## FOLLOW ON RESEARCH

After the analysis made in this paper, we found that one alternative can be good or bad depending on the situation and depending on people.

The coherent follow-up to this paper is to do a survey to all different known graffiti artists and see if doing green art is a possible alternative for them. Maybe some other alternatives will fit best for some others.

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## About the Author



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