

Public Walls and the Right to the City: A Case Study of Vienna's Wienerwand

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Vienna, 11 December 2025

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the Wienerwand, Vienna's public wall program, and whether it aligns with Henri Lefebvre's theory of the right to the city. This theory expresses the importance of citizens having the ability and right to reshape their cities to conform with their collective vision. Lefebvre's ideas put the person at the forefront for urban development, aiming to create human focused cities which offer equal access and opportunity to public spaces, goods, and programs.

Graffiti research within the academic sphere has been growing in popularity. This is attributed to the rise of social media and key artists within the scene such as Banksy. While this popularity shifts the negative stigma away from graffiti, it is still scorned within public spaces and in official policy.

Harsh policies create an inaccessible environment for those who want to participate. One can look towards public walls as an answer to this issue. These are government-sanctioned spaces within cities which offer surfaces for anyone to paint on, completely legally.

This thesis will utilize primary sources such as an interview with the current head of the Wienerwand, as well as online surveys conducted among local street artists, to understand the impact of the public wall program on the Viennese cityscape. The program is extensive, offering around 27 public walls that are available without any overt barriers. The Wienerwand provides accessible space for people to exercise their 'right to the city,' but improvements need to be made to truly align with Lefebvre's concept. This thesis will argue that while the Wienerwand specifically, and public walls programs in general, may aid citizens in feeling ownership over and exercising their right to the city, the very nature of such spaces as designated venues for limited participation is intrinsically at odds with the right to the city as a right to reshape one's city.

Key Words: Graffiti, Street Art, Public Space, the Right to the City, Henri Lefebvre, Public Walls, Legal Walls, Open Walls, Vienna ,Wienerwand, Public Wall Program.

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I. Introduction

One of the most well-known and controversial forms of artistic expressions within urban spaces is graffiti. The term ‘graffiti,’ coined in the 60s, broadly refers to any form of publicly created and illegal art on city walls for either political or apolitical motives, with a strong delineation to exclude any art that was made for advertisement or private profit. Graffiti has long been associated with illegal acts and vandalism shunned upon by the larger society. These negative implications make it difficult to see graffiti as something beneficial and expressive, especially within public spaces. Historically, however, graffiti has taken an important role in driving positive changes in unequal societies, such as protesting and spreading awareness about political issues and wars. In the 21st century, due to the rise of social media as well as popular artists like Banksy and Shepard Fairey have brought graffiti into the world of fine art, cementing it as a legitimate art form, one that has evolved past its association with unwanted and illegal vandalism.

While the attitude toward graffiti has begun to shift, it still exists inaccessible to many and is persistently scorned by the law. Considered to be vandalism and often unwanted, strict policies create a high barrier where artists must accept harsh consequences if they want to paint. Yet throughout these difficult circumstances, individuals have fought to legalize graffiti to make it truly accessible for all. Due to this newfound visibility and persistence of graffiti, and the constant pressure from the public, legal wall programs, or ‘public walls,’ have been popping up around big cities. These are specifically zoned accessible walls where anyone can do graffiti without legal consequences, no monetary barrier to entry, and have no links to corporate use. The ability to paint whatever one desires and have it stay up in a public space is an opportunity that uniquely allows people to creatively interact with their city. Among such public wall programs, one important example stands out: the Wienerwand located in Vienna, Austria. One

of the most extensive programs in the world, this public wall program is supported by the government through an organization tasked with its supervision.

Public walls provide public contact to city walls, providing free access rather than getting co-opted by advertisers. This “advertiser take-over” has been a trend in the 21st century, transforming human-focused cities to ones that prioritize economic growth. This has led to an oversaturation of consumerist ideals, sacrificing with them the needs of the people who reside within the city. One theory that aimed to understand and fix this change was introduced by French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre. Highlighting the city as a space for democratic participation and social justice for all members, Lefebvre introduced the concept of the ‘Right to the City’ in his 1968 book *Le Droit à la ville* (Lefebvre, 1996/1968). The right to the city, at its core, advocates for people to be at the forefront of urban development, promoting a humanistic approach to the city by creating space for citizens.

While the influx of urban dwellers increased pressures to expand livable spaces and improve facilities to enhance quality of life in the city, the wealthy were simultaneously shifting the priorities of the city governance to expand their own profits and power (Lefebvre, 1996/1968). The right to the city challenges this by encourages a holistic approach to urban development. Lefebvre’s (1996/1968) concept empowers city dwellers to affect change within their cities, going beyond the confines dictated to them by market forces and the state. One’s right to the city is made up of components that collectively enhance livability, quality of life, and agency. This includes creating spaces that are equally accessible to all, without exclusive prioritization of certain groups. A right to the city promotes the dissolution of hierarchical distributions of power or economic wealth. Urban development, Lefebvre (1996/1968) argues, needs to allow the public to take ownership of their spaces, being able to use them creatively without encroachment from large corporations or the state. These spaces need to allow the

public to voice their concerns and to mobilize such public spaces to drive political and societal changes.

The right to the city theory promotes the idea that space is shaped by our interactions, yet the application of this idea can prove to be difficult. Within the growing academic sphere surrounding graffiti, there are many works aligning the ideals behind graffiti and the right to the city. Graffiti and its rebellious nature reflect the right to the city's call for change to the spaces we live in. Our right to the city is to alter and control the spaces we exist in, taking away the top-down approach of control and shifting it to a bottom-up, community focused method. In a similar vein, graffiti goes through this history of fighting to exist within a city that is not willing to make space for it.

Programs such as the Wienerwand allow for a more humanistic take on the cityscape, one which takes its people into account instead of merely prioritizing economic growth. Public and legal walls could be seen to create space for graffiti where everyone can express themselves. Unfortunately, academic as well as other literature about public wall programs is scarce. While such programs are growing and spreading, many people are still not highly aware of them. In cognizance of this, this paper aims to fill this gap in the literature and attempts to connect public wall programs with the concept of the right to the city. Researching and understanding these programs can help us understand their utility and ability to fulfill a public need. This paper will frame public walls as an evolution of graffiti; an extension of the art form that is accessible to all and has created new communities around it. Leveraging the author's own experience of the Wienerwand and access to its organizers, this paper will use a case study of the Viennese public wall program to interpret this connection. Focusing on one example allows for a deeper critique of the public wall program in general. This thesis additionally utilizes interviews with public officials, surveys with participants, and theoretical argumentation, to examine whether public walls promote and enact people's right to the city.

II. Literature Review

This section will discuss pre-existing research that primarily focuses on how graffiti can be seen as a demonstration of the right to the city, in that it allows citizens to reclaim and express ownership over city space. This thesis will then further this discussion, applying this model of the right to the city to not just illegal graffiti, but also to legal, public walls.

Graffiti has always had a tumultuous relationship with the law. In their paper *Graffiti in the Lawscape 2025*, Brazioli and Brighenti (2025) simplify the repetitive path that policies surrounding graffiti tend to take in many cities. The first stage is repression, followed by negotiation, and finally capture. During initial concerns and backlash regarding graffiti within cities, terminologies like pest and infestation are used, these contribute to a perception of graffiti as a nuisance to the city. “Zero tolerance” policies are created to produce environments where graffiti cannot exist. This early backlash happens during the repression period, a “war on graffiti” is initiated, but ultimately fails since all graffiti cannot be eliminated in a major city due to the current logistical impossibility of constant surveillance and enforcement (Brazioli and Brighenti, 2025). Graffiti always finds a way to appear on urban surfaces regardless of how much control is exercised.

Following these failures, policies to “embrace” graffiti as a part of the urban environment begin to appear. This is the beginning of the negotiation stage. Here, there is a shift to contain graffiti and transform it into a “more respectable” form of art which can contribute to a city’s aesthetic landscape. This is usually the stage where cities create policies and programs such as legal walls.

Public walls give graffiti writers space in the city while still allowing the administration to exercise influence over where they spray, allowing them to isolate and segregate graffiti away from busy streets and the public eye. Brazioli and Brighenti (2025) observed that, here,

we may notice a shift in language, the use of the term *street art* begins to replace and encompass graffiti as a broader umbrella term (Brazioli and Brighenti, 2025).

The third stage, capture, is said to happen when graffiti can be exploited as a profitable business. “Graffiti tourism” begins to take place in specific locations such as Hozier Lane in Melbourne and the Donaukanal in Vienna. Brazioli and Brighenti (2025) explain this integration, “In this context, graffiti has been reinterpreted as an added-value ingredient of the urban visual-scape.” (Brazioli and Brighenti, 2025, p. 7). At this stage, the city administration and economic interests have found a way to commodify street art and capitalize on its potential profitability. Businesses begin offering graffiti walking tours, selling merchandise featuring popular pieces, and using the visual language of graffiti for advertising. This is often happening while the government continues to persecute those who paint in spaces deemed “inconvenient” for the city.

While graffiti now exists legally, it does so in select zones, subject to control in multiple ways, and often operationalized to serve the economic or aesthetic goals of businesses and the city administration, rather than being a demonstration of the public exercising their right to the city.

Andrzej Zieleniec (2016) emphasizes and expands on Lefebvre’s ideas about physical space, arguing that it is a tool to enable thriving social relations between people and the city, but that it is also inevitably changed through ownership and regulation. Like space, however, graffiti can also be changed through ownership and regulation at this third stage of capture, and possibly already at the second stage.

As space becomes controlled by possession, its use is altered. The surfaces of cities become purely functional; advertisements plaster streets and surfaces, and citizens are treated

as agents of pure consumption. Graffiti possesses the ability to alter the use of these surfaces, taking back spaces dominated by commercialization and monetary gain (Zieleniec, 2016).

Graffiti can transform these surfaces from serving a purely functional purpose to an aesthetic or community-building oriented, communicative purpose, creating exteriors that exist outside of consumption and growth. By breaking up the monopoly that advertisements possess in the streetscape, Zieleniec (2016) argues one can view these spaces from new perspectives, making viewers more aware of how our space is being used, and possibilities for uses of this space that they may not have yet considered. Zieleniec describes this process as a “creative colonization of public space” through graffiti (Zieleniec, 2016, p.9).

Graffiti can serve to bridge the connection between citizens and the city, something that has become severed due to the alienation of the individual from their commodified spaces. Murals depicting the history of the city, past events, or celebrating individual lives lived within the city help create a sense of community and belonging by highlighting those who populate the city, presenting narratives of the people, as well as replacing advertiser space (Leob, 2014). The desires of citizens can be reflected in graffiti found in public space, as opposed to advertisements in public space which attempt to manufacture new desires among the viewers instead.

The desire to change the city must originate somewhere, and visuals are powerful galvanizers. As Harvey (2012) states when referring to the right to the city, “it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart’s desire. It is, moreover, a collective rather than an individual right since changing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization” (Harvey, 2012, p. 1).

Graffiti provides a form of protest, a way to address the inequalities and injustices of a city, a way to address the ever-changing unfriendly spaces where we reside. The anonymity of

graffiti aids its effectiveness; it removes the ability to know how many voices are being expressed and permits greater freedom and honesty by greatly reducing fears of adverse consequences or persecution. It thus creates reaction and, consequently, consideration.

Of course, not all graffiti is protest based. Often it consists of nothing more than tagging one's name or creating commonly recognizable figures or symbols. Within the scene, writers compete for space and notoriety, finding the hardest to reach spots or aiming for quantity, reclaiming the advertiser space to create a new network of communication between one another or addressing the city directly and transforming the environment. No matter the reason behind a piece, it still uses the same platform any other graffiti-writer uses— the city surfaces (Evans, 2025).

While some advocate enthusiastically for the idea that the right to the city may be exercised through graffiti, others view this possibility with a more critical eye. As open as the city surfaces may be, graffiti communities remain ruled by gender hierarchies. An important component of a true application of the right to the city is equal access, yet in many cities, the graffiti scene mainly consists of male crews. This majority perpetuates traditional gender hierarchies even within alternative spheres (Calderia, 2012, 413). Since graffiti revolves around anonymity, as well as trust and relationships with the other artists, it can be difficult to puncture the walls surrounding these groups. Additionally, there are high risks associated with the work due to its illegal nature. While this already naturally limits access, the consequences of an arrest can prove to be far more severe for some groups than for others. This means women, racialized people, queer and trans people, disabled people, and many immigrants face even greater barriers to participation than others. Furthermore, graffiti culture can often be set in its ways and resistant to change and new faces, since the illegal nature of the activities leads to the community developing insular, trust-based mechanisms for security. Ultimately, while graffiti has utility as a tool for public expression for some people and some messages, others will

always be silenced or excluded, unable to achieve the same public exposure. This inequality creates a surface hierarchy where certain spaces are only accessible to a few, preventing equal representation on the city walls.

Graeme Evans makes a passing remark about Zieleniec's (2016) use of the right to the city concept, referring to it as partially naive optimism (Evans, 2025). Evans believes that graffiti can be used as an indicator for the value of areas depending on what is covering the walls (Evans, 2025). Both cultural centers and run-down neighborhoods have yielded high quantities of graffiti, yet one thrives, and the other does not. Evans (2025) mentions the commodification of graffiti similarly to Brazioli and Brighenti (2025). Realtors can use heavily graffiti-ed spaces to advertise up and coming areas and advertisers may place their ads near or even on popular painting/graffiti spots, leveraging the visibility of these artworks to draw eyes towards their subject. These phenomena represent a whole new market revolving around the graffiti scene, unbeknownst to and unintended by the original artists. Capitalism thus continues to find a way to commodify the city space, regardless of whether graffiti exists on the walls.

Smaranda Centea (2022) looks at the rights provided to advertisers versus graffiti artists. Through interviews done with artists in Sweden, Centea (2022) found that, while advertisers can pay to display in a public space, they also use up free public spaces without paying and evade punishment. Yet when an individual paints in or tags these spaces, they are penalized because this is seen as an illegal act. If someone wants to paint legally (not on a public wall) they must obtain permits and permission from private actors, which hinders accessibility to opportunities of expression, and stands in direct opposition to the principles of the right to the city. When permission is granted, mural painters are prioritized over graffiti artists, and usually get commissioned by the city to paint. This commission comes with its own regulations, however, for instance requiring approval for all visual components. When Centea (2022) asked representatives of city departments in Stockholm whether graffiti can provide a

right to the city, they answered that graffiti artists do not have rights to public spaces and that they should stick to legal walls (Centrea, 2022, 34). It thus appears that the city authorities believe there is some sort of right to the city provided by the legal walls, yet it is a contained and partially regulated space, and as such does not fully align with Lefebvre's principles (Centea, 2022).

Centea (2022) appears to be the only author to write about the right to the city in the context of legal walls. Most other sources only discuss the theory in terms of graffiti, arguing that graffiti can only exist in an illegal manner.

It appears that public officials, like most others, solely see advertising and commercial applications as the foremost legitimate use of public surfaces, with all other potential applications relegated to the periphery or especially designated, regulated spaces.

This suggests that people's views of what city space and surfaces can be used for is already constrained, and paintings on legal walls, unlike graffiti, may not permit the same "creative colonization of public space" (Zieleniec 2016, 2). As such, it is difficult to assert that public walls enable a true exercise of the right to the city. However, if graffiti in all its forms can still be commodified, and public walls enable inclusion of voices otherwise excluded due to graffiti culture and the legal risks associated with tagging, these walls still serve to fulfill some of the ideals associated with Lefebvre's theory. In this sense, it marks a relative compromise between the city and citizens, and between the free but closed communities of illegal graffiti and regulated but open communities associated with legal public walls.

It is difficult to apply the right to the city to public walls broadly due to the varying types of walls and programs in the world. Each city has unique approaches to these services as well as different degrees of access. Additionally, the lack of literature surrounding public walls

proves such research difficult. This is why it is pertinent to understand graffiti and public walls conceptually first, and in individual cities next.

To examine if and how public walls may provide citizens with the ability to exercise their right to the city; this thesis will attempt to evaluate whether regulated legal painting spaces function as an open negotiation of public space. One which enables greater and more inclusive participation but at the cost of the reduction of social messages, abandonment of reclaiming advertising space, and rejecting the commodification of public art. Then understand whether this compromise ultimately still allows citizens to exercise ownership over their spaces.

III. History of the Wienerwand

Regarding public services and accessibility, Vienna stands out as a unique case among other major cities in Europe and the world. In the beginning of the 19th century, Vienna started tackling the issue of affordability and housing for its residents, ushering in the beginning of a period known as Red Vienna. Since then, the city has invested in city wide public housing projects and other social services, such as health care, education and a variety of social programs (Kadi, 2019).

Vienna in the early 1990s was a time of intense conflict between graffiti artists and the authorities, as described in the comprehensive history of early graffiti culture in Vienna by Maike Hettinger and Stefan Wogrin (2023: 136, 150). In 1993, the Vienna police founded a special commission to combat graffiti crime, in response to strong backlash against train graffiti, a new trend which first began in the US. Train graffiti brought up many questions regarding public space and vandalism, since public transport was something that many relied on and the trains were private property but existing within public use. After a large crackdown in 1994, the graffiti scene was officially announced as dismantled by the Vienna chief of police using section 125 of the Austrian Criminal Code, citing graffiti as disfigurement (Thaller, 2024). Many artists were arrested and charged with heavy fines for damages. This was a massive blow to the tight knit scene which had been thriving and growing prior. In response, graffiti artists organized themselves officially as the nonprofit association *Vienna Graffiti Union* or *WGU (Wiener Graffiti Union, WGU)*; this politically motivated organization was used to help raise money through commissioned work to support accused artists (Ringhofer, 2018). Besides international networking, the WGU had two main objectives: first, to create an organization that people could contact if they wanted to commission graffiti art, and secondly, to campaign and advocate for the creation of more legal graffiti spaces in Vienna such as public

walls. The second goal was particularly important, as WGU needed to ensure that street artists could have space to freely practice their craft, without fear of persecution. An interview with the current head of the Wienerwand program, Theodora Hergheligi, helped provide more information about the formation of the program through the understanding of the government funded organization. In the interview she states; “It started in a park where people just... painted on the wall and this person who initiated it... brought it to the city of Vienna like, hey, this wall is getting painted all the time. Can we not make it legal?” (Interview with author, 12.9.2025). The goal was to create transparency and alleviate the tension between graffiti artists and locals who disapproved of their actions and would call the police on them. Helmut Zilk, Vienna’s mayor during the 80s and 90s, supported graffiti writers after trying the activity himself. As one of his final acts as mayor, he created several legal wall spaces in 1994, which included the “hall of fame” on the Donaukanal near Schottenring and the Nordbrücke. These walls are still the largest of the Wienerwand and are the most sought-after places to paint. From there, the WGU continued to lobby for additional walls (Ringhofer, 2018).

Currently, the Wienerwand consists of 27 legal graffiti walls. The Bildingserver, an education association for schools in Vienna, oversaw the program soon after it was established. However, since 2023, the Wienerwand program is currently run by WIENXTRA, which is an organization that focuses on youth education, programs, and festivals for free. It is supported and funded by the government and is made up of many smaller programs and groups. The walls are all identified by the symbol of a pigeon and are completely accessible to everyone; no reservation or planning is needed to participate. Each wall differs depending on who uses it. It can be used by individuals or crews, for jams or workshops and parties.

Some areas, like the Halls of Fame, are mostly used by established artists or crews; these walls are of the best quality and have good visibility. Aside from these spaces, there are smaller walls which are associated with workshops and tagging. These walls are more

accessible to the public; often used as practice spaces for beginners and children. Hannerz and Kimvall (2019), two graffiti researchers from Sweden, describe these types of walls as a “large public etch-a-sketch,” with no reason or consequence for what gets painted over (Hannerz and Kimvall, 2019).



Figure 1. The Wienerwand Symbol of a Dove, the indicator for legal walls, sometimes hard to see due to heavy layers of paint (photo by author)



Figure 2. The Wienerwand along the Donaukanal, crumbled pieces of the surface can be seen laying at the base of the wall (photo by author)



Figure 3. At the Hall of Fame at Nordbrucke, these walls are in much better condition than the more used walls along the Donaukanal (photo by author)

On the WIENXTRA official website, it is stated that: “The Wienerwand project ... is intended to support this practice of art and promote dialogue between the writers and the public. In many cities, graffiti is seen as a purely criminal act that can only be countered by rigorous prohibitions” (WIENXTRA, 2025). The Wienerwand intends to preserve the essence of graffiti and street art while making it available to all. Many of the walls are found within or near the city center as well, contributing to ease of access. The only concrete rules stated on the WIENXTRA website are that the walls are not to be used for advertising purposes and that no hate speech or sexist messages are tolerated, yet these enforcements are seen as valuable necessities to create an equal experience for those using the walls. When asked about the rules surrounding the Wiener Wand, Hergheligi stated, “If someone is writing something racist on it or anti-Semitic or something sexist, then we can do something about it. If someone is writing something on any kind of wall ... I'm not responsible for it... I can call the police. But ... if someone is writing something on a Wienerwand, then I'm calling the Büro für Sofortmaßnahmen and they remove it immediately... it's more regulated because it's a legal wall.” (Hergheligi, 2025). Hergheligi brings up a point of regulation in a positive manner, encouraging a respectful dialogue on the wall. She states that these rules can create an equal playing field for all users, making no one feel excluded or disadvantaged. Even with these

regulations in place, it doesn't appear that they are enforced often; when asked about how often messages were reported, Hergheligiú said:

Since the beginning of this year... it happened twice that there were messages which were inappropriate, which were more political, which then were removed immediately. But I would say people really use it [the Wienerwand]... for practicing graffiti. It's more in the art direction and not so political... I feel like political messages are spread in those places where a lot of people can see them. And... the Wienerwand are not in such locations where you could take so much attention. (Hergheligiú, 2025).

Those with real messages they want to get across to the public will put them in areas with high visibility, like a city center, crowded shopping street, or busy U-bahn platform. The walls are low stakes surfaces, with good accessibility, but low visibility. Those who view graffiti as a medium that can only exist within an illegal context aren't going to use the walls for serious pieces, mainly for practice. Besides that, there are important rules of etiquette regarding use of the surfaces of public walls, such as covering a whole piece if you intend to paint over it, and painting over older works before newer ones. WIENXTRA allows individuals and districts to nominate new potential spaces for walls; these recommendations are then sent to Stephan Wogrin, a seasoned graffiti historian and artist who runs Spraycity.at, which houses a map and information about all the available walls. Wogrin works with Hergheligiú as a scout for new walls due to his extensive knowledge on the subject (Hergheligiú, 2025). Given that WIENXTRA works with someone in the field, it is important since it creates a tie into the actual scene itself and doesn't only act as an outside power where the subject matter has no say in the decisions being made.

Through the interview with Hergheligiú and the history of the Wienerwand, legal walls can clearly be seen as an extension of traditional graffiti. As cities shift and change, public

spaces do as well. For the case of Vienna, citizens advocated for a right to change the city to better cater towards their wants and needs. They fought to make street art legal, so people wouldn't get persecuted for creating graffiti and additionally creating a space which allows everyone to have the ability to participate.

The Wienerwand is a space that was created for everyone and has minimal regulations. It exists to be utilized by the public, which demonstrates that the intention behind the concept aligns with the right to the city. To further understand the effectiveness of the Wienerwand, one must turn to the actual users of the walls and their experiences with them.

IV. Methodology

In formulating this paper, a qualitative approach appeared immediately to be best suited to answer the stated research questions. Qualitative methods allowed for better understanding of individual preference and reason, which was important since the Wienerwand, as a case study, is constrained to a smaller niche group of street artists. First, in September 2025, a virtual interview with the current head of the Wienerwand program, Theodora Hergheligi, was conducted over Zoom. She has been working for WIENEXTRA for a year and mainly focuses on digital youth cultures and information. The Wienerwand is one, among many, programs that she supervises. The aim of this interview was to understand what her job encompasses and the relationship between the public wall program and the city. During the interview the background of the Wienerwand, its users, regulations, and difficulties were discussed. The interview lasted about 40 minutes total and was recorded and transcribed. A transcript of the entire interview is attached in Appendix A.

Second, in early October 2025, an online survey was published, with the aim of discovering broader opinions about the Wienerwand. The survey was distributed online across street-art affiliated social circles. Over the two weeks the survey was available, it generated a total of 15 complete responses. The survey was conducted entirely anonymously, and all participants found the link either through personal outreach, or independently through online forums. A complete list of the survey questions can be found in Appendix B.

The survey included several demographic-based multiple-choice questions to have a fuller picture of the involvement and experience of the respondents. The age of the participants ranged between 15 and 45+ years. Exactly two thirds of respondents (67%) were in the 25-34 age bracket. The gender ratio was almost evenly split with seven participants (47%) identifying

as women, and eight as men (53%). The painting experience of participants ranged between 2 years to 18+ years, with most participants having 10+ years of experience.

The results were analyzed via close reading of the interview transcript and the survey results. For the interview, sections that emphasized Hergheligi's relation to the Wienerwand program and the philosophy behind the program were highlighted. For the survey, responses were divided into similar subsections such as positive and negative aspects of the wall. Often, the responses brought up parallel points, so major themes were identified and distinguished.

In addition to the survey results and interviews, the thesis relies heavily on the author's personal knowledge and experiences of living in Vienna and using the public walls. As an international student from the United States who has been living in Vienna and regularly used public walls for graffiti and street art since 2021, over the years, the author has talked and worked with many other artists in the scene. When presenting the results of my survey, the thesis also draws on some of the author's own experiences.

In sum, by using two different methods (an interview and a mostly qualitative survey), the thesis can draw on a mixture of in-depth and detailed responses from the wall administrator and shorter answers from a larger number of actual wall users than could have been interviewed individually.

V. Survey Results and Discussion

This section analyses and compares the answers from the online survey and discusses the findings (the survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix B), beginning with the participants' descriptions of their practical use of the walls and then moving on to their perception of distinctly positive and negative aspects. This section incorporates some information based on the author's personal experience as a long-term, and regular user of these legal walls as well.

To determine the relationship between the participants and the Wienerwand, the survey first asked about the respondent's frequency of public wall usage. When asked how often respondents paint on public surfaces, most participants were split between going painting a few times a year, and a few times a month. When asked how often they use the Wienerwand when choosing a spot to paint, it was almost a four-way tie between 'most of the time,' 'some of the time,' 'all of the time,' and 'sometimes or rarely.' The survey also asked about how participants knew about the walls, with most stating that they knew about the legal wall program through friends or online searches, such as the website *spraycity.at* run by Stefan Wogrin.

From these responses, it can be determined that all the participants are active within the scene and they all use, or have used, the Wienerwand. Interestingly, when the respondents were asked if they would paint as often, or at all, if the Wienerwand did not exist, over 70% replied that they would not paint at all, with only three people saying they would still paint without it. This implies that most of the participants rely on the availability of the legal walls to participate within the street art scene in Vienna, even if they are not exclusively using the Wienerwand. The Wienerwand, then, at the very least lowers the barrier to entry, and serves as a gateway for those who are interested in graffiti to begin participating without having to contend with the difficulties associated with engaging in illegal graffiti.

The remaining survey questions inquired about the participants' feelings regarding the legal wall program; why they choose to use the walls, and what they enjoy or dislike about the walls, including questions about what could be changed and improved upon. The next two subsections discuss positive aspects and critiques of the Wienerwand raised by the survey participants.

Positive Aspects

In reference to the accessibility of the Wienerwand, almost all respondents agreed that these walls are accessible to all that want to use them. A couple of respondents had similar statements as the following: “I am a big fan, if it wasn’t available I am not sure I would have started painting at that time, without knowing anyone in the scene... it is just a nice space to experiment and practice without pressure” and “for me it was like motivation to paint more, I’ve met many people painting like that, if it wasn’t for those walls I wouldn’t be painting and doing graffiti in Vienna.” The exposure to the Wienerwand brought in those who were interested, without fear, judgment, or pressure and who would never have had the chance to try it otherwise. This can especially be seen on the walls along the Donaukanal, since this is a high foot traffic zone where many people pass by, and may be inspired to start painting. Many of the respondents stated that they appreciated the amount of legal walls that are offered; “most of them [are] easily accessible with public transport, [are] not secluded from public spaces, it feels very much integrated and also makes it more normal for people who do not have a lot of experience with it.” Another participant agreed, stating that Vienna offers a variety of walls across the city, with “Most cities only [having] a few spaces.” As seen on legalwalls.net, a website that records and tracks all open legal walls around the world, Vienna is one of the only cities with a high number of legal walls within and near the actual city center. With around 10

walls located centrally, other cities known for graffiti such as Melbourne, Stockholm, and Berlin cannot compare (Legal-walls, 2025).

The openness of the walls gives citizens a free space to interact with however they please. Participants agreed with this sentiment, stating; “You don't have to ask permission, you just must paint and be respectful to others.” and “I like the huge diversity of graffiti and street art (style, form, motivation and personalities behind it)”. These types of freely accessible public spaces that allow for public interaction are a rarity in cities, since many urban spaces lack free community spaces that are not walled off by the willingness to participate in spending. Especially within the creative sphere, there are almost no other alternative options for city inhabitants to participate and interact with the city landscape legally and through their own free will. Legal walls provide a space put aside for artistic freedom. As one participant said “[the walls] are at public open spaces, so not only can people go paint there, but those interested can watch and talk to the artists.” The walls allow for open dialogue, connecting individuals through a public activity. Even if one isn't participating in the creation of street art, the audience's interpretation or acknowledgement of the piece a and important aspect of art, especially in the graffiti and street art scene. Even negative criticism still creates a community dialogue. One participant wrote that the Wienerwand “Tends to keep the city clean from Bad Graffiti,” which is one interpretation of the walls, many do not enjoy seeing graffiti outside of public walls and consider it vandalism, differentiating it from street art, which is seen in a more positive light. In an opposing point, another respondent said “In terms of street art 100%. In my opinion Graffiti is defined by its illegal element more than by its form of appearance.” This participant is referring to the “bad graffiti” the previous person mentions. This participant believes that graffiti also differentiates from street art and can only exist in an illegal form. Therefore, what is done on the legal walls can no longer be considered graffiti. This is a more traditionalist stance on graffiti but provides another interpretation of the walls themselves. Even

within the graffiti scene, some graffiti writers consider painting on public walls to not be legitimate graffiti, since graffiti originated as an illegal practice (Ericson, 2020). In this sense, while public walls allow people to enter the street and graffiti scene, they may serve to both redirect some to illegal graffiti, and others away from it. In the latter case, the walls may serve to limit the extent of ‘real’ graffiti, ultimately making it harder for those who participate in it to justify their work and presence. In doing so, the availability of public walls may prevent the reshaping of one’s city in alignment with Lefebvre’s principles, redirecting any expression of public desire or discontent away from public eyes, and towards spaces designated for street art. Even in such spaces as the public walls, such work may not be welcomed in favor of visual art. As stated by the head of the Wienerwand program in the interview, “...I would say people really use it [the Wienerwand] ... for practicing graffiti. It's more in the art direction and not so political... I feel like political messages are spread in those places where a lot of people can see them. And... the Wienerwand are not in such locations where you could take so much attention. And this is somehow the purpose of those political messages. ...It’s mostly art, to be honest. (Hergheligi, 2025).”

Issues and Critiques

As effective as the legal wall program seems to be in legally providing graffiti space, the survey still brought up some issues with the walls which will be briefly discussed in this section. Overall, specific problems concern the insufficient number of walls available, their uneven distribution, limited accessibility, and especially the lack of maintenance. Other issues brought up by the survey respondents are related to the graffiti scene more generally. Many participants addressed more than one issue in their feedback.

For instance, according to one participant, “[There] are a lot of possibilities to paint in nearly every district. Some walls [are] better than other[s]. Never enough walls.” Some districts in Vienna still don’t have any public walls available through the legal wall program, especially districts further away from the city center as can be seen on the following map. Furthermore, the quality of the walls for painting varies significantly between locations.

Legal Walls Vienna

Legale Wände Wien

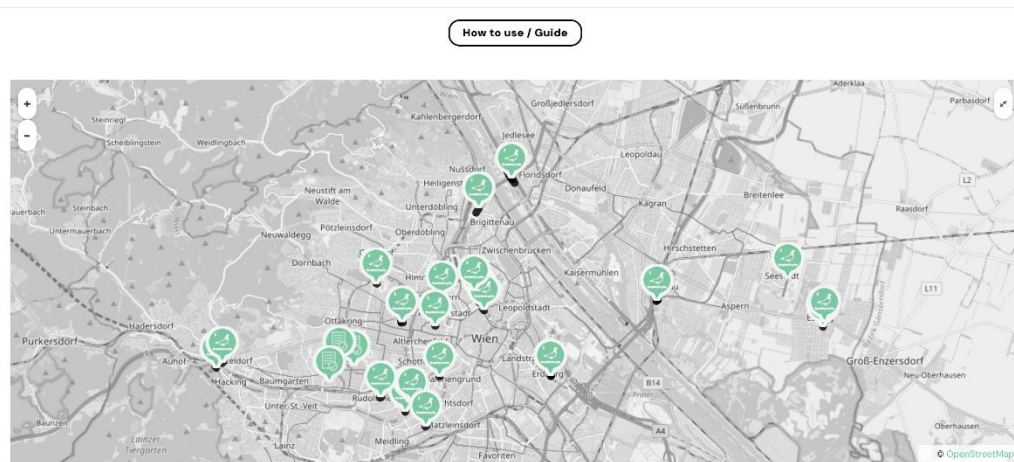


Figure 4. Spray city map, the highest number of walls are located nearer to the city center and train stations, some walls are very isolated (photo by spraycity.at)

The participants’ perspectives revealed mixed opinions about the level of participation WIENXTRA has achieved with its public wall program. One participant brought up that even though the walls do offer free accessibility to the public, the scene still “remains an intimidating space and it is sometimes difficult, especially for beginners.” Even with access to legal spaces, there remains a social aspect for group participation. Often people who are involved in the street art community band together to paint in groups or crews, and it can be difficult for newcomers to join these. Becoming involved in street art can be intimidating as a newcomer because of the difficulty of social integration within this niche community, and lack of opportunity to do so if someone doesn’t have any prior connection to the community. This

could make some newcomers uncomfortable and hesitant to get involved, especially if they are entering the street art community independently.

When asked if there were any changes the participants would like to see with the wall program, 75% said they would like more walls and more space due to the very high demand and use. Collectively this was the top concern. Responses included: “Most of the time the paintings are only there for a few days,” and “Spots dedicated for beginners could help prevent good paintings from being destroyed,” as well as “Walls on playgrounds or courts aren’t that good because [of] obvious reasons.” The existing walls can also be hard to find due to the pigeon marking that identifies the legal walls being covered up with too many layers of paint.

There are currently around seven legal walls that are in children’s playgrounds or enclosed football pitches, and the number of walls in more inaccessible locations such as these is even higher if skateparks are included. The information provided about these walls states that their use is limited due to the opening hours of the parks they are inside of. However, even during the day, there are often conflicts with spraying in the park areas that are used by other people for other purposes. For instance, in the playground areas, there are many children present, leading to many concerned parents not wanting people to spray in these areas due to the strong smell and toxins of spray paints (WIENXTRA, 2025). Even walls in more open areas can be limited due to access and safety issues, such as enough space for cyclists and runners to pass by. As one participant said: “There should be enough space before the wall to avoid accidents or conflicts with bikers.” Because the legal walls were not designed specifically for graffiti and street art users, their functionality and safety are sometimes compromised.

Another point brought up multiple times was the lack of care and service the walls receive, with respondents stating that “there is only decay, no maintenance” and “the walls should be maintained better, sometimes huge junks of wall fall off and that's not fun to paint

on.” This has been an ongoing issue. The public walls along the Donaukanal have been flaking paint off for years, and there seems to be no attempt to change that. This decay is due to the heavy use of these walls, meaning there are hundreds, if not thousands, of layers of paint on them. The question poses how much WIENXTRA is responsible for maintaining the legal walls, or if just providing these spaces in the first place is already enough. Other than outside maintenance, two participants also requested more facilities: “trash bins for cans would be great” and “free toilets at the walls would be great.”

The final question of the survey asked for any additional feedback and suggestions. Some responded: “I'd love to see more FLINTA artists. The legal walls are often dominated by male artists, some of them get mad when being crossed/overpainted... I'd love to see more community and less competition” and “fucked up scene with too many males.” It seems that even within an open public space, there are still inherent patriarchal structures at work. Greater visibility of FLINTA artists in the scene and shifts toward making graffiti truly accessible for everyone, not only a select few, will hopefully create a more equal playing field in the future.

Ultimately, it appears that while the Wienerwand has helped make street art and graffiti significantly more accessible, it is still imperfect when it comes to inclusion, accessibility, and maintenance. The walls serve a sort of contradictory, dual, role, in that they detract from an authentic exercise of one’s right to the city to regulated, designated surfaces, but also enables many more to participate in graffiti than would have otherwise been possible, likely making eventual participation in illegal graffiti more accessible as well.

VI. Conclusion

The goal of this thesis has been to assess if public wall programs can promote a right to the city. Through the literature review, it was determined that the right to the city meant the ability to shape the city and create human centered urban development instead of prioritizing economic and commercial growth. Many academic papers attributed the right to the city to graffiti since graffiti writers take advantage of public space, regardless of legality, placing messages which reflect those who live in the city, in public view, taking back the city surfaces from advertisers. By coopting the ascribed financial value of the walls for other reasons, graffiti creates new purposes and uses for spaces, ones that don't require growth. Often graffiti is not welcome or wanted in public spaces, and even if it persists, it will never have permission to exist on urban surfaces. To address this persisting issue, one may turn towards public walls as an evolution of graffiti in public space.

Public walls are a sanctioned area which only exists for graffiti, fulfilling the desires of many to have the ability to create graffiti on city surfaces. In the case of the Wienerwand, the legal walls were created out of necessity by graffiti writers. After many got arrested, others banded together to advocate for these legal walls to prevent similar situations from occurring. The government eventually complied and created legal spots, allowing the citizens to alter the city for their own needs. Now anyone can use these walls to alter their city space, however, only the spaces designated for such interaction. Legal walls address accessibility by having no stated barriers to participate, eliminating the difficulties associated with illegal graffiti.

The research undertaken here suggests that the Wienerwand is one of the best examples of a well-organized public walls program. In theory, its main goals are to promote equal access to these spaces and the activity of graffiti for people living in Vienna. This closely aligns with Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city. However, by regulating access to public surfaces

and city spaces, limiting the activity to assigned spots, and maintaining other spaces exclusively for commercial use, the program ultimately does not align entirely with Lefebvre's vision of citizens being able to reshape their cities.

The walls do ultimately expand access to the act of graffiti, enabling many who would otherwise be excluded to exercise their right to the city through graffiti. Furthermore, as the survey results indicate, the walls clearly allow many to feel an ownership over city and community spaces.

Despite the wall's role in improving the accessibility of graffiti as an artform, implementing truly equal access to available spaces still faces clear challenges. If Vienna is to truly support access to graffiti as an exercise of the right to the city, it must be willing to change and improve its programs as the city and the graffiti scene grow. Through the survey, it was made clear that while all the participants enjoy using the walls and feel it gives them a creative platform, there are various issues that limit access and should therefore be addressed. The maintenance of the walls is a big problem. It is not enough to just offer a space; the city needs to make sure that this space is maintained and attended to regularly to keep it available.

Additionally, it is important to make the Wienerwand more visible outside of the graffiti scene. Hergheligi mentioned that one of her main goals was to spread awareness of the wall. However, this has proven difficult due to her many other responsibilities within the organization and the lack of resources available for the project. Spreading information about the walls could alleviate aforementioned issues. The graffiti scene currently is oversaturated with white male crews and those who do not fall into this demographic group have difficulty reaching out to like-minded peers. However, if more people were introduced to public walls, it could aid in breaking down these traditional hierarchies. Public place-making opportunities should be known and open to all.

In continuing this research, it would prove beneficial to extend the reach of primary data collection through broader surveys, including the public. Doing so would help better understand the ways in which the walls are perceived outside the scene. A comparative analysis of the Wienerwand with other programs in the world would prove valuable to understand how they address issues faced by the Wienerwand and how public walls contribute to making cities more humanistic places everywhere. It would be insightful to survey a larger group of Viennese graffiti artists, specifically to determine how many eventually transition from public walls to illegal painting surfaces, and how many remain exclusively with public walls. This would aid in determining the true impact of the program on a genuine exercise of the right to the city.

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VII. Appendices

Appendix A: Interview with Hergheligiu Hergheligiu

The interview was conducted on September 12, 2025 (40 minutes) via Zoom.

[General introductions, an explanation of my thesis, and I asked permission to record and use quotes in my thesis.]

Z: Could you tell me about your position and the program?

T: Sure, so I'm working at WIENXTRA which is a mother company, an association, and I'm at the Jugendinfo, which is youth information, WIENXTRA is the bigger one, and there's multiple smaller associations who work for the bigger one. Our target group are young people, the youth and everyone who works with the youth. So, this is my initial work plus the Wienerwand.

Before that, it was at Bildungserver, which is an association for education, schools of Vienna. And then it came to us to be an extra to the youth information, to the Jugendinfo. I'm responsible for it. I cannot tell you so much about how it started to be super honest I just know that Wienerwand exists since over 30 years. And before me, there was this person from the building server. And before him, there was another person who initiated this program. So, it's three generations, I would say. The person who found it isn't even alive anymore as much as I know. It exists already super, super long. I cannot give you so much information how it came to life, to be honest. I think it started in a park where people just painted on the wall and this person who initiated it just brought it to the city of Vienna, hey, this wall is getting painted all the time. Can we not make it legal? To form some kind of transparency and to not have this tension between people who always call the police because someone is spraying, and make it legal?

This was the main reason, which is ongoing until now. The Wienerwand is somehow trying to break through this. It happens very much illegally so let's find a bridge to make it open, to make it transparent and to make it also a bit regulated.

Z: Exactly.

T: And what I do in my daily work, so I have many different things to do in my work and Wienerwand is a part of it. I took it over this year to 2025. And my goal is to open more walls in Vienna because there are many Bezirke or districts where you don't really have walls, and people really want to paint. We know from young people there, from people who go to school, that they would want more walls. This is now somehow a part of my activity here. This is what I'm doing now, searching for new walls, I don't know how detailed I should go, I can just tell you. So, I have not an assistant, it's not the right word, someone who helps me, who has a lot of knowledge, and his name is Stefan Wogrin, I don't know if you know Spray City?

Z: Yeah.

T: He's responsible for Spray City. He helps me when it comes to looking for new walls, for example, someone can send me an email and they can tell me, hey, I saw this wall, or I know this wall and it would fit super good to be a Wienerwand because it's in an area where people tend to hang out. It's so gray. It's so ugly. Can we not do something out of it?

And then I'm checking if the wall is private, if it's owned by a private person or if it's owned by the city of Vienna. This is what I check in the first line because if it's owned by a private person, it's super, super

complicated. We don't really do that. It can be possible to do it, but it's super complicated in terms of law to make it with a private wall owned by a private person. This is what I check first in line and then I'm sending it to Stefan and I ask him, hey, can you go and check this wall? So, he goes there, takes pictures and he checks different criteria. We even have those criteria on the website. For people who don't know, hey, how can a wall become a Wienerwand? Then they check it. And there are different criteria. For example, is this wall next to, I don't know, a park where people or children are playing? Is it next to a parking lot where, for example, if you spray and the paint particles can damage the car, the paint? Is it next to a sitting bench? There are many criteria where we can find out if this wall is good or not for Wienerwand.

There are different kinds of criteria which we have to check. And if most of them are good and you don't really disturb anyone or you don't really damage anything by painting it there, then we can say, hey, this wall could be a Wienerwand. Then we have to find out who owns this wall. This can also be super tricky because you have to make a Grundbuchauszug. I don't know how it's called in English; you do this for the city of Vienna. You ask, you have to pay a bit and then they tell you, they look for a register and then they look, who owns this wall? Then you have to contact the person who owns the wall. And then basically you just ask them. And if they agree, you make a contract and then it becomes a wall. So this is the procedure, which is complex, on the other hand, if this is done, then it's in the contract, you also settle the duration and mostly the duration is not fixed so it's forever it could be forever of course it anything can happen sometimes people, City of Vienna they decide we need to rip down the whole apartment or building, then the wall disappears. This is why it's better to make these contracts always with Wiener Linien, for example, or the city of Vienna, because it's more stable than a private person. Because a private person, I don't know so much in law, they can always decide to withdraw this contract, which is a bit complicated.

So yeah, this is the procedure. This kind of checkups and this kind of beginning is always doing Stefan Wogrin, who is some kind of a colleague, he's not working for us he gets paid for his job, I'm doing the main of it.

Z: So, you're just doing all the paperwork and contacting and then he's searching.

T: Yeah, I'm sending him the walls I want to have checked because I get it through email or, for example, Bezirksvorsteher, which is a city mayor. So, Vienna has a mayor, a big one for the whole city, and one for every Bezirk, they also have someone who is responsible for the districts. And those people, for example, I also got from them emails and requests where they told me, hey, we love what you're doing. Would you consider opening a wall here in that district?" And then we say, hey, do you have some specific ideas? Because I cannot go to the districts and search for walls. This is very time-consuming, I can tell them, hey, do you have some walls which you have already seen where you could feel it would fit? Then please send them to me. I can check them and then we can see if it's possible.

Then people send me ideas or examples where they would want to have a wall. And then me and Stefan check if this wall fits. And then we try to legalize it basically.

Z: Do you notice certain districts reaching out to you more or more in the city or outside on the outskirts? Or is it just kind of evenly spread?

T: It's super mixed. Not every district, some districts already have walls, some have more, some have less. Those who have less, they want more. I couldn't even say which district is more in which. Every district is super open to it because people in Vienna, graffiti and there are some pre-assumptions that, oh, if you do a legal wall, people will do more graffiti and then they also do illegal graffiti, which is not true because people who do illegal graffiti, they do it anyways, not on the legal walls. And It's nice because, as I said, there is not this tension anymore to say, these people are painting illegally on the wall. If it's legal, it's regulated, and then it's also regulated. For example, if someone is writing something racist on it or anti-Semitic or something sexist, then we can do something about it.

If someone is writing something on any kind of wall, we cannot really do anything because I'm not responsible for it. I can't really do anything. I can call the police for example, if someone is writing something on a Wienerwand, then I'm calling the Büro für Sofortmaßnahmen and they remove it immediately. It's more regulated because it's a legal wall. The rules are to not be sexist, to be respectful. And this is a good bridge because in graffiti, it can happen that people spread their messages, not everybody agrees with their message. So, you have to find some kind of base where everyone interacts respectfully. And this is our light fun or our guidelines, our rules.

And that's good somehow because then it's more regulated. And No one has a disadvantage of it. It only has benefits.

Z: That's great. Do you notice the type of stuff that's on the legal walls? Is it mostly art or graffiti or are there a lot of political messages or protest messages?

T: To be honest, I haven't. I don't really check so often the legal walls. It's super mixed, I would say mostly it's writings, pieces, very typical graffiti. It happens, I couldn't even say how often it happens. Since I'm doing it, since the beginning of this year, it happened twice that there were messages which were inappropriate, which were more political, which were removed immediately. I would say people really use it for practicing graffiti. So, I would say it's more in the art direction and not so political. And the Wienerwand, the locations, they are public, political message are spread in those places where a lot of people can see them. And the Wienerwand are not in such locations where you could take so much attention. And this is somehow the purpose of those political messages. So not really. It's really mostly art, to be honest.

Z: And do you think it's drawing in more people to start graffitiing or it's allowing people to explore this? Or do you usually think it's mostly just people that have already done it who are using the walls?

T: It's mixed, it also really depends on the location. for example, there is this location at Nordbahnbrücke. It's super outside near the Danube and more in the outskirts. And there is a graffiti wall, Abina Wand. And there are not so many people. So, people who start with it feel more comfortable doing it because there is not so much pressure and there are not other people looking. I would say that it's mixed. There are people who go there who paint since many, many years and who are obviously professionals in it.

There are also locations where people feel more comfortable with trying it out for the first time. So, I would say it really depends on the location. So, when it's super, super nice outside, you see a lot of people drawing on the Wienerwand. And everyone can paint them. There are also some hidden rules, not from us, somehow in the graffiti community that, for example, if someone is painting a nice piece, and it looks super, super good and clean, you tend to not really paint over it out of respect. So, this is also in a graffiti scene, there are some hidden rules where you don't tend to do it. And then you go and search for places where it's hidden and people don't really paint their good stuff. So, you don't feel bad about crossing it.

Z: So, I've talked to a lot of people from Vienna about it, and I've met some people that don't know about it, they've lived here their whole lives. Do you think that it's a well-known project, or has there been any initiative to try to let people know about it, or do people just kind of find it on their own?

T: Yeah, good point, actually. Not so many people know about it, yeah.

Z: Why is that?

T: I don't know. I know that our goal is to make it more visible and to make it more open because I know that a lot of people don't know about it. And I haven't really done research about it, it's not so common for cities that in Europe, for example, that you have such projects? Maybe you know it better because you have done the research?

Z: Yeah, Vienna definitely has one of the most, or best organized public wall systems. Each city has a couple, it's never as many or it's hard to find information about it. A lot of the other ones are private as well. So, in terms of public walls programs, Vienna is definitely the best. So, it's really impressive. I'm just wondering, is this city, does the city want to actively promote it or it's just there for the citizens to use?

T: It's not really on the priority list of the city of Vienna. It's up to us. It's definitely on our agenda to make it more visible and to bring it more to people because the scene is very active and the older people or the ones who are longer in the scene know about it. But the younger generation don't and it's not only the fact about you are painting on a wall it's also about getting in touch with the community. So, the people meet there, they connect there.

They just didn't do it because they thought, hey, we do it and the people will hear about it anyway somehow in the scene. It would be nice if it goes also out of the scene. So, yeah, it's definitely on my list to do that, to promote it more. And it will happen through, yeah, also through the digital space, I guess, because this is where most of the young people get their news or information. So, it's definitely on the list to do it because in the last years, it hasn't really been done so much.

Z: Yeah, I'm sure the city has so much to do already.

T: Yeah. Stefan hosts workshops and stuff for kids. That's probably doing a lot as well. And Stefan is doing his own kind of thing. He's just helping me, he's doing some kind of small jobs for me, but he's not really involved in the project. I would say it's really now just me and also some colleagues who are working with me here. And it's also not really the city of Vienna. We are part of the city of Vienna, but the actual city of Vienna, they are not really involved in it.

So maybe this is also why they didn't really do any promotion, because it's just not part of their job, I would say.

Z: You're also working on other projects as well, right? This is just one.

T: Exactly. Yeah. So, this is just a part of my work, which is a big part now, obviously, because it's a lot of work. And I would say in the last years, a lot of things have got a bit rusty and it needs to be renewed. Also, the graffiti scene has changed. It's definitely on my agenda, first to make more walls and also to make it more visible that they exist.

Z: Have you noticed any companies using these walls for commercials or for advertisements? Or have you had any requests if they could use it for advertisements?

T: Yes. Just recently, a company asked me if they can paint something on it. Everyone can paint on them, just not allowed to spray the brand, the logo. So, it's not allowed to use it for branding stuff. This is in our guidelines for painting. And it's not allowed to paint symbols, hate symbols, stuff like that. And also, not brands, I don't know if some children paint a painting and they make I don't know what kind of example I could give. If some children paint a painting and they make the McDonald's logo on it because it's funny. Well, if a big company wrote to me that they want to hire a professional artist, a painter, and they want to paint a painting and make their brand. And this is real; it's more professional way. It's not allowed. As simple as that. So, we got some requests, we always must tell them, hey, you can paint whatever you want, no brands, no logos, no branding. And also, it's the same for political parties where we also got requests. So, this is the same. They're not allowed to make advertisements for their political party. It's political messages. It's a thin line.

Z: And on the Donau Canal, I know there's two legal walls, and then the rest is kind of a weird gray area. Do you have any plans for that or are you kind of working with that with the public Walls?

T: Yeah, that's a tricky thing because many people think that the whole Danube Donau Canal is legal, which is not. In the moment, it's not so urgent for us to do anything there because it really depends on

how the police. The police are really tolerating it because to be honest, it's full of graffiti. There are some cases where people write and they get caught from police painting a Donaukanal and they told us we thought it was a Wienerwand if we thought it's legal because everything is painted there and we have to tell them, no, sorry. It's not, you always have to check beforehand.

Sooner or later, we have to get in touch. The thing is, from what I know, all these walls, they are Denkmalschutz. It's, I don't know how to say, when something in the city is super, super old and it's somehow safe because it's monumental. And a lot of those walls are that. So, by law, it would be super, super hard to get it legalized. They are painted anyways. So, this is a bit of a tricky thing. And this is why we didn't really want to go into it because at the moment the people are painting there. No one really says a thing. We're not responsible for it. So, we do not encourage the people to paint there, if they do it, it's, it's a bit tolerated, it can also happen that a police car drives by and the police officers having a bad day and they feel yeah, we're going to go and make a problem out of it. It really depends. Now it's not really on our agenda to change that because it's nice to open walls somewhere else where they are not walls at all. And at Donaukanal, you have basically two walls. Yeah, people are extending it. So, yeah. We are super aware of this topic.

Z: Yeah, that's really difficult.

Z: I think we have to stop the interview there; the zoom time is ending.

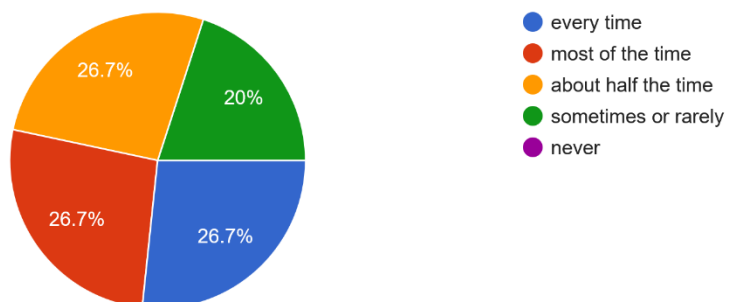
[Ending remarks and saying goodbye]

Appendix B: Survey Questions and Quantitative Results from Online Survey “Public Walls and the Right to the City in Vienna”

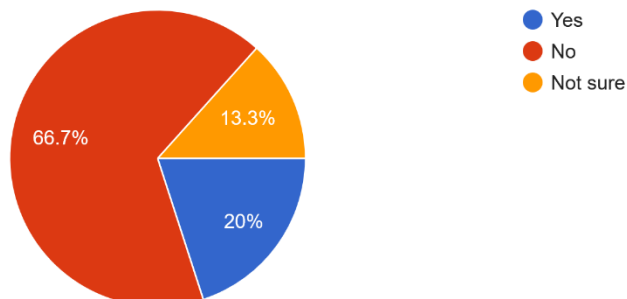
Posted on October 5, 2025

By participating in this survey, you agree that your anonymized responses may be used for research purposes. All data will be treated confidentially and stored only for the duration of the study. You can terminate your participation at any time without giving a reason by emailing neri_zola@student.ceu.edu. By clicking 'I agree' below, you confirm that you have understood the information and are participating voluntarily.

1. Are you currently living in or near Vienna?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. How long have you been doing graffiti/street art?
 - a. Open response
3. How often do you usually paint? (ex: once a week or a couple times a year)
 - a. Open response
4. How often do you use public walls (Wienerwand) when you paint?

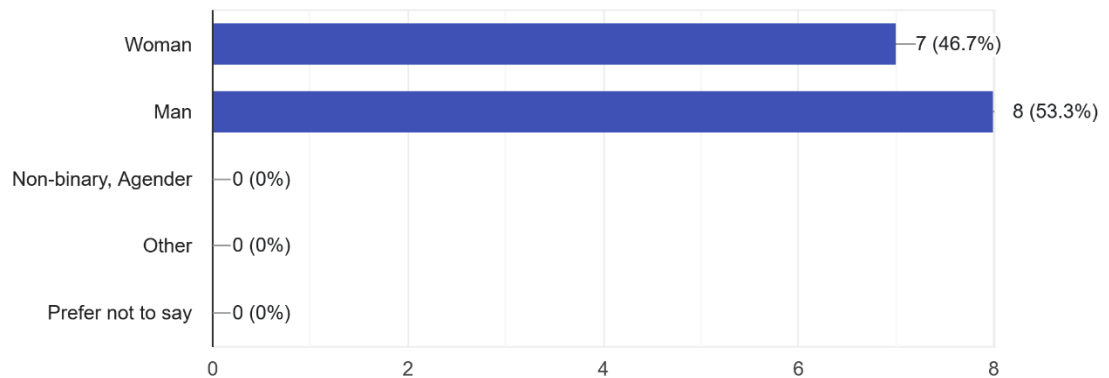


5. Would you paint as often (or at all) if the public walls program didn't exist?

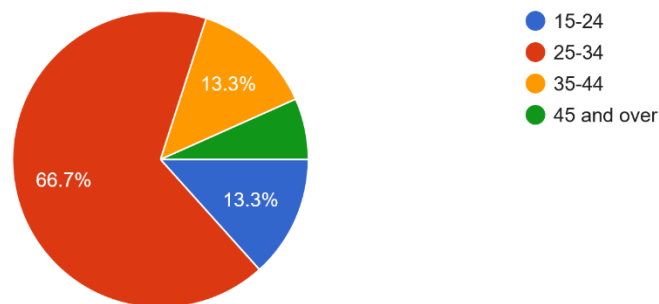


6. Were you aware of the public walls (Wienerwand) program before you started painting? How did you find out about it?
 - a. Open response

7. Do you think the Wienerwand program makes graffiti and street art more accessible to people who wouldn't paint otherwise? Briefly explain your answer.
 - a. Open response
8. Is there anything you like about the public walls (Wienerwand) program in Vienna? For instance, is it well organized and maintained?
 - a. Open response
9. Is there anything you would like to change about the current Wienerwand program? If yes, what would you like to see?
 - a. Open response
10. If possible, please pick the group that you most identify with:



11. What is your age group?



12. Please use the space below to add anything else you would like to say regarding the public walls (Wienerwand) program or the graffiti/street art scene in Vienna.
 - a. Open response

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. If you would like to contact me to learn more about my project or how the data is used, you can email me at: neri_zola@student.ceu.edu. If you have any comments or questions about this survey, please add them below.

By clicking the 'Submit' button below, you are consenting to participate in this study.