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„Public Toilet Provision at the Donaukanal in Vienna:  
Gender Inequalities and Effects on the Use of Public Space“

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# 1 Introduction

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Toilets, urinating, and defecating are still tabooed topics in our society. It seems interesting how something so essential in everyday life as using the toilet can be met with such embarrassment. Plaskow (2016: 751) states: “The fact of multiple euphemisms for the toilet—bathroom, restroom, cloakroom, washroom, powder room, lavatory, loo, john, WC—itself testifies to a general unwillingness to use the actual word.” However, as the topic is indeed part of everyone’s daily life, it is important the toilet conversation is taken up.

However, the taboo and disgust around human elimination seems unevenly associated with different groups of society and becomes more visible when various hurdles have to be overcome to fulfil this basic need (Plaskow, 2016). In contrast, for people who enjoy easy access to toilets, the topic can be left disregarded without major consequences whilst denying others the same comfort (ibid: 753). Women and those who do not fit into the gender binary tend to be on the receiving end of this denial (Plaskow, 2016). Hence, overall, the existing gender imbalances in toilet provision demonstrate “the ways social hierarchies are mapped onto public space” (ibid.: 748).

Essentially, everyone needs toilets and if this cannot be recognised, how can inequities with regards to gender be tackled, which are so often inherent in toilet provision?

## 1.1 Current Research on Public Toilets and Gender

Although a taboo remains around toilets, research on the area has prospered in recent years, which can be seen in findings by Moreira et al. (2021: 2, 4): These show that public toilets have been scientifically researched more intensely from the 1990s onwards and publications even experienced an exponential rise in the previous decade. Generally, the research on toilets in a geographical or urban planning context seems more profound in anglophone countries so far. Clara Greed<sup>1</sup> is one of few who has decided to put one of her major research foci on toilet provision in relation to gender.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example UWE Bristol n.d. for her research area and recent publications

There are various aspects which highlight that gender and sex are relevant factors to consider when talking about toilet provision, access, and planning. Women generally need toilets more often than men, partly due to biological traits (Greed, 2003: 5-6). They also take longer than men on the toilet, again because of their biology but also for taking clothing on and off (Plaskow, 2016: 751). In addition, women might show different travel patterns than men throughout the city due to their daily routines which often include care work (e.g., dropping kids at school) and household chores (e.g., going shopping), which are still often carried out by women. Thus, they often have to include various stops and are likely to face longer journeys than men do, which again is a reason why they require more toilets at different locations. (Greed, 2003: 22) However, the contrary is the case with men often being offered a greater number of toilets (Greed, 2003: 5). Harassment is another threat women potentially face when seeking toilets, especially when these are situated in secluded and dark areas (Greed & Daniels, 2002, Hanson et al., 2007 both in Greed, 2019: 919)

A great deal of research has looked into how women are disadvantaged in toilet provision in comparison to men (e.g., Greed 2003 and many other publications by Greed). However, various other articles focus on a more diverse gender spectrum, not adhering to the binary categorisation into men and women. They show how individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles have to deal with inadequate or non-existing toilets and often suffer harassment (e.g., Browne, 2004; Doan, 2010; Colliver & Coyle 2020; Colliver & Duffus, 2022). Here, the topic of toilet segregation has become a major research focus.

## 1.2 Research Interest and Aims of this Study

Long queues or nowhere to go at all: Having to use public toilets is often not as easy as it should be – and as established before, there are certain groups in society who are particularly affected by this matter. When looking at gender, women as well as people who do not fit into the binary system of men and women face serious struggles when looking for toilets, using toilets or when having to choose which toilets to use (e.g., Browne, 2004; Doan, 2010).

Hence, one main aim of this study is to shed light on the experiences of people of different genders with their use of public toilets and to determine aspects that could be improved. Furthermore, it is essential to examine the consequences of toilet provision for people of different genders, meaning consequences regarding their participation in and use of public

space. As Greed points out: “Inadequate toilet provision undermines people’s mobility and chances of freely accessing and moving around in the city as a whole. The gendering of this provision is not without significance” (Greed, 2019: 909). Similarly, Arvidsson and Pinto (2022: 1) state the following: “We argue that this seemingly mundane issue of easy access to public toilets is located at an important intersection between female political citizenship and the right to the city.” Both quotes address the relevance of public toilet provision in relation to people’s use of the city in more general terms. This connection should be investigated in more detail in the course of this study.

To examine the issues above, this study will analyse the Donaukanal [Danube Canal] in Vienna. This area appears to be a suitable location due to the following reasons: Firstly, it is a much-frequented gathering place where people come together outdoors. Furthermore, in his diploma thesis Kirchmayr (2021: 60) found out that within Vienna the toilet situation at the Donaukanal was perceived to be particularly bad by the people questioned as it was mentioned several times as a place that lacks toilets. Various newspaper articles also point to the fact that toilet provision at the Donaukanal is insufficient as can be exemplified by the following headlines: “Suche am Wiener Donaukanal: Der weite Weg zum nächsten Klo” [“Search at the Donaukanal: The long way to the next toilet”] (Scherndl, 2019) or “Öffentliche Toiletten am Donaukanal fehlen” [“Public Toilets are missing at the Donaukanal”] (Krammer, 2021).

By looking at one specific site in Vienna, the Donaukanal, this study provides the opportunity to receive a deeper understanding of the experiences, needs, and wishes of people of different genders with regards to public toilets. Even though there is already a considerable amount of literature concerning the topic of public toilets and gender, literature for the Austrian context is sparse, which makes it valuable to examine the issues at an Austrian location. This can be beneficial to finding out whether issues raised in previous studies can be confirmed at this site and, in turn, whether there are new aspects brought up by the participants of this study that could help further the discussion in a broader context. Hence, the findings can potentially be used to improve the situation at the Donaukanal if needed but may also prove valuable in being transferrable to other places in Vienna or elsewhere.

Finally, as the author of this master thesis is a student of teacher education, a further purpose of this study is to show how this topic is relevant to the school subject Geography and



Economics. More precisely, this work provides a brief analysis of which competences and knowledge can be taught and acquired by the issues raised in this study. This may help to raise awareness and to overcome exclusionary processes inherent in the topic of public toilet provision.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The research questions consist of one main question 1) with several sub-questions and a meta-question 2) which connects the findings to didactics of Geography and Economics. The following research questions all refer to the location Donaukanal in Vienna.

- 1) How does public toilet provision affect people of different genders in their use of urban public space?
  - What is the current situation regarding availability of public toilets at the site?
  - Which experiences do people who spend time at the Donaukanal have with regards to toilet provision at the site?
  - Which gender-related issues with regards to toilet provision can be found?
  - How do people of different genders deal with the toilet situation at this location?
  - What are the different needs and wishes when it comes to toilet provision at the location?
- 2) How can teaching and learning in the subject Geography and Economics profit from the topic of toilet provision and gender?

### 1.4 Methodology

This study consists of a theoretical and an empirical part. The first part contains of a literature review that examines the main findings of previous literature on the interplay of public toilets and gender. In terms of methodology, the empirical part of this study is carried out by means of *Problem-Centred Interviews*. These are then transcribed and analysed by using *Qualitative Content Analysis*. In addition, mapping of the toilets at the research location helps to receive an overview of the toilet provision. Overall, this study can be summarised as a case study that focuses on the site of the Donaukanal, as a space that has previously been established as having an unsatisfactory toilet situation (Kirchmayr, 2021: 60).

## 1.5 Structure of this Thesis

Based on the research questions, the thesis follows the ensuing structure: After this introduction, the thesis introduces relevant concepts in chapter 2 “Key Terms”. Thereafter, a methodological part follows in the third chapter “Methodology”, which explains the procedures concerning the literature review, the mapping, and, most importantly, the interviews. Then, chapter 4 “Literature Review” provides the theoretical foundation for this work. It is followed by a short chapter on the site of the study (5 “Site of Study”), which introduces the Donaukanal in Vienna and the toilet situation at this public space. Chapter 6 “Findings” represents the core of this thesis as it describes and discusses the findings from the interviews. Chapter 7 “Didactic Perspectives and Reflections” provides bridges to the discipline of teaching Geography and Economics. Subsequently, the limitations of this study are clarified in 8 “Limitations of this Study”. Finally, the most important aspects of this thesis are summarised in 9 “Conclusion and Outlook” and possible future fields of interest are pointed out.

## 2 Key Terms

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In this chapter the main concepts and terms used in this thesis shall be defined and elaborated in order to set the ground for the following discussion. The concepts comprise *public toilets*, which are located in *public space*, both of which are used by people of different *gender and sex*.

### 2.1 Public Toilets

First and foremost, it should be defined what is meant by public toilets. Moreira et al. (2022: 41) see public toilets as essential infrastructure to ensure human rights to sanitation outside the home. Greed summarises as follows: “‘Public toilets’ comprise both traditional ‘on-street’, local authority public toilets and ‘off-street’ toilets to which the public has right of access, for example in restaurants, shopping malls and department stores, which, together, may be defined as ‘away from home toilets’” (British Toilet Association, 2001, Greed, 2003, Bichard & Knight, 2011 all in Greed, 2019: 911). The author illustrates that *many away from home toilets* are in fact supplied by private providers, such as in shops or at the workplace (Greed, 2019: 911), which may be the reason Greed suggests the term *away from home toilets* as an alternative term to public toilets.

Greed (2006: 128) also draws attention to the fact that off-street toilets are often not accessible for everyone. For example, access to toilets in restaurants may be limited to customers only. Hence, these kinds of off-street toilets cannot substitute on-street public toilets.

The question of access becomes particularly relevant in the light of the public-private-spectrum of toilets. At some locations access might be restricted to certain groups or some groups might not feel comfortable to enter. The former is the case, for example, in bars where children are not allowed to enter. The latter applies among others to certain religious groups that do not wish to use toilets in places where alcohol is consumed (Greed, 2009, The Problem section, para. 2). This shows why public toilets (*public* in this case meaning that they are accessible for everyone) are highly necessary. Regarding the first example, it has to be mentioned that pubs in Austria are not as restrictive with regards to age than pubs in the UK or US. Hence, it might be easier to be granted access in terms of age but this does not mean

that non-consumers are always welcome to use toilets or that one feels comfortable to use such toilets with children. The question that should be asked is whether public toilets are really public if they are not accessible for everyone.

In the empirical part of this study, that investigates the Donaukanal in Vienna, the focus will lie on on-street public toilets, which are also mapped on the toilet map *Figure 6* provided in 5.2 “Toilet Situation and Toilet Map”. Given that in restaurants the permission to use them lies with the restaurant owners or personnel, the term *public* does not seem fully appropriate. However, participants might still refer to toilets in restaurants during the interviews and these toilets might play a role for them when they choose to use them or when they are denied entrance. Focusing on on-street toilets is also valuable to show, in how far staying outside places of consumption is even possible.

## 2.2 Gender and Sex

As public toilets as gendered places are explored in this work, it is essential to look closer at definitions of gender, sex and, and related concepts. Throughout the literature search for this study, many different uses of these terms have been encountered, which made it difficult at times to work with consistent concepts of these expressions.

Nowadays, the term *sex* is usually used to refer to someone’s biological traits, whereas *gender* is used for the social component associated with this sex. Gender, again, has multiple facets: Döring names gender role behaviour, gender expression, gender identity, and the gender-political identity. (Döring, 2013: 104-105) Similarly, but more simplified, Moreira et al. (2021: 4) perceive of sex as a biological construct and gender as a social identity. However, other sources see this differently. For example, according to the WHO, gender identity is connected to both gender and sex but not part of gender as Döring views it. They state: “Gender identity refers to a person’s deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person’s physiology or designated sex at birth” (World Health Organisation, n.d.: para. 3). It seems to them gender is more societal, whereas gender identity refers to the individual level of identity.

While a binary conception of both gender and sex is still widespread, within gender and queer studies, there is a consensus that gender and sex exist on a continuum (Döring 2013: 98).

Indeed, many accounts cited in this study deal with the issues that people outside the gender binary experience. The following definitions provide an overview of the definitions for different genders and sexes that are used in this study, but they are by no means exhaustive.

Firstly, it is not true that sex characteristics fit into only two categories (male and female). On the contrary, about 1,7% of the world's population has intersex traits. (Amnesty International, 2018: Myth 1 section, para. 3, Myth 2 section, para. 1) Amnesty International (ibid.: Myth 1 section, para. 3) state that: "Intersex is an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural variations that affect genitals, gonads, hormones, chromosomes or reproductive organs."

Gender identity can also be fluid and diverse. Colliver and Duffus (2021: 1483) use the term *transgender* for "people who do not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth based on observation of perceived biological sex." *Non-binary* can refer to people who have identities between or outside binary gender identities. It can also describe individuals who identify as male or female at different times. The last definition provided refers to people who do not have a gender identity or refuse to have one. However, it is mentioned that the term non-binary is not limited to these concepts. (Budge, 2016: 460) Many transgender people also mainly identify as non-binary (Matsuno & Budge, 2017: 116).

Bovens and Marcoci (2023: 1) use the term *gender-nonconforming individuals* for people whose gender does not fit into the traditional binary categories of men and women. For example, trans and non-binary people can be counted as gender-nonconforming individuals. Such a term can prove useful to speak about the specific experiences of these people. Browne (2004) uses *gender ambiguous bodies* to speak about women who are not read as women by others. In comparison to the aforementioned term, this specifically addresses the body that is not assignable for others as clearly female or male, even if the people themselves might identify as such.

*Cis* (e.g., *cis-gender*, *cis-woman*, *cis-men*) is used to describe people who identify with their sex assigned at birth or with their sex as it is at birth (the latter may be intersex). For the intersex community, these terms can be problematic: The first definition could imply that everyone who is not cis identifies as trans, which might not be the case for intersex people. The latter could imply that intersex people who identify with the sex characteristics they are

born with fall into the category cis. This, however, falls short of acknowledging the lack of privilege associated with being intersex (Ghattas et al. 2015: 8). However, the term appears useful to employ for the purpose of emphasising the privilege associated with identifying with one's sex assigned at birth for people who are not intersex.

Finally, Browne (2004: 334) states that “a tension exists between challenging the borders of gender and sex and using these terms to enable a discussion of embodied experiences.” Overall, while acknowledging the interplay between sex and gender, a certain separation of these categories can prove useful: For the topic of toilet provision, both social and biological aspects, and thus both sex and gender, are relevant. Hence, while being aware that these concepts cannot be completely separated, in some cases it seems necessary to distinguish between them. For example, a person identifying as a woman might not necessarily have any experiences related to the struggles menstruation can cause when there is a lack of toilet provision. However, in such cases, terms like *people who menstruate* can be helpful to accurately refer to groups affected by specific issues, rather than speaking of women in general. The distinction of gender and sex, which can be regarded as problematic too, is taken up again in 3.3.6 “Additional Questionnaire”.

The terms used for genders and/or sexes in this work may also vary in order to accurately cite other authors. For example, some cited studies might simply only collect data for the categories women and men and in such cases these terms will be adopted.

## 2.3 Gender-Neutral Toilets

Typically, toilets are places of gender-segregation, but there are also exceptions: One type of toilet that will be discussed in this study is the *gender-neutral toilet* or *unisex toilet*. Colliver and Coyle (2020: 360) define gender-neutral toilets as “public toilets available for use by anyone regardless of gender.” However, the design of such toilets can vary: While some gender-neutral toilets are planned and built as individual units which include washbasins and have fully closed walls, others are simply former female or male bathrooms that were then relabelled (ibid.: 362). Renner (2004: 18) distinguishes between unisex or family restrooms: According to him, unisex restroom refers only to single-user toilet rooms, whereas family bathrooms may contain unisex toilets but also provide a common area with washbasins and

diaper-changing tables. For simplicity, in this work the terms gender-neutral toilet or unisex toilet are used interchangeably for all types of toilets that allow usage by all genders.

## 2.4 Public Space

This work analyses the partially public space Donaukanal in Vienna and examines the implications of public toilet provision at the site on its use. Hence, it is essential to briefly discuss the term *public space* itself.

Miller (2007: ix) writes the following about public space:

“We tend to think of public space as having certain essential and obvious characteristics. We believe it is publicly owned, the opposite of private space. We believe it is open and accessible to everyone, where no one can be turned away. We imagine it as the setting for important civic events, where large groups of people come to celebrate, protest, and mourn. We see it as somehow part of democratic life—a place for speaking out and being heard.”

The abstract shows the expectations of public space, but it also implies that these expectations are not always fulfilled. For example, Miller (2007: x) further argues that access to public space might be restricted and controlled and that public space might not even be publicly owned. Kohn (2004: 8) is one of many to describe the fuzzy borders of public and private spaces and also points to the fact that it is often unclear whether *public* refers to the ownership of a place, the access to it, or both. The interplay of public and private can also be observed at the Donaukanal. For example, in the guidelines for the development of the site (Heindl & Kraupp, 2014: 3) it is mentioned that the establishment of gastronomy has been fostered in recent years. On the contrary, the public expresses the wish and need for non-commercial spaces. Despite the interplay of public and private and the reality of inaccessibility for many, the quote by Miller above might act as a guideline of what public spaces could be.

Thompson (2002: 61) describes public open spaces as places where different people with different interests encounter each other, which might also lead to conflicts. Not only are there different interests; but different groups of people, for example different genders, also have different needs regarding the built environment, which should be taken into account (Sánchez de Madariaga & Neuman, 2020: 3). Finally, in relation to public spaces, it is relevant to ask

who of the public has access to them, which purposes they are used for, and which ideals for society they represent (Bondi & Rose, 2003: 235). This leads back to public toilets, which facilitate access to the greater public spaces they are situated in (Greed, 2019: 909). Hence, in this thesis, toilets are seen as a means to access and use public spaces.



## 3 Methodology

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Overall, this research can be classified as a case study as it examines the issue of public toilets in relation to gender and its effects on participation in public space by focusing on a specific area, the Donaukanal. In the following sections, the individual methodologies and working processes of this study will be explained in more detail.

### 3.1 Literature Review

The first main part of this work consists of a literature review where the current state of literature on toilet provision with regards to gender is presented. The literature was selected mainly by means of snowballing and by using search engines, such as google scholar and u:search. The findings are relevant to set the interviews of this thesis in context and to draw on established findings when carrying them out. As Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022: 51) argue, pre-knowledge can be easily transferred to categories of analysis.

The literature mainly stems from Anglo-American sources, where the research on toilets in a geographical or urban planning context seems to be rather profound. Clara Greed is one of few who has decided to put one of her major research foci on toilet provision in relation to gender.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to say that the works cited here mainly focus on western countries and that in other geographical and cultural contexts inadequate toilet provision may have even more severe consequences for gender minorities. However, as the empirical part of this study focuses on Vienna, literature based on western countries seems more relevant to the following analysis of the research site.

### 3.2 Mapping

To answer the question of availability of public toilets at the Donaukanal, the toilets at the site were mapped in the field by use of ArcGIS Survey123. The tool allows to plot the GPS position of the selected locations in combination with additional written information and pictures. This proved helpful as a picture of every toilet facility could be included and further information,

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<sup>2</sup> See for example UWE Bristol for her research area and recent publications

such as numbers of toilets for each gender and types of facilities could be added to each location. After the mapping process, the map was further edited in ArcGIS Online until the result *Figure 6: Toilet map Donaukanal*, which can be seen in the sub-chapter 5.2 “Toilet Situation and Toilet Map”, was created.

### 3.3 Empirical Work: The Interviews

The main collection of data for this study took place in the form of eight interviews. The illustration below *Figure 1*: shows the major steps of the interview process. The approaches regarding preparation, execution, processing, and evaluation of the interviews are outlined in the following sections.



*Figure 1: Interview process (Source: by author)*

#### 3.3.1 Interview Method: Problem-Centred Interview

As interview method, the problem-centred interview after Witzel and Reiter (2012) has been chosen. This method seemed highly suitable in the context of this study due to its “orientation towards socially relevant problems” (ibid.: 5). The authors emphasise the dialogic and interactive nature of this interview type. An encounter between “prior knowledge” and “social scientific constructs” from the interviewer’s side and “practical knowledge” and “common-

sense constructs” from the interviewee’s side should take place (ibid.: 18-19). Carrying out an interview in this manner is a deductive and inductive process combined. The deductive component is the prior knowledge that guides the research. At the same time, there is an openness towards new perspectives introduced by the interviewees, which adds the inductive component. (ibid.: 15) The authors emphasise the importance of the inductive element in social research where “the meaning of human action and behaviour” is central and latent patterns of behaviour shall be discovered. In order to gain access to the meaning as experienced by the individuals surveyed, the researcher will have to withhold their prior knowledge to some extent and engage with what the individuals have to say (ibid.: 16).

Hence, on the one hand, this combination of a deductive and inductive approach allows to draw on the findings from previous research on toilets and gender, which can surely offer valuable directions for the interview. On the other hand, there is enough open-mindedness for the opinions and experiences from the interviewees.

It is also suggested that an interview guide should be used. However, it should not contain fully formulated questions but rather act as a framework and support for the interviewer (Witzel & Reiter, 2012: 32). The absence of pre-formulated questions allows for flexibility and reduces the potential artificiality of the situation (ibid.: 53).

Prior to the interview, an introductory explanation takes place. At this stage it is important to emphasise the “importance of extensive narratives” by the respondents rather than encouraging a “question-answer pattern”. Hence, the interview will be rather asymmetrical in terms of speaking time, which the interviewees should be aware of. (Witzel & Reiter, 2012: 65) In addition to formal explanations, it is vital to break the ice which can be achieved by informal talk. This gives interviewer and interviewee the chance to familiarise themselves with each other. It also provides the interviewer with the opportunity to adapt to the interviewee’s conversation style. (ibid.: 67)

The actual interview starts with an opening question that encourages the respondent to share their narratives. This opening account by the respondent should ideally offer starting points to be followed up later on (Witzel & Reiter, 2012: 68, 70). After this initial stage the problem in focus is further explored in a dialogical manner. The dialogue with the interviewee should provide the chance to gain insights into their point of view. The authors also mention that the

clarification of pre-interpretations made by the interviewer is an important process throughout the interview. (ibid.: 76) At the end of the interview a short questionnaire can be used to collect answers to standardised questions regarding social characteristics for example (ibid.: 91). Finally, the interview ends with an exit and debriefing stage that should be used to thank the respondent and offer them the possibility to share final thoughts. (ibid.: 93)

Subsequently, a postscript should be drafted that can include impressions and reflections on the situation before, during, and after the interview (ibid.: 95-96).

Overall, there are three main steps to the process of a problem-centred interview: preparation, interviewing, and processing (ibid.: 36). The main part of the processing, analysis and interpretation, will follow the qualitative content analysis introduced in the following sub-chapter.

### 3.3.2 Evaluation Method: Qualitative Content Analysis

In terms of analysis the qualitative content analysis after Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022) has been selected. In this section, firstly, the most essential features of qualitative content analysis are outlined. Then the specific characteristics of Kuckartz' and Rädiker's approach are explained and it is argued why their approach is chosen for this study. This is then followed by an outline of their analysis process including categorisation and additional forms of analysis. Finally, the particular method relevant to this study is introduced.

It seems necessary to first outline some basic principles of qualitative content analysis. In comparison to quantitative data, which refers solely to numbers, qualitative data can be diverse: texts, videos, pictures, photographs, audio files, cultural artefacts, and other forms of data can be classified as qualitative (Kuckartz and Rädiker, 2022: 16). In addition, hermeneutics, plays an essential role in qualitative content analysis, which essentially refers to the process of understanding a text in its context and by utilising prior knowledge (ibid.: 23-24). Furthermore, the authors point out the high significance of the research questions that should guide the choice of research methods (ibid.: 29). Another point mentioned is the need for methodological rigor (ibid.: 31). Finally, categorisation, a cognitive process that helps to classify, compare, and designate phenomena, also plays a central role in content analysis

(ibid.: 53-55). However, the variety of categories is great: the authors list seven different types of categories, including thematic or evaluative categories, for example (ibid.: 56-57).

Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022: 39) suggest the following definition of qualitative content analysis, which includes some of the before-mentioned aspects:

„Unter qualitativer Inhaltsanalyse wird die systematische und methodisch kontrollierte wissenschaftliche Analyse von Texten, Bildern, Filmen und anderen Inhalten von Kommunikation verstanden. Es werden nicht nur manifeste, sondern auch latente Inhalte analysiert. Im Zentrum der qualitativen Analyse stehen Kategorien, mit denen das gesamte für die Forschungsfrage(n) bedeutsame Material codiert wird. Die Kategorienbildung kann deduktiv, induktiv oder deduktiv-induktiv erfolgen. Die Analyse geschieht primär qualitativ, kann aber auch quantitativ-statistische Auswertungen integrieren; sie kann sowohl kategorienorientiert als auch fallorientiert erfolgen.“

[“Qualitative content analysis is understood as a systematic and methodologically controlled scientific analysis of texts, pictures, films, and other contents of communication. Not only manifest but also latent contents are analysed. Categories are in the centre of qualitative analysis, by which all the material relevant to the research question(s) are coded. The categorisation can be conducted in a deductive, inductive, or deductive-inductive manner. The analysis takes place in a primarily qualitative way but can integrate quantitative-statistical evaluations; The analysis can happen along the categories but also based on the cases.”]

One can see from this excerpt that there is a great degree of openness and a variety of possibilities in qualitative content analysis, which may evoke a sense of arbitrariness. Nevertheless, it is emphasised that the approach has to be a systematic one. This is partly achieved by the use of categorisation. The flexibility expressed in the quote above also takes into account that different contexts might need different approaches.

Due to the many illustrative examples given in their book, the evaluation method by Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022) seemed very applicable. The authors (ibid.: 113-114) mention several characteristics specific to their procedure; the most relevant of these shall be briefly outlined here. One of the features of Kuckartz’ and Rädiker’s approach is an initiation phase before any categories are created. The aim of this phase is to bear in mind the overall meaning of the

text. They follow a hermeneutic principle with regards to understanding texts. It is not necessarily a theory that is the starting point of the analysis. Their approach is also aligned with the use of QDA software, which proves practicable for this study and they provide detailed examples of how to analyse the data further once categories are formed.

In terms of categorisation, one can differentiate between *deductive* or *a priori* categories, and *inductive* categories. However, mixed forms are common too. Deductive categories are not based on the empirical data but established beforehand, whereas an inductive approach does rely on the empirical data for the determination of categories (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2022: 71). Deductive categories can be based on a variety of sources. Examples include the interview guideline, theory, a schedule, hypotheses, everyday knowledge, or personal experience. (ibid.: 72-73) To avoid ambiguity, definitions for each category should be formulated. (ibid.: 75) To combine deductive and inductive methods, one can start with a limited amount of pre-formulated categories and then add subcategories along with the analysis of the material (ibid.: 102-103).

Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022: 104) introduce three different analysis methods: content structuring qualitative content analysis, evaluative qualitative content analysis, and type-forming qualitative content analysis. All of the analysis types have in common that they can be both topic-oriented and case-oriented (ibid.: 105). The authors point out that this is another aspect that differentiates their approach from Mayring's, who does not put much emphasis on case-orientation (Steigleder, 2008: 174 in Kuckartz & Rädiker 2022: 105). Case-orientation seems highly relevant to this study as it allows to look at the individuals' perspectives more closely and to examine connections within one interview.

The content structuring qualitative content analysis can be viewed as the core method of the three analysis methods whereby the material is coded in several cycles (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2022: 104). For this type of analysis, it is important to note that passages may contain themes that fit into several categories. Thus, overlaps of codes are possible (ibid.: 134). The evaluative qualitative content analysis uses a different approach to categorisation as codes will be assigned different degrees of applicability (low to high) (ibid.: 161). As the name implies, the researcher needs to assess or evaluate the content (ibid.: 157). Finally, the type-forming qualitative content analysis is usually preceded by one or even both of the other methods and aims to create a typology (ibid.: 104).

In this study, the first analysis type, the content structuring qualitative content analysis, is used. A type-forming qualitative content analysis does not seem useful as the number of participants appears to low for a proper categorisation of different types. However, comparisons between participants can still take place and are also part of the content structuring qualitative content analysis. Furthermore, the research questions can be answered by means of thematic categorisation and do not necessarily require the creation of different types.

### 3.3.3 Interview Guide and Test interview

Before the conduction of the interview an interview guide (see appendix 11.2 “Interview Guide”) was drafted as suggested by Witzel and Reiter (2012: 32). Even though they advise against using pre-formulated questions, this guideline included some of these due to the interviewer being novice to the task. In addition, some questions would have been hard to formulate spontaneously because of their complexity. Unclear phrasing as a consequence would have probably confused the interviewees. However, the interviewer still added spontaneous questions when appropriate and did not stick exactly to the phrasing of the questions. Also, there was flexibility regarding the order of the questions depending on the topics raised by the participants.

In terms of structure, the interview guide included a section with reminders for the part before the start of the recording, and then three sections for the actual interview: an introduction, a main part, and an ending or debriefing. The introductory part was mainly to ask the participants about how and where they spent their time at the Donaukanal, whereas the main part then delves deeper into the topic of public toilets. The questions “Wie würdest du die Situation bezüglich öffentlicher Toiletten dort bewerten? Was sind deine Erfahrungen? Was ist gut/schlecht?” [“How would you rate the situation regarding public toilets at the site? What are your experiences? What is good/bad?”] can be classified as the opening questions as introduced by Witzel and Reiter (2012: 68, 70) as it invites the participants to narrate about their experiences and offers opportunity for follow-up questions. The main part of the interview is roughly structured in general questions about personal experience with public toilets at the site, questions about the effects of toilet situation in the area, and suggestions

or wishes for improvement. Finally, the debriefing leaves room for any additional comments from the interviewee's side.

Before the interviews that are used in this study, a test interview was conducted with another participant. This helped to evaluate the time frame needed so that participants could be informed accordingly. In addition, the test interview was useful to adapt questions that were not clear to the test participant. This was relevant for one question particularly, which was misunderstood by the test participant. The question used was "Denkst du, dass dein Geschlecht und/oder Gender einen Einfluss darauf hat, wie zugänglich oder adäquat Klos für dich hier sind und wenn ja inwiefern?" ["Do you think that your sex and/or gender has an influence on how accessible or adequate toilets are for you here and if yes, in how far?"]. The question was interpreted as suggesting that one's sex or gender could have direct influence on the accessibility of toilets whereas the interviewer actually wanted to ask whether the participant thought if one's sex or gender made it harder or easier to access toilets. Hence, the question was changed to. "Wie zugänglich oder angemessen sind die Klos am DK für dein dein Geschlecht/Gender?" ["How accessible or adequate are toilets at the Donaukanal for your sex/gender?"] Overall, the test interview proved helpful in avoiding potential misunderstandings due to unclear phrasing in the real interviews.

### 3.3.4 Participants

The only condition to be eligible to take part in the interview was that the respective person had spent time in the open public space of the Donaukanal at least ten times in the past three years. This was to ensure that the participants had a certain knowledge of the area so that they would be able to talk about their experience with regards to the toilet facilities at the site. The time frame was chosen so that the experiences were rather current but to include a time span before covid as well. This was to include people who might not have spent any time there during the pandemic but did so before.

In addition, it was a main goal to have participants of various genders as this seemed necessary to answer the research questions and shed light on the different experiences that people of different sex and gender face with regards to toilets.



The call for the interview was shared via social media (Facebook and Instagram), among friends and via email towards specific organisations.

In this section an overview of the participants is provided. The data presented stems from the additional questionnaires that the interviewees filled out. In the table below, the participants are presented according to the order in which the interviews took place. As gender and to a certain extent sex are the major focus of this study, the participant number provides information about gender and sex of each participant. This way, the findings can be easily connected to the respective genders/sexes. The terminology is translated from the original answers in German.

**Table 1:** Participant overview

Participant Identification	Gender	Sex
P1	female	female
P2	female	female
P3	female	female
P4	male	male
P5	non-binary	female
P6	intersex	-
P7	male	male
P8	male	male

As can be gathered from the table above, participant 6 did not enter their sex but did add a comment for this question item instead. The interviewee stated that the division of sex and gender in the questionnaire was misleading and problematic and that the question on sex should read “Which sex have you been assigned at birth?” instead of “What is your biological sex?”. This issue is further discussed in section 3.3.6 “Additional Questionnaire” and has also been approached in sub-chapter 2.2 “Gender and Sex”.

The age range of the participants was 23 to 40 years. However, 7 out of 8 interviewees were 23 to 29 years old. This age range might be partly due to the researcher’s own age and reach (e.g., the types of media through which the call for participation was communicated). However, as the criteria to qualify as a participant was to have spent a certain number of times at the research area, this might also to some extent inform about the typical age of visitors of the Donaukanal.

In terms of education, 6 out of 8 participants had completed a degree in tertiary education and 2 had graduated from secondary school at the time of filling out the additional questionnaire. 5 participants were in some sort of employment and 4 were students, meaning one participant was working as well as a studying.

Furthermore, the participants were asked how many times they had spent time in open public space at the Donaukanal within the last three years. Five answered with “10–20 times” and three with “20–30 times”. Hence, they were familiar with the area, which was, as stated before, a criterion to participate.

### 3.3.5 Conduction of Interviews

Before the interview, the interviewees were sent a consent form and a link to the additional questionnaire for them to sign and fill out. They were also provided with a link to the video call, where the interview would take place. In the video call, before the official start of the interview, the participants were made aware again that their interview was going to be recorded. They were also asked if they had any further questions. In addition, they were told about the time frame and in order to reduce potential worries, they were ensured that there was no right and wrong to their answers. They were also encouraged to elaborate on each question following Witzel & Reiter’s (2012: 65) advice to stimulate extensive narratives.

The interviews were conducted via the video communication service *Zoom* which also offers a recording function that was used to retrieve audio files later on. Conducting the interviews online also offers flexibility in terms of location for both interviewee and interviewer, which was a main reason for this option. In terms of language, the interviews were conducted in German as this was thought to create the most natural setting for the native German speaking respondents. However, when excerpts are used later in this thesis, English translations are provided. The interview guide proved helpful in ensuring that all relevant aspects were discussed. The only exception to this proceeding was the interview with participant 6. It was carried out as a shortened version on the phone and was thus not transcribed. This is why in references only the participant number is stated and also why there are no direct quotes from this participant.

In accordance with Witzel & Reiter's (2012: 95-96) suggestion of drafting postscripts, most interviews were followed by a short reflection by the interviewer in order to improve the procedure for the following interviews. This included the following notes: being aware to not anticipate answers or bias the participants with the questions asked, not to backchannel extensively during the interviewees' answers in order to ensure audibility in the recording, and to refrain from phrasing questions in a long manner or to include more than one topic within one question. The latter precaution was to reduce the risk of confusion and to prevent situations where participants need to ask the interviewer to repeat questions. Overall, these postscripts were taken into account to improve validity, the ease of the transcription, and the well-being of the participants.

### 3.3.6 Additional Questionnaire

An additional questionnaire (see appendix 11.3) was created for the purpose of asking for further background data on the participants. This survey was created with Google Forms and shared with the participants prior to the interviews. The questionnaire consisted of seven questions and therefore could be completed in about five minutes. The advantage of this format in contrast to asking for the information during the interview is the possibility of preformulated options in a multiple or single choice format. Asking for general background information is likely to be more efficient this way. Via a unique code for each participant that they had to enter within the questionnaire, the surveys could be matched with the respective interview. The other questions asked were related to age, sex and gender, educational background, occupation, and the amount of time spent at the site of research (Donaukanal).

Sex and gender were separated in two questions with the reasoning that both, the biological aspect of sex and the social aspect of gender would be relevant with regards to the use and experience of and with toilets. Döring points out that having a single question for sex and gender (e.g., just asking for "Geschlecht") would be unclear as to whether it refers to the biological or social dimension. To avoid this ambiguity, specifying which of these concepts the question refers to is suggested. (2013: 97-98) The author also proposes to alter the conventional order of possible answers to these questions in order to avoid "othering" and to work against socially established hierarchies (101-102). Hence, this advice was taken into account in the questionnaire.

However, as previously stated in “Participants”, the separation of gender and sex and the phrasing of the question asking for the participant’s sex was criticised. It can be questioned whether the separation of sex was very useful after all because it does not necessarily specify anyway, which biological characteristics (such as menstruation) apply. The criticism of the question “What is your biological sex?” rather than “Which sex have you been assigned at birth?” is very understandable, given that the former implies it is something fully selective, whereas *assigned* emphasises the element of decision-making in this allocation, which relates to Hird (2000: 248) who sees both “intersexuality and transsexualism as two bodily forms that [...] suggest ‘sex’ as socially inscribed.” On the other side, it is uncertain whether all participants would have been able to make sense of the term “assigned at birth”. Nevertheless, in the future more attention should be paid to the terminology used. The comment provided a valuable contribution to reflect on the wording of the questionnaire and underlines the importance of the discussion of such terminology.

### 3.3.7 Transcription

The recordings were transcribed with the transcription function provided in the programme MAXQDA. Mainly, the transcription was carried out manually by this author. However, in some instances additional automatic transcription software, such as sonix and trint, was used and the transcripts were then further edited and corrected manually in MAXQDA, as the automatic transcriptions still included many faults. In the transcripts, grammatical errors were corrected and fillers reduced when they hindered readability.

### 3.3.8 Evaluation

The evaluation process followed the Qualitative Content Analysis, as described before. The material was coded in MAXQDA. Many of the sections of the literature review could be adopted as categories and were further complemented by categories established from the material. Throughout the coding process, the categories were continuously reassessed. Thus, several times categories were renamed, split up, or combined to keep the number of codes manageable. The respective results, arranged according to the categories, can be found in 6.1 “Interview Results” where the accounts of the participants are presented and complemented with selected excerpts of the interview material. This part aims to give a raw overview of the

interviews, whereas the sub-chapter 6.2 “Discussion” then links the findings with literature, offers interpretations and returns to answering the research questions.

Table 2 below presents the system of categories that has been developed and used for the analysis of the data. Both deductive and inductive categorisation were used. As can be seen, the number of sub-categories is rather high, which is partly because some of them repeat themselves in several main categories. For example, topics that are mentioned as experiences may also be readdressed as wishes. The definition for each category is provided as well.

**Table 2:** *Categorisation system*

Main categories and definitions	Sub-categories
<p><b>1. Activities</b> The activities carried out by the participants at the Donaukanal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting friends</li> <li>- Sports/physical Activity</li> <li>- Passing through</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Use of Public Toilets</b> General information on which types of toilets have been used and the frequency of toilet usage at the site</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public urination</li> <li>- Bars/restaurants</li> <li>- Avoidance of portable chemical toilets</li> <li>- Avoidance of public toilets in general</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. General Experience and Attitude</b> Description of general experiences that are not directly linked to gender inequality by the interviewees themselves</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Payment</li> <li>- Public urination</li> <li>- Hygiene and cleanliness</li> <li>- Safety</li> <li>- Number of Toilets</li> <li>- Opening Times</li> <li>- Equipment</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Experience of Gender Inequality</b> Description of experiences that are linked to gender inequality by the interviewees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Equipment/facility</li> <li>- Hygiene</li> <li>- Comments, judgement, Aggression</li> <li>- No suitable option for gender</li> <li>- Number of toilets per gender</li> <li>- Menstruation</li> <li>- Public urination</li> <li>- Waiting time</li> <li>- Payment</li> <li>- No discrimination</li> </ul>

<p><b>5. Thoughts on Gender Inequality</b>  No personal experience but thoughts about the experiences of other genders/sexes, Considerations about toilet segregation and gender inequality regarding toilets in general</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Payment</li> <li>- Equipment/facility</li> <li>- Hygiene</li> <li>- Managing the toilet issue</li> <li>- Safety</li> <li>- Public Urination</li> <li>- Opinions/observations regarding unisex toilets</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Acceptable Walking Time</b>  Acceptable maximum amount of time to walk to a public toilet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2 mins max.</li> <li>- 5 mins max.</li> <li>- 10 mins max.</li> <li>- 15 mins max.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Effects on the Use of Public Space</b>  Effects of the toilet situation on the stay and the use of the public space Donaukanal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Choice of location</li> <li>- Activities</li> <li>- Frequency of visits</li> <li>- Duration of stay</li> <li>- Consumption</li> <li>- Quality of stay</li> <li>- No effects</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Needs and Wishes</b>  Needs and Wishes regarding the toilet provision at the site, suggestions for improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safety</li> <li>- Maintenance</li> <li>- Equipment and facilities</li> <li>- Opening times</li> <li>- Location, distribution, and findability</li> <li>- Education</li> <li>- Types and design of toilets</li> <li>- Hygiene and cleanliness</li> <li>- Payment</li> <li>- Quantity and ratio of toilets</li> </ul>

## 4 Literature Review

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The following chapter first provides a brief introduction to Feminist Geography and Gender-Sensitive Planning. It then continues to explore the current state of literature regarding toilet provision in connection with issues of gender and sex. The focus lies mainly on the experience of different users as does the empirical part of this work.

Various authors have explored the topic focusing on different aspects from medical or biological to societal issues and from quantitative issues of toilets provision to aspects concerned with the quality of toilets. The following sections aim to outline these diverse foci that are all relevant for understanding how gender and sex are relevant in the realm of inequities in toilet provision. They then help to pose questions of how exactly this affects people and how it affects them in different ways.

Before delving into the various themes that can be found on the interplay of toilet and gender, the following two sub-chapters provide a brief introduction into the paradigms of feminist geography and gender-sensitive planning and thereafter a historical account of the topic to gain some insights how the discussion about equal toilet provision has developed over the past years.

### 4.1 Feminist Geography and Gender-Sensitive Planning

The topic and questions raised in this thesis are relevant to and embedded in both feminist geography and gender-sensitive planning. Due to the limited scope of this work, this is only a glimpse into the premises of those subjects and by no means a complete account of the history and angles of these disciplines. Nevertheless, it seems relevant to provide some disciplinary context to understand from which perspective the ideas of this work are coming from and in return, what these disciplines contribute to the topic of this study.

Datta et al. (2020: 2) emphasise feminist geography's diversity and its context dependency regarding time and place. However, despite its different foci, they argue feminist geography always aims at the "disruption of inequalities and an articulation of difference."

Moss (2002: 3) provides examples of some specific topic areas that feminist geography has started to get engaged in: "spatializing the constitution of identities, contextualizing meanings

of places in relation to gender, and demonstrating how gender as a social construction intersects with other socially constructed categories within particular spatialities.” All of these broader topics are also relevant to public toilets as places where gender is both enforced as a social construct and where gender matters in terms of the experience of these spaces.

Essential to the discipline of feminist geography is also the consensus that spatial and gender relations are interdependent (Autor\*innenkollektiv Geographie und Geschlecht, 2021: 32). This theory is also inherent in the topic and questions of this paper as it aims to expose how gendered relations of power manifest themselves in spatial patterns.

In their handbook for feminist geographies (Autor\*innenkollektiv Geographie und Geschlecht, 2021: 10-11), the authors name three main aims of feminist geography: Firstly, feminist geography seeks to point at voids in research, which might often be due to particular groups being left out. It then intends to fill these gaps. Secondly, it aims to make the contributions of marginalised groups visible. Lastly, according to the authors, feminist geographers position themselves, meaning they reflect on their role as researchers and take political consequences from scientific findings.

For this work, the first aim is definitely valid as literature on gender equal toilet provision in Austria is sparse. Regarding the second point, it is difficult to identify to what extent the literature used for this study stems from marginalised groups; however, there are certainly cases such as Doan’s article (2010) that talks about her own experience as a transgender woman. Concerning the last point, taking political consequence would go beyond the scope of this study; however, hopefully the findings of this study can help to raise awareness for the issues present. In terms of reflection, as a cis-woman, the author of this thesis has certainly experienced some degree of disadvantaging in terms of toilet provision but is still privileged in comparison to other genders who are often granted no provision at all. Thus, this author is aware that there might be a certain blindness to problems and experiences that other genders encounter. This is why it is even more important to give voice to a variety of genders, which is done in the interviews of this study.

Planning, in contrast to geography, is somewhat more output- and practice-oriented and thus tends to look at specific plans and implementations (Roberts, 2013: 3-4). With regards to



planning, it must be said that jobs that are concerned with the built environment have until recently been mainly occupied by men and often continue to do so (ibid.: 2).

In Planning, Fincher and Iveson (2008: 2) identify the need to consider diversity, which had been neglected in the past, they argue. According to them, there are three major categories that can act as guidance to planners when contemplating diversities. The first of these is *redistribution*, which refers to the aim of rectifying disadvantages. Secondly, they established the category *recognition*. This concept refers to the process of understanding groups in order to plan for their needs. The third category by the authors is called *encounter*. This term represents the opportunities for different people to meet each other. (ibid.: 3) All three of these concepts can provide relevant viewpoints for public toilet provision. Toilets can be viewed as a resource that has to be justly (re)distributed. The needs of different groups with regards to toilets differ, which makes recognition highly relevant to be able to cater adequately for different users. Lastly, it is also a space where the encounter of different genders has to be discussed in light of the emergence of unisex toilets.

One approach within gender-sensitive planning is the *times of the city* approach, which considers time as an essential resource that is closely linked to one's quality of life. Given the multiple tasks women often handle, this seems particularly relevant to them and their everyday life. (Roberts, 2013: 5) Time is also a major theme in the discussion around gender equality in toilet provision and will be discussed in more detail in this work.

## 4.2 Historical Developments: Examples from the UK and Sweden

It is worthwhile to briefly examine the debate around public toilets for different genders historically and to investigate where the absence of women's toilets is coming from. Both of the following examples point at the significance of who is involved in decision-making processes and they also indicate which and whose needs are deemed important. This is by no means a complete account of historical events concerning this topic and of course developments went differently in different countries; however, introducing two examples from the beginning of the last century might prove useful in pointing out the debates around toilets and gender and help understand the issues that are still faced today.

For example, Penner (2001) elaborates on a debate about the potential construction of a women's public lavatory in Camden starting 1900. Voices against the construction came from concerned property owners worrying about the value of their closeby houses and from omnibus owners arguing the facility would obstruct traffic (ibid.: 35). It is also crucial to mention that the deputation of these two groups did not include a single woman and in the vestry of St. Pancras, the institution responsible for the affair, there was only one woman present at the reception of the deputation (ibid.: 40-41).

Penner points towards more profound reasons by the objectors against the female toilets than the arguments brought forward by the property and omnibus owners. She argues that not the toilet itself was an issue in their view, but the sex and class of its potential users. After all, there were toilet facilities for men available at the site. There was also awareness of the number of women passing Park Street, but this was even used as an argument against a women's toilet as the street was deemed too congested already. It seemed not acceptable to the deputation that working class women were in need of such facilities. Instead, it was argued that women could use the toilet at home, ignoring the fact that many women at the site did neither live nearby nor have access to water-cosets and baths at their homes. Penner concludes that perceptions of class in combination with perceptions of decency and morality played into the whole discussion. She also points to the fact that working-class women and women who used the street to shop had different needs, which is why it does not make sense to talk about women's needs in general in her view, but to distinguish between the needs of women of different classes. (Penner, 2001: 41)

The toilet was finally built five years later after a query by Mrs Miall Smith, the only vestrywoman, who had argued for the toilet from the beginning, and a report by the Highways, Sewers and Public Works Committee (Penner, 2001: 48). However, the account shows, that the construction of the toilet was not realised without dispute and persistence. It also shows that who is in charge of decision-making is highly important to who is considered in planning and who is left out.

The importance of who is present at a decision-making level can also be seen in Arvidsson and Pinto's article (2022) who report how female municipal councillors from the Social Democratic Party in Sweden advocated more public conveniences for women. They put forward motions

for this cause throughout the 1910s in the cities of Malmö, Gothenburg and Stockholm, which all passed (ibid.: 1).

The authors argue that while in other countries, such as New Zealand and in the Anglo-American realm the call for toilets often came from those outside local positions of power, the situation in Sweden was different. Here, the need for public toilets was voiced by women working within local councils (Daley, 2000: 96 in Arvidsson & Pinto, 2022: 3; Arvidsson & Pinto, 2021: 3). Several arguments were brought forward for a better and ideally free toilet infrastructure for women. These included justice and gender equality, biological needs, women's role as caregivers, class, and public health. (Arvidsson & Pinto, 2022: 7-10) The most convincing arguments, however, were the ones concerning women's biology and their role as caregivers. The urge for the provision of toilets that were free of charge was mostly ignored. On the other hand, toilets were placed in working class areas, which shows some awareness for the class issue even if it was not directly addressed by anyone except the councilwomen who forwarded the motions. The authors come to the following conclusion: "The question of class thus can be said to have been addressed through praxis, but not through a form of articulation that would signal acceptance of class and gender as political issues" (ibid.: 12). Interestingly, in Sweden there were less concerns about the encounter between working- and middle-class women that could take place in public conveniences than in the Anglo-American realm. The authors provide two potential reasons for this: firstly, the fact that in the Swedish context the toilets were intended to cater towards the needs of working class women which means the respect of middle-class women was not a major concern, and secondly, the temporal and cultural differences to Victorian Britain. (ibid.: 13)

For reasons of limited space in this paper, the details of the historical development of women's public toilets will not be examined more closely, yet both these examples aim to highlight the point that it matters who is in charge of decisions in planning and whose voices are taken into account. The first example also shows that in some cases a lot of persistence was needed to improve the toilet situation for women.

### 4.3 Why Public Toilet Provision is a Gender Issue

Firstly, there are various aspects why gender matters when planning public toilets. Furthermore, gender also plays a major role when examining existing inequalities and exclusion in toilet provision.

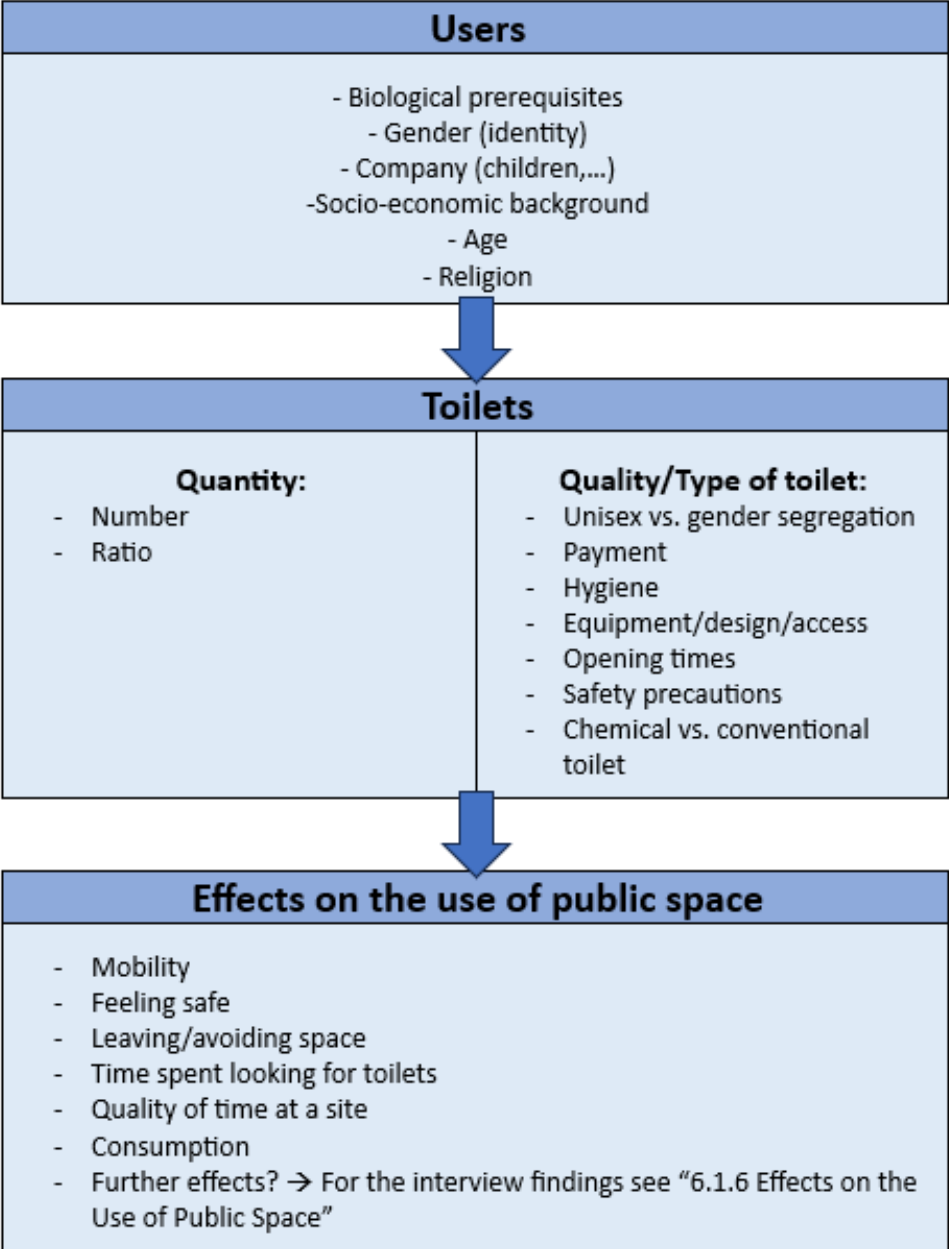
As stated in the introduction of this work, a great deal of research has examined in how far women are disadvantaged in toilet provision in comparison to men (e.g. Greed 2003). Many recent publications also explore the experiences of transgender, non-binary, and intersex people, and people with gender-ambiguous bodies in connection with public toilets (e.g., Browne, 2004; Doan, 2010; Faktor, 2011). Here, the topic of toilet segregation has become a major research focus.

The following sections outline various aspects that make toilet provision a gender issue and addresses in what ways people of certain genders are disadvantaged in their access to public toilets. Some of these inequalities are due to the fact that different groups of people require different types of toilet provision. Other inequalities are a result of certain genders being disproportionately affected by certain issues.

As will be argued, it is important to look at both quantity and quality of public toilets: Both the number of toilets provided and how they are designed are relevant for a provision that does not discriminate against certain genders. This is summarised by Moore (2002: 600) who determined four categories of restroom inequities in the workplace (which, however, can be just as well transferred to public toilets in general as they neatly summarise both quantitative and qualitative issues that can be observed in all sorts of public spaces): Unequal toilets (referring to number, size, and distance), inadequate women's toilets, missing women's toilets, and no toilets at all. However, as women are not the only ones suffering from toilet inequity, these categories can be expanded to the provision of unisex toilets and all those not fitting into binary toilet labels.

In the ensuing sections the most prominent aspects that account for the gendered nature of public toilets according to the literature search are discussed. The last two sections of this sub-chapter then look at the issue through the lens of power relations and outline the broader effects of (unequal) public toilet provision on the use of public space. The findings also inform the categories used for the empirical part of the study.

The illustration *Figure 2* provides a summary of the aspects mentioned in the following sections and sets them in context with each other. It is important to mention that no claim to completeness is raised with this graph.



*Figure 2: Users, toilets, effects (Source: by author, based on themes from the literature review)*

### 4.3.1 Biology, Health, and Hygiene

In this section, concerns of biological nature and health-related issues will be examined which are often also connected to concerns about the level of hygiene in toilets.

Women generally need toilets more often and for a longer time than men do, which is partly due to biological reasons (Greed, 2003: 5-6; Plaskow, 2016: 751). For example, pregnant

people and people who menstruate must urinate more often (Plaskow, 2016: 751). It should also be taken into account that menstruation, unlike urination and defecation, cannot be controlled consciously, which gives people who menstruate less autonomy in deciding when they go seek a toilet. In addition, the process of changing period products takes some time. (Anthony & Dufresne, 2007: 273) Hence, menstruation is one reason for this difference in the need of toilets (although it also has to be kept in mind that menstruation does not only affect women). Furthermore, urinary tract infections are more common among women due to their shorter urethras. Urinary tract infection again leads to more frequent and urgent urination. (Plaskow, 2016: 751) Also, Jagtap et al. (2022: 8) found that holding urine (as it might be done when no suitable toilet is nearby or queues are long) can lead to a higher chance for women to develop urinary tract infections. Furthermore, according to Buckley and Lapitan (2010: 265), the prevalence of urinary incontinence is twice as high in women than in men. All these issues signify a higher dependence on toilets. Overall, when pregnant women, women who menstruate, and females with some kind of gynaecological problem are added up, this amounts to a significant proportion of the public, which stresses the wide scope of the issue.

Concerns of hygiene and cleanliness are often connected to potential health issues as Moreira et al. (2022: 48) point out. This is also underlined by their interviewees' explanations in their study on user's perspectives on the public toilets at a site in Belo Horizonte, Brazil (ibid.). Furthermore, most of the remarks about the maintenance of toilets came from female participants, indicating that well maintained toilets are more important to women (ibid.: 49). Some participants voiced concerns about catching infections when using unhygienic toilets, among them a pregnant woman (ibid.: 48). Also, one participant pointed out that cleanliness might be more essential for women "as they have to sit" (ibid.: 49).

However, in reality, women often do not even sit down when using public toilets. According to Moore et al. 1991 (in Greed, 2009: The Debilitating Effect section, para. 3), about 80 percent of female public toilet users choose to hover, even though they favour sitting down at home. Greed (2009: The Debilitating Effect section, para. 3) further explains that the choice to not sit down when using public toilet facilities is often connected to the fear of contaminated seats but also cultural aspects may play a role. She then points to the role of cleaning and stall design, which can prevent women from sitting if not carried out or planned adequately. The fear of sitting down is relevant as hovering has been found to be linked with residual urine

retention, meaning the bladder cannot fully empty (Moore et al., 1991 in Sjögren et al., 2017: 1680). These findings indicate that cleanliness of public toilets might play different roles depending on sex, as people with penises can simply stand to urinate; thus, being further away from the sanitary installation. Hence, it is particularly important for people who cannot urinate standing up to be provided with clean facilities so that they are actually willing to use them and can use them sat down, which would be the healthier option in contrast to hovering.

Another relevant factor why cleanliness is particularly important to people who menstruate is the need to change or insert period products. As Maroko et al. (2021: 2) argue: “Access to clean, safe toilets with water, soap, and disposal mechanisms, is essential for ensuring dignified, safe, comfortable MHM [menstrual hygiene management] for all.” This point will be further elaborated in the following section on sanitary equipment and toilet design.

Changing babies’ diapers is yet another task that demands a high level of hygiene, and therefore, clean conditions for baby and mother. Hence, washing facilities and disposal bins are needed. These are also important so that other users do not have to deal with unsanitary conditions. (Greed, 2016: 514) This being said, it has to be noted, that of course, the same level of cleanliness is needed when men take care of changing their babies’ diapers. However, it is still a task mostly carried out by women (Greed, 2003: 22), meaning they tend to be more affected by a lack of hygiene.

Overall, in this section it was argued that due to biological conditions women are generally more dependent on public toilet provision than men. In addition, there is a need for clean and hygienic toilets, an aspect often linked to biological issues. While a high level of hygiene is a requirement beneficial for everyone, as outlined, women might particularly value it and profit from it.

#### 4.3.2 Sanitary Equipment, Toilet Design, and Access

Different genders might have different needs in terms of what a toilet should contain or look like. Some of the aspects mentioned here overlap with the previous section as often facilities needed in a toilet also have to do with hygiene. Greed and Daniels (2002: 73) found in their study conducted in North Somerset, United Kingdom that participants expressed great dissatisfaction with toilet access and design and that female participants were particularly

unhappy with the interior of toilets. Greed (2019: 917) comments that the latter is hardly surprising considering that most toilets are designed by male engineers or providers who might not take into account the varied needs of other genders.

A main aspect is that menstruating people are in need of a toilet design that takes into account their period. Here, the term menstrual hygiene management, which has already been mentioned in the previous section, should be introduced as it highlights the need for such facilities. It is defined as follows: “Women and adolescent girls are using a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect blood that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of the menstruation period, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials” (Sommer & Sahin, 2013: 1557). One aspect mentioned in this statement is the disposal of sanitary waste. According to Greed (2009: The Debilitating Effect section, para. 2) “the 'bin problem' is frequently raised by female respondents, often with extreme embarrassment.” She elaborates that even though disposal bins need to be available in stalls according to the Environmental Protection Act (1990) in England and Wales, their location right next to the toilet seat is often problematic. In the narrow stalls the bin then often touches the women’s legs when they sit down. Moreover, the disposal bins are often not emptied and therefore too full, which counteracts the original aim of these bins, namely to avoid users’ contact with sanitary waste. This connects to the previous section where the importance of hygienic conditions for women is highlighted. Greed (2009, The Importance of Changing section, para. 2) concludes that the needs of menstruating people are not satisfactorily catered for, partly due to inadequate location of bins and a lack of their maintenance. Apart from basic provisions such as disposal bins, and hand washing facilities (another point mentioned in the definition of menstrual hygiene management above) further equipment like hooks or shelves to store period supplies can prove helpful. Furthermore, a mirror can help to examine clothing for blood stains. (Schmitt et al. 2018: Redefining the Concept section, para. 2)

Not all amenities and designs of toilets can be said to be more beneficial or important to one gender than to another. For example, the size of toilet stalls as a restricting factor for many women, including pregnant women is mentioned by Greed (2016: 514); however, many men might also profit from larger cabins. Another example of amenities that might improve the



toilet visits of many users are shelves. These can be helpful to store a variety of items, among those, for example, colostomy or urostomy equipment, catheter equipment, gloves for self evacuation, menstruation products, gloves of manual wheelchair users, hairbrushes, and makeup bags. (Bichard, 2015: 267) Hence, shelves would benefit a variety of users, but might be particularly important for those who need to store sanitary products. Maroko et al. (2021: 5) point out: “hooks on doors and privacy assured by locks on stall doors (...) are relevant to enabling comfortable, safe and dignified MHM [menstrual hygiene management], even if they are not MHM-specific.”

Physical accessibility is another major factor to be considered in toilet design. Even if there would be enough toilets in the first place, attributes such as small cubicles and inward opening doors can act as barriers for a variety of people and thus impede access for them (Greed, 2003 7). Again, physical access is not necessarily (but can be) directly connected to gender inequity in toilet provision. However, keeping in mind that women need toilets more frequently and usually have fewer facilities available to them, limited physical access has the potential to further reduce their opportunities to use a toilet.

The restriction of physical access can, for example, take the form of turnstiles as Greed (2019: 915) describes. She argues that these can act as barriers for women with pushchairs, people who cannot pay the entrance fee, ambulant disabled and pregnant people. It is worth mentioning that Greed only talks about *women* with pushchairs. It is likely that hereby she wants to highlight that it is mostly women who are travelling with pushchairs. Nevertheless, of course turnstiles would cause problems for everyone trying to enter the toilet with a pushchair. In 1965 the Turnstile Removal Act came into effect in Britain and turnstiles were no longer allowed in public conveniences run by local authorities; however, in many places, such as train stations, they may still exist. Greed further mentions narrow entrances as access barriers as these also divide abled and disabled users.

There are further examples of how physical access can be connected to access based on gender. As observed by Moreira et al. (2022: 50), women had more troubles than men entering chemical toilets at their site of research because they had bags and other items with them more frequently.

### 4.3.3 Mobility and Care Work

Even though divisions of paid work and parenting are not as clear-cut as they used to be, women are still predominantly the ones in charge of house- and care work (e.g going shopping or dropping off children). This is reflected in women's mobility with them spending more time out during the day including more time on public transport and multiple stops on their ways. They are also more likely than men to be in company of children and elderly or disabled people who usually need toilets more frequently and potentially without prior notice. (Greed & Johnson, 2015, chapter 15 in Greed, 2019: 916; Greed, 2003: 22) At some places public breastfeeding might be viewed as a taboo, which makes toilets plausible locations for mothers to feed babies (Plaskow, 2008: 54). Again, these routines and examples of care work show that women are usually in greater need of public toilets. However, it is not only women themselves who need these facilities when they are out and about, but often also the people they are responsible for.

In terms of care work, it is also noticeable that diaper changing tables are often placed in women's toilets but not in men's. According to Plaskow (2008: 56), this shows how gender norms are both reflected and enforced in toilet provision. However, it does not only imply that women should be in charge of changing their children's diapers: It might also deprive men of the chance to spend time with their children in public and puts them in a difficult position when doing so. In the US, Obama signed the "Bathrooms Accessible in Every Situation" (BABIES) Act in 2016, which ensures that changing stations must be present in men's bathrooms as well as women's in federal buildings (Blakemore, 2016).

### 4.3.4 Quantitative Aspects of Toilet Provision

In this section, aspects concerning the distribution of space and number of toilets, and the time spent to access them by people of different genders shall be examined.

The fact that women need toilets more often and longer would lead to the assumption that more facilities are available for women than for men. However, the opposite is mostly the case. Greed (2003: 5) points out that the provision for men amounts to twice the number of toilets than those for women as they are provided with urinals in addition to closets and furthermore, men's toilet blocks are more frequent, too. Notably, these numbers most likely

refer to the situation in the UK. Plaskow (2016: 751) also draws attention to the fact that even when women's and men's bathrooms take up the same amount of space, women usually have fewer facilities they can use because stalls consume more space than urinals.

Often, this unequal provision of toilets can be directly observed when looking at the long queues of women in front of toilets in any busy public place (Anthony & Dufresne, 2007: 272). In response to the fact that women need longer on toilets, some US municipalities have introduced so-called potty parity laws for new toilet facilities which prescribe that women shall be provided with two to three times the number of cubicles that men are provided with (Plaskow, 2016: 751). Anthony and Dufresne (2007: 278) also raise an important point by addressing that equality in toilets (even when only looking at quantitative aspects) can mean different things, such as equal square footage, equal toilets, and equal waiting time. In fact, they argue that equal speed of access is probably the most suitable form of measurement. This seems plausible because, in the end, increased time efficiency is the desired outcome of both more toilets and more space. It is also what matters in order to reduce queues for women.

While women's toilets often come with long waiting times, non-segregated toilets are sometimes even non-existent although they would be needed by many people (e.g., Anthony & Dufresne, 2007: 268). Hence, when talking about numbers of toilets for different genders it is necessary to recognise that for people who do not identify as male or female, there might be no adequate possibility to relieve themselves at all.

#### 4.3.5 Payment

The question of affordability is of course closely intertwined with the question of accessibility because when a person cannot afford to enter a toilet, access is not given.

In Vienna, quite often urinals are free of charge, while using cubicles is not. This is discussed in Kirchmayr's work (2021: 107-109) where many respondents commented on the issue saying it was unfair or discriminating. In Austria, a complaint on the same topic reached the Equal Treatment Commission in 2010. A woman stated that throughout business trips she repeatedly had to pay a 50 cents fee for the use of toilets while the use of urinals did not cost men anything. The senate III of the Equal Treatment Commission examined whether this

constitutes discrimination based on gender. However, they established that urinals and cubicles are different services and thus could not be compared. Their reasoning was that discrimination meant that women and men were charged differently for the same service. Thus, the senate ruled that the case did not represent a form of discrimination against the gender of the party concerned. (GBK, 2010) Nevertheless, while cubicles and urinals might not be equal services, they still have the same function. Hence, women need to pay to urinate, while men can choose not to. Interestingly, for this line of reasoning, pay toilets were banned in the US (Anthony & Dufresne, 2007: 278).

Generally, the opinions of users regarding whether payment for toilets is appropriate or not often differ widely. For example, in the study on public toilets carried out by Moreira et al. (2022: 51) in Brazil some people, mainly from higher socio-economic background, commented they would be willing to pay for public toilets and found the quality of the service to be the more important matter. However, it was noticed that they only took into consideration their own situation and not the realities of homeless people or informal workers. Other participants found that fees for public toilets were not justified in view of the taxes they paid to the city. What remains is that while some might be willing to pay for adequate public toilet provision, others might not be able to afford to do so. As Stanwell-Smith (2010: 613) points out, fees minimise accessibility.

#### 4.3.6 Opening Times

Opening times are a further relevant factor in terms of accessibility. Public toilets that are not open during night-time pose problems particularly for those who are dependent solely on public facilities (Human Rights Council, 2019: 12). Maintenance, vandalism, and other forms of crime are among the possible reasons for cities to restrict opening hours of toilets (Moreira et al., 2021: 4). However, by doing so, the availability of public toilets shrinks. People that spend time in public during nighttime need toilets at this time just as much as during daytime. This problem is not only a gender issue, as it might, for example, affect homeless people, those working night shifts, or people who go out at night. However, as has been established before, women generally do need to use toilets more often (and it is often less comfortable and more difficult to pee in public as will be argued later on), which puts them in an even more dependent position. The issue of restricted opening times for menstruating people is noted

by homeless participants in a study of whom many commented that “periods do not stop flowing at nighttime” (Maroko et al., 2021: 12). Thus, when being homeless, menstruation reinforces the need of toilets even more. This highlights the necessity to think about intersectionality, which means that different sources of discrimination can overlap and reinforce each other (Sánchez de Madariaga & Neuman, 2020: 3).

#### 4.3.7 Toilet Segregation and Exclusion

Toilets belong to the last sex-segregated spaces that still exist (Plaskow, 2016: 750). This segregation transports certain messages. As Plaskow (2016: 750) argues “sex-segregated lavatories declare that there are two and only two genders, that everyone is either male or female, that gender is fixed and self-evident, and that there is some undefined danger in men and women using toilets in a shared space.” Two major points in the discussion of separating toilets in women’s and men’s are addressed in this statement: Firstly, it addresses the exclusion of people who do not fit into this binary system. Secondly, it relies on an often-used argument why this segregation should persist – keeping women safe.

The topic of safety will be explored in more detail in a separate section (4.3.8 “Safety and Harassment”). Here, the main focus lies on the question in how far toilets and associated customs and practices can include and exclude groups of people. Of course, feeling safe can also be part of feeling included; nevertheless, safety deserves its own section due to its multiple facets. In the light of inclusion and exclusion, the discussion around toilet segregation versus gender-neutral toilets seems particularly prominent.

There are several accounts of people for whom binary toilet segregation causes difficult or even threatening experiences. For example, Doan (2010) describes her personal experiences as a transgender woman and how she was denied using the women’s toilet at her workplace before gender reassignment surgery and documentation of a change of sex. Another study by Browne (2004) focuses on the experiences of women who are read as men when using the ladies’ bathroom: The reactions to these perceived instances of trespassing range from one’s presence being questioned to being removed by bouncers. A non-binary participant in Colliver and Duffus’ study (2022: 1490) also explains how they feel judged when using public toilets divided in men’s and women’s. In contrast, when being able to use gender-neutral facilities,

they feel far safer and more comfortable. These experiences show how essential the provision of gender-neutral toilets are and also how exclusionary their non-existence can be.

The non-existence of gender-neutral toilets is not only an issue for transgender, non-binary, and intersex people, and people with gender-ambiguous bodies. It can also lead to difficult situations for all caregivers. Faktor (2011: 15) provides the example of disabled people who need support from someone when using the toilet. The respective caregiver might, however, have a different gender than the person they take care of. This is also the case when one partner of an elderly heterosexual couple takes care of the other. Gender segregated toilets also prove difficult for parents who want to accompany children of different genders as Anthony and Dufresne (2007: 277) point out. Hence, toilet segregation can lead to exclusion of those who are dependent on caregivers of different genders and to exclusion of the caregivers themselves.

While many arguments speak for the provision of gender-neutral toilets, it is however problematic when they are established by replacing women's toilets. In this case, the provision for women becomes even more sparse than it already is. As Greed (2019: 913) points out: "It needs to be recognised that advances towards inclusion in one area could increase exclusion in another." This procedure is also noticed by participants in Colliver and Duffus' study about toilet provision in queer venues (2022: 1491-1492): Oftentimes former women's bathrooms at these sites were just relabelled as gender-neutral bathrooms.

For some women it might also be uncomfortable to share toilets with men, for example because of the noises and smells they might produce. Hence, sharing a bathroom would hamper their relaxation on the toilet. In addition, in the presence of men some women worry about leaving traces of blood when they menstruate, showing stains, or even disposing of sanitary products in toilet stalls. (Greed, 2019: 920) Greed (2020: 133) raises the question if by installing gender-neutral toilets, biological differences, such as menstruation, are recognised and whether women's "right to privacy, equality, and dignity" is guaranteed in this process. One could argue that the taboo around menstruation is a problem in itself that should be tackled rather than trying to conceal menstruation overall. However, the discomfort some women might have with regards to displaying their menstruation cannot simply be ignored.

Overall, these accounts again highlight that it is important to consider the needs of all genders, rather than trying to improve the situation for one group but at the same time worsening the situation for another.

#### 4.3.8 Safety and Harassment

The location, environment, and type of toilets matter when it comes to concerns related to safety. When on-street toilets were situated in remote locations that are not easily visible and had insufficient lighting, it raised concern among female participants in previous toilet research. Furthermore, having to walk past the men's toilets to reach the women's facilities can lead to women experiencing harassment, such as cat calling. (Greed & Daniels, 2002, Hanson et al., 2007 both in Greed, 2019: 919)

Another relevant topic concerning safety issues is toilet personnel. For example, a majority of the female participants (102 out of 153) in a study in Ankara emphasised the value of security personnel being present in public bathrooms as they described feeling unsafe otherwise, especially during night-time (Afacan & Gurel, 2015: 257). However, security personnel can also have opposite effects as described in the following instances: Two participants in Browne's study (2004: 337, 339) on the toilet experiences of women with gender ambiguous bodies talk about instances where they had been physically moved away from a women's toilet because the bouncers at the site read them as male instead of female. These accounts show how the same measure (to appoint security personnel) can have highly opposing effects for different groups of people (feeling safe versus being exposed to violence). Of course, this may also considerably depend on the training and awareness of aforementioned staff. Nevertheless, it is vital to consider that certain provisions or actions might not have positive effects for all groups of people, which stresses the importance of including a diversity of voices when considering changes to existing structures.

The segregation of toilets and the provision of gender-neutral toilets, as discussed in section 4.3.7 "Toilet Segregation and Exclusion", is discussed again at this point due to the topic's controversiality regarding safety. Hence, both arguments used for and against gender-neutral toilets should be looked into.

Women's bathrooms are frequently viewed as "sacred spaces" (away from men) in the midst of heterosexual nightclubs (Goffman, 1959 in Browne 2004: 337). The notion of the "sacred space" is also explored by Overall (2007: 83) in the following statement: "In a sexist society, women's toilets have a social function: They offer a space for bonding, the exchange of information and personal recovery. [...] Any woman who has withdrawn to the 'ladies' ' room after a rough situation knows that segregated toilet facilities play this role. It is a symptom of life in a sexist society."

Often so-called "gender critical" feminists pledge for both toilet segregation and banning transgender women from female bathrooms. They use the chance of sexual violence against women as the reason for this standpoint; however, they only focus on the fear of cisgender women in their argumentation. (Colliver & Duffus, 2022: 1486)

It is worth looking into the reasons for the fear associated with gender-neutral bathrooms in more detail. A study by Colliver and Coyle (2020) deals with this topic by analysing comments on YouTube videos about gender-neutral toilets. They found that gender-neutral toilets were repeatedly constructed as spaces of danger for female people in those written entries. They were represented as places where women would be exposed to sexual harassment and where child victimisation could easily take place. (ibid.: 365) Some commenters framed transgender people as potential sexual offenders (ibid.: 366, 368), which shows that transphobic ideas do play a role in the resistance against gender-neutral toilets. Among the comments, further arguments against gender-neutral bathrooms revolved around the idea that cis men could enter them as women in disguise and sexually harass women and girls. However, as the authors point out, this line of argumentation is illogical as it could apply to segregated bathrooms even more so. (ibid.: 369) A frequently proposed suggestion among the commenters was to have separate bathrooms for transgender people. Often this idea was presented within the reasoning that separation would make women and girls less prone to sexual assault. What is left out in this line of argument is that explicit transgender toilets would mean everyone using them would automatically declare their identity as transgender. This, however, could then put this group in danger of being assaulted. (ibid.: 369-370)

Namaste (2000: 135-136) elaborates on the motivation behind the aggression against sexual minorities: "[...] I argue that a perceived transgression of normative sex/gender relations motivates much of the violence against sexual minorities, and that an assault on these



'transgressive' bodies is fundamentally concerned with policing gender presentation through public and private space." In toilets as segregated places this policing behaviour seems particularly present and can be seen in the examples of violence by bouncers above. Hence, just as some claim safety as a reason for binary toilet segregation, it can be used as an argument against it when considering experiences of people with gender ambiguous bodies.

While it is of course important to take the feeling of safety of those women who do fit into classical gender roles seriously, it is also essential, that the needs and safety of those not fitting into a system of binary labels are not forgotten in the conversation around toilet segregation. As Faktor (2011: 14-15) puts it: "A spatial identity built upon exclusion is, from a security perspective, deeply flawed; that is, there is something distasteful about allowing one marginalised group to feel an abstract sense of safety by compromising the safety of another marginalised group." With this statement the author refers to the practices that potentially make cis women with gender unambiguous bodies feel safe (e.g., the policing of gender norms in toilets) but thereby jeopardise other women's safety (ibid., 14). Basically, it leads back to Greed's argument that fostering inclusion can also lead to exclusion (2019: 913). This argument, it seems, can be used to advocate both gender-neutral toilets and toilet segregation. What remains is that safety concerns of all genders must be treated seriously and equally.

#### 4.3.9 Disgust and Taboos

Plaskow (2016: 751-752) points out the essentiality of elimination for our health and growth. Nevertheless, she argues, the mention of urine and faeces is met by disgust by the majority of people. That the toilet is a topic better not discussed in public can also be exemplified by the range of euphemisms that exist for the term she argues.

However, it often seems that the feeling of disgust is even greater when the topics of urinating and defecating appear in connection with women. This is illustrated by the repulsion in Trump's reaction to Hilary Clinton using the bathroom during the third Democratic debate in December 2015: "I know where she went—it's disgusting, I don't want to talk about it" (Weiner, 2015 in Plaskow, 2016: 748). Even though Donald Trump's statement might not speak for everyone, the disgust expressed by him at the thought of a woman using the toilet

is surely not a singular feeling. This is underlined by Plaskow (2016: 751) who calls this repulsion a “broader cultural phenomenon.”

According to Plaskow (2016: 752) “disgust has important political consequences in that the rejection of elimination as part of human embodiment becomes intertwined with a series of social hierarchies as the rejected part of the self is then projected onto multiple others.” She further argues that “marginalized groups are often perceived not simply as socially inferior but also as contaminating or disgusting.” This is supported by Barcan’s argument (2005: 10) that “those who represent a threat to the established gender/sexual (and sometimes racial) order may themselves come to be imagined as a form of cultural waste.” By pointing at Trump’s reaction to Hilary Clinton’s toilet break, Plaskow (2016: 752-753) notes that the emotion of disgust contributes to preserve certain social hierarchies. Hence, according to this analysis viewing women’s elimination as something disgusting is used to perpetuate their inferiority, or, in other words, to maintain patriarchy.

At first glance, the feeling of disgust itself might not seem connected to public toilet provision in any obvious way. However, it may have material consequences for public toilet provision when, due to disgust, daily needs of women are ignored. The disgust or shame attributed to toilets is likely connected to Plaskow’s (2016: 751) observation that “toilets are often hidden away, in the least attractive part of buildings or public areas.” This again means a greater burden for women because of the time and effort they have to invest in searching for a toilet.

Another aspect that illustrates that men urinating is a much more acceptable topic than women urinating is the fact that men can often be seen to do so publicly. As Greed (2009, The Problem section, para. 6) observes, for men it is rather common to urinate on streets while the places for women to urinate are more restricted. Only a small number of women will urinate in public while the majority will hold back urine until they can use a proper toilet facility. Greed even argues that public urination is sometimes seen as an act of bravado when men do it, whereas women experience a lot more control and restriction when it comes to places they can use for urination.

Potentially, this could also be connected to the issue of disgust mentioned above. However, it surely also has to do with the fact that women have to take off more clothing and are thus more exposed when urinating in public. While it is not desirable in general that people urinate

in public due to reasons of hygiene, it is another example of how something perceived as rather normal for men is viewed as dirty or unacceptable when women do it. It also means that again, women have fewer opportunities to urinate.

#### 4.3.10 Power Structures behind Unequal Toilet Provision

Plaskow (2016: 750) states: “Inequities in location and access can be dismissed as trivial, but they convey a message about whose time is more important”. This statement perfectly shows the power structures that stand behind and become visible through toilet provision. It is hence not only a matter of who gets to go to the toilet quicker or more conveniently. Unequal toilet provision is also a symbol of how patriarchal structures are still in place.

Beall (1997: 18) admits the concept of power is not an easy one to define; nevertheless, most people will recognise it when it is exerted. It can be seen in the capacity to coerce, ignore, override, control, and influence. What all of these actions seem to have in common is an imbalance between different groups and a certain relation of dependency. Nevertheless, the author refrains from viewing power simply as something that one group holds and exerts over another. By referring to Kabeer (1994: 224 in Beall, 1997: 18-19) the usefulness of the more process-oriented term *empowerment* is pointed out as it captures the possibilities of those with little power to still resist, subvert, and transform their circumstances. Browne’s (2004: 343) examples of strategies used to counteract discrimination on women’s toilets perfectly illustrate this conceptualisation of empowerment: These strategies can take the form of not going to certain toilets or claiming the category “woman” in order to belong “for example, by emphasising the absence of a penis.” Hence, even in a state of powerlessness there are coping mechanisms to be seen which can be interpreted as signs of strength within a weak position of power.

Looking at the spatial dimension of power Beall (1997: 3) states: “What gets built, where, how and for whom reflects relations of power [...]. Cities are literally concrete manifestations of ideas on how society was, is and should be.” The author also concludes that “there is an obvious intersection between power and space,” which becomes particularly evident in the competition for space where those with less power often lose out (ibid: 18). Toilets are no exception of this phenomenon. Just as other built environment, they exhibit power structures. The abilities to control and ignore as mentioned above have become obvious in the previous

sections when considering how certain groups are left out and not considered by those in control.

The existence or non-existence of women's toilets are also an indicator of their access to halls of power and their social status in general. In the US, there are several examples of such decision-making places lacking female toilets for a long period of time. Sandra Day O'Connor, associate justice, had to use a public toilet when she started working at the Supreme Court in the 1980s because there was no women's bathroom at her work place. In the House of Representatives, a female bathroom close to the House chamber was only established in 2011. Ivy League universities such as Princeton Graduate School, Harvard Law School, and Yale Medical School chose not to offer female toilets for a long time either. Their non-existence was also used as justification why women could not study there in the first place. While the situation for women has improved and they will nowadays usually find some place to go to the toilet, the provision for them still mirrors their disadvantaged position in society in contrast to men. Even more so does the inadequate toilet situation for trans and disabled persons reflect their social status. (Plaskow, 2016: 249) With these examples Plaskow shows how the toilet situation in certain places mirrors more general societal gender hierarchies.

As toilets demonstrate who is welcome and who is not, and whose time and needs are important and whose are not, they could act as symbols which help to identify and tackle patterns of exclusion. This is not to say, however, that power dynamics are only inherent in toilet provision on a symbolic level. As has been argued in the previous sections and as can be seen in this example of women's exclusion of halls of power, they do have serious implications for people in everyday life.

Furthermore, power relations cannot only be observed between providers and users, they are also inherent in the social interactions within toilets as they are provided. This can be seen in the evaluation of bodies in toilets. Skeggs (2001: 302) states that normative femininity possesses the power to trigger comparisons, self-judgment, and shame. Within bathrooms those who are viewed as feminine hold the power to evaluate those who are not. This is evident, for example, in the experiences of women who are not read as female. When they visit ladies' bathrooms their right to be in this space is likely to be questioned by the people who conform to traditional gender-roles (e.g., Browne, 2004: 338). It can thus be seen as an example where power manifests itself in control.

#### 4.3.11 Effects on Use of Public Space

Toilet provision has material implications. As Greed (2019: 909) clearly states: “Inadequate toilet provision undermines people’s mobility and chances of freely accessing and moving around in the city as a whole. The gendering of this provision is not without significance.” This statement conveys that toilet provision has far-reaching consequences that are relevant to examine more closely.

According to Greed (2016: 509) restricted mobility due to a lack of toilets particularly affects those who menstruate who then might struggle to work or travel. Some job areas might be particularly affected, such as taxi drivers or promoters, who work outside office buildings, as mentioned by Schön (2021). For those menstruating it might prove challenging to work in such areas if a high density of (free) toilets is lacking.

Inadequate toilet provision can also heavily impact mobility in the sense that it forces people to spend long times moving around in order to relieve themselves. This becomes evident when looking at the following examples of experiences of gender-nonconforming people. In a paper about non-binary teenagers one interviewee reports how they use the gender-neutral toilet in a café in the town close by to the school because of the lack of such facilities at the school itself (Paechter et al., 2012: 706-707). Similarly, a participant in Browne’s study (2004: 340) spent over two hours on the motorway driving her car while needing a toilet. She chose not to go throughout the whole journey in order to avoid the unpleasant experience of using a toilet in a service station. These accounts exemplify how inequalities in toilet provision can exclude people from certain places and how this in turn can affect their mobility patterns and time spent looking for toilets.

The observations by Moreira et al. (2022: 47) show the struggles that the lack of adequate toilets can create when accompanied by children. As the small chemical toilets provided in the touristic public space under observation proved not suitable to use with children, visitors went to other places or stopped their tour of the touristic place completely. Thus, this account also shows that in order to make a place attractive for touristic activities, public toilets are a relevant factor to consider for planners. However, the main point to be made is how a place is made inaccessible for a certain group (people with children) and therefore excludes them.

It is also possible that people who made such experiences are also less likely to spend time at sites that lack toilets again which restricts their choice on where to spend time in public.

The lack of toilets can also have effects on consumption. For example, at the site studied by Moreira et al. (2022: 47) it was observed that people did no longer buy coconut water because of the lack of public toilets. As mentioned by the authors, this has economic effects for drink vendors. However, it should also be considered that having to reduce the intake of drinks is also very restrictive for people who want to spend time at such a place.

Greed (2006: 127-128) addresses the importance of public toilets if governments want to encourage cycling, walking, and the use of public transport. She argues while car drivers can easily and quickly reach toilets in the closest motorway service station, this is not the case for cyclists, pedestrians, and users of public transport. Hence, public toilet provision might also have effects on how people travel. Men and women are also differently affected in this way because their mobility differs. For example, women tend to walk and use public transport more than men, while cycling is often more popular with men. (Goel et al., 2023: 1) Also, the proportion of females among the car driving population is lower than the male proportion in Europe (55 % male drivers, 45 % female drivers) when looking at the countries surveyed in the Sartre project in 2010 (European Commission, 2014: 5). Thus, interestingly, women often tend to use the types of transport that are less convenient in terms of toilet provision, which makes improvement in this area even more necessary.

The lack of safety or comfort can surely also be counted as a major effect of deficient toilet provision. It either seriously influences the quality of the time spent at a certain place or leads to people not going to such a place at all. This can be seen in the following statement by a non-binary person:

“I find it really difficult to go to some public spaces, especially straight ones, because it is just so difficult to go to the toilets, that’s why I like finding a queer space that has gender neutral toilets and I know I won’t experience the same discomfort when I need the toilet” (Colliver & Duffus, 2022: 1488).

In this case, rather than accepting discomfort this person chooses to go to places that are tolerant of their identity and where using the toilet proves less difficult.

Finally, a lack of public toilet provision can influence how people are perceived and reacted to by others as illustrated by the following example. Plaskow (2016: 753) states: “[...] the absence of toilet access prevents full participation in public life and forces people into compromises that can reinforce perceptions of their abjection.” What she means by that is illustrated by the example of homeless people who often have no other possibility than public urination or defecation. Because of that they might be viewed as even more disgusting. In contrast, for people who do not have to face any barriers in accessing toilets it is easier to “disown elimination as an aspect of the self,” as Plaskow puts it. According to Plaskow, it is also easy for those people to refuse others the access to toilet facilities. This observation can be transferred to other groups who struggle with toilet access as could be seen in Trump’s remark about Hilary Clinton’s toilet visit (ibid.: 748). Because Trump as a man does not have to face the struggle of spending a long time on or looking for a toilet, he does not have to endure comments on this element of his daily life. As soon as one’s need to use a toilet becomes public, it can be commented on and represented as disgusting.

To conclude, toilet provision represents the gender inequalities present in our society, but it also often contributes to making and maintaining them. However, even though several sources state that inadequate toilet provision has effects on the use of public space (e.g., Greed, 2019: 909; Arvidsson & Pinto, 2022: 1-2), there still seems to be a great potential to gain more detailed knowledge of the ways in which people are affected and how exactly toilet provision translates to their use of public spaces.

#### 4.3.12 Conclusion

As has been stated before, the absence of toilets for gender minorities and the unequal provision for different genders has been a cause for struggle and fight for a long time. Even though conditions have continued to improve, there are still issues that remain unresolved as can be seen from the aspects outlined above. The previous sections have also offered insights into the multifacetedness of gender inequality in toilet provision, which demonstrates that complex analyses are needed in order to improve them. The variety of aspects involved can also be seen in *Table 2: Categorisation System* in 3.3.8 “Evaluation”.

## 4.4 Gender-Sensitive Planning in Vienna

Gender Equal Planning has played a key role in Vienna during the last few decades. According to Bauer (2009: 64-65) the city of Vienna has been committed to foster gender equality since the early 1990s. For example, the municipal department for the promotion and coordination of women's affairs was created in 1992, which, according to the author, contributed to a "gender-sensitive approach" in different departments, including town planning. Various pilot projects in support of women and girls were initiated ever since. Starting from the late 1990s, there have been efforts to make gender concerns a more overarching topic across various departments. Irschik and Kail (2013: 194) mention the exhibition "Who owns public space – women's daily life in the city" by Eva Kail and Jutta Kleedorfer in 1991 as the starting point of Vienna's involvement with the topic of gender in urban planning. Ever since a considerable timeline of events, projects, and other milestones concerning gender-sensitive planning has accumulated. These include, for example, the establishment of the largest gender-sensitive housing project in Europe (Frauen-Werk-Stadt 1), the initiation of a permanent jury for housing projects that have to consider gender aspects in their evaluation, the development of recommendations for creating gender-sensitive parks, and the publication of handbooks on the topic of gender mainstreaming in 2012 (ibid.: 227-229) The authors emphasise the importance of continuing gender mainstreaming in the future. They point out the potential pitfall of viewing gender issues as already dealt with as the focus of planners moves on to other groups. According to them, the gender perspective should not be forgotten when talking about other groups such as elderly people or migrants (ibid.: 226-227).

When examining the manual "Gender Mainstreaming in der Stadtplanung und Stadtentwicklung" ["Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning and Urban Development"] as part of the *STEP<sup>3</sup> 2025* (Stadtentwicklung Wien, MA 18, 2013), what can be noticed about the conceptualisation of gender is that it seems to be a binary one sticking to the roles of men and women in their descriptions. There is no specific mention of other genders and how they should be considered in planning. It does, however, take into account the social dimension of gender, rather than only focusing on biological differences (ibid.: 17). More inclusivity and

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<sup>3</sup> Urban Development Plan



awareness of different gender roles can thus be identified as an important aspect for future guidelines and considerations.

Nevertheless, one can say that gender equal planning overall does play a key role within urban planning in Vienna, which is a relevant context to view the issue of toilet provision in. One can assume that there is a certain awareness for gender issues and the spatial context in which this study is set is not one completely blind to such issues. This is important to point out as there are certainly places in the world where gender minorities experience far less recognition or are subject to (stronger) discrimination. This being said, there are certainly problems to be found at the Donaukanal in Vienna as is argued throughout this study.

## 4.5 Toilet Provision in Vienna

This section aims to take a closer look at the topic of gender equal public toilet provision and to what extent it is integrated in Vienna's planning strategies.

Finding toilets in Vienna can be said to be relatively convenient: Information on the whereabouts of toilets in Vienna is indicated by signposts but can also be found online. For example, the City of Vienna offers a map on their website that shows all toilets provided by them, including additional information, such as accessibility, opening times, and numbers of cubicles per gender (Stadt Wien, n.d.: <https://www.wien.gv.at/umwelt/ma48/sauberestadt/wc/>).

Public toilets as a gender mainstreaming aspect can be found in the objectives of strategy papers by the City of Vienna, for example in their Manual "Gender Mainstreaming in der Stadtplanung und Stadtentwicklung" ["Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning and Urban Development"] (Stadtentwicklung Wien, MA 18, 2013). Toilets are also a key point in the "Fachkonzept öffentlicher Raum" ["Manual Public Space"] as can be seen in the following statement:

„Ausreichend öffentliche Toiletten im (teil)öffentlichen Raum sind in einer zeitgemäßen Stadtentwicklung unabdingbar. Sie erhöhen die Chancen auf Teilhabe im hohen Maße, vor allem bei älteren Menschen, Kindern, Jugendlichen und marginalisierten Menschen. Viele Menschen, die den öffentlichen Raum nutzen, sind schlicht darauf angewiesen, dass öffentlich nutzbare WC-Anlagen zur Verfügung stehen. Neben allen anderen Kriterien ist zur Verbesserung der Aufenthaltsqualität – gerade bei längerer

Aufenthaltsdauer im öffentlichen Raum – die Möglichkeit, ein WC aufsuchen zu können, unabdingbar“ (Stadtentwicklung Wien, MA 18, 2018: 63).

[“Sufficient public toilets in (partially) public space are necessary in contemporary urban planning. They increase the chances of participation to a high degree, especially for elderly people, children, teenagers, and marginalised people. Many people who use public space are simply dependent on the availability of publicly accessible toilets. For the improvement of the quality of time spent the possibility to use a toilet is, in addition to all other criteria, highly necessary – in particular for lengthy stays.”]

This excerpt clearly shows that the authors view toilets in public spaces as highly relevant for people to be able to make use of said spaces and to increase the quality of their stay. They mention elderly people, children, teenagers, and marginalised people as those particularly dependent on the provision of public toilets. There is no specific reference to the relevance of gender in this paragraph, however.

Another aspect mentioned in the manual is that planning for public toilets reduces pollution and the resulting costs. It is also stated that a strategy for adequate toilet provision in Vienna shall be developed. (Stadtentwicklung Wien, MA 18, 2018: 63).

Given these guidelines and objectives, one would assume that the toilet provision in Vienna has reached a high standard and is continuously improving. But there are still problematic issues and even backlashes. Schön (2021) points out some of them: The distribution of public toilets can be criticised because some districts have far fewer facilities than other. For example, there is not a single public toilet in the 15<sup>th</sup> district and only one in the 4<sup>th</sup>. Often, the city of Vienna concludes contracts with restaurants in areas with a low number of toilets so that their toilets can be used for free by passersby. Schön points out that the problem with such arrangements is that access is then dependent on the opening times of the restaurants. Nevertheless, it seems like a good use of restaurant toilets to make them open to the public. Furthermore, Schön mentions that the Wiener Linien, a major provider of public toilets in Vienna, decided to reduce the number of toilets from 50 to 31 by the end of 2021. The author also contends that often a charge of 50 cents has to be paid to enter toilet cabins. Urinals, in contrast, are free of charge, thus disadvantaging people who cannot use urinals.

Overall, in Viennese planning, there is certainly awareness of the importance of public toilets. However, this awareness does not always directly transfer to practice as can be seen in the criticism above. On this note, the findings of this study aim to encourage further improvements of public toilets for people of all genders.

## 5 Site of Study

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This chapter is dedicated to the research area, the Donaukanal in Vienna. Firstly, a short overview of the Donaukanal is provided. Secondly, the toilet situation at the site is discussed.

### 5.1 Description of the Site

The Donaukanal is a much-frequented gathering place where people come together and, for example, enjoy some drinks outdoors in summer. There are several bars and restaurants, however, many people also use the open public spaces along the canal to gather. The pictures beneath (*Figure 3* and *Figure 4*) offer some impressions of what the area looks like.



**Figure 3:** Donaukanal close to Rossauer Brücke (Source: by author)



**Figure 4:** Donaukanal close to Schottenring U-Bahn (Source: by author)

The Donaukanal is a canal that stretches over 17 kilometres. The management of the area lies with the DHK (Donauhochwasserschutz-Kommission) and falls in the responsibility of the federation as well as the states of Vienna and Lower Austria. 2005 the Donaukanal became a target area of the *STEP* and 2010 a masterplan was dedicated to further planning objectives for the canal (Heindl & Kraupp, 2017: 46-47).

The Donaukanal represents an interesting interface between public and private space, or as Heindl (2023: 2020) writes “a public space of much interest to the people and to private investment.” The team Heindl and Kraupp won a competition to establish guidelines for the future of the Donaukanal area (ibid.). The topic of the private-public-divide is expanded on in their Donaukanal Partitur (2014: 3). It is said that in previous years the focus lay on establishing gastronomy at the site, which had helped to create a positive image overall. On the other side, many people wish for more non-commercial spaces in the centre of Vienna. This results in a new aim, the balancing of privately-owned and public spaces along the Donaukanal.

Regarding their strategy, looking back, Heindl (2023: 220) writes the following:

“In order to make sure that the open space was left without gastronomy or urban beaches, we proposed a twofold strategy: to increase and improve public infrastructure and to secure as much of the not-yet-commercialized space as possible. For these goals, we developed a notational tool for public infrastructure and a detailed topographical plan, which we called Nichtbebauungsplan [‘non-building plan’] referring to the legal urban planning document of a Bauungsplan [‘land-use plan’].”

As this plan was non-binding, the Donaukanal has since been a space of contestation between the interests of private investors and the public: For instance, protestors prevented the construction of a restaurant within the area dedicated to the public by the Nichtbebauungsplan. (Heindl, 2023: 220-221)

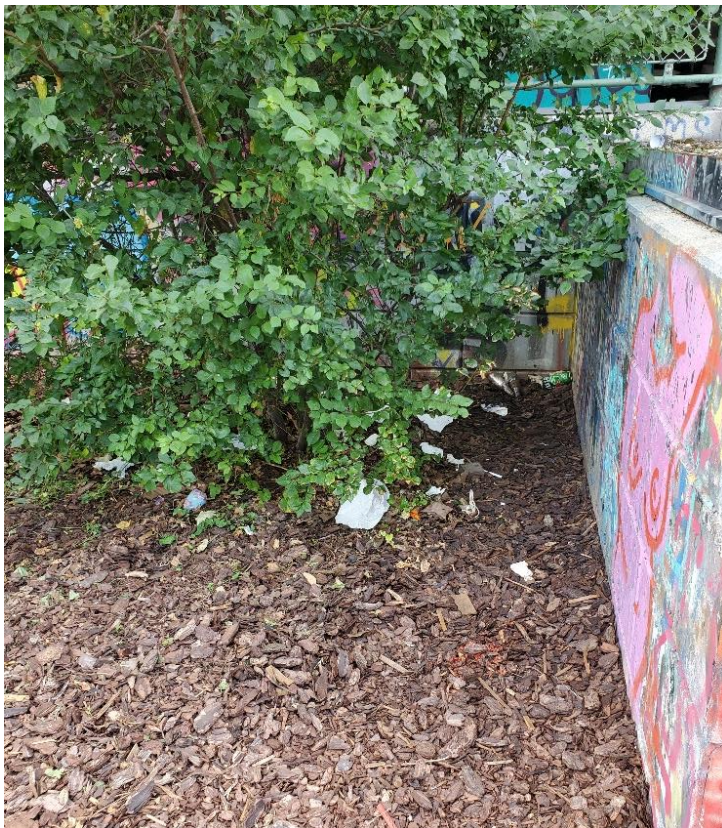
## 5.2 Toilet Situation and Toilet Map

Having established that the Donaukanal has a major function as public open space within the city of Vienna, the question of toilets provision arises. Heindl and Kraupp (2014: 20) already recommend in their guidelines that existing toilets at the Donaukanal should be remediated and supervised. Furthermore, they suggest that additional facilities should be installed.

However, whether the situation has improved since then is questionable. In his diploma thesis Kirchmayr (2021: 60) found out that within Vienna the toilet situation at the Donaukanal was perceived to be particularly bad by the people questioned as it was mentioned several times as a place that lacks toilets. Various newspaper articles also point to the fact that toilet provision at the Donaukanal is insufficient as can be exemplified by the following headlines:

“Suche am Wiener Donaukanal: Der weite Weg zum nächsten Klo” [“Search at the Donaukanal: The long way to the next toilet”] (Scherndl, 2019) or “Öffentliche Toiletten am Donaukanal fehlen” [“Public Toilets are missing at the Donaukanal”] (Krammer, 2021). Hence, the situation regarding public toilet provision seems to be inadequate for many users which makes it valuable to find out how exactly people are affected and what could potentially be improved.

As can be seen in *Figure 5* below, there are sites at the Donaukanal that seem to be used for public urination quite regularly, which leads to the pollution of public space.



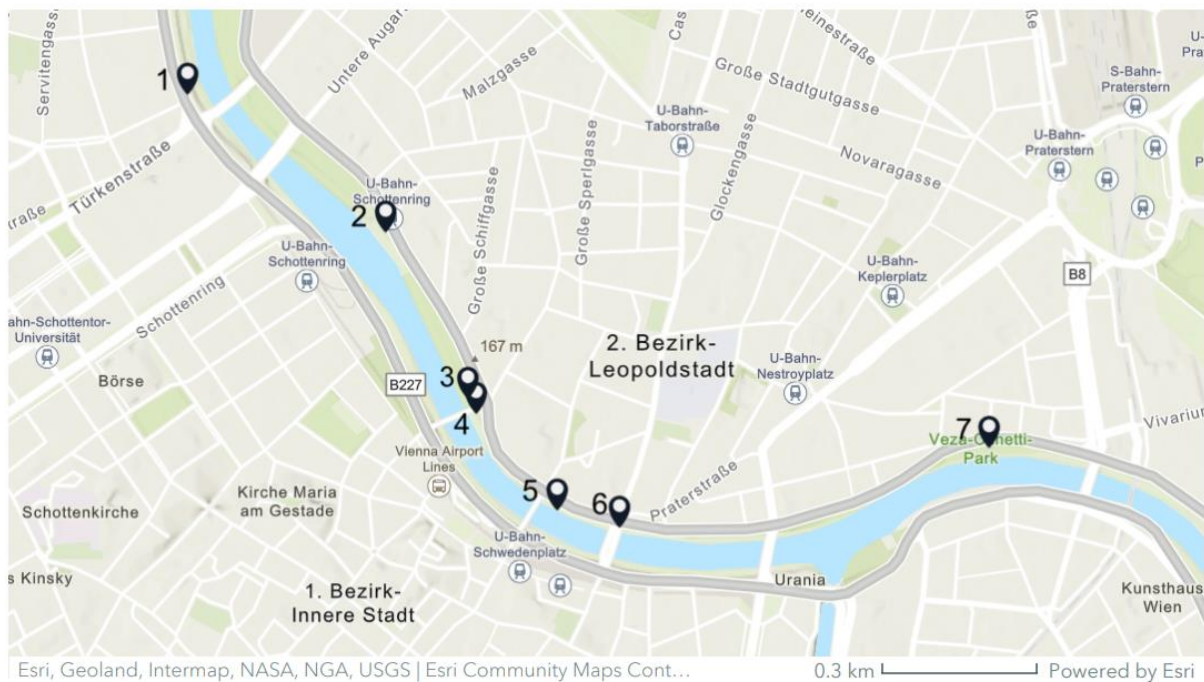
**Figure 3:** Pollution at the Donaukanal (Source: by author)

The following map *Figure 6* illustrates the status quo with regards to public toilets, thus providing the reader with a sense of orientation. The map also makes it possible to contextualise the findings of the interviews. The section of the Donaukanal that was mapped represents the so-called *Urbane Mitte* (Urban Centre) of the Donaukanal, which lies between Siemens-Nixdorf-Steg and the ship dock Kunsthaus, as defined in the master plan from 2010 (Geschäftsgruppe Stadtentwicklung, 2010: 30). Only ‘on-street’ toilets were mapped; hence, any toilets within restaurants or bars were not included. However, two of the toilets mapped

do belong to restaurants or bars but were located on the riverbank, not inside the bars or restaurants.

The additional information for each toilet in *Table 3* offers insight into what type of toilet it is, how balanced the number of female, male or potential unisex toilets is, and whether payment is required. In some instances, additional information is added. The mapping took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, 2022. Therefore, it could be the case that facilities have been added or closed in the meantime.

What stands out in terms of location is that almost all toilets are situated on the left riverbank, while on the right riverbank, on the side close to the city centre, only one toilet is offered. As can be seen in *Table 3*, there is even only a single stall at this location. What also comes to attention is that location 3 and 4 are rather close together, while there is a greater distance between locations 6 and 7.



**Figure 4:** Toilet map Donaukanal (Source: basemap by Esri, Geoland, Intermap, NASA, NGA, USGS | Esri Community Maps Contributors, Esri, HERE, Garmin, Foursquare, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS; survey and compilation by author)

**Table 3:** Description of toilets

Location	Type	Number per Gender	Payment	Further Notes
1	ökLo <sup>4</sup>	Unisex: 1	No	
2	Container	Women: 3 cubicles Men: 2 cabins, 3 urinals	50 cents	Open 4-11 pm
3	Container	Women: 5 cubicles Men: 2 cubicles, 7 urinals	No (not clear if entry is allowed for non-customers)	Belongs to bar, open when bar is open
4	Portable chemical toilet	Unisex: 3	No	1 accessible toilet
5	Building	Women: 4 cubicles Men: 3 cubicles, 4 urinals	At time of data collection no one present to charge money, but there was a chair potentially for toilet personnel	
6	Portable chemical toilet	Unisex: 3	No	1 accessible toilet
7	Building beneath stairs	Unisex: 3	No	

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<sup>4</sup> The *öklo* is a brand of mobile composting toilets that uses wood shavings instead of water



## 6 Findings

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The literature review has already shown in how far gender is relevant in toilet provision and has provided several examples of the experiences of gender minorities when needing or using public toilets. The following analysis and interpretation of interviews with visitors of the Donaukanal in Vienna will be set in relation to those previous findings.

In the sub-chapter “Interview results”, the findings from the interviews are presented following the developed categories. In the sub-chapter “Discussion”, the findings are put in relation with existing literature and the research questions are answered.

In order for the reader to be able to connect the statements with the gender and sex of the participants, the table from section 3.3.4 “Participants” is provided again at this place:

*Table 4: Participant overview*

Participant Identification	Gender	Sex
P1	female	female
P2	female	female
P3	female	female
P4	male	male
P5	non-binary	female
P6	intersex	-
P7	male	male
P8	male	male

### 6.1 Interview Results

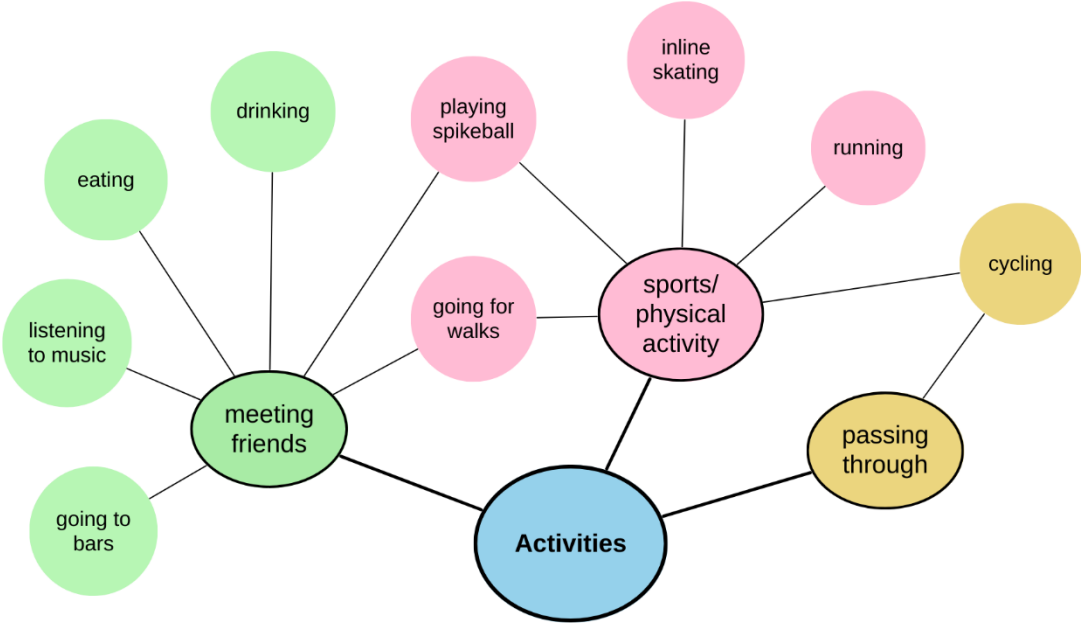
Here, the findings from the interviews are presented in thematical order according to *Table 2: Categorisation System* in 3.3.8 “Evaluation”, starting with more general topics and then leading to the aspects related to gender inequality. Finally, implications of public toilet provision and wishes for the future as reported in the interviews are presented.

#### 6.1.1 Activities carried out by the Participants

In the first stage of the interview, the participants were asked how they spend their time on the Donaukanal. The activities mentioned are presented in this section.

The graph below shows how the participants spend their time on the Donaukanal. These activities can be grouped in three main categories: meeting friends, sports, and passing

through. Sometimes meeting friends also includes sportive activities, however. Meeting friends in some way or another was mentioned by all participants.



**Figure 5:** Activities of the participants at the Donaukanal (Source: by author, based on interview transcripts)

**6.1.2 Use of Public Toilets**

The participants commented on if and how often they used public toilets at the Donaukanal and which types of toilets they usually went to. All of the participants stated that they had visited public toilets at the site, but the number of visits varied. Several participants also said that they sometimes used toilets of bars or restaurants (P1 Pos. 6, P4 Pos. 4, P5 Pos. 4, P7 Pos. 8, P8 Pos. 8). Three participants (P1 Pos. 6, P2 Pos. 6, P3 Pos. 4) mentioned that they tended to avoid the portable chemical toilets at the Donaukanal and one participant (P4 Pos. 4) even reported they tried to avoid public toilets at the site in general. Lastly, five out of the eight participants (P1 Pos. 6, P3 Pos. 10, P4 Pos. 4, P7 Pos. 8, P8 Pos. 8) reported that they had urinated in public; again, the frequency and preference of this practice varied.

**6.1.3 General Experiences**

The category “General experiences” refers to experiences with toilets at the Donaukanal which are not directly linked to gender inequality by the interviewees.

A topic that was frequently commented was payment of toilets. Most participants reported that they had paid for toilets at the Donaukanal. The opinion on payment was divided and some participants had ambivalent feelings about it. The willingness to pay was often bound to the expectation of a clean toilet (P2 Pos. 12, P3 Pos. 6, P4 Pos. 26), as illustrated by the following comment:

*„Also ich würde lieber 50 Cent zahlen und ein gutes Angebot haben als irgendwie gratis aber ein ganz grausliches“ (P4 Pos. 26).*

*[„I would prefer to pay 50 cents for a solid provision rather than having one that is free but disgusting.“]*

However, it was also mentioned several times that using a toilet should be free by principle; some added it was a human need (P2 Pos. 22, P5 Pos. 18, P8 Pos. 28). For example, participant 5 argued as follows with regards to paying for toilets:

*„Prinzipiell finde ich es eher nicht so gut, weil ich finde, das ist einfach ein menschliches Bedürfnis, dass man aufs Klo geht. Und nicht jeder hat 50 Cent, nicht jeder hat 50 Cent dabei“ (P5 Pos. 18).*

*[“Generally, I rather dislike this idea, because it is a human need to go to the toilet. And not everybody has 50 cents, not everybody has 50 cents with them.“]*

Participant 8 explained that he generally tried to avoid paying for toilets but that he understood the charges in some instances, such as bigger events. He also reported that depending on the urgency or situation, he cared more or less about paying. (Pos. 28)

Another topic discussed was hygiene or cleanliness. One could notice that the portable chemical toilets, which are free of charge, were connotated as rather unhygienic (P2 Pos. 38, P3 Pos. 10, P4 Pos. 14, P8 Pos. 20). In contrast, in other types of toilets, the participants were more satisfied with the level of hygiene and cleanliness (P1 Pos. 16, P2 Pos. 12, P3 Pos. 6 & 10).

Regarding the facilities and equipment in the toilets, some participants mentioned that toilet paper was not always in stock when they used the toilets (P1 Pos. 16, P5 Pos. 14), while others did not share this experience (or only in the portable chemical toilets) (P2 Pos. 36, P8 Pos. 22). Three interviewees also noted that in the portable chemical toilets there was no possibility to wash their hands (P3 Pos. 12, P4 Pos. 20), which also earned criticism from participant 4. Some

participants helped themselves by usually bringing tissues (P1 Pos. 16, P3 Pos. 12, P8 Pos. 22) or disinfection spray (P3 Pos.12, P7 Pos. 25,) with them when using the public toilets. Hence, certain precautions are taken to deal with insufficient facilities.

In terms of safety, the responses were mixed. Participant 8 (Pos. 32 & 36), for example, said that he had never felt unsafe when going to the toilet at the site. The reasons he gave were his own personality (not anxious and acting with foresight) and the presence of many people. The number of people was also mentioned as affecting her feeling of safety in a positive way by participant 2 (Pos. 24). She further mentioned good lighting as a positive factor. Participant 4 (Pos. 30), on the other hand, said that the Donaukanal was perceived by him as a rather unsafe place in general. Participant 1 (Pos. 18) talked about safety precautions when going to the bushes, such as going together or telling others to check on her in case she was not back after a certain time. Participant 7's opinion (Pos. 31) on the issue was multidimensional: He explained that he felt uncomfortable in some parts of the area due to darkness, but on the other side, the darkness was welcome when looking for a hidden place to go to the toilet. He was not so worried about his own safety overall but commented that he had been concerned about scaring other people when urinating in bushes. He added that the practice of public urination to the extent it happened at the Donaukanal might negatively affect people's perception of safety at the site in general. On the other hand, the proper public toilets at the site were deemed safe by him. Hence, the perception of safety was not always clear-cut and also varied greatly among the participants.

Furthermore, public urination was discussed. As mentioned before in 6.1.2 "Use of Public Toilets", most participants reported that they relieved themselves in public when spending time at the Donaukanal. Only participants 2 (Pos. 12 &14), 5 (Pos. 10), and 6 said they would not do so at the site. However, the interviewees who did say they publicly urinated at the Donaukanal showed different gradients of preference and comfort to do so. Some interviewees expressed reservations. For example, participant 1 (Pos. 50) said she found it slightly strange to urinate publicly in the city. Participant 4 (Pos. 8) pointed out that he did so when there was no feasible alternative nearby. Moreover, participant 8 (Pos. 49) said he tried to hide when doing it because he found public urination offensive when done too obviously. Participants 3 and 8 showed little to no concerns. The former (Pos. 22) explained she preferred

a lawn to a portable chemical toilet and did not mind if there were some people around and the latter (Pos. 14) also reported he did not mind using bushes or trees.

Regarding the quantity, most participants stated that they found the number of toilets rather low or did not know of many facilities (P4 Pos. 12 & 14, P5 Pos. 8, P7 Pos. 19, P8 Pos. 14). Participant 8 (Pos. 19) voiced his surprise about the lack of toilets given the number of people spending time in the area. Most interviewees had also experienced cases where toilets either had not opened yet or were already closed (P1 Pos. 20, P3 Pos. 8, P4 Pos. 28, P5 Pos. 16, P8 Pos. 26).

#### 6.1.4 Gender Inequality: Experience and Thoughts on the Topic

Here, the personal experiences of gender inequality of the participants are outlined. However, not only did the participants reflect on their own experiences of gender inequality, but some interviewees also raised concerns about potential problems or experiences people of other genders could encounter (see category “Thoughts on gender inequality” in *Table 1*). Such findings are summarised in this sub-chapter in addition to the accounts of own experiences as they often fit together well thematically. Some of the topics in this sub-chapter also overlap with the previous one (“General Experiences”), but here the focus lies on differences and imbalances between genders.

The two interviewees who do not conform to binary gender categories (P5 Pos. 24, P6) described the problem of having no suitable toilet options in terms of gender available. Judging comments or looks regarding their right to be in a certain bathroom (male or female) were also reported by these two participants (P5 Pos. 24, P6). Participant 6 even shared that they had experienced aggression due to that same reason. However, these were experiences from other places than the Donaukanal.

The problem of having no appropriate option and therefore encountering rebuke from other toilet users was also recognised by a female participant:

*„Ich kann mir schon vorstellen, wenn Personen die sich als divers, inter oder trans identifizieren, dass das sehr, sehr schwierig ist. Jetzt nicht nur am Donaukanal, sondern generell einfach zu entscheiden, auf welche Toilette man geht. Und ich kann mir vorstellen, dass man dann vielleicht öfters, gerade wenn sie äußerlich nicht der*

*klassischen Interpretation von einer Frau oder einem Mann entsprechen, dann vielleicht schief angeschaut werden, wenn sie auf dem jeweiligen WC sind und ja. In dem Fall wäre es auf jeden Fall eine gute Idee unisex Toiletten zu haben, aber nicht nur am Donaukanal, sondern überhaupt“ (P3 Pos. 34).*

*[“I can imagine that it is difficult for people who identify as diverse, intersex, or trans. Not only at the Donaukanal, but generally to decide which toilet to choose. And I can imagine that they will receive disapproving looks at the respective toilets, if their looks do not conform to the classic interpretation of a woman or man. In this case, it would certainly be a good idea to have unisex toilets, not only at the Donaukanal, but in general.”]*

Given the debate around unisex toilets, the participants were asked about their opinion on them. None of the participants was completely against gender-neutral toilets. Some respondents pointed out positive as well as negative sides of such toilets or suggested having three options (male, female, and unisex) as can be seen in the following excerpt:

*„Generell aber [...] finde ich es manchmal angenehmer, dass es auch getrennt ist. Also das hat auch Vorteile, dass es getrennt ist. Vor allem wenn man in so Orten ist wie den Donaukanal, wo vielleicht mehrere betrunkene Personen sind. Und dann, ja dann ist es vielleicht angenehmer, wenn die Toiletten auch teilweise getrennt sind bzw. man sich entscheiden kann, ob man jetzt auf die Unisex Toilette geht, auf die männliche Toilette oder auf die weibliche Toilette“ (P3 Pos. 34).*

*[“But in general, I sometimes find it more comfortable if it is separate. What I mean is, having separated toilets also comes with advantages. Especially at the Donaukanal where, potentially, there are several drunk people. An then it is maybe more comfortable when some of the toilets are separated or if you can decide between going to a unisex toilet, a male toilet, or a female toilet.”]*

Hence, the participant acknowledges the barriers faced by people who do not conform to binary genders but also has some reservations concerning gender-neutral toilets. The suggested solution is having suitable choices for everyone.

Another participant took a very positive stance towards unisex toilets. The main argument here is reduction of waiting time for women:

*„Ich finde es grundsätzlich extrem gut und ich habe auch überhaupt keine Probleme damit, wenn Frauen auf eine Herrentoilette gehen und dort halt in die Kabine gehen, die ja häufig frei ist und weil Frauen ja doch noch häufiger länger an den Toiletten anstehen als Männer, weil es einfach durch die vielen Pissoirs mehr Möglichkeiten gibt für Männer. Das heißt, allgemein halte ich eigentlich sehr, sehr viel von dem Gedanken, auch größere öffentliche Toilettenanlagen unisex zu haben“ (P7 Pos. 37).*

*[“I really like the idea and I also don't have any problems with women going to men's toilets and using the stalls there, which are often unoccupied, because women often queue longer than men. That means in general, I think very, very highly of having bigger public toilet facilities which are unisex.”]*

In agreement with the quote above, waiting time at women's toilets is another imbalance that was mentioned by all cis-female participants (P1 Pos. 14 & 34, P2 Pos. 30, P3 Pos. 38).

*„Also bei den Frauen ist überall eine Schlange - das ist ja generell meistens so - und bei den Männern nicht. Ja dieses Verhältnis ist oft bisschen unfair finde ich“ (P3 Pos. 38).*

*[“In front of the women's toilets there are queues everywhere – in general, that is often the case – but not at the men's toilet. Yes, I find that this imbalance is often a little unfair.”]*

Participant 3 assumed that part of the reason was that men had more fixtures to use because of the additional urinals (Pos. 38). The same participant later elaborated as follows with regards to the implications of long waiting times:

*„Weil das ist eben so ein Thema. Dann geht man lange hin und muss auch noch warten und dann hat man irgendwie eh schon keine Lust mehr zurückzugehen und noch was zu trinken und dann fährt man irgendwie lieber heim“ (P3 Pos. 56).*

*[“This is certainly kind of an issue. Then you walk for a long time and have to wait as well and then you are already not in the mood to go back and have another drink and then somehow you just prefer to go home.”]*

The long waiting times were reason for some to choose men's toilets rather than women's. For example, the non-binary participant 5 (Pos. 30) stated that they actually preferred women's toilets but would choose men's to reduce waiting time. Participant 2 (Pos. 32)

mentioned that she had used men's toilets at festivals in a different location but that this sometimes led to rude comments.

One participant mentioned menstruation as a form of disadvantage and pointed out that this was also a factor why menstruating people needed more toilets. The interviewee also argued that being on one's period impedes the ability to relieve oneself in the bushes. (P2 Pos. 48)

Hygiene was also mentioned as a gender-related issue by one participant who said that she never sat down on the toilet seat (P1 Pos. 34). Furthermore, the interviewee explained that the lack of hygiene, equipment and malfunctioning of facilities become more relevant and problematic when menstruating, as exemplified in the quote below:

*„Hin und wieder fehlen einfach [...] so Papiertücher oder so Klopapierrollen, was halt auch nicht immer so praktisch ist. Oder zum Beispiel, ja, wie gesagt, wenn ich jetzt zum Beispiel meine Tage halt habe, dann gehe ich halt ungern dort hin oder generell auf ein öffentliches WC, weil halt auch eben oft die Seife halt nicht angefüllt ist oder das Wasser nicht gescheit rinnt und ja einfach nicht so super ausgestattet ist wie einem Lokal oder wie man es halt daheim kennt“ (P1 Pos. 34).*

*[“Paper tissues and toilet paper are missing every now and then, which is not so practical. Or, for example, as I said, when I am on my period, I don't like going there so much or to public toilets in general, because often there isn't any soap or the water isn't running and it's just not as well equipped as a toilet in a bar or the one you know from home.”]*

Even though a low level of hygiene was also criticised by a male participant (P4 Pos. 18 & 20), the issue was not presented as a discrimination against him, in the sense that this would somehow affect him more as man in comparison to other genders. On the contrary, the male interviewees recognised that hygiene might be a more important factor for women as they cannot use urinals and have to be closer to the toilet seat (P4 Pos. 44, P7 Pos.21).

*„Ja, ich glaube schon, dass es für Frauen oft schwieriger ist, wegen dem Hinsetzen einfach auch beim auf die Toilette gehen. Weil man da als Mann im Stehen einfach ein bisschen weniger Kontakt zur Toilette einfach hat“ (P4 Pos. 44).*



*[Yes, I do think that it is often more difficult for women, partly because of the sitting down when going to the toilet. Because, as a man, when standing, you simply have a little less contact with the toilet.]*

One participant pointed out that she found the portable public toilets unsuitable for women because they spent more time at toilets and because there was no space to store bags (P2 Pos. 10). When asked about gender inequalities later on, the same participant also criticised that she had not noticed any facilities to change diapers (Pos. 48).

Imbalances were also noted with regards to public urination. One participant voiced his thoughts on taboos and gender differences regarding public urination. In his opinion, taboos were connected to the fact that people without penises had to undress more to urinate and therefore needed spots where they were less visible. In contrast, people with penises could stand up while urinating and were almost fully dressed, which made them more mobile and hence, added to their feeling of safety. (P8 Pos. 48) Participants 2 (Pos. 16 & 48), 3 (Pos. 20), and 5 (Pos. 42) said public urination was a greater taboo for women and would possibly attract more attention. Participant 6 said they would not urinate in public in the city because they could not urinate when standing and would feel unsafe as well.

One imbalance that was noted by a male participant was that women experienced exclusion on a financial level because men often had free options in the form of urinals or outside (P7 Pos. 33). Participant 2 (Pos. 22) also shared the opinion that women were more affected financially: “Es ist eigentlich nicht gerecht, dass für uns nur die bezahlten Optionen wirkliche Optionen sind.” [“It is not really fair that for us only paid options are real options.”] Other non-male users did not mention payment as a gender inequality per se but still saw it as restricting or problematic (P1 Pos. 12 & 52, P3 Pos. 6, P5 Pos. 18).

Another assumption by a male participant was concerned with safety. He argued that the topic was a greater concern for women because in his experience they usually felt more unsafe in the city in general. (P4 Pos. 44) Again, this perceived imbalance was not stated as a gender-related disadvantage by any participants who were not male, when asked about inequalities. However, safety concerns were still voiced.

The three men (P4 Pos. 10, P7 Pos. 33 & 61, P8 Pos. 62) also established that the search for toilets was a more present topic among their non-male friends in the sense that it was connected with more discussion, difficulty, or effort. These observations were summarised under the category “Managing the toilet situation” as it was also phrased by participant 8 (Pos. 62).

Finally, no experience of any sort of exclusion or discrimination regarding toilets was only reported by the men. Participants 4 (Pos. 42) and 8 (Pos. 40 & 42) specifically mentioned that they did not feel disadvantaged as men and also the male participant 7 did not report any type of experienced exclusion.

*„Aber jetzt so persönlich als Mann habe ich mich eigentlich noch nie irgendwie jetzt benachteiligt gefühlt. Also ich glaube, da hat man es oft eher am einfachsten“ (P8 Pos. 42).*

*[“But personally, as a man, I have actually never felt disadvantaged. Rather, I think it is easiest for men.”]*

### 6.1.5 Acceptable Walking Time

The participants were asked how long they would be willing to walk at most to reach a public toilet. The results are presented in *Table 5* below. There is no result for this answer from Participant 6 as this was a shortened version of the interview and the respective question was not asked.

**Table 5:** Maximum acceptable walking time

Participant identification	Maximum acceptable walking time
P1	5 mins
P2	15 mins
P3	5 mins
P4	2 mins
P5	10 mins
P7	5 mins
P8	5 mins

In general, the willingness to walk seemed to be lower for the male participants than for the other interviewees. For example, the longer durations of acceptable walking times, 10 and 15 minutes, stem from female and non-binary participants, whereas all male participants stated shorter times, either 5 or even only 2 minutes.

Participant 8 (Pos. 54) explained that he usually tried to minimise walking time at the cost of comfort. Participant 3 (Pos. 46) provided a rough calculation and came to the conclusion that five minutes each, for walking to the toilet and back, plus additional waiting time would already lead to about 15 minutes in total. Given that she would have to do that several times throughout the evening, she would spend about a quarter or a third of the time going to the toilet, she said.

#### 6.1.6 Effects on the Use of Public Space

Many participants reported the toilet situation had an effect on the duration of their stay, for some to a greater extent than for others (P1 Pos. 54, P2 Pos. 58, P3 Pos. 24 & 58, P4 Pos. 38 & 52, P5 Pos 34, P7 Pos. 43 & 53, P8 Pos. 50). For example, participant 5 said the following regarding the issue:

*„Aber ja, es kam schon öfter vor glaube ich, dass ich dann einfach gegangen bin, weil ich aufs Klo musste oder weil eh mehrere aus unserer Gruppe zum Beispiel aufs Klo mussten. Und dann sind wir entweder in ein Lokal in die Stadt gegangen oder nach Hause zu ihnen“*  
(P5 Pos. 34).

*[“But yes, I think it happened a few times that I just went home because I had to go to the toilet or because several people in our group had to use the toilet, for example. And then we either went to a place in the city or to somebody’s house.”]*

With regards to leaving the place, participant 1 (Pos. 52) pointed out that the financial aspect also played into the matter. Given that for some toilets 50 cents have to be paid, she might suggest a change of location after a certain period of time to avoid spending too much money just on using toilets.

Regarding the frequency of visiting the Donaukanal, there were two female interviewees who stated that under specific circumstances they would not go there in the first place:

*„[...] zum Beispiel hatte ich schon mal eine Blasenentzündung und da ist zum Beispiel Donaukanal dann der absolut falsche Ort, also man muss vielleicht öfter aufs Klo und in der Situation ist das dann komplett ausgeschlossen. [...]. Auch vielleicht wenn man jetzt seine Tage sehr stark hätte, würde ich da vielleicht auch nicht gerade dort einen Abend*

*dann verbringen. Also das wären so die Extremsituationen vielleicht. Das muss dann nicht der Donaukanal sein“ (P2 Pos. 60).*

*[“For example, I once had a urinary tract infection and then the Donaukanal is absolutely the wrong place to go to. Because you might have to go to the loo more often and in this situation it is completely out of question. Also, if I had strong menstrual bleeding, I wouldn’t spend my evening there. So that would be the extreme situations. Then it doesn’t have to be the Donaukanal.”]*

This excerpt mentions menstruation and urinary tract infections as reasons not to visit the Donaukanal. Participant 1 (Pos. 12) also stated that her menstruation had been a reason for avoiding the site due to the potential difficulty of finding a toilet quickly and the lack of possibilities to wash her hands. Two other interviewees (P3 Pos. 48, P5 Pos. 44) stated that the toilet situation was a factor why the Donaukanal was avoided by some people and why they themselves would choose not to go there at times.

Some participants stated that they would sometimes decide to drink less (alcohol) due to the toilet situation at the Donaukanal in order to avoid having to go to the toilet too often (P1 Pos. 52, P2 Pos. 56, P3 Pos. 52, P5 Pos. 46). In contrast, all male participants said that the (lack of) toilets at the site did not influence the number of drinks consumed by them (P4 Pos. 56, P7 Pos. 57, P8 Pos. 66). These contrasting accounts are exemplified below in two of the answers given in response to the question whether the toilet situation impacted the consumption at the Donaukanal. The first excerpt shows an example of a high effect on consumption, whereas the second excerpt illustrates no impact.

*„Aber wenn du jetzt zum Beispiel mit Freunden, wenn ich irgendwie was trinke oder so, dann muss man halt schneller mal aufs Klo. Und da nimmt man sich dann halt eher zurück, dass man jetzt nicht unbedingt jetzt hier aufs Klo muss“ (P5 Pos. 46).*

*[“For example, when I am with friends and I drink something then I have to go to the loo more quickly. And in such a situation you hold yourself back, so that you don’t have to go to the loo here and now.”]*

In contrast, the answer of participant 8 was as follows:

*„Nein, war jetzt eigentlich für mich persönlich noch kein Grund, weil es eben sehr einfach ist, wenn man so noch aufs Klo gehen muss, dass man sich wo hinstellt. Jetzt als Mann*

*ist quasi da jetzt so wenig Aufwand sagen wir mal, dass ich deswegen nicht weniger getrunken hätte“ (P8 Pos. 66).*

*“No, for me personally that was never a reason because it’s just very easy, if you have to go to the toilet to just go stand somewhere. As a man that’s practically such a little effort, that I would have never drunken less because of that.”*

Whereas the first excerpt shows that going to the toilet is something better to be avoided, the second excerpt shows it as something that takes little effort and therefore is of minor significance.

Negative effects on the quality of the stay at the Donaukanal were voiced by three participants (P2 Pos. 54, P4 Pos. 50, P7 Pos. 53). The following quote exemplifies this.

*„[...] es ist weniger gemütlich einfach würde ich sagen. Also das ist was, was man dann schon im Hinterkopf hat und sich denkt boah ja irgendwann muss ich dann aufs Klo gehen und es ist irgendwie umständlich. Also es hat auf jeden Fall einen negativen Einfluss“ (P2 Pos. 54).*

*[“It’s just less comfortable, I would say. So, it’s something that you have in the back of your mind, where you think: Oh dear, at some point I have to go to the loo and that’s somehow inconvenient. So, it definitely has a negative impact.”]*

The fact that many people urinate in public also leads to visitors not doing certain activities at the site as one participant explains:

*„Ja, also grundsätzlich finde ich es oft grauslich am Donaukanal, weil man einfach merkt, dass sehr viele Leute einfach im Freien urinieren und dann dazu diese Grünstreifen und sowas [verwenden] - wo man vielleicht sonst einmal auch Federball spielen könnte oder was auch immer. Das mache ich dort eher nicht, weil einfach die Wiesen grauslich sind“ (P4 Pos. 50).*

*[“Well, in general I often find the Donaukanal disgusting because you can notice that many people urinate in public and to do so they [use] those grass strips and so on – where you could normally play badminton or whatever. That is something I would not do there because the lawn is just disgusting.”]*

Participant 7 (Pos. 10) shared the opinion that public urination had negative effects on the attractiveness of the area. He stated that the amount of public urination and lack of toilets stood in conflict with its function as an open public space where people spend time and carry out multiple activities.

Taking into account the relevance of nearby toilets for female friends, two participants stated that the choice of the meeting point at the Donaukanal was influenced by the proximity of toilets (P4 Pos. 10, P7 Pos. 33 & 51). Participant 7 (Pos. 51) added that he paid attention to the choice of location as well so that he could be close to toilets or places where he did not have to expose himself too much when urinating in the open.

However, there were also views that the toilet situation had no effect on the use of the Donaukanal. Participant 6 argued that due to the short periods of time spent there the toilet provision did not have an impact on them. On the other hand, they acknowledged that if they spent more time at the site, the provision would have an impact. Participants 1 (Pos. 52) and 8 (Pos. 56) also said that the toilet situation did not have any noteworthy effects on their stay, because, according to them, there were ample possibilities to go to the toilet. However, the former then added that when the toilets closed later at night it would restrict her after all (P1 Pos. 52) and she had also referred to some restrictions earlier in the interview. Hence, there were some conflicting statements within the account.

### 6.1.7 Wishes for the Future

Towards the end of the interview, the participants were asked about their wishes for future developments of the toilet provision at the Donaukanal. The aspect mentioned by most participants was to increase the total number of toilets at the site (P1 Pos. 58, P3 Pos. 56, P4 Pos. 58, P5 Pos. 52, P7 Pos. 59, P8 Pos. 68). Two female participants also suggested to change the ratio of women's and men's toilets (P1 Pos. 58, P3 Pos. 56). P3 argued this could be done by either converting male toilets into female toilets or simply increasing the toilets for women.

This example illustrates the wish for more toilets within a shorter distance:

*„Also ich würde die Dichte auf jeden Fall erhöhen. Ja, ich glaube einfach der Schlüssel wären viele saubere Toiletten, die auch genug Kabinen haben, [...] wo dann wirklich an dem Toilettenstandort genug sind, dass man nicht lange warten muss“ (P4 Pos. 58).*

*["So I would definitely increase the density. Yes, I think the key would be many clean toilets, which also have enough stalls, [...] where there are really enough at one toilet location so that one doesn't have to wait for a long time."]*

In addition to the quantity of toilets, this passage also talks about the quality of the toilets and mentions cleanliness as an important factor. Cleanliness was also voiced as a wish by participant 5 (Pos. 52). Others (P2 Pos. 62, P8 Pos. 68) mentioned hygiene indirectly by talking about the maintenance of toilets. In addition, two participants mentioned that hygiene products should be in stock (P1 Pos. 58., P6) and participant 6 added that these should be for free. Participant 6 also said that bins should be provided in male toilets, too.

Findability of toilets was a further topic that was discussed. One participant argued that toilets should be located right down at the riverbanks, not up the stairs, especially having in mind people who are not local (P2 Pos. 62). This participant also added that a good distribution of the toilets was desirable. Another participant suggested better signposting as a potential improvement (P5 Pos. 52).

Wishes also included particular types of toilets. *öklos* were specifically mentioned by two participants as toilet concepts they would like to have more frequently at the site (P2 Pos. 62, P7 Pos. 59). One participant argued such toilets were easily accessible and more ecological than chemical toilets (P2 Pos. 62). The other interviewee saw their advantages in them being cheap and not consuming much space and thus feasible to install many of them (P7 Pos. 59). Whole containers with several toilets or proper toilet buildings were also among the favoured toilet types (P8 Pos. 68 & 70). One participant argued that using toilets in restaurants should be normalised (P5 Pos. 54). Chemical toilets on the other hand were generally categorised as unsatisfactory and thus not part of anyone's wishes.

The non-binary and intersex participants (P5 Pos. 52, P6) expressed the wish for unisex toilets at the site. Participant 6 said it was completely fine to have male and female options and that separation even made sense in places where many people partied, but that there should always be a gender-neutral toilet as well. They also added that - in particular if no unisex options were available - it was essential to educate toilet personnel on the existence of people who do not fit into binary gender options. Participant 5 suggested building facilities only for

FLINTA<sup>5</sup> people in addition to unisex toilets, arguing this would create safe options for all genders, including cis-women:

*„[...] diese Lösung habe ich schon mal gesehen, dass es ein Klo gibt für FLINTA Personen und eine für alle Geschlechter und ich fände das wäre eigentlich eine voll gute Lösung, dass sich alle sicher fühlen, auch Cis-Frauen. Und dass man aber auch die Möglichkeit hat, aufs Klo für alle Geschlechter zu gehen“ (P5 Pos. 24).*

*[“I have seen this solution where there is a toilet for FLINTA people and one for all sexes and I think that would actually be a really good solution for everyone to feel safe, also cis-women. And that you also have the possibility to go to a toilet for all sexes.”]*

The same two participants (P5, P6) also commented on the ideal layout of toilets. One suggestion for improvement was that there should be continuous walls from the floor to the ceiling between cabins and that proper partition walls should be installed to separate the urinal area (P6). With regards to urinals, participant 5 (Pos. 32) suggested that cabins could be located before the urinal area so that passing through could be avoided. They also said having only cabins and no urinals at all might be a more suitable option.

Participant 4 (Pos. 58) was the only one who specifically mentioned safety as an aim when asked for potential improvements. Among these desired safety arrangements were lightning and visibility of the toilet locations, but also precautions against drug abuse. The latter wish was connected to a shocking experience at the Praterstern in Vienna, where the participant had witnessed a person using drugs on the toilet. However, no such incident had occurred to him at the Donaukanal.

Finally, two participants (P1 Pos. 58, P3 Pos. 56) mentioned later opening times as an aspect they would appreciate. Participant 8 (Pos. 59) contended that toilets should be free of charge and participant 1 (Pos. 58) argued toilets should become more accessible for people with disabilities.

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<sup>5</sup> FLINTA stands for *Frauen, Lesben, Inter Menschen, Nichtbinäre Menschen, Trans Menschen und Agender Menschen* (women, lesbians, intersex people, non-binary people, trans people, and agender people) (Queer Lexicon, 2023).



### 6.1.8 Overview of all Participants

Table 6 below provides a brief overview of the most salient points by each participant.

Table 6: Participant summaries

Participant 1	Participant 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Uses DK to meet friends (eat, drink, music), running, skating</li> <li>▪ Inequality is observed with regards to waiting time/queues between men and women</li> <li>▪ Problems connected to menstruation are mentioned</li> <li>▪ Does not feel comfortable urinating in the bushes (also mentions safety concerns) but still does it when no other options are available</li> <li>▪ Positive attitude towards unisex toilets</li> <li>▪ Does not seem very bothered by the toilet situation overall but does mention a few negative aspects/aspects that impair the stay</li> <li>▪ Wishes: more containers with toilets, longer opening times, accessibility, more toilets for women, hygiene products/toilet paper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Uses DK to meet friends (drinks), going for walks</li> <li>▪ Rejection of portable chemical toilets because of lack of light</li> <li>▪ Finds payment okay if toilets are then clean but also argues going to the toilet is a natural need and toilets could be provided by the city</li> <li>▪ Wouldn't urinate in public like her male friends do because not possible to hide as much and because of safety concerns.</li> <li>▪ Generally feels safe when going to the toilet at the DK</li> <li>▪ Attitude towards unisex toilets mixed</li> <li>▪ Wishes: <i>öklos</i>, better distribution of toilets and they should be located right at the DK.</li> <li>▪ Toilet problem is mentioned as a particular issue for the DK</li> </ul>
Participant 3	Participant 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Uses DK to meet friends for drinks or playing Spikeball</li> <li>▪ Rejection of portable chemical toilets</li> <li>▪ Long distance to reach toilets, limited opening times, long queues at women's toilets</li> <li>▪ Does not mind public urination and prefers it to portable chemical toilets</li> <li>▪ values hygiene in public toilets</li> <li>▪ feels relatively safe at DK</li> <li>▪ highlights importance of unisex toilets for people who do not fit into gender binaries, but separation also comfortable due to perception of safety → best to provide all options</li> <li>▪ When using proper toilets, a great part of the evening is spent on using the toilet (walking and waiting included)</li> <li>▪ Toilet situation sometimes leads to her group leaving the place</li> <li>▪ Wishes: Longer opening times and more toilets, especially for women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Uses DK to meet friends and sometimes cycles there</li> <li>▪ Tries to avoid public toilets</li> <li>▪ Usually urinates in public when there is no suitable option but would prefer to use proper toilets</li> <li>▪ Awareness that toilet situation at DK is difficult for women</li> <li>▪ Would classify the toilet situation as bad due to lack of toilets/low density and level of hygiene. Problem with chemical toilets: no possibility to wash hands, size, unhygienic (does not want to sit down). Willing to pay 50 cents for a clean toilet</li> <li>▪ Feeling of safety at DK rather low</li> <li>▪ No issue with unisex toilets but concern that women could be unhappy about more unhygienic conditions</li> <li>▪ Does not feel disadvantaged as a man</li> <li>▪ Public urination makes the space rather unpleasant. Toilet situation sometimes reason for leaving the place</li> <li>▪ Wishes: many clean toilets, water in toilets, safety precautions</li> </ul>

Participant 5	Participant 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DK meeting point with friends for food/drinks.</li> <li>▪ Only knows chemical toilets and toilets in bars, situation at DK particularly difficult because no alternatives.</li> <li>▪ Public urination not an option for them at the site</li> <li>▪ Finds hygiene important because cannot urinate standing up</li> <li>▪ Missed toilet paper</li> <li>▪ Small number of toilets causes stress</li> <li>▪ Toilets should be free of charge</li> <li>▪ Hard to decide which toilet to choose when only binary options, experience of unpleasant looks and comments when perceived to be in the wrong place</li> <li>▪ More normalised for male people to urinate in public</li> <li>▪ Toilet situation does not affect them when passing through but when spending more time e.g., drinks less</li> <li>▪ Wishes: Toilets for FLINTAs + unisex toilets, waiting in front of urinals uncomfortable – could be planned differently, better signposting, more hygienic, normalise using toilets in bars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Does not spend much time at the DK but if then to go for walks with friends</li> <li>▪ Has used one toilet at the DK, experience was alright</li> <li>▪ Container Toilets uncomfortable because toilet personnel present → role as overseer</li> <li>▪ Has experienced aggression and rebuke for using “wrong” toilet</li> <li>▪ Would not urinate in public</li> <li>▪ Deciding on a toilet option should not be predominant, one should just be able to use a toilet in peace</li> <li>▪ Usage of the public space DK not restricted because only spends short amounts of time there</li> <li>▪ Wishes: additional unisex options, education for toilet personnel, partition walls, bins in male toilets, free hygiene products</li> </ul>
Participant 7	Participant 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Uses DK to meet with friends (sit, drink, walk), jogging</li> <li>▪ Has used toilets of bars and bushes</li> <li>▪ would rate toilet situation as bad: small number of toilets, often subject to a charge for many people, DK important public space, public urination hence problematic</li> <li>▪ own expectations for toilets are relatively low but still sees toilet situation as a problem (e.g., for women)</li> <li>▪ thinks he has unintentionally scared people in the past when coming out of the bushes after urinating there</li> <li>▪ effects on length and quality of stay</li> <li>▪ Wishes: <i>öklos</i>, solutions should be found because DK has high value as public space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Uses DK to meet friends (drinks), pass through, run, and go for walks</li> <li>▪ Mostly urinates in public, sometimes asked in bars (sometimes uncomfortable), sometimes used chemical toilets (not hygienic)</li> <li>▪ Has no high expectations of toilets but thinks there is a small number at the site</li> <li>▪ Bigger problem for women</li> <li>▪ Tries to avoid paying for toilets but sometimes does not care, understands payment at bigger events</li> <li>▪ Has never felt unsafe at the site, partly because there are many people</li> <li>▪ No discrimination against men</li> <li>▪ Problems for people who do not fit into gender binaries</li> <li>▪ No issues with unisex toilets</li> <li>▪ Easier for men to urinate in public because have to undress less and are more mobile</li> <li>▪ No effects on his stay but can be reason for other people to suggest change of location</li> <li>▪ Wishes: more toilets, not only portable toilets</li> </ul>

## 6.2 Discussion

The discussion of the findings here shall lead back to the research questions posed in the beginning and connect to the literature review. For orientation, the key words of the research questions are highlighted in bold.

**The current situation regarding availability of public toilets at the site** can be illustrated by both the toilet map and the interviews. The toilet map created provides a momentarily overview of the number and locations of public toilets at the Donaukanal. As stated in sub-chapter 5.2 “Toilet Situation and Toilet Map”, almost all toilets are situated on the left riverbank. People in a previous study (Kirchmayr, 2021: 60) have criticised the lack of toilets at the site and this perception was shared by the interviewees in this study. What can also be observed when contemplating the map is that in women’s toilets there are generally less fixtures than in men’s toilets, which is an observation often made in previous literature as well (e.g., Greed, 2003: 5). Four out of seven places provide only unisex toilets, whereas the other three only have female and male options. However, it is also relevant to consider what types of toilets these are and where they are located. For example, the portable chemical toilets are unisex, but these were also viewed as unpleasant by most participants. Another unisex toilet is number seven in the map but this one is rather far away from the more frequented part of the Donaukanal. Hence, it is comprehensible why the general impression of the participants is that unisex toilets do not or only rarely exist.

This already leads to the question **which experiences people who spend time at the Donaukanal have with regards to toilet provision at the site**. Generally, it was noted that the site is lacking toilets. In addition, many participants reported limited opening hours, which further restricts the already limited offer of public toilets. The fact that many of them have needed toilets when they were already or still closed shows that there would be demand for more toilets with longer opening hours.

Interestingly, the toilet issue has also been pointed out as a topic specifically relevant to the location Donaukanal within Vienna. Many of the interviewees primarily use the public open spaces at the site, rather than its bars and restaurants, which leads to a greater dependency on public toilet provision. Hence, the Donaukanal seems to be in an interesting position as it

functions as a popular open public space on the one side but complicates being one on the other side.

As can be seen in the description of toilets in *Table 3*, there are two locations with portable chemical toilets. However, the associations with these toilets were generally negatively charged. This also applied to hygiene and cleanliness. The portable chemical toilets were mostly said to be inadequate with regards to hygiene, whereas the satisfaction with other toilet facilities was higher in this respect. This poses the question whether portable chemical toilets are eligible or should be replaced by other options. After all, offering toilets only makes sense when they are attractive to use for the people at the site.

In terms of payment for toilets, Moreira et al. (2022: 51) found that some people, mainly from higher socio-economic background were willing to pay for a higher quality of a public toilet. Similar opinions could be found in this study; however, participants did also point out the problematic nature of such charges. For the participants themselves, of which five were in some sort of employment, paying 50 cents might not be a big issue (although some did mention that various visits during one evening would lead to a considerable sum), but for homeless people or people with a very low income, payment might be indeed an excluding factor.

Regarding safety, the presence of people and lighting can both cause positive and negative reactions. When looking at the interviews, both can be desirable or undesirable depending on the situation. For example, darkness and no people present makes it more comfortable for people to urinate on the street or in bushes but at the same time can lead to other people not feeling safe. Given that public urination is not a desirable behaviour when caring for the attractiveness of the place, lighting seems to make sense both to increase safety and to reduce public urination.

Furthermore, several **gender-related imbalances** were voiced by the participants. Some of them were first-hand experiences and others were based on assumptions about people of different genders or sexes. Many of these comments resonate with the findings presented in the literature review.

One aspect of gender inequality mentioned in previous literature (e.g., Anthony & Dufresne, 2007: 272) is the long waiting time at women's toilets. This experience was shared by the

three women in this study. Hence, everybody who would like to use women's facilities has to spend more time of their evening going to the toilet. This issue links to Plaskow's (2016: 750) statement that unequal toilet provision implies whose time is deemed more valuable. Given the unequal distribution of fixtures in male and female bathrooms at the site, longer waiting times for women are unsurprising.

Policing of gender norms, such as Browne (2004) describes it, was also reported by the participants. The experiences described by the two interviewees who do not conform to gender binaries (P5 Pos. 24 & 30, P6) such as comments, judging looks, or even aggression make clear that unisex toilets are highly necessary.

Given such experiences, the intersex participant (P6) argued that the presence of toilet staff and their role as overseers diminished their safety, whereas another participant (P3 Pos. 12) stated their presence made her feel safer. It demonstrates that the same provision can have different effects on different people and links to the divergent perception of toilet personnel discussed in section 4.3.8 "Safety and Harassment". A potential solution to this discrepancy could be better education for toilet personnel, as was mentioned by participant 6, or offering unisex toilets so that the policing of gender becomes redundant.

Toilet design and facilities within the toilets at the site were another topic discussed, which appeared to be a more salient topic for non-male participants. For example, one participant (P2 Pos. 10) criticised the lack of storage space in portable chemical toilets. This relates to Maroko et al. (2021: 5) who argue that design choices such as hooks on doors matter for menstrual hygiene management. Another participant (P1 Pos. 34) referred to lack of soap and running water, which was a problem when she was on her period. Also, all three women stated they tried to avoid the portable chemical toilets. A discomfort associated with using such toilets among women is also noted in Moreira et al. (2022: 48-49). Hence, the reasons why these types of toilets are so unattractive in particular for women should be further investigated.

Mostly, the participants were aware of a great deal of issues other genders could face and could change perspectives rather easily. However, sometimes participants admitted that they had not noticed or thought about issues, such as the lack of unisex toilets or accessibility, before. This emphasises the importance to include a variety of people in planning processes,

because issues that do not affect or come to mind to one group might still be of great importance for others. It also shows a certain ability to ignore issues that are not a problem for oneself, which stands for a certain privilege. It might also be read as a structure of power when adhering to Beall's claim (1997: 18) that power is inherent in the capacity to ignore.

Interestingly, payment and safety were addressed by men as aspects where they saw a gender imbalance (to their advantage). The aspect of payment as a gender inequality was shared by one female participant (P2 Pos. 22) and expenses were also mentioned as a reason for trying to reduce the number of toilet visits by another female participant (P1 Pos. 12 & 52). Given that women need the toilet more often (Greed, 2003: 5-6), the payment charged at the Donaukanal is likely to affect them more than men. In terms of safety, a few concerns were raised by people of different genders but there was no evidence that non-male users generally felt less safe than the male users at the Donaukanal.

Given that the toilet situation is viewed as unsatisfactory in many regards, it is essential to look into **how people deal with the toilet situation at the location.**

A major theme within the interviews was public urination, which can be viewed as a reaction to insufficient toilet provision. It is also a pollution caused by some but relevant to everyone spending time there, and as a practice that is marked with certain gender imbalances.

The men who participated in this study all stated they urinated in public. However, two of the women also said they sometimes used the bushes as toilets. Greed's (2009, The Problem section, para. 6) observation that men urinating in public is common practice seems to hold true for the participants in this study, but it is less clear whether the suggested rarity for women doing the same holds true as well. It is shown by the answers of the interviewees that it is not a male-only practice, but still seems more common among men. It is also connected with more effort for people who have to hover and some participants did mention that non-male persons urinating in public was marked with a greater taboo. It also does not seem that the men celebrate the practice of public urination as "bravado" as Greed (ibid.) calls it but that it is rather done due to a lack of better options and time efficiency. If they would still urinate in public, if the toilet situation was better remains unclear, but given the answers from the interviews there are indications that they would use proper toilets if they were more attractive (i.e., closer cleaner, and for free).

A strategy that was mentioned by both the non-binary participant (P5 Pos.30), who is read as female, and a female participant (P2 Pos. 32) to avoid long queues was using men's toilets rather than women's toilets. However, this is at the cost of discomfort in the form of unfriendly comments challenging their presence. However, it shows that there are ways power relations can be confronted by those who are disadvantaged (Browne, 2004: 343).

In reaction to insufficient equipment in toilets, precautions were taken by some participants by bringing tissues or disinfection spray. However, the lack of toilet paper, water or soap might be a greater issue for homeless people who are more dependent on such provision and it can cause discomfort when people are on their period as has been pointed out before.

### **What are the different needs and wishes when it comes to toilet provision at the location?**

Previous findings, that the number of toilets at the Donaukanal are insufficient (Kirchmayr, 2021: 60) could be confirmed in the interviews carried out. Hence, the most common wish expressed was that there should be more toilets at the site and/or more toilets for women. This might help to change the fact that many men urinate in public but also improve the situation for people who do not want to relieve themselves in public and are therefore dependent on the few toilets available. According to the interviewees, these toilets do not need to be expensive but fulfil basic functions and should be clean and well maintained. However, chemical toilets seem to be highly unattractive. Thus, the installation and maintenance of such toilets can be regarded as rather ineffective. Facilities such as *öklos* were mentioned as desirable alternatives.

Another need that was communicated was unisex toilet options. As pointed out before, there are unisex toilets available at the Donaukanal. However, given that the wish for such toilets was voiced, the existing gender-neutral toilets may not be sufficient in number, are potentially not located in attractive locations, or may be in an unpleasant state. In this context, it also seems highly relevant to look at the attitudes towards unisex toilets given the arguments often brought forward against them. As Colliver and Duffus (2022: 1486) and Colliver and Coyle (2020: 365) point out, for example, the safety of cis-women is often used as a justification for not installing gender-neutral options. However, this fear could not be confirmed by the responses of cis-women in this study. While there were some concerns regarding safety, the general attitude was that unisex toilets were welcome and important for those who do not fit into gender binaries.

However, any concerns by cis-women about their safety or comfort in unisex toilets could be easily avoided by simply offering female and male as well as gender-neutral toilets, which has also been pointed out by participants. Looking back to the status quo of toilet provision, this combination is not the case at the moment. Toilet locations either only provide unisex toilets or none at all, which is in contrast to the idea of providing different options so that everyone feels safe. In addition, as mentioned by participant 7 (Pos. 37) unisex toilets can also help to reduce waiting times for women. This is also proven by simulations by Bovens and Marcoci (2023). In that sense, unisex toilets are also a means to lessen the problem of long queues for women, which have been critiqued several times throughout the interviews.

Other suggestions were connected to menstruation. As participant 6 argued, menstrual products should be offered for free and bins should be available in men's toilets too. The latter raises an important point because people using men's toilets might still be in need to dispose of sanitary waste, which is probably often forgotten in planning processes.

The toilet design was also among the aspects discussed when talking about wishes for future developments. Here, privacy is a key issue that often falls short in men's toilets, especially in urinal areas where users can often see each other completely (Anthony & Dufresne, 2007: 276). However, as pointed out by participant 5 (Pos. 32) waiting in such areas can be highly uncomfortable for people who cannot or do not want to use the urinals. This is why they could be situated after the individual stalls or be replaced by stalls altogether. Another wish regarding privacy was raised by participant 6 who argued for continuous walls from floor to ceiling between stalls and that proper partition walls should be installed for separation in the urinal area (P6). These comments came from the non-binary and intersex participants, which might indicate that privacy is even more important for those not conforming to gender binaries. The policing of gender norms in toilets might explain the importance of privacy.

The central question of this study was **how public toilet provision affects people of different genders in their use of urban public space**. The results show that the toilet situation can impact the quality and the duration of the stay, and whether people chose to come to the Donaukanal in the first place. Further consequences were the impact on the effective time for the activities the participants wanted to do at the site, the consumption of drinks, and the type of activities carried out. Thus, a variety of effects can be determined.



Regarding the quality of the stay, one quote stands out: „[...] Weil es, wie schon gesagt, schon oft einfach immer eine große Frage ist, die schon auch den Abend so ein bisschen dann natürlich bestimmt [...]“ (P7 Pos. 53). This shows that a seemingly trivial human need has the power to influence the quality of an evening.

Greed (2019: 909) argues that insufficient public toilet provision has the power to restrict people's access to the city. This is demonstrated by both people leaving the Donaukanal and not going there in the first place:

Many participants (of different genders) stated that they had left the site due to the toilet situation. However, some participants mentioned they noticed that a change of location was more often suggested by female friends. Some statements within the interviews made clear that biological reasons such as being on one's period or having a urinary tract infection (women are more affected by these as pointed out by Plaskow (2016: 751)) eliminated the Donaukanal as an adequate option to spend time at. Hence, for people who menstruate or are more often affected by urinary tract infections, the Donaukanal might not be a place to go to in the first place and thus shows how insufficient toilet provision can exclude. This is in line with Greed's opinion (2009, The Importance of Changing section, para. 2) that the needs of menstruating people are not taken into account to a satisfactory level.

The low number of toilets also means that much time is spent on walking to toilets and back, which limits the timespan actually spent with friends or doing other preferable activities. Interestingly, the personal acceptable walking time to reach a toilet was lower among the men in comparison to the other participants. Some assumptions can be made why this is the case: It might be based on experience, in the sense that non-male people are used to spending more time for going to the toilet. The willingness to walk longer might also indicate that for non-male people proper toilets are still preferable to bushes or trees, for which they accept a certain walking time, whereas for cis-men public urination is not a big hassle.

Moreira et al. (2022: 47) reports on a decrease in drinks consumption due to a lack of public toilets in their research area. In this study at the Donaukanal, a gender difference regarding this aspect can be seen: Effects on the number of drinks consumed can be observed among all female and the non-binary participant, but with none of the male participants. This might

be connected to the fact that going to the toilet (both in public and to proper toilets) takes more time or effort for the former group.

The fact that many people urinate in public, as pointed out before, has implications for the use of the public space. The behaviour has the capacity to make certain activities, such as sports, unattractive due to unhygienic conditions. On the other hand, many of the participants stated that they urinated in public themselves, even if they said that this behaviour leads to the place being less attractive. Moreover, the negative consequences of this kind of pollution have to be borne by everyone spending time at the Donaukanal, even those who are not accountable for it. Potentially, this can also be viewed as a gender imbalance, provided the causers are predominately male.

A few participants said that the toilet provision at the Donaukanal had no effect on their use of the public space. However, participant 1 stood out in that regard because even though she claimed that her use of the space was not affected (Pos. 52), she also said that she tended to avoid the Donaukanal when she was on her period (Pos. 12). In addition, she mentioned that once the toilets close or after having paid several times for the toilet (Pos. 52), she might suggest a change of location or would drink less. Perhaps, the personal effects of public toilet provision are often so much part of day-to-day life that they are hardly reflected on and awareness of the constraints it poses might be missing.

Overall, it can be said that the impact of the public toilet provision on the use of the space at the Donaukanal is greater for non-male users, but not or not clearly so in all respects.

Finally, the phenomena observed and experienced at the Donaukanal are in line with many of the concerns raised in the literature. Nevertheless, it has to be recognised that despite the toilet situation, many people still go to the Donaukanal and seem to enjoy themselves there, given the variety of activities carried out at the site. However, expansions and improvements of the toilet facilities could potentially upgrade the quality of the space and might make the site more attractive for additional users who would otherwise avoid the area. Adaptations could also lessen the exclusion certain groups experience through inadequate provision, such as no options for their gender, lack of hygiene, financial aspects, and many more. After all, returning to Miller's (2007: ix) statement about beliefs of public spaces, they should be "accessible to everyone."

## 7 Didactic Perspectives and Reflections

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This chapter addresses the meta-question of **how teaching and learning in the subject Geography and Economics can profit from the topic of toilet provision and gender**. It should emphasise the importance of dealing with the access to public spaces and gender-related topics in school. Hence, the following discussion aims to act as a bridge between the disciplines of geography and urban planning on the one side, and the teaching of the subject Geography and Economics on the other side.

If exclusion and taboos around toilet provision should be deconstructed, it makes sense to take a closer look at education. After all, in accordance with the education for sustainable development, learners should be supported to develop critical thinking and ways of action that are necessary for a solidary way of living together despite scarcity of resources (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, n.d.).

The need for gender-sensitive teaching is emphasised by Ferber et al. (2016), who carried out a school project on gendered spaces in the city. They observed that both teachers and students viewed the gender topic as irrelevant at the beginning of the project (ibid.: 278). Such non-existent interest should be countered by showing teachers and students the relevance of discussing gender hierarchies given these affect all the spaces they move in.

Indeed, it can be said that the topic of toilet provision is a highly relevant theme to students as the need for toilet is something that affects them (and everyone) in their daily live. It is thus a topic that seems highly accessible to the students and allows them to share their own experiences. Students may be able to reflect on their access to toilets when they are out and about in their free time, but toilet provision could even be analysed within the school itself. Hence, as the topic is so relatable, the students' personal experience can be used as a starting point for further discussion of more elaborate concepts, as is argued later on. This relates to the call for student-centredness within the subject, where students should be "picked up where they are" to then lead them to new perceptions and insights (Schmidt-Wulffen, 2004: 63).

In addition, more and more (especially young) people do not identify with their sex assigned at birth says psychologist Diana Klinger (Al-Youssef, 2023). It is thus likely that students in the

classroom struggle with gender segregation in toilets, just as described in this thesis. Acknowledging their needs and making them part of the classes taught could prove valuable to foster solidarity among students.

The relevance of the topic for students may also provide room for them to become active themselves. For example, after an analysis of the school toilets, potential improvements could be proposed. This is in line with the principle of action-orientation, which is among the major principles of the subject of Geography and Economics (Pichler et al., 2017: 62) and also relates to the need to be capable to act in face of societal challenges, which has been addressed at the beginning of this chapter.

The curriculum for upper secondary schools (AHS) (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, 2023) includes various competences and topics that could be taught and acquired by the example of public toilet provision and gender: For example, in 5<sup>th</sup> grade one can find the point “discussing causes and effects of spatial and social mobility among different societies,” which directly relates to the effects on the use of public space discussed in this work. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade the item “Evaluating effects of societal processes of inclusion and exclusion on the living conditions of certain groups in society” stands out. Here, the feeling of safety of for transgender, non-binary, and intersex people, and people with gender-ambiguous bodies could be addressed. Finally, in 8<sup>th</sup> grade the aims of the curriculum involve to “explain aims, scope for action, and effects of spatial planning” and to “examine the constructions of spaces and spatial identities.” The former could involve discussing how one could get involved in changing unequal toilet provision, whereas the latter can ask questions of how identities are shaped by gender segregation in toilets.

As has been stated before, the topic of public toilet provision may act as a starting point for a debate of various subject-specific ideas. When looking at the key concepts of Geography and Economics (*Basiskonzepte*), there are several that seem connected to the issues raised in this study. The key concepts were developed with the aim of offering the necessary lens and methodology to (de)construct, structure, and problematise phenomena from a geographical and economic perspective and develop reflected actions (Hinsch et al., 2014: 52). Therefore, it is valuable to examine these concepts in more detail and look at how the transfer from the scientific discipline to teaching can happen.

Many of the key concepts include aspects that could be taught by using the example of public toilet provision. However, the concept “Interests, Conflicts, and Power” seems particularly suitable. Firstly, power relations are frequently argued to underly the inequities of toilet provision in the literature concerned with public toilets and gender (e.g., Plaskow, 2016; Browne, 2004). Furthermore, the concept allows to look at the issue from various perspectives (i.e., who has which interests and who has the power to make certain decisions) and thus encourages multiperspectivity.

The latter leads to another key concept named “contingency” as it is argued that multiperspectivity can help to implement this concept (Hinsch et al., 2014: 55). Contingency deals with the idea that individual or societal issues are always embedded in a certain context (spatially, (socio)economically, and historically) and are always subject to change. Thus, claims to universal truths regarding explanations and solutions for such issues should never be trusted. (ibid.: 54) When applying this theory to the topic of this thesis, it implies that depending on time, space, and the people involved solutions for fair public toilet provision may vary.

Another key concept of the school subject is “diversity and disparity”. According to Hinsch et al. (2014: 53) accessibility and reachability are strongly intertwined with diversity and disparity, which can be exemplified perfectly by the example of public toilet provision. Just as Fincher and Iveson (2008: 2) regard the consideration of diversity in planning as highly relevant, it could be shown by the existing literature and the interviews in this study that different genders have different needs for public toilet provision.

Finally, the topic of public toilet provision can contribute towards teaching a critical topography. Topography has long been a dominant part of the subject Geography and Economics – however, often in a rather unreflected way that focuses solely on where certain objects are located (Hitz, 2001: 482). Hence, this so-called topography can only really be referred to as the learning of *toponyms* (Vielhaber, 2012: 89). However, it is argued that “pupils have to be told that the production of geographical codes is based on powerful impacts that have to be critically reflected” (ibid.). This notion can be illustrated by the locations and types of toilets at the Donaukanal. Rather than simply learning where certain objects are, their existence and characteristics should be questioned: Why are there toilets in certain places but

not in others? Who decided to put them there? Who designed them this way and for what reason? How does it affect people?

Overall, it can be said that the topic offers many possibilities to teach various concepts and competences, but this is of course dependent on the choice of teaching approach, too. In addition, Geography is vast in the disciplines it can cover, which makes it impossible to specialise in all of them. Rather it should teach the communication about key problems, as Rhode-Jüchtern (2009: 17) argues. In so far, there is no requirement to use the topic of public toilet provision for these teaching and learning goals, but it has the potential to act as an example for a variety of issues, look through various lenses, and to start an interesting debate.

## 8 Limitations of this Study

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Of course, there are certain limitations to this study, which are clarified in this chapter. Most of these limitations refer to the sample of participants and the conditions of the interviews.

To qualify as a participant for this study, having visited the Donaukanal at least ten times in the past three years was a prerequisite. This means that the interviewees are people who are generally willing to spend a certain amount of time at the site. Thus, no insights are gained about people's opinion who are not willing to visit the Donaukanal in the first place. However, the toilet situation might be part of the reason these people do not want to spend time at the site and their reasoning would provide additional insights into the matter.

Another limitation concerns the comparability of the interviews. As the interview with Participant 6 was carried out as a shortened version on the phone and was not transcribed, the information on the experiences and opinions of this interviewee are less detailed than insights from other interviews.

Furthermore, the original aim was to interview three people who do not conform to binary gender roles. Due to limited responses to calls for interviews, only one intersex and one non-binary person participated in this study. Further insights from gender minorities, such as trans people, for example, would be highly valuable.

It is also necessary to point out that the participants had a rather high level of education and two of them identified as non-binary and intersex, respectively. Hence, the general awareness of gender inequality and openness towards finding suitable solutions might be rather high in this sample in comparison to other people.

Regarding comparability of different genders, it has to be said that the sample was rather small. Hence, the findings can only act as indicators towards certain gender-specific experiences. However, in many cases, such as longer waiting times at women's toilets, for example, the literature as well as the number of fixtures for women support the claim that gender inequalities are present here. Greater samples could offer the opportunity to correlate gender with certain experiences, perceptions, and effects.

Regarding the spatial applicability of the findings, it can be said that sometimes it proved difficult to restrict certain questions and answers to the Donaukanal. Hence, some findings might be more relevant for the Donaukanal, whereas others are experiences and observations about public toilets more generally (or within Vienna). However, asking questions about a specific area might have been helpful for participants to specify or recall problems or experiences.

Lastly, it is necessary to point out that the Donaukanal might attract a certain audience. Hence, it is not a place that is representative for all problems regarding toilets. Other public spaces might be more suitable to illustrate problems parents and their children or homeless people (as groups strongly dependent on public toilets) face when spending time in public spaces.



## 9 Conclusion and Outlook

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This thesis has examined the status quo of the public toilet provision at the Donaukanal, existent inequalities inherent in this provision, as well as its interplay with people's use of public space.

In previous literature, a variety of gender-inequalities relating to both quantity and quality of toilets were examined. These often resonate with experiences of interviewees in this study, such as long waiting times at women's toilets and exclusion and policing through gender segregation in toilets (e.g., Anthony & Dufresne, 2007: 272; Browne, 2004).

Within the interviews, the topic of public urination played a prominent role. While many visitors, in particular cis-men, make use of this practice, it also has negative consequences for those spending time at the site, for example by reducing the attractiveness of carrying out certain activities. Those who do not urinate in public are necessarily more dependent on public toilets. However, as can be learned from the interviews, the number of toilets as well as their opening times are perceived as insufficient. These issues in addition to the long waiting times at women's bathrooms mean a great amount of time is needed for using the toilet, especially for non-cis-male users. The toilet situation can also impact the duration of the stay and whether people chose to visit the site at all. The latter was especially relevant for biological/health reasons, such as menstruation or urinary tract infections. Reducing the consumption of drinks was a further measure taken by non-male people, to avoid having to go to the toilet frequently. (See chapter 6 "Findings")

Some recommendations for action became evident as well: Overall, the number of toilets should be increased, especially under consideration of a gender-equal distribution of fixtures. Gender-neutral options are needed in addition to other options to cater for various needs. The concept of portable chemical toilets at the site should be re-evaluated given their unpopularity. Potentially they could be substituted with more hygienic and better equipped solutions. Toilet design should support the need for privacy and menstrual requirements should be contemplated. Overall, many suggestions for improvement were given, which shows that involving users in such processes could offer promising outputs. (See chapter 6 "Findings")

The topic of gender equality in toilet provision remains pertinent. Given that many users of the Donaukanal perceive the toilet situation as unsatisfactory (in this study as well as in Kirchmayr, 2021: 60) underlines the importance of continuous evaluation and improvement. Furthermore, as this study has shown, people of different genders have very different expectations and experiences of and with toilets. Hence, it continues to be important to include the voices of a variety of people. A variety of effects on the use of public space could also be shown; however, this connection still needs further evaluation.

Thematically and perspective-wise the topic of this thesis has also much to offer for the school subject of Geography and Economics. Many overlaps between the curriculum and the key concepts on the one hand, and the content and prospects of this thesis could be found. It may also act as an example for students to get involved and help overcome barriers for excluded groups. (See chapter 7 “Didactic Perspectives and Reflections”)

Some ideas for future research include the following aspects, of which the first refer to the Donaukanal area and the last one to the greater topic of inequalities in toilet provision:

The findings of this study may act as a starting point for more extensive studies, which include more participants. This would also allow for more valid comparisons between different genders. In addition, as has been pointed out in chapter 8 “Limitations of this Study”, future research could include the reasoning of people who do not visit certain public spaces in the first place, to find out more about existent patterns of exclusion.

Given that most toilets are situated on the left riverbank (see *Figure 6* in sub-chapter 5.2 “Toilet Situation and Toilet Map”), it would be interesting to examine whether this has any connection with the attractiveness of each side for users.

Another way of examining the toilet situation at the Donaukanal could include photographic documentation of the pollution caused by public urination, a topic that was highly present in the interviews and could be captured in this way.

Furthermore, this study has mainly focused on the user perspective of public toilet provision; however, the provider perspective could offer valuable insights into the reasoning and basis for decisions regarding toilets at the site.

In addition, while Vienna has equal public toilet provision on the agenda (Stadtentwicklung Wien, MA 18, 2018: 63), the topic might be even more relevant in places where gender minorities face even stronger discrimination. Such research continues to be important to limit the exclusion certain groups experience.

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# 11 Appendix

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## 11.1 Abstract

While toilets in general are still a tabooed issue in society today, it is widely acknowledged that gender plays a crucial role for the offer of adequate public toilets. This work examines gender inequalities in the public toilet provision at the Donaukanal in Vienna and investigates the effects on the use of public space of said provision. Data was collected by conducting eight interviews with people of different genders who had visited the Donaukanal several times before. The transcripts of the interviews were analysed by means of qualitative content analysis using the software MAXQDA. In addition, a map was created to gain insights into the number and types of toilets offered at the site. The findings show that, indeed, there are several gender inequalities inherent in the public toilet provision at the Donaukanal. It could also be shown that the toilet situation has various effects on the use of the space and in some regards gender differences could be deduced. Finally, it is argued that the topic of public toilet provision and gender can prove valuable for teaching and learning in the Austrian school subject Geography and Economics.

Obwohl Toiletten nach wie vor ein tabuisiertes Thema in der heutigen Gesellschaft sind, ist es weitgehend anerkannt, dass Gender eine wesentliche Rolle für adäquate öffentliche Toiletten spielt. Diese Arbeit untersucht Gender-Ungerechtigkeiten hinsichtlich des öffentlichen Toilettenangebots am Donaukanal in Wien und ermittelt Auswirkungen dieses Angebots auf die Nutzung des öffentlichen Raums. Daten wurden durch die Durchführung von acht Interviews mit Personen verschiedener Gender erhoben, die den Donaukanal alle mehrmals zuvor besucht hatten. Die Transkripte der Interviews wurden mithilfe der qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse und der Software MAXQDA ausgewertet. Zusätzlich wurde eine Karte vom Untersuchungsgebiet angefertigt, die Einblicke in Anzahl und Typen der vorhandenen Toiletten bietet. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass einige Gender-Ungerechtigkeiten durch das Toilettenangebot gegeben sind. Es konnte auch gezeigt werden, dass dieses Angebot verschiedene Effekte auf die Nutzung des öffentlichen Raumes hat, wobei auch hier teils Unterschiede je nach Gender abzuleiten sind. Zuletzt wird argumentiert, dass öffentliches Toilettenangebot und Gender als Thema wertvolle Lehr- und Lernmöglichkeiten für den Geographie- und Wirtschaftskundeunterricht bieten kann.

## 11.2 Interview Guide

<b>Vor Interview</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bedanken</li><li>• Thema, öffentliche Toiletten &amp; Gender, DK, → Masterarbeit</li><li>• Hinweis auf das Aufnehmen und Transkribieren</li><li>• Interview selbst wird etwa eine halbe Stunde dauern auch je nachdem wieviel du zu erzählen hast, aber ich würde sagen 40 Minuten maximum</li><li>• Ganz allgemein würde ich dich einladen wirklich ausführlich zu erzählen, was dir zu den Fragen einfällt; das heißt, ich werde versuchen, dass ich dich nicht unterbreche, außer es ist mir etwas unklar</li><li>• Gibt kein richtig/falsch!</li><li>• Datenschutzerklärung/Einverständnis schicken und erinnern, dass ich sie unterschrieben zurück brauche</li><li>• Kurzes Google Form → Link, Kennzahl sagen</li></ul>
<b>Einstieg</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kurz erzählen, <b>wie</b> die Zeit am Donaukanal meist verbracht wird (welche Tätigkeiten)</li><li>• <b>Wo</b> genau?</li></ul>
<b>Hauptteil</b>
<p>Persönliche Erfahrungen/Gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hast du am DK schon öfter Toiletten benutzt und wenn ja welche? (Ort/Art) (Container, chemische Toiletten/<i>Dixiklos</i>, in Restaurants, <i>öklo</i>,...)</li><li>• Wie würdest du die Situation bezüglich öffentlicher Toiletten dort bewerten? Was sind deine Erfahrungen? Was ist gut/schlecht?</li><li>• <i>Ergänzend: Denke an Anzahl d. Toiletten, Hygiene &amp; Gesundheit &amp; biologische Bedürfnisse, Ausstattung, Barrieren, Öffnungszeiten, Bezahlung, Sicherheit, Exklusion (z.B. durch Labels), Begleitung anderer Menschen</i></li><li>• Wie zugänglich oder angemessen sind die Klos am DK für dein dein Geschlecht/Gender? (Was fehlt, auf was wird Rücksicht genommen?)</li><li>• (Bzw. hast du dich aufgrund deines Genders/Geschlechts am DK schonmal benachteiligt gefühlt was den Zugang zu Toiletten bzw. eine angemessene Toiletteninfrastruktur angeht?)</li><li>• Unisex Toiletten – wie stehst du zu ihnen und bzw. sind sie dir am DK untergekommen, gibt es irgendwelche Erfahrungen in Bezug auf Unisex Toiletten, die du am DK gemacht hast?</li></ul> <p>Effekte:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Warst du hier am Donaukanal schon mal in der Situation, dass du keine Toilette gefunden hast und kannst du die Situation vielleicht kurz beschreiben? (event. schon vorher fragen)</li><li>• Was hast du getan, wenn du keine Toilette gefunden hast? (öffentlich Urinieren ein Thema, Tabu?)</li><li>• Wie weit bzw. lange wärst du bereit zu gehen, um eine Toilette aufzusuchen? (Gehminuten bzw. wenn du jetzt an spezifische Orte im Umkreis vom DK denkst)</li><li>• Inwiefern beeinflusst die Toilettensituation deinen Aufenthalt am DK?</li><li>• <i>Ergänzend: Länge, Qualität des Aufenthalts, Wege die du auf dich nehmen musst, Konsum</i></li></ul> <p>Wünsche:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Was würdest du dir in Bezug auf die Toiletten Infrastruktur hier am DK wünschen? Was sollte berücksichtigt werden? Was könnte verbessert werden?</li></ul>
<b>Schluss</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weitere Anmerkungen, Ergänzungen</li></ul>

## 11.3 Additional Questionnaire

21.07.23, 13:36

Befragung ergänzend zum Interview

### Befragung ergänzend zum Interview

Vielen Dank, dass Sie an einem Interview im Rahmen meiner Masterarbeit teilnehmen. Die folgende Umfrage dient dazu, noch einige ergänzende Informationen zu erheben und dauert höchstens 5 Minuten.

Es wird im Folgenden nach einer Kennnummer gefragt. Diese dient dazu, die Daten aus der Befragung mit dem zugehörigen Interview verknüpfen zu können. Insofern sind die Daten, die Sie hier eingeben, für die Verfasserin zuordenbar; in der Masterarbeit wird Ihr Name aber selbstverständlich anonymisiert.

*\* Gibt eine erforderliche Frage an*

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1. Wie alt sind Sie? (Jahre) \*

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Bitte geben Sie hier die Kennnummer ein, die Sie erhalten haben. (Diese dient zur Verknüpfung mit dem zugehörigen Interview) \*

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Mit welchem Gender (sozialem Geschlecht) identifizieren Sie sich? \*

*Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.*

trans\*

weiblich\*

inter\*

nicht-binär\*

männlich\*

Sonstiges: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Welches ist Ihr biologisches Geschlecht? \*

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

- weiblich
- männlich
- intersexuell/zwischen Geschlechtlich
- Mann-zu-Frau-transsexuell
- Frau-zu-Mann-transsexuell
- Sonstiges: \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Was ist Ihr derzeitiger Beschäftigungsstatus? (Mehrfachantwort möglich) \*

Wählen Sie alle zutreffenden Antworten aus.

- Schüler\*in
- Studierende\*r
- Angestellt (Vollzeit)
- Angestellt (Teilzeit, geringfügig)
- Arbeitslos
- Selbständig
- Pensioniert
- Sonstiges: \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Welcher ist Ihr höchster Bildungsabschluss? \*

Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.

- Pflichtschulabschluss
- Lehrabschluss
- Berufsbildende mittlere Schule
- Matura
- Hochschulabschluss
- Sonstiges: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Wie oft haben Sie in den letzten 3 Jahren Zeit am Wiener Donaukanal im öffentlichen Freiraum verbracht? \*

*Markieren Sie nur ein Oval.*

- weniger als 10-mal
- 10- bis 20-mal
- 20- bis 30-mal
- öfter als 30-mal

Vielen Dank für die Teilnahme und Unterstützung!

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