GET THEE TO A SMART CITY: A STUDY ON QUEER URBAN PLANNING IN SEESTADT ASPERN

By

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Abstract

This study is a theoretical reflection on the dynamic tensions and interplay between queer space production and the neoliberalising smart city, focusing on queer co-housing initiative Que[e]rbau within the Seestadt Aspern development in Vienna, Austria. As one of the largest urban development projects in Europe, Seestadt is posited as a model for affordable housing and democratic city planning elsewhere. Despite the burgeoning discourse on the smart city concept, which promises a technologically driven solution to urban challenges, little attention has been paid to how queer spaces emerge within this framework. Through a detailed examination of Seestadt, this research aims to explore the compatibility between the concepts of "smartness" and "queerness", whilst being attentive to the neoliberalising functions of the master-planned "smart city". This speculative question will be approached primarily through observing the dynamic interplay between Seestadt and Que[e]rbau, reflecting on how these urban spaces are co-constituted through competing narratives and imaginings of the smart city. Employing an interdisciplinary approach, including content analysis and qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation, diverse perspectives from developers, residents, and other stakeholders are collected and analysed. Architectural visual data such as master plans and photographs of Que[e]rbau and Seestadt will also be incorporated to conduct spatial analysis. Guided by a number of conceptual impulses, embedded in a number of academic disciplines, including governmentality studies, urban studies, geographies of sexualities, queer geographies, and queer urban studies, the research ultimately concludes that regardless of how experimental techno-utopian smart city visions may be, true queer utopias cannot be imagined without centring environmental justice and processes of decolonization.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 21,336 words
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Signed: Alina Young

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I would like to dedicate this project to my grandfather Brian Young, who first inspired my interest in architecture.

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INTRODUCTION

This research project investigates the practice of queer urban planning with a case study on Que[e]rbau - a queer affordable co-housing project in "smart city" Seestadt Aspern, Vienna. Through my interactions with residents involved in designing Que[e]rbau, I gained insights into what makes the project queer and the significance of being situated in "smart city" Seestadt. As one of the largest urban development projects in Europe, Seestadt is posited as a model for affordable housing and democratic city planning elsewhere. It is also a site of controversy and ongoing protest in Vienna, as the development necessitates the construction of an environmentally destructive highway. A principal objective throughout my research process has been to interpret Que[e]rbau's positioning within the broader Seestadt rationale, untangling intersections and contradictions between queer urban space-making and "smartness". This undertaking required both evaluating what smart urbanism means for Seestadt, and how Que[e]rbau is understood, relationally, to the development by different stakeholders. Given that the Seestadt project encapsulates private-public dynamics in city planning, a significant part of my analysis focuses on governance strategies and power relations behind the production of its utopian urban vision. Spending extended time in "smart city" Seestadt—consistently alone, and sporadically with residents, close friends, planners, activists, and acquaintances—revealed an urban space imbued with myriad meanings and desires. My research aims to elucidate contestations over the space, both materially and symbolically, whilst being attentive to the neoliberalising functions of the master-planned "smart city".

The current introductory chapter will include the following sections: 'A Note on Queer'; 'Background'; 'Topical Literature Review'; 'Methods and Research Design'; and 'Positionality', respectively. It seemed critical to define how I intend to deploy the term 'queer' throughout my research, so I will share 'A Note on Queer' to begin. The 'Background' section aims to introduce both the Que[e]rbau and Seestadt Aspern projects, as well as provide socio-historical context for Vienna's unique, experimental planning history. The 'Topical Literature Review' addresses recent literature on queering urban planning, smart city discourses, and emerging studies on Seestadt and Que[e]rbau. Here, I outline my research aims and objectives. In the 'Methods and Research Design' section, I expand on my qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and text analysis of data collected from informational and statistical materials. I also address the limitations of my research. The 'Positionality' statement is a

disclosure and contemplation on my own situatedness vis-à-vis the research and personal motivations for pursuing this topic.

Chapter 1 'Theoretical Framework' traces the key theories and conceptual frames deployed throughout the thesis and analysis. Drawing insights from a range of fields and academic disciplines, I discuss the following ideas: production of space; the right to the city; queer space; queer architecture and aesthetics; urban vs rural dichotomies; homonormativity; homonationalism; urban planning and architecture as a technique of disciplinary power; smart citizenship and subjectivation; and utopian thinking in urban planning. Though broad in scope, I have employed these theories and concepts to better understand the practice of queering urban planning in the context of the neoliberalising smart city. Chapter 2: What's queer about Que[e]rbau? constitutes the main analysis of the co-housing project Que[e]rbau. Starting with 2.1. It's What's Inside That Counts: Que[e]rbau Aesthetics, I conduct an analysis on the aesthetics of the building, drawing comparisons with another housing project for LGBTQ people in Vienna - the Türkis Rosa Lila Tipp Villa. Here I discuss possible manifestations of queer aesthetics, the problems with visibility, and construction of queer spaces of fear in the city of Vienna. I continue in the following section 2.2 Queering Planning and Queer community-building practices to describe the participatory planning processes integral to the Que[e]rbau project, as well as relational interpretations of its purpose and significance. Here I also introduce a new queer co-housing project initiated by the same group, offering insights into the planning process that I had the opportunity to observe.

The next chapter, Chapter 3: Situating Que[e]rbau in the Smart City, situates Que[e]rbau in the smart city, contemplating the queer potentials and contradictions of this form of techno-utopian urbanism. In 3.1. Urban entrepreneurialism, experimentation and responsibilization and the Smart City I discuss residents' opinions on the smart technologies and overall vision of Seestadt propagated by the developers and City of Vienna. Further, in the section 3.2. Safety and Surveillance and the Smart City I comment on the spatial layout of the neighbourhood and urban planning practices that prioritise safety and security, and how these might adversely affect LGBTQ people and other marginalised groups. 3.3. Sustainability and the Smart City highlights the power geometries triggered by the Seestadt project in terms of detrimental environmental and social impacts on the surrounding region. I also draw attention to the political economy embedded in smart city infrastructures by looking more closely at the city's technology partner Siemens.

A Note on Queer

The term 'queer' is pervasive in public, political and academic discourses, which means it is often deployed in contending ways. Throughout this research I will deploy it as both an umbrella term for unbounded non-normative sexualities and gender expressions, and as a methodological orientation.

As a verb and methodological orientation, to "queer" is to unsettle established norms, and disrupt and rupture prevailing cis-hetero-patriarchal systems of dominance.

As an identity, beyond both encompassing and being encompassed within the ever-burgeoning LGBTQ+ acronym (lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and inter* identities), queerness signifies fluidity in self-identification. I will use the terms queer and LGBTQ interchangeably.

Background

Que[e]rbau is a queer communal housing project situated in Seestadt Aspern, also known as Vienna Urban Lakeside, in Vienna, Austria. With planning initiated in 2012, the Que[e]rbau concept was developed by Verein Que[e]rbau Wien—an association of future residents and interested parties—in coordination with the City of Vienna and project developer Wohnbauvereinigung für Privatangestellte (WBV-GPA). WBV-GPA delivers affordable, subsidised housing. The project was completed in June 2017 following a multi-phase participatory planning process, which involved collaboration between residents and planners on the design of communal areas and specifications of individual apartments.[1] This is notably the first queer cohousing initiative (*Baugruppenprojekt*) of its kind in Austria.[2] The *Baugruppen* model entails an autonomous management structure whereby the residential project is managed by a "mini-cooperative" made up of all its tenants.[3] The Que[e]rbau tenants cooperative is officially named *Verein Que[e]rbau Seestadt*.[4] According to the website, the Que[e]rbau is designed to "meet the requirements of queer people" and "support old and young, singles and partners as well as all types of families – rainbow, patchwork, foster families".[5] The term "queer people" is employed here to denote lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and inter* identities. The project also welcomes cisgender, heterosexual residents seeking alternative living arrangements not premised on heteronormative, nuclear familial structures.[6] As per website, "the only ticket to [Que[e]rbau] is being open to people with a queer lifestyle".[7]

Que[e]rbau is part of a larger vision: Vienna Urban Lakeside (Seestadt). Opened in 2013, Seestadt is promoted as a "smart city with a heart" and one of the largest urban development projects in Europe, projected to accommodate 25,000 residents by 2028.[8] The project developers

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[1] "Welcome…," Que[e]rbau, accessed February 9, 2023, https://queerbaudotat.wordpress.com/.

[2] "Archivmeldung: Ludwig: Erstes Integratives LSBTI-Wohnprojekt in Österreich," archival entry of the city hall correspondence, 16 June, 2017, Presseservice der Stadt Wien, https://presse.wien.gv.at/2017/06/16/ludwig-erstes-integratives-lsbti-wohnprojekt-in-oesterreich.

[3] Roberta Cucca and Michael Friesenecker, "Potential and Limitations of Innovative Housing Solutions in Planning for Degrowth: The Case of Vienna," *Local Environment* 27, no. 4 (2021): 508.

[4] "Wir Vom Que[e]Rbau," Verein Que[e]rbau Seestadt, Yella Yella! Nachbar_innentreff, 2024, https://www.yellayella.at/wir/.

[5] "Welcome…," Que[e]rbau, accessed on February 9, 2023, https://queerbaudotat.wordpress.com/welcome/.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] "Living and Working in Aspern Seestadt," Wien 3420 Aspern Development AG, accessed March 6, 2023, https://www.aspern-seestadt.at/en.

Wien 3420 Aspern Development AG—established in 2003—manage Seestadt in collaboration with the City of Vienna, embodying a "management-oriented planning direction".[9] This self-proclaimed *city-within-a-city* lies within four kilometres of Vienna's north-eastern limit. Seestadt could alternatively be described as a *smart-city-within-a-smart-city*, given that Vienna is committed to a municipality-wide "Smart Climate City Strategy";[10] the local planning framework for meeting interdependent global challenges such as urban population growth, the climate crisis, and "technological revolution".[11] The smart city concept is definitionally contested and heterogeneous in application across different socio-spatial contexts, but can be broadly understood as a model promising urban futures where the integration of technologies into the urban fabric and infrastructure optimises operational efficiency, sustainability, and economic growth.[12] It has become an urban planning norm over the last 30 years, with various international organizations such as UN Habitat's World Urban Forum pushing it as a preferred implementation model for international development practitioners.[13]

Smart cities are typically fitted with IoT (Internet of Things) sensors that monitor and collect data on various aspects of city life, which is then analysed with artificial intelligence to improve living quality for residents. Technology is integrated into the following eight infrastructure domains: "mobility", "security", "healthcare", "energy", "water", "economic development and housing", and "engagement and community".[14] The smart city promises an experimental, techno-utopian form of modernity in which information and communications technologies bring "order over disarray"[15] and ostensibly mitigate social problems. Vienna's smart city vision does not solely focus on technological solutions for urban problems; it also emphasises the importance of civic participation in development policy, as articulated in the City's mission statement: "High quality of life for everyone in Vienna through social and technical innovation in all areas, while maximising

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[9] Astrid Krisch and Johannes Suitner, "Aspern Explained: How the Discursive Institutionalisation of Infrastructure Planning Shaped North-Eastern Vienna's Urban Transformation," disP - The Planning Review 56, no. 2 (2020): 60.

[10] Vienna Municipal Administration, *Smart Climate City Strategy Vienna*, tr. Angela Parker. 2022, Available at: https://smartcity.wien.gv.at/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/05/scwr_klima_2022_web-EN.pdf.

[11] Ibid.,17.

[12] Ryan Burns and Max Andrucki, "Smart cities: Who cares?," *Environment And Planning A: Economy And Space*, 53, no. 1, (2020): 2.

[13] Glen David Kuecker and Kris Hartley, "How Smart Cities Became the Urban Norm: Power and Knowledge in New Songdo City," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110, no. 2 (2020): 517.

[14] McKinsey Global Institute *Smart cities: Digital solutions for a more livable future* (McKinsey & Company, 5 June 2018), https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/operations/our-insights/smart-cities-digital-solutions-for-a-more-livable-future. 3.

[15] Hannah Knox, "Cities and Organisation: The Information City and Urban Form," Culture and Organization 16, no. 3 (2010): 187-8.

conservation of resources".[16] Seestadt, however, does represent a site of technological experimentation within the broader Viennese smart city initiative.

Seestadt is classified as an experimental urban development zone, or "living lab", afforded special status in terms of organizational structure, funding and planning regulations.[17] Primarily an energy research project, it is a joint venture between the City of Vienna and private technology company Siemens.[18] Here, planners and scientists experiment with new urban technologies, collecting real-time data on energy consumption from three select buildings, further analysed for control purposes and to shape future action towards sustainable development. Seestadt is testing out a circular economic model by analysing buildings that "simultaneously produce and consume energy and are integrated into a smart power grid"[19], as well as an underground carpark where air is "recycled to heat flats, and smart building control systems predict building energy requirements on the basis of weather forecasts and other data".[20] In addition to systematic controls, participating residents—or "users" as they are referred to on the website—can closely regulate heating, ventilation and household appliances via smartphone.[21] Besides technology-driven innovations, Seestadt is considered novel amongst large-scale European development projects for the high degree of civic participation in planning processes. Even the site's master plan incorporated input from citizens through surveys and exhibitions.[22] Austrian planning experts Astrid Krisch and Johannes Suitner regard Seestadt as a textbook case of "good planning practices" with its "artistic displays, assemblies, subsidised housing, district management, participation processes, passive energy offices, timber high-rise construction, and much more".[23] The experimental character of the area has garnered interest from urban planning researchers and practitioners worldwide, including students of Gender Studies.

Experimentation in urban planning is not a recent phenomenon in Vienna. The original "Viennese Experiment" in progressive municipal administration came during the period of "Red

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[16] Joe Appleton, "Smart City Vienna: In Conversation," bee smart city, October 18, 2023, https://www.beesmart.city/en/smart-city-blog/smart-city-vienna-in-conversation.

[17] Aspern Seestadt, "Urban Lab," 2023, accessed 3 May, 2023, https://www.aspern-seestadt.at/en/business_hub/innovation__quality/urban_lab.

[18] Vienna Municipal Administration, *Smart Climate City Strategy Vienna*, tr. Angela Parker, 2022, 107.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Aspern Seestadt, "Welcome to Seestadt," accessed June 3, 2023, https://www.aspern-seestadt.at/en.

[22] "Planungsprozess Seestadt - Beteiligung, Weiterentwicklung, Wettbewerbe," Stadtplanung, Stadt Wien, September 5, 2023, https://www.wien.gv.at/stadtplanung/aspern-seestadt-planungsprozess.

[23] Astrid Krisch and Johannes Suitner, "Aspern Explained: How the Discursive Institutionalisation of Infrastructure Planning Shaped North-Eastern Vienna's Urban Transformation," 60.

Vienna" (1918-1938).[24] Following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1918, the Social Democratic Worker's Party (SDAPÖ) filled a political vacuum in the capital, enacting a radical set of municipal reforms aimed at making Red Vienna "a model of municipal socialism… to prefigure a future socialist society"[25] nationwide. Hopes for a transformed socialist society were decisively crushed in 1934 when the fascist-leaning Christian Social Party staged a successful parliamentary coup, backed by the army and right-wing paramilitaries.[26] Although the political project of Red Vienna failed to manifest societal transformation, its legacy endures in current housing and planning policy. The most enduring aspect of the programme was the construction of 400 communal housing blocks known as *Gemeindebau*. These residential blocks incorporated "kindergartens, libraries, medical and dental clinics, laundries, workshops, theatres, cooperative stores, public gardens, sports facilities, and a wide range of other public facilities."[27] The innovative concept of the *Gemeindebau* has informed development projects in Vienna up until this day, cementing the city as an international model for affordable housing. The Vienna City Administration continues to exert great influence on housing construction, with around 60% of Viennese housing subsidised by the state, albeit in a vastly altered political economy.[28]

In the years between the end of Red Vienna and progression towards market-orientated reform policies in the 1980s, Vienna's planning policy adhered to Fordist and technocratic development approaches. The municipality was the leading authority in urban development, being both the largest property owner and developer on account of its extensive social housing construction.[29] This era marked a period of stability and prosperity in Vienna, with the expansion of the welfare state and implementation of large infrastructure projects such as the metro system and vast social housing estates.[30] From the mid-1980s onwards, Austria transitioned towards post-Fordism, signalled by a decline in the welfare state and advent of flexible governance structures. This shift ensued a tension between welfare planning and adoption of a competitive development

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[24] Veronika Duma and Hanna Lichtenberger, "Remembering Red Vienna," *Jacobin*, tr. by Loren Balhorn, October 2, 2017, https://jacobin.com/2017/02/red-vienna-austria-housing-urban-planning.
[25] Eve Blau, The Architecture of Red Vienna 1919 - 1934 (The MIT Press: 2018), 415.
[26] Joseph Heathcott, "The House That Anti-Fascism Built: The Hofs of Red Vienna," *PLATFORM*, September 27, 2021, https://www.platformspace.net/home/the-house-that-anti-fascism-built-the-hofs-of-red-vienna.
[27] Blau, The Architecture of Red Vienna, 212.
[28] Ines Sánchez de Madariaga and Marion Roberts, *Fair Shared Cities: The Impact of Gender Planning in Europe*, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 87.
[29] Johannes Suitner, "Vienna's Planning History: Periodizing Stable Phases of Regulating Urban Development, 1820–2020," *Planning Perspectives* 36, no. 5 (December 22, 2020): 893.
[30] Ibid.

model in line with "new conventional wisdom[s]"[31] across Europe. At the turn of the century, Vienna entered a new phase of planning characterised by strategic management, public-private partnerships, and consideration of "non-spatial matters such as digitisation, novel participatory practices, and diversity instead of equality as the envisioned social model".[32] The Seestadt project exemplifies public-private partnerships in urban development. It is also a prestige project "too big to fail"[33] according to Krisch and Suitner, who claim that the "underlying planning philosophy…of [Seestadt]…influences planning orientation and future visions for Vienna" [34] as a whole. Integral to this philosophy is the practice of gender mainstreaming.

Seestadt is touted as a city "with a female face" (*Die Seestadt ist weiblich*) with all streets and public spaces symbolically named after influential women from Austria and beyond. [35] The neighbourhood has been heralded an example of best practice in gender mainstreaming for its "*Bebauungsstruktur*" (development structure), "*Verkehrskonzept*" (transport concept), and "*Freiraumkonzept*" (public space concept). [36] Gender mainstreaming as a practice refers to "integrating a gender equality perspective at all stages and levels of policies, programmes and projects".[37] In the European context, the obligation for states to implement gender mainstreaming was embodied in the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, taking effect in 1999.[38] Vienna was ahead of the curve, with gender-sensitive projects being implemented in areas of social housing, public transport, and public spaces from the early 1990s onwards.[39] Feminist visions of the "non-sexist city"[40] gained traction in Europe with the second-wave feminist movement and materialist feminist thought in the 1970s, critiquing the ways mainstream architecture, design, and planning reinforce a capitalist-patriarchal system that confines women to domestic spaces. The non-sexist city vision typically centred on housing design, by finding ways to socialize housework and childcare into

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[31] Ibid., 894-5.
[32] Ibid., 895.
[33] Krisch and Suitner, "Aspern Explained," 60.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Wien 3420 aspern Development AG, "Aspern Seestadt Has a Female Face: Street Names + Biographies of the Featured Women," Vienna: aspern Die Seestadt Wiens, 2019.
[36] wohnbund:consult, "Gender Mainstreaming Im Stadtentwicklungsgebiet Flugfeld Aspern: Begleitende Expertise Zum Masterplan," Salzburg/ Wien: wohnbund:consult, 2006, 94.
[37] Council of Europe, "What Is Gender Mainstreaming?," Gender Equality, accessed May 25, 2024, https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/what-is-gender-mainstreaming.
[38] "Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and certain related acts, signed in Amsterdam on 2 October 1997," Official Journal of the European Union - EUR-Lex, 10 November 1997, no. 340: 0001-0144 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/ams/sign
[39] Sánchez de Madariaga and Roberts, *Fair shared cities*, 194.
[40] Dolores Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work," *Signs* 5, no. 3 (1980): 170–187.

planning so that women could more easily enter the workforce.[41] At that time, such planning was categorised as women-specific with gender conceptualised as a category of sexual difference. With the poststructuralist turn in Western feminist theory, some planning theorists criticised target-orientated approaches as "essentialist and neglecting the heterogeneity of women and the social construction of the category gender". [42] From the 1990s onwards, state-centred gender mainstreamed approaches to urban planning in Europe ostensibly understood gender as a structural category, with a focus on reconciling binary spheres of *home* and *work* and enabling people (regardless of gender) to take more control of their time and daily lives.[43]

Vienna city authorities began concertedly implementing gender-sensitive planning after the establishment of the Women's Office of the City of Vienna in 1992, followed by a specialised women's city planning and co-ordination unit in 1998.[44] According to government materials on planning, gender mainstreaming means ensuring that the city's services and amenities meet the needs of citizens with different "life realities, life phases, social and cultural backgrounds".[45] One would assume this description includes queer, transgender and gender diverse people. There is conspicuously no mention of LGBTQ+ populations in the latest *Manual for Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning and Urban Development*.[46] In the City of Vienna *Gender Mainstreaming - Made Easy* manual, there is a single concern raised related to "lesbians, gay men, and transgender persons";[47] specifically, whether any given new legislation could disadvantage these groups. It is intriguing that a city which brands itself as the "rainbow capital"[48] of Europe does not address the impacts of planning policy on LGBTQ+ individuals in these publicly available government materials. A review of Seestadt's planning documents also reveals a notable absence of references to LGBTQ+ populations or incorporation of queer perspectives in the planning process. The notable exception being Que[e]rbau, a project that was not part of the original masterplan yet has become one of the

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[41] Leslie Kern, *Feminist city: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World*, (London; New York: Verso, 2020), 111-2.
[42] Ibid.,12.
[43] This paragraph contains substantial revised material from the unpublished manuscript: Alina Young, "Gender mainstreaming and urban planning in the 'world's most liveable city': Case Study on Vienna, Austria," submitted to CEU course *Critical Theory on Policy and Practice*, April 2022.
[44] Municipal Department 18 (MA 18) – Urban Development and Planning, *Manual for Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning and Urban Development*, Vienna: Urban Development Vienna, 2013, 13.
[45] Ibid., 17-18.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Municipal Department-OS, Section for Gender Mainstreaming, *Gender Mainstreaming- Made Easy: A Manual,* Vienna: Stadt Wien, 2021, 30.
[48] "For LGBT", Vienna Tourist Board, vienna.info, accessed 25 May 2024, https://www.wien.info/en/see-do/lgbt.

most publicised co-housing projects in Seestadt.[49] Que[e]rbau has been enthusiastically embraced in the marketing efforts of both Seestadt and City of Vienna. This research aims to elucidate the dynamic interplay between Seestadt and Que[e]rbau, reflecting on how urban spaces are co-constituted through everyday embodied practices, narratives, and power relations.

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[49] Wojciech Czaja, "Wiener Baugruppe Que[e]Rbau: Ein Haus Wie Ein Regenbogen," *Der Standard*, December 8, 2017, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000069296365/wiener-baugruppe-queerbau-ein-haus-wie-ein-regenbogen.

Topical literature review

Mainstream city planning discourses continue to neglect queer perspectives, despite a growing body of literature challenging hetero-cis-normative orthodoxy in urban processes.[50] It is still, however, a comparatively limited field of academic inquiry. A great deal of the relevant literature focuses on queer space and city planning in terms of spatially singular queer neighbourhoods or enclaves.[51] Research in this area highlights the commodification and/or demise of gay districts—primarily in cities of the Global North—due to the shifting desires of queer subjectivities, the "influx of heterosexuals",[52] and increased tolerance towards LGBTQ+ people in other areas of the city, diminishing the need for expressly gay neighbourhoods.[53] Canadian sociologist Amin Ghaziani has written extensively on urban sexual cultures and the decline of "gayborhoods", proposing the analytic frame of "cultural archipelagos" to understand queer space in a more spatially pluralistic manner.[54] In her book *Planning and LGBTQ Communities: The Need for Inclusive Queer Spaces*,[55] American planning theorist Petra Doan similarly urges urban planners to look "beyond queer space" embodied in the "gayborhood" and recognise the "actual patterns of the highly mobile and fluid LGBTQ populations".[56] Attending to the needs of the most marginalised in the community, including "queer youth of colour, persons living with HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ seniors, LGBTQ immigrants, and the transgendered population as a whole",[57] is

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[50] Alison L. Bain and Julie A. Podmore, "Queer(ing) Urban Planning and Municipal Governance," *Urban Planning* 8, no. 2 (2023): 145.

[51] David Bell and Jon Binnie, "Authenticating Queer Space: Citizenship, Urbanism and Governance," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 9 (August 2004): 1807–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000243165.

[52] Catherine J. Nash and Andrew Gorman-Murray, "LGBT Neighbourhoods and 'New Mobilities': Towards Understanding Transformations in Sexual and Gendered Urban Landscapes," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no. 3 (January 6, 2014): 759.

[53] Ibid;
See also; Petra L. Doan and Higgins Harrison, "The Demise of Queer Space? Resurgent Gentrification and the Assimilation of LGBT Neighborhoods." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 31, no. 1, (2011): 6-25.

[54] Amin Ghaziani, "Cultural Archipelagos: New Directions in the Study of Sexuality and Space," *City & Community* 18, no. 1 (March 2019): 4, https://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12381;
See also; Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (Princeton University Press, 2014).

[55] Doan L. Petra, ed., *Planning and LGBTQ Communities: The Need for Inclusive Queer Spaces* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[56] Ibid., 257.
See also; Petra L. Doan "Queers in the American City: Transgendered Perceptions of Urban Space." *Gender, Place & Culture* 14, no. 1 (2007): 57–74. doi:10.1080/09663690601122309; Petra L. Doan, ed., *Queerying Planning: Challenging Heteronormative Assumptions and Reframing Planning Practice* (1st ed.) (London: Routledge, 2011).

[57] Petra L. Doan, *Planning and LGBTQ Communities: The Need for Inclusive Queer Spaces*, 257.

paramount for producing truly inclusive queer urban spaces. On queering participatory planning, urban scholar Vanesa Broto writes that the practice necessitates being attentive to "emotions, affections, physical interaction and a sense of the body's situation in physical space".[58]

There is an ever-growing body of scholarship, including feminist critiques, on smart cities. Sociologist Saskia Sassen has written on the potential of the governing technologies in smart cities being used to control and command residents rather than engage them in dialogue, and argues that whilst traditional cities are informal, open systems, smart cities are centralised and closed.[59] Scholar Rob Kitchin has written widely on a technocratic form of governance found in smart cities that is reliant on limited data and algorithms, which ostensibly "fail to recognise the wider effects of culture, politics, policy, governance and capital in shaping city life and urban systems".[60] The corporatisation of governance is another significant criticism levelled at smart cities. Sociologist Robert Hollands stresses that corporate interests are privileged, public services marketized for private profit, and local specificities ignored, as global digital technology companies build their ICT systems into the smart city's infrastructure.[61] Hollands, like many others, argues that smart cities exacerbate social inequalities and fuel gentrification by requiring a "sizeable secondary workforce"[62] to service the needs of professionals living and working in the city.

There is also an emerging body of research on gender and racial biases inherent in the production of data and smart city digital technologies, given the overwhelming dominance of cisgender, heterosexual, white men in the sector. In their recent book *Data Feminism*, Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein offer an intersectional feminist framework for approaching data science and ethics, challenging differentials of power within the technology industry that disproportionately affect women, people of colour, LGBTQ+ people and other marginalised groups in society.[63] In *After Work: A History of the Home and the Fight for Free Time* Helen Hester and Nick Srnicek discuss how smart home technologies and devices fail to "alleviate the burdens of

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[58] Vanesa Castán Broto, "Queering Participatory Planning," *Environment and Urbanization* 33, no. 2 (2021): 316.
[59] Saskia Sassen, "Urbanising Technology," Urban Age, LSE Cities, December 2012, https://urbanage.lsecities.net/essays/urbanising-technology.
[60] Kitchin, Rob, Tracey P Lauriault, and Gavin McArdle, "Smart Cities and the Politics of Urban Data." In *Smart Urbanism: Utopian Vision or False Dawn?*, ed. Simon Marvin, Andrés Luque-Ayala and Colin McFarlan (Routledge, 2015), 19.
[61] Robert Hollands, "Will the Real Smart City Please Stand Up? Intelligent, Progressive or Entrepreneurial?" City 12, no. 3 (2008): 303–320.
[62] Ibid., 315.
[63] Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein, *Data Feminism*, MIT Press, 2020.

reproductive labour",[64] counterintuitively creating new associated tasks under capitalist "logics of data extraction".[65] Situating smart home design within the hegemonic and "colonising narratives of industry and science",[66] Sarah Pink et al. advocate for a more ethical approach to design reflecting the diverse experiences of the heteronormative households that "smart" masculinist imaginaries are ostensibly aligned with.[67] Others, such as scholar Adam Rottinghaus, posit that smart home discourses outline a "new white futurism" that frames smart home devices as tools for "synchronisation between—rather than emancipation from—domestic and waged labour"[68] in contemporary, white, heteronormative middle-class culture. An ongoing project at the Technical University Berlin entitled *Smart People: Queer Everyday Life in Digitalized Spaces* investigates digitally mediated actions and spatial strategies of queer subcultures in the South Korean smart city Songdo.[69] A recent study on the smart city strategy in London, UK, analyses spatial inclusion policies with assistive technologies for LGBTQ communities.[70] These projects represent some of the few contributions to an emerging field: queer people and smart cities.

Academic interest in smart city Seestadt is steadily increasing, with various case studies, including master's and doctoral theses, being published this year. Anecdotal evidence suggests that more studies are forthcoming. Much of this literature is in German and originates from Vienna-based universities, but studies are also emerging from universities across Europe and more globally.[71] The most comprehensive study on Seestadt to date is sociologist Cornelia Dlabaja's book *Die Seestadt Aspern: Ein Stadtteil im Werden* (The Urban Lakeside Aspern: A Neighborhood in the Making).[72] Dlabaja's work is the culmination of several years of ethnographic study on the area,

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[64] Helen Hester and Nick Srnicek, *After Work: A History of the Home and the Fight for Free Time* (London: Verso, 2023), https://www.perlego.com/book/4142355, 104.

[65] Ibid., 103.

[66] Sarah Pink, Yolande Strengers, Rex Martin, and Kari Dahlgren, "Smart Home Masculinities," Australian Feminist Studies 37, no. 112 (2022): 117.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Adam Richard Rottinghaus, "Smart Homes and the New White Futurism," *Journal of Futures Studies* 25, no. 4 (2021): 45.

[69] "B04 Smart People: Queere Alltagshandlungen in Digitalisierten Lebensräumen." SFB 1265 Re-Figuration von Räumen, March 11, 2024. https://www.sfb1265.de/teilprojekte/smart-people-queere-alltagshandlungen-in-digitalisierten-lebensraeumen/.

[70] Tekin, Hamdi, and Irem Dikmen. "Inclusive Smart Cities: An Exploratory Study on the London Smart City Strategy." *Buildings* 14, no. 2 (2024).

[71] Magdalena Bürbaumer, Christoph Kirchberger, Martin Berger, and Julia Dorner, "Recruitment, Participant Motivation and Response Rates in a Smartphone-Based Travel Survey: Mobility Panel in Aspern Seestadt," *Transportation Research Procedia* 76, (2024): 283-295;
See also Damian Poklewski-Koziel, "In Search of a Healthy Balance on the Example of the New District of Seestadt Aspern in Vienna," *Czasopismo Techniczne* 6 (2018): 17–28;
See also Jennifer Wei Zhang, "Towards an Equitable City: Gender Mainstreaming Strategies in the Context of Vienna," *China City Planning Review* 32, no. 1 (March 1, 2023): 40–50.

[72] Cornelia Dlabaja, *Die Seestadt Aspern: Ein Stadtteil im Werden*, Vienna: Böhlau, 2024.

which considers conflicting urban visions and transformations of the surrounding environment, as well as the public's ongoing role in shaping the city. She has also been involved in drafting multiple settlement monitoring reports on Seestadt Aspern, funded by Vienna Housing Research (MA 50) and Seestadt developers Wien 3420 Aspern Development AG.[73] These in-depth reports evaluate neighbourhood dynamics, population changes, and the emergence of socio-cultural milieus, based on extensive surveys and stakeholder interviews conducted between 2015 and 2019. In their paper on Aspern, urban planning scholars Astrid Krisch and Johannes Suitner investigate the "planning and development processes of networked infrastructure systems from an institutional perspective",[74] using theories of "ASID (agency, structure, institutions, and discourse) and discursive institutionalism".[75] In terms of literature on Que[e]rbau, the project features in the Frauenservice Wien book *Mein lesbisches, queeres Wie*n (My lesbian, queer Vienna),[76] and is cited in the policy paper *Inclusive Housing Policies: Housing is the beginning*[77] for the inclusion of two apartments for people with refugee backgrounds.

My research project aims to address broader social, political, and theoretical questions related to the production of queer space and smart governmentality. The research is guided by a number of conceptual impulses, embedded in a number of academic disciplines—governmentality studies, urban studies, geographies of sexualities, queer geographies, queer urban studies etc., — that I endeavour to synthesise throughout successive analytical chapters. There is currently a dearth in research related to queerness, or queer people, and top-down smart city projects like Seestadt. If this is to become an urban development model elsewhere—and the attention it receives from international planning practitioners suggests it might—then queer perspectives need to be mainstreamed into planning. My findings indicate that these perspectives have not been adequately incorporated, if at all. Regarding the queer co-housing concept of Que[e]rbau; I was genuinely impressed and hopeful about its potential. Whilst not without its flaws, the project proffers an alternative to the atomized, isolating living arrangement that many people living in urban settings experience. After all, queerness is about embracing failure. Throughout this research, I have also

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[73] Wiener Wohnbau Forschung, "Lake City Settlement Monitoring (2019)," *Home - wiener wohnbauforschung*, 2019, https://www.wohnbauforschung.at/index.php?id=491&lang_id=en.

[74] Krisch and Suitner, "Aspern Explained: How the Discursive Institutionalisation of Infrastructure Planning Shaped North-Eastern Vienna's Urban Transformation," 51.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Oluchukwu Akusinanwa, Cosi Appel, Viktoria Eberhardt *et al., Mein lesbisches, queeres Wien,* Frauenservice Wien (MA 57) (Vienna: Frauenservice Wien, 2021).

[77] Bettina Reimann, Julia Diringer, Ricarda Pätzold, *Inclusive Housing Policies: Housing is the beginning,* Sonderveröffentlichungen, Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik, 2022, https://difu.de/publikationen/2022/inclusive-housing-policies-housing-is-the-beginning.

been attentive to the queer potentials of this experimental approach to planning exemplified by Seestadt and its ongoing monitoring and feedback mechanism. However, I found that regardless of how ambitious this techno-utopian vision may be, true queer utopias cannot be imagined without prioritising environmental justice and processes of decolonisation. Although my analysis relies heavily on theoretical reflection, I believe this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the connections and conflicts between queer space-making and the smart city paradigm.

Methods and research design

This research is interdisciplinary by design, involving content analysis and qualitative research methods.[78] Any study on gender, sexuality and space should necessarily engage with fields of sociology, architecture, history, critical geography, and urban planning, so it was imperative to include the sociohistorical context for the Viennese social housing tradition, the Vienna Smart Climate City Strategy, as well as municipal approaches to mainstreaming gender in urban development.[79] I have also incorporated architectural visual data such as masterplans and photographs of Que[e]rbau and Seestadt to interpret form and function.[80] I discovered a repository of masterplans on the Seestadt developers' website, which I used for my spatial analysis.[81] My insights on the spatial layout of Seestadt are speculative and interpretive, drawn from critical literature cited in the thesis rather than proven expertise in urban design analysis. I disclose that I do not have formal education in urban planning, architecture, geography, or landscape architecture. In addition to visual data, I parsed multiple Seestadt promotional materials, coding and examining words or themes pertaining to "smartness", making inferences about the kind of urban vision being projected by the developers.[82] My qualitative research methods include semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and text analysis of data collected from informational and statistical materials.[83] Utilising these resources, I gathered a range of perspectives and conceptualisations of the development project from developers, residents, and other voices around Vienna. I have endeavoured to provide my own conclusions about the potentials and tensions in queer space-making in the smart city through the following methodology.

Everyone is impacted by the built environment, as urban landscapes bear the inscription of societal norms, gendered or otherwise, and in turn, shape subjectivities and reproduce social

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[78] Nina Lykke, "This Discipline Which Is Not One: Feminist Studies as a Postdiscipline," in *Theories and Methodologies in Postgraduate Feminist Research: Researching Differently*, ed. by Rosemarie Buikema, Gabriele Griffin and Nina Lykke (London: Routledge, 2011), 138; Klaus Krippendorff, *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (SAGE: 1980), 21.

[79] Daphne Spain, "Gender and Urban Space," *Annual Review of Sociology* 40, no. 1 (2014): 581-598.

[80] Penny Tinkler, *Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research*, (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013).

[81] Wien 3420 aspern Development AG, "Master Plan: Aspern Die Seestadt Wiens," Master plan | aspern Die Seestadt Wiens. Accessed May 25, 2024, https://www.aspern-seestadt.at/en/business_hub/planning__reality/master_plan.

[82] Krippendorff, *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*, 26.

[83] Robert Stuart Weiss, *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*, (Free Press, 1994); Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

structures.[84] The research is therefore contingent on a queer feminist intersectional research approach, reflective of the ways phenomena such as race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, dis/ability etc., intersect to produce different social and political identities and lived experiences across urban landscapes. An "intersectional approach" can simply be understood as "attentiveness to power relations and social inequalities".[85] Intersectional queer feminist methodologies should work towards rectifying power inequalities within society and involve careful reflection on the power inequalities evident in the production of that knowledge.[86] But I remain cognizant of the fact that intersectional methods, however transformative or radical in origin, have the potential to be "commodified and colonized for neoliberal regimes".[87] Attending to potential co-optation is essential when analysing planning policy, as "identity-based radical politics [can often be] turned into corporatized diversity tools leveraged by dominant groups to attain various ideological and institutional goals".[88]

The City of Vienna prides itself on recurrently topping the world's "most liveable city"[89] rankings, ostensibly measured by "quality of life, people-centred urban design, environmental sustainability, and attractiveness to investors".[90] An image of universal city enjoyment is conveyed. Studies show that such indexes foreground the preferences and lifestyles of relatively privileged urban dwellers, concealing socioeconomic disparities across districts by aggregating the data at the city level.[91] Social dimensions of liveability, such as *community*, *social interaction*, and *social cohesion,* are largely unaccounted for in mainstream liveability discourses.[92] Regardless, the City proceeds to market these rankings as sound evidence of inclusive urban planning. Applying an intersectional

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[84] Edward W. Soja, "The Socio-Spatial Dialectic," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70, no. 2, (1980): 207–225.

[85] Patricia Hill Collins, "Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas," *Annual Review of Sociology* 41, (2015): 1-20.

[86] Jennifer Fish and Jennifer Rothchild, "Intersections of Scholar-Activism in Feminist Fieldwork: Reflections on Nepal and South Africa," in *The Intersectional Approach: Transforming the Academy Through Race, Class and Gender*, ed. Michele Tracy Berger and Kathleen Guidroz (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 268.

[87] Sirma Bilge, "Intersectionality Undone: Saving Intersectionality from Feminist Intersectionality Studies," *Du Bois Review* 10, no. 2, (2013): 407.

[88] Ibid., 407.

[89] "Vienna is the most Liveable City," City of Vienna, accessed on May 3, 2023, https://www.wien.gv.at/english/politics/international/comparison/ranking-economist.html.

[90] Jenny McArthur and Enora Robin, "Victims of their own (definition of) success: Urban discourse and expert knowledge production in the Liveable City," *Urban Studies*. 56, no. 9, (2019): 1714.

[91] Eugene McCann, "Inequality and politics in the creative city-region: Questions of livability and state strategy," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 31, no. 1, (2007): 188–196.

[92] Kathlee M. Lloyd, Simone P. Fullagar, and Sacha Reid, "Where is the 'Social' in Constructions of 'Liveability'? Exploring Community, Social Interaction and Social Cohesion in Changing Urban Environments", *Urban Policy and Research*, 34, no. 4, (2016): 347.

queer feminist methodology to my research thus demands a critical engagement with disciplinary and institutional frameworks, minding not to reproduce the very power dynamics sought to be challenged.[93]

Attentiveness to power inequalities in knowledge production is especially pertinent where the disciplines of urban planning and architecture are concerned - professions observably dominated by white cisgender men and found to pedagogically privilege "Western traditionalist" notions of "neutrality, expertise, and scientific rationality as the foundation of professional knowledge".[94] Despite decades' worth of criticism and theorising on alternative practices to counter the "normalising tendencies of mainstream architectural production",[95] architectural and urban planning pedagogies remain imbued with Eurocentric, heteronormative biases and frameworks. Critical urban geographies, too, have been critiqued for the tacit whiteness embedded in their fields of inquiry.[96] That said, much of the source material used towards this thesis does favour Western-centric perspectives and theoretical foundations, due in part to my own situatedness vis-à-vis the research and focus on a European city.[97] I must also be reflexive about the discernible hegemonic position of Anglophone literature in urban studies and critical geographies in terms of knowledge production and circulation and how my positionality as a native English speaker may reinforce citational biases.[98] And since I do not read German at a scholarly level, I could not make use of relevant German source materials - Que[e]rbau was, after all, inspired by existing housing projects in Germany. Fortunately, the City of Vienna offers most of its popular publications and urban planning manuals in English. Ideally, I would have penned several pages on smart cities and queer space production in different global contexts to better situate the research, and more adequately identify the hegemonic logic at play in the development and theorising of European smart cities. Data on queer space and smart cities is, however, lacking, so

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[93] This paragraph contains revised material from unpublished manuscripts: Alina Young, "Gender mainstreaming and urban planning in the 'world's most liveable city': Case Study on Vienna, Austria," submitted to CEU course *Critical Theory on Policy and Practice*, April 2022 and Alina Young, "Intersectionality and Interdisciplinarity" submitted to CEU course *Intersectionality and Interdisciplinarity*, May 2022.

[94] Shundana Yusaf, "Decolonizing Architectural Pedagogy: Towards Cross-Culturalism," *Dialectic*, 7, no. 3, (2019): 3.

[95] Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, Jeremy Till, *Spatial agency: Other ways of doing architecture* (Routledge & CRC Press, 2011), 27.

[96] Laura Pulido, "Reflections on a White Discipline," *The Professional Geographer* 54, no. 1, (2002):42–49.

[97] **Situatedness** as a concept articulates how research is impacted by the researcher's "personal relationships and by linguistic, biographical, historical, political, economic, cultural, ideological, material, and spatial dimensions" (Phillip Vanini, "Situatedness," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, vol. 2, Lisa M.Given ed., (SAGE publications, 2008), 815).

[98] Lily Kong and Junxi Qian, "Knowledge circulation in urban geography/urban studies, 1990–2010: Testing the discourse of Anglo-American hegemony through publication and citation patterns," *Urban Studies* 56, no 1., (2019): 47.

I will not attempt to extrapolate or transfer my findings from this localised study onto other environments.

For qualitative research methods, I carried out eight semi-structured interviews, attended group discussions, and happened upon a handful of chance encounters between September 2022 and May 2024.[99] All of these interviews, bar one Zoom call, were in person. Interlocutors included: Que[e]rbau residents and architects involved in the project's participatory planning phase; a traffic scientist; two future residents of a new queer housing project by the same developers; a university student living in another Seestadt housing project; and a Seestadt tour guide. The interviews were all conducted in English and involved questioning interlocutors about how they experience the architecture, space, and location of this housing development, what queerness and community mean to them, and, importantly, how Que[e]rbau differs from other social housing projects in Vienna. I was particularly interested in the cooperative planning process, an innovative concept within social housing practice. Interviews with those not directly involved in the Que[e]rbau project were modified. Each person I approached to interview declined the need for an informed consent form; ergo, consent was obtained verbally in every case. One interlocutor even impatiently dismissed the form as bureaucratic waste. Regarding the identification of interlocutors, I have pseudonymised all interview material. To preserve their anonymity, I have omitted testimony about interpersonal relationships or other sensitive experiences shared. At the outset, I had intended to interview as diverse a group of people as possible, taking into account different household forms, gender, nationality, ethnicity, age, etc, with at least two respondents from each group. I had also hoped to make contact with queer asylum seekers and residents with refugee backgrounds living in Que[e]rbau. Regrettably, I fell short of this aim. All interview participants were white, cisgender, and of Austrian nationality, except for one Dutch-Italian national. Whilst acknowledging that my desired queer feminist intersectional approach may be severely scrutinised for lack of diversity and insufficient numbers in interviews, I will explore in my analysis whether this outcome speaks to any external dynamics.

Over the past two years, I intermittently visited Que[e]rbau to carry out participant observation and get to know residents informally.[100] My casual presence around the housing project did not cause many perceptible "reactive effects"[101] on people's behaviour; aside from

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[99] Weiss, *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*.
[100] Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 1.
[101] Ibid., 3.

occasional curiosity about my English accent, I went mostly unnoticed. During nearly all my visits to Que[e]rbau, German was the predominant language spoken until I intervened. However, aside from the shared language, the group was relatively diverse in terms of age, nationality, ethnicity, and gender expression. The majority of my descriptive field notes were subject to three layers of "interpretation and sense-making".[102] Typically, I would type rough notes on my mobile phone, followed by a frantic voice memo recording at the next opportune, private moment and then later write up my impressions whilst sitting down at a computer. I gleaned valuable insights from my interactions there, among them a certain degree of cynicism and criticism of the project. According to some, political disagreements and diverging opinions on management responsibilities have compromised the cooperative spirit of the development. The COVID-19 pandemic and related national lockdowns were also cited as a major contributor to strained community relations.[103] These conversations mainly took place in the Que[e]rbau's cafe/multipurpose space "Yella Yella", which could be described as an "anchor institution";[104] a key site of community building that "grounds the material culture of a group to a specific urban place" and generates "collective identity".[105] Anchor institutions such as bars, bookstores or bathhouses have historically functioned as havens of safety, acceptance and self-expression for LGBTQ+ communities, but they can be found in any community.[106] Yella Yella is patently the most popular site of contact for Que[e]rbau residents, and I would argue it serves as a Seestadt-wide anchor institution. Identifying and frequenting Yella Yella then constitutes a method in spatial analysis because the cafe is a sure indicator of sexual geographies and/or queer space.[107]

Yella Yella was not my sole fieldwork location, as I collected impressions on Seestadt and Que[e]rbau from all manner of spontaneous and conscious engagements with people across Vienna. Unfortunately, no such meetings materialised into formal interviews, but they did inform my analysis and conclusions. American writer Samuel R. Delany's concept of urban "contact" versus "networking"—two competing modes of sociality—is helpful in understanding how I came

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[102] Ibid., 9.

[103] Markus Pollak, Nikolaus Kowarz and Julia Partheymüller, "Chronology of the Corona Crisis in Austria - Part 4: Lockdowns, mass testing and the launch of the vaccination campaign," Vienna Center for Electoral Research, March 1, 2021, https://viecer.univie.ac.at/en/projects-and-cooperations/austrian-corona-panel-project/corona-blog/corona-blog-beitraege/blog100-en/.

[104] Eugenie Birch, "Anchor institutions and their role in metropolitan change," (Philadelphia: Penn Institute for Urban Research, 2010).

[105] Amin Ghaziani, "Measuring urban sexual cultures," *Theory and Society* 43, (2014): 373.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Amin Ghaziani, "12. Queer Spatial Analysis," in *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology,* eds. D'Lane R. Compton, Tey Meadow and Kristen Schilt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 201-215.

to learn of varied opinions on the development project.[108] Delany designates the social practice of "contact" as an interclass phenomenon whereby individuals are brought together, often in public spaces, by incidental encounter.[109] Contrastingly, "networking" is an intra-class activity that takes place in institutional settings such as conferences, workshops, parties etc., where those with the requisite social abilities can navigate.[110] In his view, contact interactions are essential for an "overall pleasurable social fabric"[111] yet are undersupplied and diminished in contemporary urban life compared to networking practices, largely due to the frenzied neoliberalisation of cities.

Serendipitous instances of contact range from "the conversation that starts in line at the grocery counter" to "casual sex in public restrooms",[112] both of which Delany considers fundamental to the democratic potential of urban life. Ephemeral sex in public spaces holds particular significance for queer cultures; it resists a privatised, "heteronormative culture of intimacy" that is materially supported by the state in "marriage and family law, in the architecture of the domestic, in the zoning of work and politics".[113] Delany borrows the idea of "contact" from urban planner Jane Jacobs' vastly influential work, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, which impresses upon the need for "sidewalk contacts"[114] for cultivating trust amongst the public, further advocating for mixed-used neighbourhood planning to engender said interactions.[115] It is relevant to note the reference to Jacobs' theories on city planning in multiple Seestadt promotional materials.[116] I find it instructive to invoke the concepts of "contact" and "networking" when illustrating my search for perspectives, as those experiences reflect, in part, the urban character of Seestadt—and Vienna more generally.

Networking could have yielded better results. I reached out to Que[e]rbau residents directly through Facebook groups, attended events at Yella Yella, and had a resident kindly email a research callout to her neighbours; yet I could not secure many in-depth interviews with people living there. No doubt residents are familiar with and perhaps weary of such requests, given the international attention the site receives from urban planning students and practitioners. Candidly, I will attribute

[108] Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue 20th anniversary edition* (NYU Press, 1999), 123.
[109] Ibid., 129.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., 126.
[112] Ibid., 123.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Vintage Books, 1961), 56.
[115] Ibid.,129.
[116] Wien 3420 Aspern Development AG, *Die Instrumente des Städtebaus,* aspern Citylab Report Dokumentation und Analyse zum Projekt Aspern Seestadt, 2010.

the lack of substantive discussion to both personal limitations, including the language barrier, and a palpable reticence from residents. The possible reasoning behind their reticence will be incorporated into subsequent analysis. Besides concerted efforts to connect to people related to Que[e]rbau and Seestadt, leads and colourful anecdotes also came to me by sheer coincidence, in a manner more closely resembling the contact mode of social practice Delany articulates.

I learnt of a family residing in Que[e]rbau through an art curator with whom I shared complimentary wine at an exhibition opening. At a friend's birthday party, a gymnast who travels to Seestadt for acrobatics rehearsals expressed her sentiments. Another friend's sports teammate divulged her involvement in a new collaborative queer housing project by the same developers. A CEU student spotted me in the university library perusing Seestadt promotional materials and offered to share their experience living there. A third friend put me in contact with their work colleague who lives in Seestadt. I also communicated with *Lobau Bleibt* activists at a techno party, where they recollected Yella-Yella being a venue for plenums. I had actually hoped to conduct fieldwork in the last remaining *Lobau Bleibt* activist camp (Anfanggasse) to explore connections between queer space and environmental action, as well as associations or tensions with Que[e]rbau and Seestadt. Unfortunately, the camp dissolved in September 2022, so I was unable to do any "deep hanging out"[117] with activists, but I did manage to join a demonstration on eviction day. The abovementioned fleeting interactions across the city were revealing and informative in their distinct ways. I recognise that these meets could not have been entirely random, as Delany also notes that contact is "contoured… by earlier decisions, desires, commercial interests, zoning laws, and immigration patterns".[118] The fact that I have found myself accidentally Seestadt-adjacent on multiple occasions is worth further consideration.

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[117] Clifford Geertz, "Deep Hanging Out," *The New York Review*, October 22, 1998, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1998/10/22/deep-hanging-out/.

[118] Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue 20th anniversary edition*, 142.

Positionality

In full disclosure, the impetus for this research emerged from a visceral personal reaction to Seestadt Aspern. Whilst admittedly lacking awareness about the development project and novel planning processes taking place within, my first encounter with Seestadt evoked a mild distaste for the aseptic, corporate aesthetics. Seestadt struck me as a place lacking in character, with expanses of dusty, greyfield land and unfilled high-rise buildings encircling an artificial lake. I confess this prejudice did not subside over time; a disclaimer for value judgements on design that follow in analytical chapters. I discovered the Que[e]rbau co-housing concept months after my initial visit and immediately wondered how queer community could form and thrive in the 'smart city' environment. As a queer person questioning alternatives to isolating, atomised living arrangements—a question made more urgent after COVID-19 lockdown measures in 2020 exacerbated a pre-existing "crisis in domestic architecture"[119][120]—Que[e]rbau had piqued my interest. The subsidised "non-profit building association"[121] aspect of the project also intrigued me, having had a string of disastrous and downright traumatic experiences with private renting in Vienna. From warding off predatory *Wohngemeinschaft* (shared flat) co-inhabitants to sparring with unscrupulous landlords acting in contempt of the law, my motivation for pursuing this research is rooted in emotion. Hailing from the United Kingdom, I spent most of my adult life in London, a city that has been in the grips of an ever-worsening housing crisis for years.[122] There, I paid exorbitant rent for a shared student flat on the private rental market. I acknowledge the privilege of my socioeconomic status to be able to afford that configuration, but it has still shaped a relatively pessimistic outlook.

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[119] Nicholas Thomas Lee, "An atomised interior: Exploring a morphology for a pandemic home," *Interiors* 12, no. 2-3, (2022):153.

[120] **Note on the COVID-19 crisis in Austria**: After the first Austrian COVID-19 case was detected on 25 February 2020, the government mandated two 'hard' lockdowns between 16 March 2020 and 14 April 2020, and 17 November 2020 and 8 February 2021 (Pollak, Kowarz and Partheymüller, "Chronology of the corona crisis in Austria - part 4: Lockdowns, mass testing and the launch of the vaccination campaign").

[121] "Flat types - privately owned flats, subsidised and city-owned flats," City of Vienna, https://www.wien.gv.at/english/living-working/housing/renting/flat-types.html.

[122] Jamie Ratcliff, "Tackling London's Housing Crisis," in *Hot Property,* eds. Rob Nijskens, Melanie Lohuis, Paul Hilbers and Willem Heeringa (Springer, Cham, 2019), 15-21. **See also** Susie Dye, "London's housing crisis and our work to tackle it", Trust for London, December 18, 2023, https://trustforlondon.org.uk/news/londons-housing-crisis-and-our-work-to-tackle-it/.

During the interview process and fieldwork, I registered a dissonance stemming from my scepticism and people's genuine, unfiltered pride in Vienna's housing record and infrastructural provisions. Being a foreigner with unsure prospects of staying in Vienna—and slim chances of ever securing social or subsidised housing—I arguably remained an outsider to the community throughout. I recognise the privilege of having formal citizenship from a Western nation-state, but the UK's recent departure from the European Union has complicated my residential status somewhat.[123] At the start of the research, I considered whether I could become a "cultural insider"[124] by virtue of being queer. In hindsight, more alienating facets of my positionality, including language and nationality, won out. I realise that the language barrier posed a significant limitation to my research, potentially leading to miscommunications, misunderstood cultural nuances, and a loss of contextual richness. It is also undoubtedly a major reason why I did not manage to have more in-depth discussions with residents. That said, I contend with geographer Beverly Mullings' assessment that the insider/outsider binary seeks to "freeze positionalities in place",[125] ignoring the instability of this perceived boundary. As succinctly put by Mullings: "No individual can remain an insider and few ever remain complete outsiders".[126] I felt incredibly welcomed by certain people there, including the project initiators, who made sincere efforts to put me in touch with more residents. My enrolment in a postgraduate degree in Critical Gender Studies proved to be a source of commonality, as most people were more than acquainted with queer theory and feminist praxis. One resident I met is the co-founder of a celebrated Vienna-based feminist magazine and has authored a book on the feminist movement in Austria. I heard second-hand that other residents are deeply involved in LGBTQ+ advocacy across Vienna. I had much to learn and did not find unequal power relations between myself and research participants with regard to subject knowledge.[127]

As this is a study on urban space, it is critical I reflect on my embodied privilege as a white, able-bodied, cisgender woman moving through the city. Any negative impressions or experiences I may have had visiting Seestadt were not due to discrimination or phobia on the basis of those categories. I must, therefore, be reflexive about how these privileges intersect to inform my own

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[123] BBC, "Brexit: What you need to know about the UK leaving the EU," BBC News, December 30, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-32810887.

[124] Alison Rooke, "Queer in the Field: On Emotions, Temporality, and Performativity in Ethnography," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 13, no. 2, (2009): 155.

[125] Beverley Mullings, "Insider or outsider, both or neither: some dilemmas of interviewing in a cross-cultural setting," *Geoforum* 30, no. 4, (1999): 340.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Farhana Sultana, "Reflexivity, Positionality and Participatory Ethics: Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas in International Research," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 6, no. 3, (2007): 375.

experiences living and navigating this city, as well as their impacts on the research. In doing so, I avow that my academic contribution provides a situated, partial perspective on queer space in the smart city.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This current reflection on the production of queer urban space in Seestadt rests on a fundamental theoretical assumption that built environments shape, and are shaped by, social relations. Urban spaces cannot exist as an independent material reality, fixed and self-contained, because all "(social) space is (social) product".[128] The spatial is an "ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification";[129] a "complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and cooperation".[130] A complex web spanning all spatial scales due to globalisation and technological advancements that accelerate the flows of capital, goods, and people, effecting what Marxist geographer David Harvey describes as "time-space compression".[131] He depicts a world shrinking under the oppressive weight of capitalist accumulation and consumption. In dialogue with Harvey, geographer Doreen Massey's concept of the "power-geometry" of time-space compression expresses how certain social groups wield power to initiate flows and movements, simultaneously undermining the power of others with differentiated mobility.[132] Massey writes:

> "It is not simply a question of unequal distribution, that some people move more than others, and that some have more control than others. It is that the mobility and control of some groups can actively weaken other people. Differential mobility can weaken the leverage of the already weak."[133]

Urban planners and architects represent social groups that commandeer time-space compression. Urban planners possess the power to regulate mobility and movement through zoning, density regulation, and infrastructure development. Architects possess the power to design built structures which discipline bodies and behaviours, structures that are often constructed and sustained by exploitative global extractivist economies.[134] Recognising these dynamics is crucial when analysing a model of smart urbanity like Seestadt, reconciling a democratic urban vision with its environmental and techno-political reverberations across the region and more globally.

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[128] Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space*, Blackwell, 1991, 26.
[129] Doreen Massey, *Space, place and gender*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 3.
[130] Ibid., 265.
[131] David Harvey, *1935-. The Condition of Postmodernity,* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), 284.
[132] Massey, *Space, place and gender*, 149.
[133] Ibid., 150.
[134] Space Caviar ed., *Non-Extractive Architecture: On Designing without Depletion*, 1. V–A–C Sternberg Press, 2021.

The built environment is not merely a physical manifestation of social and political forces; it also conditions social practices, contributing to identity formation for those who concurrently experience and transform the space. It is a dialectic relationship, a "socio-spatial dialectic".[135] No urban space is politically neutral or uncontested, and the social relations that produce it may include varying degrees of inequality and exploitation, whether on the basis of class, race, ethnicity, gender, dis/ability, sexual orientation, age, or religion, to name but a few categorisations. In other words, the built environment is a vector of power relations, as political and/or capital interests work to impose visions and systems of organisation onto the space. And the 'city' is the foremost arena of power and capital. Cities also possess emancipatory, revolutionary potential. The "city and the urban process it produces become major sites of political, social and class struggles"[136] as people claim their right to participate and transform urban space in the face of detrimental neoliberal policies that prioritise market-driven development. Building on French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's *The Right to the City* (1968),[137] Harvey insists that "the right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city."[138] For queer cultures, the city is a locus of cultural production where queer subjectivities and futures can be imagined and agitated for. It is difficult to imagine queer life without urban spaces.

Urban vs. rural contrasts play a significant role in constituting queer subjects and queer urban communities, whether that community is tangible or imagined. The inherently spatialised "gay imaginarium", as conceptualised by American anthropologist Kath Weston, is a symbolic space where gay subjectivities are constructed through the perpetuation of a binary opposition between urban tolerance and community, and rural repression and "gay absence".[139] In actuality, many queer people who embark on the "great gay migration" to cities do not find the promised gay utopia, and instead encounter a universalised conception of the gay self that is "gendered, racialised and classed",[140] privileging those with closer proximity to power.[141] Queer theorists such as Jack Halberstam have criticised the "metronormative" narrative of gays migrating from rural persecution to urban tolerance for constituting a necessarily neoliberal white cisgender—and

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[135] Edward Soja, "The Socio-Spatial Dialectic," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70, no. 2, (1980): 207–225.

[136] David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (Verso Books, 2012), 66.

[137] Henri Lefebvre, "The right to the city," In *Writings on cities*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, (Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1996).

[138] David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *New Left Review.* 53, (2008): 23.

[139] Kath Weston, "Get Thee To a Big City," in *Long, Slow Burn: Sexuality and Social Science* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 55.

[140] Ibid., 51.

[141] This paragraph contains revised material from unpublished manuscript: Alina Young, "Queer Theory Paragraphs" submitted to CEU course Queer Theory, December 2022.

enlightened—gay subject.[142] In contrast to enlightened inner city life, the suburban way of life is construed as homogenous, consumerist, and individualistic. As geographers Julie Podmore and Alison Bain note, the conceptual framing of heterosexual suburbia vs the queer inner city is more than a "question of representation"; these dichotomous constructions influence "urban planning, mortgage lending, municipal ordinances, and land use zoning".[143] Locating Que[e]rbau—and Seestadt—within the urban/rural dichotomy is not a straightforward task. Though a city in name, Seestadt (Lake City) exhibits many suburban and rural characteristics, challenging the perceived rigidity of this binary. Seestadt is, by most metrics, a suburb, both spatially and narratively siloed from the surrounding settlements in the Donaustadt district. Imaginings, visions, and hopes for Seestadt from various interested groups are demonstrably in tension. I will continue to refer to Seestadt as a city, nonetheless, operating on the assumption that queer space can be produced anywhere.

The production of queer space has been theorised in dynamic and contending ways, including between the respective fields of *queer geographies* and *geographies of sexualities*. The latter focuses on mapping LGBTQ+ spaces and their significations; the former considers how the "queering" of space intersects with a multiplicity of marginalisations. The tension between these two fields arises from the incommensurability of LGBTQ identity politics and the idea of continual re-constituting and disruption of subjectivity in post-structuralist thought. Recognising that queer geographies do not follow a linear progression from geographies of sexuality, I will consider both conceptualisations of queer space-making to analyse the Que[e]rbau project. Early engagements between queer theory and critical geographies in the 1990s (geographies of sexualities) positioned queer space as the obverse of heteronormative space whilst acknowledging that "space is not naturally authentically 'straight' but rather actively produced and (hetero)sexualized".[144] For geographers David Bell and Gill Valentine, the mere presence of queer bodies on the city streets work to denaturalise the heterosexing of space.[145] As Elspeth Probyn writes: "[S]pace is a pressing matter and it matters which bodies, where and how, press up against it".[146] The production of

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[142] Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 37.

[143] Julie A. Podmore and Alison L. Bain, "'No Queers out There'? Metronormativity and the Queer Suburban," *Geography Compass* 14, no. 9 (June 9, 2020), 5.

[144] Jon Binnie, "Coming Out of Geography: Towards a Queer Epistemology?," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 15 (1997): 223.

[145] David Bell and Gill Valentine, *Mapping desire: Geographies of sexualities*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 18.

[146] Elspeth Probyn, "VIEWPOINT Lesbians in Space. Gender, Sex and the Structure of Missing," *Gender, Place & Culture* 2, no. 1 (1995): 81.

queer space is thus understood as the "reterritorialisation of heterosexual space",[147] a concrete space that enables "visibility of sexual subcultures that resist and rupture the hegemonic heterosexuality that is the source of their marginality and exclusion".[148] In built environments, queer aesthetics play a significant role in carving out non-conformist spaces from the dominant cis-heteronormative culture.

Queer subjectivities have been related to high chroma colours in the Western imagination for centuries, perpetuated by a hegemonic heterosexist culture imbued with "chromophobia".[149] Hatred of colour, or "chromophobia", has long been present in Western cultural and political thought, with high-keyed colours being consciously "purged from culture" and othered as belonging to "the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological".[150] Urban streetscapes and public spaces often favour tonally muted and anonymous aesthetics, "making those who do not conform or look like they belong there even more frighteningly visible".[151] Colour is therefore incorporated into some physical queer spaces as an act of reclamation, resistance and symbolic representation. Beyond the use of vibrant colour, queer aesthetics in design and architecture may manifest in textural, structural, or ornamental features that create "novelty and difference".[152]

The notion that queer space, built or discursive, is inherently transgressive and necessarily opposed to hegemonic heterosexuality has been subject to critique. Many critical theorists caution the former approach for inadequately confronting fixed assumptions about sex and sexuality. Geographer Kath Browne contends that such framings

> "express the oppressed or abjected side(homosexuality) of a dichotomous, oppositional normative model of sexuality based on heterosexuality/homosexuality. Whilst space is rendered fluid, the normative hetero/homo, man/woman divisions are often left intact and the production of new, fluid sexes, genders, sexualities or desires are not explored. As a result, such studies only describe the spatial expression of such transgressions within

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[147] Natalie Oswin, "Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality: Deconstructing Queer Space," *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 1 (February 2008), 90.
[148] Ibid.
[149] David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000).
[150] Ibid., 22-23.
[151] Pippa Catterall and Ammar Azzouz, *Queering Public Space: Exploring the Relationship between Queer Communities and Public Spaces* (London: Arup, 2021), 16, https://www.arup.com/-/media/arup/files/publications/q/queering-public-space-report.pdf.
[152] Adam Nathaniel Furman, "Queer Aesthetics with Adam Nathaniel Furman," interview by Jemma Queenborough, 2020, https://www.inclpublication.com/queer-aesthetics, 21.

"normal" and normative oppositions (man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual); they do not challenge these boundaries."[153]

Queer geographies complicate this dichotomy, signalling a turn towards post-structuralist approaches in the deconstruction and de-essentializing of queer space. This work observes that queer spaces can be "unfixed, contested and disciplinary"[154] and potential spaces of exclusion imbricated in colonialism, racism, and neoliberal capitalism. Lisa Duggan names "homonormativity" as a form of sexual politics that privileges neoliberal markers of liberation such as privacy, domesticity, and consumption.[155] It is a "politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilised gay constituency…".[156] Homonormativity has been conceptually deployed to confront the privileging of cisgender gay white male subjects and perpetuation of racisms and patriarchies within apparent progressive queer spaces, such as commercialised "gayborhoods".

Within the analytic frame of homonormativity, David Bell and Jon Binnie theorise that urban sexual citizenship agendas and entrepreneurial governance strategies have become inextricably interwoven, as cities enlist "sexual 'others' in processes of urban transformation".[157] They note that "[g]ays are often cast as model citizens of the urban renaissance, contributing towards the gentrification of commodifiable cosmopolitan residential and commercial areas".[158] And so, "gay-friendliness" has become a form of cultural capital to foster urban competitiveness. The "sexual restructuring of cities"[159] is a form of neoliberal spatial politics that benefits people with access to cultural and material capital, inevitably at the expense of marginalised groups lacking these resources. Anthropologist Martin F. Manalansan locates the nexus between the commodification of queer culture and heightened surveillance of racialised communities, as areas are made palatable and 'safe' for visitors by monitoring public spaces where people of colour—queer or otherwise—would typically gather, thus demarcating "racial, ethnic, class and sexual"

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[153] Kath Browne, "Challenging Queer Geographies," *Antipode,* 38, no. 5, (2006), 887.
[154] Natalie Oswin, "Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality," 91.
[155] Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism," in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, Russ Castronovo, Dana D. Nelson and Donald E. Pease eds. (New York, USA: Duke University Press, 2002), 175-194.
[156] Lisa Duggan, *The twilight of equality? Neoliberalism, cultural politics and the attack on democracy,* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2003), 50.
[157] David Bell and Jon Binnie, "Authenticating Queer Space: Citizenship, Urbanism and Governance," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 9 (August 2004): 1807.
[158] Ibid., 1815.
[159] Ibid., 1817.

boundaries.[160] In many Western countries, Austria included, LGBTQ movements and spaces are also instrumentalised in the construction of boundaries, urban citizenships and national identity. Jasbir Puar's theory of homonationalism is instructive in understanding the utilisation of homonormativities in Austrian public and political discourses, where state-sanctioned, depoliticised queerness is often mobilised against racialised Others construed as politically regressive.[161] Puar qualifies that homonationalism is not solely a state practice but the

> "historical convergence of state practices, transnational circuits of queer commodity culture and human rights paradigms, and broader global phenomena such as the increasing entrenchment of Islamophobia."[162]

In the Viennese context, homonationalist ideologies contour how certain areas of the city are discursively constructed as LGBTQ "spaces of fear".[163] Scholars Christine Klapeer and Karin Schönpflug describe this process as *Orientalismus bzw. antimuslimischen Urbanismus spielen* (urban orientalism or anti-Muslim urbanism), whereby Vienna's racialised working-class districts are designated as dangerous places for queer people, as opposed to wealthier, predominantly white middle-class neighbourhoods.[164] In this way, marginalised groups are cast as adversaries in the queer struggle for the right to the city, deflecting from institutional cis-hetero-patriarchal systems of dominance. Seestadt is a highly diverse neighbourhood in terms of the number of different ethnicities and nationalities residing there. In the Viennese public imagination, it is discursively constructed in multiple contrasting ways: as a "space of fear", a concrete "Lego land", or an eco-city for "*bobos*" (a portmanteau of bohemian-bourgeois, colloquially used disparagingly). The thesis will explore these representations in turn, with particular emphasis on the image the city developers aim to project and the citizens they mean to produce. The top-down spatialisation of the city is one technique through which the Seestadt planners articulate these objectives.

The professions of urban planning and architecture play a major role in enforcing social norms and regulating bodies. Planning scholar Michael Frisch critiques planning as an explicitly heterosexist project that reproduces "structures of heterosexual domination" through notions of

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[160] Manalansan, Martin F, "Race, Violence and the Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City," *Social Text* 84-85, Vol. 23, Nos. 3-4, Fall-Winter (2005): 141.
[161] Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Duke University Press, 2007.
[162] Jasbir Puar, "Rethinking Homonationalism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45, no. 2 (April 25, 2013): 337.
[163] Christine M. Klapeer and Karin Schönpflug, "De/constructing Spaces of Queer Fear: Rassisierte und Klassisierte Stadt- und Raumkonstruktionen am Beispiel Wien," *GENDER – Zeitschrift für Geschlecht, Kultur und Gesellschaft* 1, no. 1 (2020): 78-94.
[164] Ibid., 92.

"order, public, family and reproduction". [165] According to Frisch, these three "heterosexist assumptions about life" guide zoning regulations, housing policy and common understandings of public space. [166] The writings of French philosopher Michel Foucault are foundational to understanding how modern city planning emerged as an impulse to "bring order out of chaos"[167] and control populations. Amongst other forms of power, Foucault understood architecture and the spatialisation of the city as instruments of disciplinary and observational power. Panoptic surveillance is one such technology of power and subjectivation he describes, using Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon as an illustrative example.[168] The Panopticon—a prison architecture that enables a single guard to observe all inmates simultaneously without being seen—disciplines inmates to internalise the guard's unverifiable gaze.[169] In this way, the Panopticon "automizes and disindividualizes power"[170] so that no one wields it directly but are all subjected to its self-disciplining and normalising effects. Disciplinary power is exercised through the

> "instrument of permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance, capable of making all visible, as long as it could itself remain invisible. It had to be like a faceless gaze… thousands of eyes posted everywhere".[171]

In built environments, the surveillant gaze operates with the primary objective of "visibility through illumination".[172] In terms of urban design, illumination can be achieved through designing "more open and clean spaces" and enhanced street lighting, as well as imposing aesthetic regulations and various city ordinances.[173] Crucially for Foucault, the disciplinary effects of urban planning are not wholly oppressive; they can also be productive.[174] Jane Jacobs writes about the positive effects of casual surveillance—or eyes on the street— in urban communities, in terms of increased personal security and trust between city dwellers.[175] Seestadt's spatial layout is heavily influenced by Jacobs' planning principles. It is not just the neighbourhood's spatial layout that

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[165] Frisch, Michael, "Planning as a Heterosexist Project," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 21, no. 3 (2002): 245.
[166] Ibid., 256.
[167] Ibid., 258.
[168] Jeremy Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings,* ed. Miran Božovic (London; New York: Verso, 2011).
[169] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977), 203.
[170] Ibid., 202.
[171] Ibid., 214.
[172] John Pløger, "Foucault's Dispositif and the City," *Planning Theory* 7, no. 1 (2008): 64.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 210-11.
[175] Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 1961.

regulates and disciplines its citizens, as the Seestadt "smart" development model is also productive of a particular kind of citizen: the smart citizen.

Smart citizenship is a strategy of neoliberal subjectification necessary for smart cities to function. The success of urban living labs and future investment opportunities depend on residents being both economically and environmentally conscious when performing scripted uses for smart technologies.[176] Within a Foucauldian framework of analysis, neoliberal governance operates through shaping subjectivities and the conduct of individuals according to entrepreneurial and economic dictates.[177] Foucault posits that the neoliberal subject, or *homo economicus*, "is an entrepreneur of themselves"[178] bound to rationally calculate every personal decision, thus maximising their utility in ultimate service of state or power. The *homo economicus* is produced through the "idea and practice of responsibilization - forcing the subject to become a responsible self-investor and self-provider…who meshes with the morality of the state and the health of the economy".[179] Smart citizens, particularly those directly involved in urban living lab experiments, are expected to be "data-driven, information-hungry, technology-savvy home energy managers."[180] Smart city experimentation models reflect a broader shift in urban governance in an era of globalization, which Harvey describes as the transformation from managerialism under welfare-state conditions to entrepreneurialism.[181] Cities must gain relative competitive advantages over other cities for resources, jobs and capital, principally by turning to private capital for investment and services.[182] Vienna's welfare state began to erode after the 1980s, as supply replaced demand-oriented approaches and private-public partnerships became the prevailing development model.[183] Seestadt is, however, an unusual "smart" development project in the sense that significant levels of funding come from private companies that are wholly or partly owned by the City of Vienna (i.e. site developers Wien 3420), though neoliberal logics of experimentation still direct the

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[176] Anthony Levenda, "Thinking critically about smart city experimentation: entrepreneurialism and responsibilization in urban living labs," *Local Environment* 24, no. 7, (2019): 573.

[177] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[178] Ibid., 225-6.

[179] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 568.

[180] Yolande Strengers, *Smart Energy Technologies in Everyday Life: Smart Utopia?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 51.

[181] David Harvey, "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 71, no. 1, (1989): 3-17.

[182] Ibid., 5.

[183] Johannes Suitner, "Vienna's planning history: periodizing stable phases of regulating urban development, 1820–2020," *Planning Perspectives* 36, no. 5, (2021): 894-5.

vision.[184] Still, to avoid assuming a precipitously disparaging stance on smart urbanism, this research will consider some genuinely innovative and utopian impulses driving the Seestadt project, as well as possible queer potentials for this form of experimental urbanism.

Utopian thinking in urban planning has been dismissed by many as idealistic on the one hand and symptomatic of totalitarianism on the other, as a priori assumptions and ideals are projected onto urban futures. Lefebvre argued that radical societal transformation is in fact conditional on experimental utopianism; that is, "the exploration of human possibilities, with the help of the image and the imagination, accompanied by an incessant critique and an incessant reference to the given problematic in the 'real' ".[185] He proposes a methodology—*transduction*—for conceiving future cities and urban forms, whereby the theoretical or *possible* object is constructed from empirical observations later fed back into the conceptual framework, thus introducing "rigour in invention and knowledge in utopia".[186] The process of transduction should reduce the risk of abstract urban utopias and ideal cities that are totally disconnected from local specificities and citizens' needs.[187] Geographer Eden Kinkaid posits that Lefebvre's transductive logics embody queer experimental impulses, as transductive methodology "reaches for utopia…but swerves and recollects it in the present".[188] On queer experimentalism, they write:

> "Queerness as experimentalism is…a kind of limit experience: a desire for a (yet) unrecognizable form of knowledge and embodiment that must always scramble up the scaffolding and run through the protocols of what we already know and what we already are to arrive somewhere else."[189]

Given that Seestadt is a city operating through ongoing monitoring and feedback mechanisms, and supposed high levels of civic participation, does it have transformative (and queer) potential as imagined in Lefebvre's conception of experimental utopianism? And what are the real impacts of so-called innovative concepts on the lives of people living there?

[184] "Living and working in Aspern Seestadt," Wien 3420 aspern Development AG, accessed on March 6, 2023, https://www.aspern-seestadt.at/en.

[185] Henri Lefebvre, *Utopie expérimentale: pour un nouvel urbanisme*, (Revue Française Sociologie 2.3, 1961), 192.

[186] Henri Lefebvre, "The right to the city," in *Writings on cities*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, (Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), 151.

[187] This paragraph contains revised material from the unpublished manuscript: Alina Young, "A Study on Queering Urban Planning in Smart City Seestadt Aspern, Vienna", submitted to CEU course *The Urban Scale: Built Environment, Social Forms and Political Potentials*, March 2023.

[188] Eden Kinkaid, "(en)Vision(ing) Otherwise: Queering Visuality and Space in Lefebvre's Production," *GeoHumanities* 4, no. 2 (2018): 441.

[189] Ibid.

CHAPTER 2: WHAT'S QUEER ABOUT QUE[E]RBAU?

The etymology of the name Que[e]rbau is instructive for excavating the housing project's epistemological foundations. A double entendre, Que[e]rbau includes the words "queer" and "*Querbau*", an abbreviation of *Quergebäude* (transverse building). It has long been disputed whether "queer" derives from the German *quer* "oblique, transverse, crosswise",[190] as *Quergebäude* most definitively does. In larger housing schemes, the *Quergebäude* stands transversely—or perpendicular—to the front building, accessible via crossing an inner courtyard or side wing. Que[e]rbau, being a singular unit publicly visible from all sides, does not qualify as a *Quergebäude* in technical terms. The wordplay instead articulates a crossing or transgression of normative boundaries in planning practice. Denoting a method above all, the "queer" in Que[e]rbau provides insight into the methodological approach taken by planners and residents - that is, "queering" participatory planning and affordable housing.

Que[e]rbau is a nominally queer space, queer building, queer housing initiative. Someone entirely unacquainted with the project's architectural form, organisational structure and customs could make several assumptions about this space from the moniker. They may visualise a building that aesthetically confronts design convention. Or speculate on a planning process which challenges disciplinary knowledge and gender-biased, heteronormative frameworks of architectural practice. And in all likelihood, they would assume that Que[e]rbau embodies an act of reclaiming heterosexualised urban space by-and-for people of diverse sexual and gender identities: a house for queers! The current chapter, "What's Queer about Que[e]rbau?", will take these hypothetical assumptions forward to analyse the architectural aesthetics and participatory planning processes inherent to the Que[e]rbau project, as well as relational understandings of the project's purpose and meaning.

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[190] *queer: adjective1*, Oxford English Dictionary, accessed April 29, 2024, https://www.oed.com/.

2.1. It's What's Inside That Counts: Que[e]rbau Aesthetics

Figure 1 This image shows Que[e]rbau [centre of frame] soon after completion in 2017. Que[e]rbau café 'Yella-Yella!' can be seen on ground floor level with two sets of double-glazed curtain walls meeting just short of the foremost façade intersection. (Wienerberger Austria, 2024).

It was a task discerning Que[e]rbau (Fig. 1) amongst its neighbouring residential blocks. Searching for balconies adorned with pride flags proved an inconclusive measure, as I had noticed colourful significations for the LGBTQ+ community in several windows en route from the station to the desired address. Poring over my phone for navigational guidance, I walked the building's perimeter to be quite certain before entering the ground floor cafe Yella-Yella. A person standing behind the bar beckoned me inside, presumably after having observed my meanderings, made visible through double-glazed curtain walls that ran partially along two sides of the block. The exterior design of Que[e]rbau challenged my preconceptions of queer co-housing aesthetics. Nestled in between a collection of equally modular structures, Que[e]rbau did not appear to be at "odds with the normal, the legitimate, and the dominant"[191] building style found within Seestadt, in ways I had imagined an explicitly queer building would. I soon discovered that those uniformed blocks surrounding Que[e]rbau constitute a mixed-use development site (Site D22) designed by

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[191] David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 62.

the Clemens Kirsch Architektur firm.[192] The site consists of three subsidised housing schemes: Que[e]rbau, a home for children with disabilities, as well as a more conventional apartment block. This might clarify why Que[e]rbau and adjacent blocks visually meld into a "coherent totality",[193] but the rationale behind designing these geometric constructions with tonally muted facades deserves further analysis.

In terms of outdoor space, the three buildings are connected by a wide concrete footpath, a neat lawn peppered with saplings, and a community vegetable garden. Que[e]rbau also has a sizeable, tarmacked area in front of the Yella-Yella which intersects the bus stop. With a few notable exceptions, many housing developments in Seestadt adhere to the minimalist design principles of "Site D22". And for a smart city that cites the ideas of renowned American urban planner Jane Jacobs as inspiration for its community-minded ethos, including her belief that "if a city's streets look interesting, the city looks interesting",[194] Seestadt's residential parts do not necessarily spark excitement. Que[e]rbau's lead architect, Clemens Kirsch, has expressed this very sentiment about his own building. In a 2017 interview with local newspaper *Der Standard*, Kirsch admitted that "at first glance, [Que[e]rbau] doesn't look all that exciting".[195] The justification being that "the last thing [he] wanted was a pink and purple villa, because if a project is already so strong in terms of content and typology, then you don't have to emphasize it with loud, trumpeting façade colours".[196]

A queer building decorated in "loud", "trumpeting" colours is exactly what I had envisioned. High-chroma colours have historically been gender-coded, sexualised, and racialised by dominant Western culture, which LGBTQ+ people worldwide have been steadily reclaiming as symbolic markers of queer subjectivity.[197] Chromophobia is visibly apparent within the fields of urban planning and architecture.[198] One regarded pioneer of modernist architecture, Le Corbusier,

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[192] Clemens Kirsch Architektur, *Seestadt Aspern - Site D22,* retrieved 11 July 2023 from https://www.clemenskirsch.at/en/site-d22/
[193] Ibid.
[194] Wien 3420 Aspern Development AG, *Vision + Reality: The Instruments of Urban Design*, 2011, 1.
[195] Wojciech Czaja, "Wiener Baugruppe Que[e]Rbau: Ein Haus Wie Ein Regenbogen," *Der Standard*, December 8, 2017. https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000069296365/wiener-baugruppe-queerbau-ein-haus-wie-ein-regenbogen.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Abbra Kotlarczyk, "Queer uses of colour: A tinted hermeneutics," *Local Colour,* Artlink, 2019, https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/4740/queer-uses-of-colour-a-tinted-hermeneutics/.
[198] Batchelor, *Chromophobia.*

once said that "colour is suited to simple races, peasants and savages"[199] and that it is "necessary to establish the law of whitening…[as] cleanliness makes one see the objects in their sincere truth … in perfect purity".[200] In his opinion, architects who indulge in ornamentation and misuse of colour are unable to "resist dangerous caresses".[201] Putting overt racial logics aside for a moment, this moralistic notion of pursuing purity and truth in architecture also reflects essentialist binary narratives on gender and sexuality – a decidedly anti-queer position. With this recent history of compulsory whitening and purification of architecture in mind, it seemed reasonable to me that Vienna's first dedicated queer co-housing building would break a few design norms.

Que[e]rbau is rendered in three gentle shades of beige. Kirsch's justification in *Der Standard* for the beige exterior of Que[e]rbau is a not-so-subtle allusion to—and likely jibe at—the pink and purple façade of the Türkis Rosa Lila Villa (TIPP, Fig. 2), a community centre and collective housing project for queer migrants, including with refugee backgrounds, in central Vienna.[202] The TIPP is potentially one of Vienna's most colourful buildings; besides its soft pink and royal purple masonry paint, the walls showcase protest banners, a prominent Progress Pride Flag, and psychedelic murals depicting queer people of colour in loving embrace. There can be no mistaking this building. Having personally frequented the Villa bar, I can also attest to the diversity of the people who live, work, party, and organise inside its bright walls: multiple nationalities, ethnicities, gender identities and expressions and sexualities. The visual contrast between the exteriors of the TIPP and Que[e]rbau projects can be explained in part by their respective origin stories.

The TIPP was created in 1982 as an autonomous structure (an occupied house owned by the municipality) for housing lesbians and gays within the broader context of a Europe-wide squatter movement.[203] To prevent further squatting elsewhere, the City handed over the house and other buildings to the occupying collectives, offering precarious contracts that excluded rental costs (only running costs) but could be repealed at any time.[204] Fortunately, no revocation notice has ever been issued to the TIPP, and to this day, it remains a critical meeting point for activists

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[199] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 143.
[200] Le Corbusier, as quoted in Guillaume Janneau, "L'Exposition des arts techniques de 1925," *Le Bulletin de la vie artistique*, February 1, 1923, 64.
[201] Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture,* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 284.
[202] "Über Uns", Die Villa Rosa Lila Villa, retrieved 15 July 2023 from https://dievilla.at/.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Robert Foltin, "Squatting and Autonomous Action in Vienna," in *The City Is Ours: Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe from the 1970s to the Present, Oakland: PM, 2014,* 257-259.

and queer community across Vienna. And a highly visible meeting point at that. The vibrant façade conveys—or "trumpets"—a message; of subverting heteronormative design scripts, territorialising queer space, and demanding recognition for various types of diversity that exist in the city.[205] The TIPP observes an aesthetics of political resistance and queer pleasure.

Figure 2 This image shows the front facade of Türkis Rosa Lila Villa - TIPP (Marty Huber, 2022).

Que[e]rbau, by contrast, is a project that has been conceptually and literally built from the ground. Whereas the TIPP was established in a mid-19th century building initially lacking features to be fully inclusive and accessible (e.g no elevator),[206] Que[e]rbau architects could take an intersectional approach to planning from the get-go. For this reason, I found Kirsch's adamance on achieving "neutrality" in structure and exterior design curious. On a purely aesthetic level, Que[e]rbau, and indeed numerous Seestadt residential blocks, conjure Le Corbusier's functionalist maxim: "the house is a machine for living in".[207] In other words, these are conventional, and I would argue,

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[205] Mariam Fraser, "Classing Queer: Politics in Competition," *Theory, Culture & Society* 16, no. 2 (1999): 107-131

[206] 'Wien Kulturgut', Stadt Wien, retrieved 15 July 2023 from
https://www.wien.gv.at/kulturportal/public/grafik.aspx?address=Linke+Wienzeile+102

[207] Le Corbusier, 1923, in Guillaume Janneau, "L'Exposition des arts techniques de 1925," *Le Bulletin de la vie artistique*, 64.

corporate-looking buildings. Que[e]rbau resident Marlene cast similar aspersions on the exterior colour palette of Que[e]rbau and other Seestadt buildings. Marlene is a politically active retiree who was involved in planning the Que[e]rbau project in the early stages. She also organises community initiatives in Seestadt, including language exchange meet-ups. On the appearance of the neighbourhood, she commented:

> "Everything is grey here. Grey, beige, brown, white. The houses are really dull colours, all of them. It's male taste."

Whatever Kirsch's personal qualms with the colours pink and purple may be, his architecture firm could not have been totally agentic in design choices. After all, Que[e]rbau is part of the smart city landscape. An aesthetics of political resistance like that of the TIPP—a citation for the Vienna squatter movement—would likely not gel with the corporate, investment-worthy atmosphere that the Seestadt master plan sought to cultivate. It is principally a capitalist venture desiring smart citizens to populate and propagate.

Acknowledging the authoritative role of Seestadt's competition jury and chosen architecture firm, how much creative control could Que[e]rbau initiators exert on the construction of their project? Florian, the planner and co-initiator of the Que[e]rbau project, divulged to me that the "building is different from how [they] first imagined…but all that was possible to build on that kind of site". The plot was smaller than previously hoped. Florian stressed that Clemens Kirsch showed great enthusiasm for the project and was receptive to their requests to change certain design aspects. From this conversation, I could gather that a queer aesthetics of political resistance had never been the intention for this building, and less visibility was, in fact, preferred. This project does not aim to be identified explicitly as a residence for LGBTQ individuals. Florian described the TIPP as a "very political" project and alluded to Que[e]rbau residents wanting a quieter life away from the inner city. "Visibility is a trap", after all.[208] Being visibly queer, whilst a powerful form of disruption and resistance to cis-heteronormative codes of social "acceptability", can heighten vulnerability to disciplinary forces outside of one's chosen community.

In recent months, the TIPP—whose residents are predominantly queer migrants and/or people of colour—has interfaced starkly with hegemonic regimes of visibility after a resident hung

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[208] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200.

a Palestinian flag outside the building amidst the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict.[209] This visible show of solidarity provoked online vitriol from established Viennese journalists, a flurry of racially motivated threats from anonymous (and named) internet users, and articles from local LGBTQ organisations with titles such as *Türkis Rosa Lila Villa: Jetzt hängt die Flagge der Schande noch höher* (Türkis Rosa Lila Villa: Now the flag of shame hangs even higher).[210] "Do [they] know how endangered homosexuals are in the territory of the Palestinian administration…?"[211] one Vienna-based academic commented. In addition, the right-wing populist FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria) called on the city council to cancel the TIPP's yearly funding.[212] In an official statement, the TIPP accused the FPÖ's intervention of being a means to "push their anti-Arab racism and queerphobia…using political narratives to silence [the TIPP's work]".[213] Thinly veiled racist and queerphobic attacks on the TIPP, made under the guise of concern for the lives of LGBTQ people in Gaza, are embedded in homonationalist discourses that dictate "acceptance" and "tolerance" for queer national subjects as the test by which the "right to and capacity for national sovereignty is evaluated."[214] As well as serving to legitimise the state's diplomatic and foreign policy, these mechanisms impact the embodied experiences of racialised people living in Vienna, feeding the discursive construction of queer spaces of fear in the city; namely, working-class districts with large migrant populations.[215]

Seestadt's population is highly diverse, with residents reportedly representing 98 different nationalities, mostly from Poland, Germany, Hungary, Ukraine, Turkey, Afghanistan, Romania, and Slovakia.[216] One non-Austrian Seestadt inhabitant I spoke to claimed she almost "never encounters Austrians" in her daily travels. The fact that nearly all the people I interviewed who live in Que[e]rbau or Seestadt were Austrian nationals is potentially demonstrative of two interrelated factors. Firstly, given Vienna's unique history of collaborative housing concepts and wide-scale subsidised housing provision, Austrian citizens or foreign nationals who have resided

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[209] "Israel-Gaza Crisis," United Nations, accessed April 14, 2024, https://www.un.org/en/situation-in-occupied-palestine-and-israel.

[210] GGG.at, "Türkis Rosa Lila Villa: Jetzt Hängt Die Flagge Der Schande Noch Höher," *GGG.at*, October 25, 2023, https://www.ggg.at/2023/10/24/tuerkis-rosa-lila-villa-jetzt-haengt-die-flagge-der-schande-noch-hoeher/.

[211] Ibid.

[212] ILGA-Europe, *Freedom of Expression* (ILGA-Europe, 2024), 1.

[213] "At the Core of Our Identity Is Equality," *Die Villa,* December 5, 2023, https://dievilla.at/tipp-verein/im-kern-unserer-identitat-liegt-gleichberechtigung/.

[214] Puar, "Rethinking Homonationalism," 336.

[215] Klapeer and Schönpflug, "De/constructing Spaces of Queer Fear," 92.

[216] "So SIEHT Mehrsprachigkeit in Der Seestadt Aus…," aspern Die Seestadt Wiens, November 7, 2023, https://www.aspern-seestadt.at/city-news/so_sieht_mehrsprachigkeit_in_der_seestadt_aus_.

in the country for a long time will be more accustomed to these forms of living. Secondly, Austrian citizens are far higher on the City's priority list for affordable housing than non-citizens. Seestadt is Vienna's second most disenfranchised neighbourhood, with over 40% of residents ineligible to vote in national and local council elections.[217] Half of those residents are EU citizens who are, however, eligible to vote for district representatives.[218] Seestadt then represents a perplexing confluence of mass disenfranchisement and supposed experimental levels of civic engagement.

Unlike other multicultural districts in Vienna, which are discursively constituted as 'problem areas' or spaces of fear, Seestadt is often imagined as an eco-city for white middle-class Austrians by those unfamiliar with the neighbourhood. As I will address in the following chapter, this misconception is likely a result of the highly curated image projected by the developers. Que[e]rbau resident Marlene divulged that "there are political enemies of the City of Vienna on the political right who want to create a very negative image of Seestadt" by portraying the area as a latent hotbed of gang violence. She recalled how a video of boys fighting on the outskirts of Seestadt was circulated widely by right-wing groups, as supposed evidence of underlying social issues. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a chasmic divide between how Seestadt residents perceive their neighbourhood and the juxtaposing narratives so vigorously promoted by the City, developers and hostile groups. And where does Que[e]rbau fit in these narratives? If Que[e]rbau is not an outwardly performatively queer space in terms of aesthetics, and is considered by its initiators to be non-political, then what is the nature of the interplay between the project and Seestadt? Before exploring broader questions related to Que[e]rbau's physical and symbolic positioning within the entrepreneurial smart city, I must first ask: what's queer about Que[e]rbau?

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[217] "Was Hat Die Verfassung Mit Mir Zu Tun?", aspern Die Seestadt Wiens Zum Pressroom Adresse. *OTS.at*, February 22, 2023. https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20230222_OTS0124/was-hat-die-verfassung-mit-mir-zu-tun-bild.
[218] "Wahlrecht: Große Grätzl-Unterschiede," ORF, September 21, 2020, https://wien.orf.at/stories/3067813/

2.2. Queering Participatory Planning

"So what's queer about Que[e]rbau?". This was the first question I posed to project initiators Florian and Mark. Both had kindly agreed to talk to me over a plate of meatballs at the *"Yella Yella! Donnerstagstreff"* (Thursday meeting), one frosty February evening. It marked my second visit to the Que[e]rbau's cafe Yella Yella. As Mark prepared our meals at the canteen-style food station and Florian concluded a neighbourly conversation, I intently observed the room. Yella Yella is the main communal space for Que[e]rbau residents and hosts many of Seestadt's cultural offerings. The events calendar is consistently occupied, featuring art exhibitions, literary and poetry readings, lectures, cooking sessions, film screenings, feminist book presentations, and music concerts.[219] As per the website, Yella Yella is the *"Fenster nach Außen"* (window to the outside), a place for common initiatives and "critical social discourse".[220] As I have mentioned elsewhere, the cafe serves as an "anchor institution"[221] for the wider Seestadt community. It is not an anchor institution in the economic sense, being a self-organised non-profit cafe, but it does facilitate community-building initiatives that "fossilise a way of life in space and place".[222] The room itself is spacious, well-lit, and modern, with floor-to (almost) ceiling triple-glazed windows running across two sides. Various pride flags adorn the polished concrete walls. In the brief time it took for Mark and Florian to settle down across the table, at least 5 new people entered the space, greeting each other in German by name. A child burst through the door on a pushbike with their guardian trailing behind. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks were flowing. The crowd was diverse in terms of age and gender presentation but read as predominantly white. The atmosphere was casual. Without a moment's hesitation, Florian responded to my opening question:

> "the special—or queer—thing about [the project] is that there were no predetermined structures, i.e. floor plan configurations…the [rooms] were created individually and then we also individually fitted [these individual apartments] into the feeling of the [whole] house."

Tailoring each apartment to residents' specific needs and aesthetic tastes certainly constitutes a transgression of normative architectural practice in housing design, which typically

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[219] "Yella Yella! NACHBAR_INNENTREFF." Yella Yella! Nachbar_innentreff, 2024. https://www.yellayella.at/.

[220] "Wir Vom Que[e]Rbau," Verein Que[e]rbau Seestadt.,Yella Yella! Nachbar_innentreff, 2024. https://www.yellayella.at/wir/.

[221] Eugenie L. Birch, "Anchor institutions and their role in metropolitan change," (Philadelphia: Penn Institute for Urban Research, 2010).

[222] Ghaziani, "Measuring urban sexual cultures," 373.

follows top-down hierarchical procedures that universalise and over-code difference. Florian uttered the word 'feeling' multiple times during our conversation; he is attentive to the ways in which "emotions, affections, physical interaction and a sense of the body's situation in physical space"[223] should infuse queer planning practice. Mark reiterated their purposeful subversion of traditional building processes, adding:

> "[There] is not some [architect] that sits in his bureau and does whatever he wants; you need to speak to the future residents to find out what their needs are. As an architect, the first thing is, I know nothing. What are *your* needs? Everyone had a questionnaire to fill in [expressing their wants] …and then we met with the clients. This! This is the queer thing about it….".

From a queer theoretical perspective, the task of queering architecture is a somewhat paradoxical pursuit, as the architectural method necessitates setting forth a "framework", a "logic", or "order" to transform ideas into form.[224] A queer methodological orientation implies destabilisation and fluidity; resistance to stasis and structure.[225] But the idea of hope is also a queer methodology, so pursue it they shall.[226] The core construction of Que[e]rbau is fixed, but the internal spaces have been adapted and repurposed multiple times since the project's unveiling in 2017. After our seated conversation, Florian guided me through the communal areas, some noticeably vacant in anticipation of reinvention. He clarified that lead architect Clemens Kirsch had designed the structural building elements, including an open staircase in the central atrium (see Fig. 3), whilst he collaborated with residents on the 33 individual apartments and communal spaces. The communal areas comprise a sauna, cafe, fitness gym, co-working space, tea house, workshop, vegetable garden, roof terrace, and seminar room to accommodate all manner of gatherings and activities.

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[223] Vanesa Castán Broto, "Queering Participatory Planning," 316.

[224] Marco Jobst and Naomi Stead, *Queering Architecture: Methods, Practices, Spaces, Pedagogies* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023), 3.

[225] Ibid.

[226] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 4.

Que[e]rbau Stiegenhaus als Treffpunkt. Foto: Verein Que[e]rbau

Figure 3 An image of the central staircase in Que[erbau] (Verein Que[e]rbau, 2019).

The focal staircase and atrium concept materialised following close consultations between Clemens Kirsch and Florian, inspired by the project motto: *"Jede_r für sich und manches zusammen ..."* (each for themselves and some together). Kirsch described the atrium as *"Ein toller Raum, wo die Erschließung inszeniert wird, ein lichtdurchfluteter Raum, der Blickbezug und Kommunikation ermöglicht"*;[227] a bright circulation space that enables spontaneous social contact between residents. The central staircase extends all the way up the multi-story atrium, surrounded by apartment doors and long corridors overlooking the drop below (see Fig. 3). An assortment of pride flags hang over the corridor balconies. Kirsch envisioned this open space as an ideal *"Tratsch"* (gossip) spot; though any sensational whispers exchanged here would likely resonate throughout the atrium like an echo chamber.[228] That said, such design features are necessary in order for collaborative housing projects to be lived as "transversal territories" where repetitive encounters can nurture collective life and conviviality.[229] It can also be interpreted as a challenge to, or blurring of, boundaries between perceived public and domestic realms. Domestic spaces have traditionally been designed in the image of the nuclear family, a highly gendered and heterosexist social construction, reproduced through the specific composition of living spaces: the "bedroom", the "living room",

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[227] Michael Kerbler, "Baugruppe Que[e]Rbau: Quer Zum Normalen Sozialen Wohnbau," *Der Standard,* June 3, 2017, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000058646599/baugruppe-queerbau-quer-zum-normalen-sozialen-wohnbau.

[228] Czaja, "Wiener Baugruppe Que[e]rbau".

[229] Josefina Jaureguiberry-Mondion, "Spatialising the Collective: The Spatial Practices of Two Housing Projects in Berlin," *Social & Cultural Geography* 24, no. 10 (2022): 1923.

the "kitchen", and so on.[230] Each room acquires a specialised function that reifies familial roles; the kitchen, for example, when separated from other rooms, stabilises gender roles. In the words of design theorist Colin Ripley:

> "...the single-family house and by extension apartments, condominiums and the like – is a central structure of heterosexual hegemony, the primary architectural expression of hetero-normativity. All housing, at least in the developed world, is designed and constructed from within that hegemonic tradition, using models that assume heteronormativity in its users."[231]

What is assumed in the "users" of Que[e]rbau? I inquired the initiators about how they initially attracted people to the project and the current criteria for selecting new tenants. Around mid-2010 they began reaching out to local magazines and prominent voices and organisations in the Vienna LGBTQ advocacy scene to promote the project. Through these efforts, they assembled a "pioneering" group to participate in planning the space, though not all members persevered until the project's completion. Their vision was always for a socially mixed, queer-inclusive housing project that accommodates non-normative living arrangements. As the website stipulates, the Que[e]rbau is designed to "meet the requirements of queer people" and "support old and young, singles and partners as well as all types of families – rainbow, patchwork, foster families".[232] Accordingly, "*QB richtet sich insbesondere an Stadtbewohner_innen, die ihren Lebensentwurf häufiger abseits des mainstream definieren wollen oder müssen*" (Que[e]rbau is aimed in particular at city dwellers who want or need to define their lifestyle outside the mainstream more often).[233] Identifying as queer is not, however, a precondition for living in Que[e]rbau. In fact, there appear to be few preconditions, as Mark explained:

> "Queer comes in all [forms] and from all parts of the society and from all kinds of political corners. People are queer. We only excluded the far-right…this would be too controversial I would say. So no far right, but liberal or green or other political [leanings]...this must all be possible. And this already makes this group something [different] compared to the other co-housing groups."

He gently criticised other co-housing projects for forming distinctive social milieus, reflecting a broader critique that cooperative housing projects remain the preserve of well-educated, middle-

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[230] Colin Ripley, "Strategies for Living in Houses," in *Trans-Bodies / Queering Spaces*, ed. D. van den Heuvel and R. Gorny, *Footprint* 11, no. 2 (21) (2017): 96.
[231] Ibid., 95.
[232] Que[e]rbau, "Welcome…".
[233] Que[e]rbau. "Fragen Und Antworten." *queerbaudotat.wordpress.com*, February 9, 2023. https://queerbaudotat.wordpress.com/fragen-und-antworten/.

class individuals with the resources to commit to a time-intensive planning process. Some argue that the social homogeneity of these self-selected groups can lead to intensified segregation and contribute to gentrification.[234] Whilst a significant proportion of Que[e]rbau's 50 or so residents self-identify as queer, representing diverse genders within and beyond the binary, many residents would categorise themselves as cisgender and heterosexual. There are also multiple families with children in various non-normative configurations. The apartments are, therefore, designed to accommodate people of all ages, sexual orientations, and familial arrangements, and with varying accessibility requirements. Resident Marlene, who has been involved in the project since 2014, shared her experience of the individual apartment planning process:

> "[Florian] designed the apartments. He met with each of us. With me, he met, I think, two or three times. And he had a floor plan, and he asked me, 'Where do you want to have the kitchen, or bathroom, or bedroom, or whatever?' He made an effort to fulfil the wishes of the people. But in the end, some things could not be realised because of the building structure…the drainage and the electricity, it's all in a certain place. And you could say, okay, I want my kitchen here. But it was not possible because [of] all the pipes."

She then went on to describe the group planning process for deciding on communal spaces and organisational structure:

> "It was interesting to meet so many new people, it was wonderful. There were hardly any people that I knew from before, like two or three. I thought it was a good atmosphere most of the time. People got involved, and they had ideas, they proposed, and so on. I remember one weekend, we had a two day seminar. Not here in Seestadt, but in the 10th district, in a place called Planet 10. We talked about the communal spaces like Yella (community cafe), the seminar room, the tea kitchen…we also have a sauna. The fitness room came later. And there were groups forming, sitting together on the table and [discussing how] we imagined these spaces should be used and how we are going to run them and how we are going to organise the Yella."

Marlene explained the current situation in terms of organisational structure and distribution of shared tasks and responsibilities, such as managing the food co-op, communal cooking, and community vegetable garden. Group decisions are made on a majority rule consensus basis. The organisational structure is ostensibly a horizontal collective model, with regular plenary meetings held for residents to deliberate on issues relevant to the whole house. This approach is intended to prevent hierarchies from developing within the group. Marlene expressed disappointment at the decline in meeting frequency and attendance since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with

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[234] Andre Holm, "Ein Ökosoziales Paradox. Stadtumbau und Gentrifizierung," *Politische Ökologie* 124 (2011): 45–52.

typically only 6 or 7 participants present. It was suggested that many of the project's most engaged members are simultaneously involved in other forms of social and political activism. Divergent perspectives regarding the project's vision, along with broader political and ideological disagreements, have reportedly led to factionalism within the community. Residents are also divided by differing ideas and expectations of what queerness means. The attempt to be fully inclusive of diverse opinions may have inadvertently hindered community-building efforts, and although the initiators assert that the cohousing project is not intended to be a political space, the variety of political perspectives has influenced community cohesion. I observed a tension reminiscent of the conflicts seen in the geographies of sexuality and queer geographies approaches to queer space production. This tension arises from the inherent incongruity between LGBTQ identity politics and the notion of ongoing reconstitution and disruption of subjectivity found in post-structuralist thought. Whilst some residents perceive queer housing as a space primarily for LGBTQ individuals, others view it as an opportunity to dismantle divisions based on socioeconomic status or other social categorisations. The project initiators envisioned both interpretations, but there is clearly tension between them.

Although the participatory design process for Que[e]rbau occurred many years before I began this research, I had the unique opportunity to observe the planning phase of one of the *Baugruppen's* new queer housing projects, Biber*Land.[235] The project is located in the Lobau floodplain and offers individualised housing units with communal cooking facilities, a community garden, a playground for children, and a shared workshop space.[236] The core principle of communal living in Biber*Land is "*Teilen statt Besitzen*" (sharing instead of owning).[237] Florian, who has been managing this new project, invited me to sit in on one of their meetings. He was eager to embark on a new project equipped with experiences collected from the Que[e]rbau participatory planning process. Following the group meeting, I met with two of the future residents for an interview to learn more about their experiences and insights.

Future residents Lena and Johanna shared their excitement about living in an ecological queer community. I initially asked them why they wanted to live in a queer co-housing project and what queerness means to them. Lena was hesitant to self-identify as queer and does not consider it an important aspect of their identity, yet she finds the term useful in describing their non-normative family configuration. Johanna is part of a polycule and contemplating co-parenting,

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"Biber*Land," EBG Wohnen, 2024, https://www.ebg-wohnen.at/projekte/38.
Ibid.
Ibid.

CEU eTD Collection

seeking a living space where they can avoid having to justify their living arrangement or face judgement from neighbours. Whilst they don't expect all neighbours to identify as queer, they hope for them to be supportive allies. Lena and Johanna share a common desire to avoid isolation with their partners, a need that became more pressing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The queer aspect of residing in the Biber*land project is perceived as an alternative to living with individuals who simply return home and close their doors behind them. The community of prospective residents also includes individuals who may not identify as queer but are seeking unconventional living arrangements. The organisational process involved participating in discussions about the conceptual and administrative elements of the shared communal spaces, such as the distribution and access to solar panel energy. Some future residents had prior experience with organising communal life and brought their expectations and predispositions about how communities should be organised with them. Discussions were guided by the initiators, who described the process as sociocratic rather than majority voting, like Que[e]rbau. Technical aspects of planning, such as mapping the electricity and energy infrastructure, were handled by the initiators. Lena was content with skipping negotiations concerning technical decisions, as her primary motivation for residing in Biber*land was the opportunity to share space with others in a green environment.

The Biber*land project is located in the Lobau floodplain, which is part of the Donau-Auen National Park, a vibrant natural setting teeming with diverse flora and fauna. It is entirely conceivable why a queer housing project would want to settle here. But what about Seestadt? I desperately wanted to know why and how they selected Seestadt as the site location. Why would a queer co-housing project establish itself in this suburban urban experimentation zone? I inquired Mark and Florian about the selection criteria for the Que[e]rbau project's location. The initiators clarified that the location was chosen through a developer's competition, a standard procedure in developing new subsidised residential buildings in Vienna. The primary criterion for this process is the assessment of quality across categories such as "sustainability, architecture, ecology, and economy".[238] They were not particularly enthused and had originally tried for a different location elsewhere in Vienna. Mark suggested he would have preferred a livelier inner-city location. Though a city in name, Seestadt is more characteristic of suburbia, which some have characterised as the "bastion of heteronormativity".[239] Despite Mark's misgivings, I learnt that many residents appreciate Seestadt's peripheral location for its easy accessibility to the Donau River and Lobau

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[238] "Developer's Competitions", City of Vienna, accessed on April 1, 2024,
https://socialhousing.wien/tools/developers-competitions.
[239] Phil Hubbard, "Here, There and Everywhere: The Ubiquitous Geographies of Heteronormativity," *Geography Compass* 2 (2008): 640–658.

forested area; its proximity to nature is the main draw. Marlene admitted that whilst it may be a smaller neighbourhood and less vibrant than the inner city for queer life, she appreciates the fact that she knows many people in the area, something she didn't experience when living more centrally. The developers of Seestadt and the City of Vienna, however, are promoting a different narrative about this neighbourhood. They portray it as an urban entrepreneurial district poised to evolve into a vibrant cultural and financial centre rather than solely a residential area. The subsequent chapter seeks to unravel the contrasting narrative constructions of the smart city and explore how various individuals interpret it, as well as the role of Que[e]rbau within these narratives.

CHAPTER 3: SITUATING QUE[E]RBAU IN THE SMART CITY

Figure 4 An image of Seestadt from above (Stadt Wien/Christian Fürthner, "Entdecken Sie die Seestadt von oben!" 2018).

Figure 5 An image of Seestadt from above with the U2 metro line in view. Wien Aspern Nord railway station can be seen in the bottom right hand corner of the image. The area in between Wien Aspern Nord station and the lake remains undeveloped at the time of writing (Christian Fürthner, "Entdecken Sie die Seestadt von oben!" MA18, 2018).

I recall my first journey to Seestadt with lucidity. It was a blisteringly hot summer's day in August 2020, which I had decided to spend exploring a distant district of Vienna. Hopping aboard a carriage on the U2 metro line (the purple one), I set off for the last stop: Seestadt. The purple one is unlike the others; it's speedier and smoother and veers onto an elevated track after departing the inner city. From that moving vantage point, you get a real sense of the pastorality and dispersed settlement topography in districts north of the Danube. It feels remote. In just under 20 minutes, Lake City came into striking view. On approach, the metro track curved the site's perimeter quite suddenly, affording a panorama of the city skyline behind a twinkling artificial lake (see Figures 4 & 5). It is an impressive sight; imposing, strange,… futuristic, even.

Figure 6 An image of the front view of Wien Aspern Nord station, taken by Google Street View in 2021. A bus stop can be seen directly outside the station's entrance (Map data © 2024 Google).

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[240] Christopher Reed, "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment," *Art Journal* 55, no. 4, (1996): 64.

Figure 7 An image of the view from Wien Aspern Nord station looking out towards Seestadt, taken by Google Street View in 2021 (Map data ©2024 Google).

Figure 8 An image of the undeveloped land north of the Seestadt lake, taken by Google Street View in 2021. The land remains undeveloped at the time of writing (Map data ©2024 Google).

The train lurched into Wien "Aspern Nord" station. This station is supposedly destined to become a "(supra-) regional public transport hub",[241] a gateway between Vienna and the Slovak Republic's capital Bratislava. The station—a modernist slab of concrete—stood atop an arid, uncultivated wasteland (see Fig. 6). Overcome with excitement at the prospect of traversing this desert plain, I exited the train prematurely, one stop before my intended destination. I rode the exit escalator and hit a wall of heat crossing the entrance threshold. There is a bus stop directly outside to transport people to less accessible parts of Seestadt. Beyond that, the barren zone (see Figures 7 & 8). Despite developing an instant migraine due to the heat, dust, and enormity of the site, I opted to walk towards the mirage.

[241] Wien 3420 aspern Development AG (n.d.), *Master Plan Revisited: State of Planning 2017,* tr. Angela Parker, Wien 3420 aspern Development AG, 8.

Figure 9 An image of myself lying on hot tarmac in the construction zone of Seestadt, just north of the lake (Emilija Mazuraite, personal archive, 2021).

I have made that journey through the Seestadt construction site-cum-desert many times since, in all kinds of weather conditions and seasons, and the vista never ceases to provoke an affective response. The image in Figure 9 depicts an occasion when I cycled to Seestadt with my partner to languish on the hot, sunned tarmac somewhere in the wasteland. A moment of personal tranquillity in a seemingly inhospitable place. The environment is so unfamiliar that I question whether this particular "smart" model is at all replicable or if it intends to be. Indeed, it is its unusualness that draws me back time again. I have randomly encountered many people—mostly queer—that share a similar fascination with the place. In recent years there has been a proliferation of arts festivals, performances, and experimental workshops with queer feminist orientations on this wasteland. I personally took part in a world-making workshop with the Dusts Institute in September 2023, which involved scavenging brutal objects from around the construction site.[242] Maybe it is the experimentation and potentiality of it all that draws the queers out to partake in wasteland rituals. Whatever its future brings, the Seestadt project has dared to envision something different. What consonances exist between smart and queer utopias? When gazing across the liminal wasteland, José Esteban Muñoz's famous words on queerness come to mind:

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[242] Luftsichtsturm, "Airsight Deck," 2023. https://luftsichtsturm.org/.

"Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain."[243]

Is "smartness" and "queerness" compatible? and what are the queer urban futures imagined through the Que[e]rbau project? The following chapter aims to elaborate on these questions, taking a view on the implications of smart urban infrastructures and governmentality in Seestadt—and smart cities more generally—for different groups.

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[243] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (NYU Press, 2009), 1.

3.1. Urban entrepeneurialism, experimentation and responsibilization and the Smart City

Stroll along any of Seestadt Aspern's major promenades and you will confront a construction site billboard proclaiming "Work on Progress". An ethos of entrepreneurialism permeates the manicured streets and looming incomplete buildings. Samuel Delany's vivid description of empty commercial properties resembling a "glass and aluminium graveyard"[244] comes to mind at the sight of unrented office spaces. Seestadt has something to prove; a vision to articulate to residents, workers, and visitors alike. And with a dedicated website, marketing unit, press team, information centre, guided tour programme and Seestadt livecam, the vision is certainly being articulated.[245] The Seestadt website is commercialised and minimalist, comprising business lingo-laden text and image carousels of joyful residents in motion. On the site landing page, Seestadt is promoted as a city "built on a foundation of innovative concepts and forward-looking ideas", combining "high quality of life with economic drive" and therefore a "smart, safe investment for investors, entrepreneurs, and companies looking to relocate".[246] Through the website I contacted the Wien 3420 aspern Development AG information centre to request a guided tour. Within a matter of days, it was arranged that I would receive a personal information session in English with Paul, a longstanding Seestadt tour guide.

Paul greeted me at the main Seestadt metro station and walked us across the square to the information centre, opening the door with a smartphone app. I ask if this is a "smart" tech feature. He laughs. It's "not THAT smart" and keys are equally smart, he said. The room is sleek, green, and empty; tech start-up meets high school classroom. In the corner, there is a display stand showcasing Siemens technology, Seestadt's technology partner. The room centres around a huge architectural model of Seestadt. On first impressions, the set-up implied a formal lecture situation. And it did begin like that; Paul effortlessly spun out two vault-shaped stools from behind the model for us to sit on and launched into a well-rehearsed introduction. He told me he personally receives between 8,000 - 10,000 visitors per year, ranging from politicians, students, and international visitors. His formal tone hastily subsided. The rest of the discussion was conversational and occasionally spirited. As a Spatial Planning graduate, Paul has worked in the

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[244] Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue 20th anniversary edition*, (NYU Press, 1999), 151.
[245] Aspern Seestadt, *Seestadtcam, 2023,* accessed on March 7, 2023, https://www.aspern-seestadt.at/en/info_centre/seestadtcam.
[246] Aspern Seestadt, "Living and working in Seestadt!,"accessed on March 7, 2023 https://www.aspern-seestadt.at/en.

Seestadt comms and marketing team for 15 years and still feels great personal enthusiasm towards the project. Having witnessed the neighbourhood's various stages of development—from its days as a toxic brownfield site, through the "pioneer" phase when the first residents settled, to its current state—Paul takes great pride in a project that offers high-quality social and affordable housing in a district historically neglected by the municipal administration, in his opinion. However, he did criticise the high proportion of office buildings, which the developers are having difficulty occupying due to inadequate surrounding highway infrastructure—something I could easily observe whilst walking through the streets. Paul estimated around 40% of office spaces remain vacant as of March 2024. He also stressed that he would not personally elect to live in Seestadt because of his highly visible and long-time role within the project, valuing the anonymity offered by the inner city.

A substantial portion of our two-hour conversation was devoted to discussing the wider Viennese tradition of social housing and the controversial *Stadtstrasse* (city street) project - one of multiple large roads currently being built to connect Seestadt to other settlements in the district (a divisive topic I shall return to at the end of this chapter). My attempts to redirect the conversation to "smartness" and tech experimentation were met with notable resistance as he rather exasperatedly reiterated that "smartness is not just about tech solutions!". I can only imagine how many visitors have pressed him on this issue. His reluctance to talk at length about Seestadt's smart technologies struck me as curious, considering the neighbourhood's evident marketing campaign promoting investment-worthy energy-related innovations. Paul's interest in Seestadt, as well as that of most of the people I interviewed, lies primarily in the participatory planning and affordability aspect of the development - with or without the aid of smart technologies. In their view, smart technologies are either just a necessary condition to living there, incidental, or thoroughly bothersome.

A central inquiry driving my research is to what extent the techno-utopianism of Seestadt resonates with queer urban futures imagined through the Que[e]rbau project. It is worth noting that Que[e]rbau is not part of the Seetstadt "living lab" experimentation programme I described in the introduction but is similarly equipped with smart technologies and monitoring systems. The Aspern Smart City Research centre refers to the 100 or so residents involved in the Siemens live-data demonstration project (living lab) as "smart users", to articulate their agency and interaction with the smart grid through a smartphone application.[247] Paul added that users can "opt-out" of

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[247] "Smart User," Aspern Smart City Research, March 11, 2022, https://www.ascr.at/en/smart-user/.

the experiment at any time if they so choose, by simply disconnecting from the app. To assuage security concerns about data collection practices, Siemens states that users remain "anonymous 'contributor[s]' to the smart city…[and] individual data, consumption, and behaviour patterns aren't relevant to the research".[248] The company assures that "…while 'where you are' is relevant to the building control technology, 'who you are' is not."[249] This emphatic denial of surveillance is intriguing, and perhaps symptomatic of swelling public discourses of apprehension around data monitoring regimes.

The term "users" registers as impersonal, obfuscating diversity of experience and power dynamics embedded in the political economy of smart infrastructures. As geographer Rob Kitchin argues, it is problematic how much of the writing and rhetoric about smart cities seeks to appear "pragmatic, non-ideological, and commonsensical".[250] The smart city imaginary is anything but a-political, as I endeavour to demonstrate. By increasing civic participation in tech-driven sustainability efforts, the living lab ostensibly offers a more democratic, affordable, bottom-up approach to city governance. Crucially, urban experimentation such as this instils a sense of responsibility in residents to self-monitor and contribute to the project's overall success. It is a neoliberal mode of governance predicated on public-private partnerships and active (*smart*) citizenship; a strategy of subjectivation necessary for smart cities to function.[251] This is reflective of a broader shift in urban governance over the past three decades towards entrepreneurialism, whereby cities strive to gain competitive advantage by leveraging private investment and services.[252] As for identifying the neoliberalised, experimentation subjects – or "users" – that smart cities seek to attract and retain, it seemed vital to talk to Que[e]rbau and other Seestadt residents about their experience living under the energy-monitoring eye of Aspern Smart City Research. If the "living lab" residents seemingly exercise a degree of agency in their interactions with the smart technology, what of Que[e]rbau residents and others uninvolved in the experimentation programme?

I detected impatience from Mark (Que[e]rbau co-initiator and lead architect) when the conversation turned to the smart city and urban experiments. He conceded that "they've got some sensors out there" before reeling off a list of technologies. Marlene scoffed "you'd need to be a

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[248] Siemens AG, "Being Cosy with the Future of Energy." Siemens Global Website, November 7, 2019. https://www.siemens.com/global/en/company/stories/infrastructure/2019/aspern-smart-city.html.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Rob Kitchin, "Making Sense of Smart Cities: Addressing Present Shortcomings," *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 8, no. 1 (March 2015): 132.
[251] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[252] Harvey, "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism", 1989.

geologist to understand what's going on out there" with regard to smart technology. When asked about the smart technologies integrated in her apartment, she said:

> "Well we've got these smoke alarms…they can register all kinds of things. Temperature [for example]. They can also find out how many people are in the room. I removed them because I got mad at them…when you sleep, in the middle of the night, it starts yelling at you because the battery is low. And then I…Yeah…I deinstalled them."

Marlene's act of defiance is not as much motivated by concerns of panoptic surveillance as it is by nocturnal inconvenience. Still, on this evidence alone, she is far from representative of a normalized, responsibilized smart citizen.[253] Neither Mark nor Marlene seemed enthused about the purported benefits of this technology for Seestadt citizens. Mark told me that gaining permission to build Que[e]rbau had been conditional on installing energy monitoring systems in every apartment but would not elaborate further. Despite the ubiquitous—both physical and virtual—presence of smart city promotional materials, I could gather that no one dedicated much thought to the smart vision. I questioned whether the Seestadt marketing machine compelled residents to keep up to date with technological developments, but people expressed feelings of ambivalence or bewilderment. Critics of smart urbanism may categorise this bewilderment as a symptom of digital marginalisation, referring to the marginalisation of citizens who lack skills or sufficient access to digital technologies required for being connected in the smart city.[254] Marlene remarked with frustration that the "[smart city developers] don't tell anybody anything about [the energy project]…they are just making propaganda". These impressions arguably contradict the notion that civic participation is higher in smart cities and that entrepreneurial urbanism produces smart citizens who are fully invested in the concept. Another person I spoke to from a different Seestadt housing project expressed deep disappointment and frustration with the smart technology incorporated into her apartment building. Paulien, an international university student living in a "smart building" dormitory, described its features:

> "…in the building where I live… we have this inner yard that is pretty green. And, yes, we have solar panels. It is a passive building, meaning that it makes more energy than it consumes. But over the past years, my rent has increased a lot. So I actually talked to the dorm manager about that, and it was explained to me that their system does not work properly."

She continued:

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[253] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 568.
[254] Alberto Vanolo, "Smartmentality: The Smart City as Disciplinary Strategy," *Urban Studies* 51, no. 5 (2014): 893.

> "…the building is not only for students. It's also for people who maybe have some difficulties in life. Let's think about people who came out of a divorce and don't have many financial means to live in another setting. And that was my biggest criticism as well, when my rent got increased by €50, actually, every year…If you are promoting accessible housing, it should stay accessible."

Marlene also criticised Seestadt's supposed false promises on smart energy systems, suggesting that energy contracts are differentiated and structured on how much one is able to pay. She added:

> "You can have a better contract, you can have a bad contract. If you have a bad contract, a cheap one, you can be forced to only use the washing machine in the night and things like that."

Others I spoke to in Que[e]rbau did not fully subscribe to the larger Seestadt vision and were more concerned with the success of their own queer community-building initiative. When asking project co-initiator Mark for his thoughts on smart citizenship, he insinuated that the vision caters to white middle-class sensibilities. Much critical urbanism literature echoes this sentiment; that smart cities exacerbate social inequalities and fuel gentrification by appealing to privileged demographics and requiring a "sizable secondary workforce to service the needs of professionals"[255] and information workers living and working in the city. Mark explained that in order to gain eligibility for affordable housing in Seestadt, an applicant must have resided in the same address for more than two years prior. This legal requirement inherently excludes people living in precarity without the material means or security to reside for prolonged periods. Mark became visibly incensed about this fact. He tells me this tool of exclusion runs counter to the Que[e]rbau inclusion concept; it being the only housing project in the area to reserve multiple apartments for people with refugee backgrounds.[256] Studies have shown that despite Vienna's high levels of subsidised housing provision, forced migrants are widely excluded from affordable housing due to "strict access requirements, frequent moves, and waiting times" and the City's preference for middle-class employed individuals and locals. Que[e]rbau's inclusion concept has been cited as an "inspiring practice example"[257] in Europe for housing policy that endeavours to improve the housing situation for people with refugee status.

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[255] Robert Hollands, "Will the real smart city please stand up? Intelligent, progressive or entrepreneurial?," *City* 12, no. 3, (2008): 315.

[256] "Inclusion Concept und Vernetzungstreffen," Que[e]rbau, accessed 22/02/2023 https://queerbaudotat.wordpress.com/2015/12/29/118/

[257] Reimann, Diringer and Pätzold, "Inclusive Housing Policies," 21.

We went on to discuss the positioning and wider role of Que[e]rbau in the entrepreneurial city. In short, "Seestadt needs [queers]!". Interestingly, Que[e]rbau was not included in the original Seestadt master plan, but the developers "liked the idea so much…they made great efforts to secure a site" for them, according to Mark. A queer co-housing project's potential draw and utility for entrepreneurial city planning can be partly understood through the concept of "homo-entrepreneurial urbanism".[258] This is a form of governance whereby particular queer identities (read white, cis-gendered, middle class) are assembled to enhance urban competitiveness. The Que[e]rbau residents I spoke to are cognisant of their positioning in the broader development project and how the novel queer co-housing concept could be leveraged to attract further investment and entrepreneurial citizens to Seestadt. Attracting and funding a continuous stream of international professional and academic research is equally important. Research conducted in Seestadt extends its influence and produces new knowledge that can be integrated into city planning according to transductive logic. As one Seestadt resident mentioned, the neighbourhood is constantly evolving at a rapid pace. The City of Vienna and Seestadt marketing efforts are demonstrably successful in attracting researchers and visitors. The co-housing concept, in particular, is a significant draw for Vienna, as it "contributes to relieving some of the burdens of social welfare provision".[259] Que[e]rbau is one of 9 co-housing initiatives (*Baugruppen*) located in Seestadt, all of which are highly valued and promoted by the City marketing machine.[260] The former head of the IGBW (An Alliance of Collaborative Housing Initiatives), a representative body for collaborative housing initiatives in Austria, said this of the Seestadt developer's interest in *Baugruppen* settling there:

> "Between the center and the outskirts there has been an urban development area which was quite disconnected from any other infrastructure. And they [the municipality] started to develop it and thought we needed to bring people there in the first place, so like pioneers, who would have some kind of interest to identify themselves with that new area. They thought that collaborative housing could be a good vehicle to not only bring active people there but to also promote this kind of alternative development approach".[261]

[258] Kanai, "Whither Queer World Cities?," 1.

[259] Christiane Droste, "German Co-Housing: An Opportunity for Municipalities to Foster Socially Inclusive Urban Development?," *Urban Research & Practice* 8, no. 1 (2015): 80.

[260] aspern Die Seestadt Wiens, "Baugruppen in Aspern Seestadt: Aspern Die Seestadt Wiens," in aspern Seestadt | aspern Die Seestadt Wiens, 2024, https://www.aspern-seestadt.at/lebenswelt/wohnen-arbeiten/baugruppen

[261] Paidakaki, Angeliki, and Richard Lang, "Uncovering Social Sustainability in Housing Systems through the Lens of Institutional Capital: A Study of Two Housing Alliances in Vienna, Austria," *Sustainability* 13, no. 17 (2021): 13.

Beyond attracting interest and investment to the city, these co-housing initiatives—Que[e]rbau included—were envisioned to produce model Seestadt (smart) citizens and collectively build the neighbourhood from the ground up. As a strategy of neoliberal subjectivation, these "pioneers" of Seestadt are morally obliged to exhibit qualities such as "flexibility, creativity, tolerance, cosmopolitanism and participation in public life",[262] contributing to the overall health of the neighbourhood. The term "pioneers", which appears in many Seestadt promotional materials, connotes colonial exploits, as though these Seestadt citizens are the "first" to settle new lands. I will explore the geometries of power triggered by Seestadt later in the chapter. The Que[e]rbau and Seestadt residents I spoke to expressed ambivalence towards the smart city vision with its associated technological experiments and research hub. One person expressed bemusement at the frequent architectural guided tours that pass by their window, saying: "this is just the place we live…our lives are outside Seestadt". That said, I also noticed genuine pride in the neighbourhood from some residents, not for Seestadt's assistive technologies or international reputation amongst development experts, but for the smaller communities they've built. It became evident that residents perceived a lack of meaningful engagement in the broader decision-making processes of Seestadt, despite the city's assertions of fostering high civic participation. Student Paulien complained that opportunities to effect substantive change within the neighbourhood have been minimal, limited primarily to perfunctory surveys and box-ticking exercises. Whilst multiple online forums and Facebook groups facilitate discussion amongst Seestadt residents, other channels for civic engagement appear superficial, in her opinion.

It would be erroneous to categorise the Que[e]rbau project as merely a homonormative initiative that benefits the entrepreneurial city and reifies a specific kind of neoliberal queer subjectivity. Despite the stumbling blocks mentioned in the previous chapter, Que[e]rbau has endeavoured to challenge mainstream planning practices with its horizontal approach and socially mixed inclusion concept. Whether it has produced a truly queer-inclusive urban space is a question I unfortunately cannot answer definitively due to a lack of empirical data. It is also a deeply subjective and time-contingent query, as spaces are in a constant state of transformation. From observation, it can be inferred that not all Que[e]rbau or Seestadt residents have been "responsibilized" into becoming "data-driven, information-hungry, technology-savvy home energy managers."[263] Indeed, some have outright rebelled against the tech experimentations.

[262] Vanolo, "Smartmentality: The Smart City as Disciplinary Strategy," 887.
[263] Strengers, *Smart Energy Technologies in Everyday Life*, 51.

Besides technologically driven strategies of city governance, what other instruments of governmentality are deployed in Seestadt? To find out, I took a walk around the neighbourhood.

3.2. Spatiality, Safety, and Surveillance in the Master-Planned Smart City

Figure 10 Master plan of Seestadt showcasing formative design elements with accompanying key. It is important to note that the area north of the lake has not been developed at the time of writing. This master plan from 2018 is a projection of the intended completed development (Adapted from Wien 3420 aspern Development AG 2018).
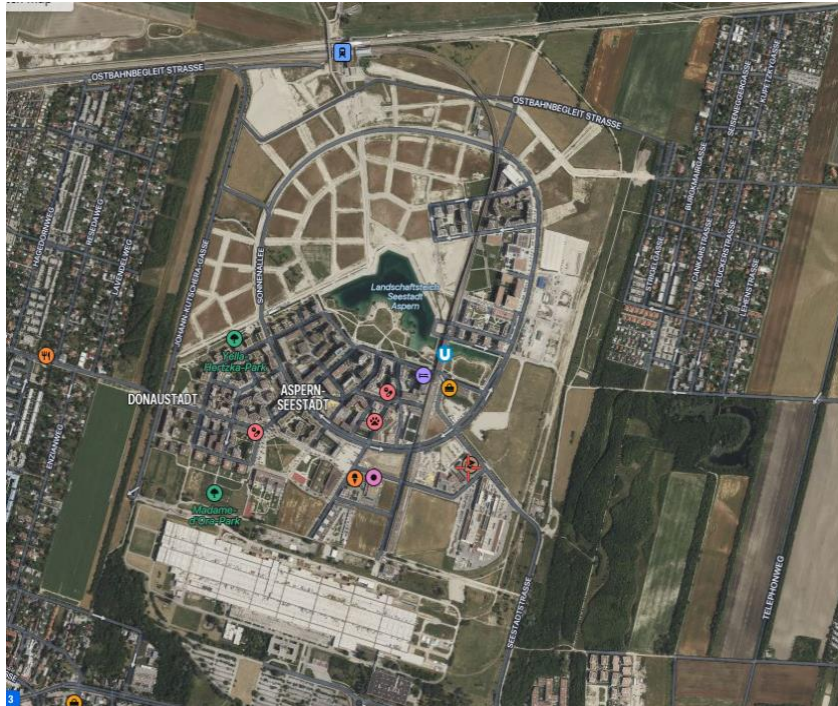
Figure 11Satellite image of Seestadt in May 2024 (©OpenMapTiles 2024).

"Our ambition has been to provide a Masterplan that creates streets and public spaces that are fundamentally public, human, lively, intimate and secure."[264]

- Johannes Tovatt, master planner for aspern Seestadt

Seestadt master planner Johannes Tovatt affirms that the city's radial structural elements (See Fig. 10), including the central lake and planned circular road network, "unite, pull together and provide an ordered framework within which individual contributions can evolve and flourish".[265] Figure 11 depicts the state of development in Seestadt as of May 2024. The ideas of "order" and "individuality" make for an uneasy pairing, but Tovatt's vision hinges on two contrasting elements: "grand gestures combined with unexpected spatial surprises".[266] His "grand gestures" comprise the lake, the boulevard, and green public spaces. The "spatial surprises" are the "corners where one can get lost", down meandering roads, leafy shortcuts, and irregular city blocks.[267] By their description, these "spatial surprises" indicate a fluidity in the arrangement of public space that could facilitate unexpected and meaningful encounters between residents or

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[264] "Master plan: Aspern die seestadt wiens", Master plan | aspern Die Seestadt Wiens, 2018, https://www.aspern-seestadt.at/en/business_hub/planning__reality/master_plan.
[265] Wien 3420 aspern Development AG. (n.d.), *Master Plan Revisited: Status of Planning 2017*, 5.
[266] Ibid.
[267] Ibid.

transients. The notion of "getting lost" may also imply spaces of seclusion, hidden from the authoritarian gaze.[268] Paul echoed Tovatt's line during our conversation in the Seestadt marketing room, explaining that the developers principally provide equitable living conditions and a framework through which community can be built and prosper. In his estimation, the ways in which Que[e]rbau and other co-living groups transform their projects and utilise public space is outside of the developers' purview. It is acknowledged within critical urban design discourses that planning practices should transcend predetermined programmes and embrace indeterminate outcomes.[269] And if public spaces are unregulated, as Paul insinuated, more fluid modes of social interaction can occur.

Seestadt would appear to emblematise conscious planning which factors a desire for spontaneous urban sociality. Promotional materials suggest that Seestadt's layout draws inspiration from community-driven planning principles championed by Jane Jacobs.[270] The *aspern Seestadt Citylab* report engages with Jacobs' contention that mixed-used neighbourhoods with "appealing public spaces"—conducive to social contact—"[generate] greater safety for everybody".[271] Jacobs stresses the importance of "sidewalk contacts" in engendering a "feeling for the public identity of people, a web of public respect and trust, and a resource in time of personal or neighbourhood need."[272] One such resource is the "casual surveillance" of children playing in public spaces, which precludes institutional or authoritative interference when the level of social contact is high.[273] Seestadt markets itself as an ideal neighbourhood for families. Most of the people I spoke with would concur with this characterisation, including Paulien, who remarked that the "district is mostly made for children". Marlene, providing a concise feminist analysis of Seestadt's family-oriented planning, commented:

> "What is feminist [about Seestadt] is that there is a lot of space…if you have children, they don't get run over by a car the moment they leave the house…they have green spaces. They have playgrounds. They have got rooms for the kids where they can play together. Other houses have got rooms where teenagers can use drums or musical instruments. You have all kinds of things that are good for children. That's feminist in the sense that it's reducing childcare labour."

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[268] Foucault, *Discipline and punish*.
[269] Quentin Stevens, Jonathan Daly & Kim Dovey, "Designing for possibility in public space: affordance, assemblage, and ANT". *Urban Des Int.*, 2024.
[270] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (Vintage Books, 1961).
[271] Wien 3420 Aspern Development AG, *Vision + Reality: The Instruments of Urban Design*, 2011, 62-3.
[272] Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 56.
[273] Ibid., 78.

Open, well-lit areas away from roads exemplify Seestadt's gender-sensitive planning: Seestadt's "female face".[274] Gender mainstreaming policies emphasise increased visibility for the sake of public safety, a prevailing theme in Seestadt's promotional materials. In Seestadt, visibility is increased not only through park and public space design but also through the spatial arrangement of residential and commercial buildings, the majority of which are predetermined by the master plan. Student Paulien had conflicting feelings about Seestadt's spatial layout in terms of her personal sense of safety. She said:

> "One reason why I feel very safe to walk, also in the middle of the night, through Seestadt, is that if I would sneeze, everyone on the street is going to hear it. Because it's all built so close together. And on the one hand, that gives me a sense of safety. On the other hand, that also pushes you to be quiet."

Whilst ensuring women's and children's safety is paramount to the health of an urban area, it is also critical to examine how the rhetoric of family-friendly planning can be used by hegemonic structures to marginalise certain groups and delineate non-conforming behaviours. Instances of urban contact unmediated by social codes, institutions, or economy are especially important for queer and marginalised communities, historically excluded from state-sanctioned forms of heteronormative intimacy and relationality.[275] Delany's study on queer spatial practices in 1980s downtown New York attends to the fundamentality of non-normative social interactions, such as public sex or cruising, to the overall vitality of urban areas.[276] Without interclass contacts, neighbourhoods become exclusive and hostile to difference, which runs counter to the democratic ideals of urban life. Fleeting, or "surprise" encounters, fall into the realm of urban needs outlined by Henri Lefebvre: "specific needs which are not satisfied by those commercial and cultural infrastructures which are somewhat parsimoniously taken into account by planners."[277] If planning is to become a queer-inclusive project, Frisch argues that cities should embrace the "disorder" that might allow greater interaction and mixing outside of the narrow heterosexual family home.[278] If Tovatt's inclusion of "spatial surprises" had instilled hope that the developers were prepared to

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[274] Wien 3420 aspern Development AG, *Aspern Seestadt Has a Female Face*.
[275] Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue 20th anniversary edition*.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Henri Lefebvre, "The right to the city," in *Writings on cities*, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, 1996, 147.
[278] Michael Frisch, "Planning as a Heterosexist Project," *Journal Of Planning Education And Research* 21, no. 3, (2002): 254-266.

embrace indeterminate outcomes and "disorder", the master plan mission statement suggests otherwise:

> "The task of the master plan is to bring together a finely balanced nexus of use clusters and compatible mixed-use combinations within a logical, stable spatial structure…Urban life, a city of short distances, a safe environment through **social control** and a well-balanced social structure – all objectives that require a maximum degree of mixed use."[279]

The stark invocation of the term "social control" summons Foucault's Panopticon to my mind: visibility through illumination.[280] During my time wandering the pristine streets of Seestadt, I couldn't help but feel exposed, not just due to the tightly clustered buildings but also the lack of greenery. Nearly everyone I've spoken to has complained about the tree shortage in Seestadt. For a smart city that proclaims to be sustainable and climate-conscious, the scarcity of vegetation seems odd. Densely packed buildings and sparse shrubbery inevitably increase visibility—with normalising effects—illustrated by Paulien's hypothetical 'sneeze' that wakes the neighbours. Que[e]rbau is located right on the western periphery of the neighbourhood, facing a small, forested area. I asked initiator Mark about the (in)visibility of the building's location. He remarked:

> "So, we are somehow at the edge of the city. We are not near the subway. This is a minus, of course…But we enjoy this place. We have a park and [being] at the edge makes it attractive for other things. We have a bus station, we have an outdoor area, we can do things outside and the house is not somewhere in the middle [of Seestadt] where nobody sees it. We are much more visible here somehow."

Que[e]rbau's positioning on the margins of Seestadt does arguably afford more relative visibility, given it's the first building people see when travelling into Seestadt via bus. For Mark, its conspicuousness is net positive. I found his expressed desire for visibility a little confusing considering what had been said earlier about wanting the building to be aesthetically inconspicuous. Lead architect Clemens Kirsch echoed Mark's assessment of the location, stressing that

> "It was important to the group that the building should be located on the construction site and be visible, and not be tucked away at the back of a side street. They wanted to be

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[279] Wien 3420 aspern Development AG, *Master Plan Revisited: Status of Planning 2017*, 30.
[280] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 203.

present. And they also found the best place for it with the club café, which communicates well with the outside space. It functions as an interface to communicate self-confidently: We are here, we exist, and that's a good thing."[281]

I can only deduce that they want to be visible but not visibly queer. Kirsch's characterisation of the cafe Yella Yella as an "interface" is instructive in understanding the project's relation to both Seestadt and spaces outside of the neighbourhood. By pure coincidence, I met an environmental activist and art curator who held regular meetings with other activists in Yella Yella to discuss direct actions and demonstrations against a planned City highway - a highway that is being built to connect Seestadt to Vienna. In the following section, I will untangle narratives surrounding Seestadt's sustainability ethos, as well as the political economy embedded within its infrastructures, which lay bare the contradictions inherent in entrepreneurial governance strategies.

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[281] Michael Kerbler, "Baugruppe Que[e]Rbau: Quer Zum Normalen Sozialen Wohnbau," *DER STANDARD*, June 3, 2017, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000058646599/baugruppe-queerbau-quer-zum-normalen-sozialen-wohnbau.

3.3 Sustainability and the Smart City

Seestadt is praised for being an international paragon of sustainable development and climate responsibility; a "city-within-a-city [that] combines high quality of life with environmental awareness and economic drive".[282] The Seestadt brand logo and all promotional materials feature a standardised apple green colour, an unsubtle allusion to their green credentials. The neighbourhood has been heralded as a "green mini-city"[283] for almost achieving net zero with its circular economic model and passive buildings that "simultaneously produce and consume energy,...integrated into a smart power grid".[284] Seestadt is also a self-described "pioneer" in Vienna for implementing the "sponge city" principle, a rainwater management technique.[285] Purportedly, a porous water retention layer underneath the roads and pavements provides water for planted trees, mitigating the risk of the "urban heat island" effect.[286] This terminology refers to the phenomenon where urban areas experience significantly higher temperatures compared to rural surroundings. As I mentioned in the previous section, the neighbourhood has a noticeable absence of greenery. One resident I spoke to rather exasperatedly referred to their own neighbourhood as the "cement city". A recent study found that in certain areas of Seestadt, green spaces make up only 0-1% of the total area of street surfaces.[287] In response to widespread discontent and complaints about the excessive heat during summer months, developers have initiated efforts to remove concrete surfaces and plant new trees and shrubs retroactively. Resident Paulien conceded that things were slowly improving in that regard. She said:

> "...[the City and developers] haven't planned it properly because over the years that I've been living there, they have been breaking up the streets to plant green areas. For example, the whole area at the station, they changed it. Now they have planted some green areas because before…it was unbearable to walk there because of all the cement. It gets really, really hot. And the difference is really noticeable now…even with one and a half metres of green on the sides of the road."

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[282] City of Vienna, Executive Group for Construction and Technology –Project Management aspern Seestadt, *Smart City Vienna, what's the story?,* trans. Angela Parker, City of Vienna, Municipal Department for Urban Development and Planning (MA 18), wien 3420 aspern development AG, 2018, 5.

[283] Amanda Peacher, "Vienna's green mini-city offers a model for sustainable, urban living", The World, March 1, 2021, https://theworld.org/stories/2021/03/01/viennas-green-mini-city-offers-model-sustainable-urban-living.

[284] Vienna Municipal Administration, *Smart Climate City Strategy Vienna*, tr. Angela Parker, 2022, 82.

[285] "Grünräume", Wien 3420 aspern Development AG, last updated, April, 2024, https://www.aspern-seestadt.at/gruenraeume.

[286] "Urban Heat Islands", MetLink, Royal Meteorological Society, accessed in March, 2024, https://www.metlink.org/fieldwork-resource/urban-heat-island-introduction/.

[287] Bürgerversammlung "Begrünung der Seestadt", SeeStadtgrün, accessed on May 30, 2024, https://seestadtgruen.at/buergerversammlung/.

Ill-conceived green space planning is not the only contradiction inherent in Seestadt's purported exemplar environmental awareness ethos; there are even more complex geometries of power at work. For one, claims of environmental consciousness are derided amongst environmental activists and experts in Vienna due to an ongoing highway "*Monsterprojekt*" (monster project) that will connect Seestadt to the rest of the city.[288] The proposed "*Monsterprojekt*" comprises the "S1 Vienna Outer Ring Expressway", the Aspern "*Stadtstrasse*" (City Road), and the "Seestadt Aspern interchange", all of which will converge to link Seestadt with surrounding areas.[289] Before 2021, the road project also included the infamous "Lobau Highway" plan, which triggered a wave of protests and encampments, resulting in its eventual cancellation.[290] The Aspern City Road has also been an object of significant protest and direct actions, including two now-extinct encampments located in the vicinity of Seestadt. On 5 April 2022, a major protest camp at the Hirschstettner Strasse construction site (blockading works on the highway) was cleared by police. On 5 September 2022, the last remaining camp on Anfanggasse was voluntarily dissolved by protesters in anticipation of an eviction by authorities.[291] Before its dissolution, camp structures could be seen adorned with pride flags and anarchist symbols, with the campaign manifesto bringing attention to the disproportionate negative impacts of environmental degradation on queer people and other marginalised communities. [292]

Que[e]rbau residents were supportive of the movement, offering the *Yella Yella!* as a space for organising and plenary meetings. They held an internal vote to decide on the road project and unanimously opposed it. Unlike the anti-Lobau Highway campaign, attempts to impede the construction of the other major roads proved unsuccessful, and they are scheduled to be opened to traffic by 2026.[293] A resident told me that car ownership within the community is minimal, with most residents using bicycles or public transportation. It is a reality that many LGBTQ+ people,

[288] "Lobau-Autobahn:Autolobby & Politik," System Change not Climate Change, blog post, accessed on 4 April, 2024, https://systemchange-not-climatechange.at/lobau-autobahn-autolobby-politik/.

[289] Scientists for Future Wien, Niederösterreich, Burgenland, "Stellungnahme zur LobauAutobahn und zugehörigen Straßenbauprojekten", 5. August 2021, 4. https://at.scientists4future.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2021/08/Stellungnahme-und-Factsheet-Lobautunnel-S4F-Wien.pdf

[290] "Cancellation of Lobau freeway in Austria heralds new era for climate and nature", Greenpeace, Vienna, December 1, 2021, https://greenpeace.at/cee-press-hub/cancellation-lobau-freeway/.

[291] Sebastian Fellner, "Protestcamp bei Baustelle in der Lobau wurde geräumt," *Der Standard,* April 5, 2022, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000134683726/protestcamp-zur-stadtstrasse-in-der-lobau-wird-geraeumt.

[292] Lobau bleibt!, accessed on Maz 5, 2024 https://lobaubleibt.at.

[293] "Stadtstraße Aspern - aktuelles Großbauprojekt", Stadt Wien | Straßenverwaltung und Straßenbau, https://www.wien.gv.at/verkehr/strassen/bauen/grossprojekte/stadtstrasse/index.html.

and people who do not conform to heteronormative family and kinship structures, are less likely to be able to afford a car.[294] This is why far-reaching public transport provision is especially important. Marlene remarked disapprovingly on the state of public transport to and from Seestadt. She said:

> "…[the public transport] could be better…there have been plans for a long time which have not been realised at all. The argument has been that they first need to build the *Stadtstrasse* in order to build a tram. It's a matter of priorities…politicians are not feminists! The motorway is going to be a four-lane motorway with no pedestrian crossings and no cycle lanes, just for car drivers. I don't know how you can build a street like that."

The highway project articulates a geometry of power where queer mobilities are decreased in favour of car users.[295] Resources that could be going towards improving the inadequate public transport system are instead being funnelled towards the road project to appease a powerful car lobby. Years ago, a political decision was made to proceed with the road project based on an environmental impact assessment which had grossly overestimated the projected levels of motorisation in the Aspern area.[296] According to tour guide Paul, meeting the demands of this old environmental impact assessment is a legal precondition for constructing the northern part of Seestadt. In other words, until these roads are built, nothing else gets built. The wasteland will remain a wasteland. The master plan dictates that the northern part is reserved mostly for commercial properties and businesses, a more lucrative proposal than further residential blocks. And so, the developers and City of Vienna eagerly await the 2026 road completion date. When I pressed Paul on the potential detrimental socio-environmental impacts of the new roads, he assured me that the benefits would outweigh the costs in terms of reduced congestion and traffic in residential areas. He was decidedly pro-road. A few weeks after our meeting, I met a traffic and transport expert from the Technical University's Institute of Transport Science, who expressed a radically opposing view. Klaudia has worked on various position papers on the highway projects, all of which have concluded that this venture will increase traffic and contribute to urban sprawl. On the likelihood of future urban sprawl, she said:

> "If you build all of this…what will happen is more sprawling. Some of [the planned road infrastructure] is in Vienna, some of it is in Lower Austria. And in Lower Austria there is

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[294] Sarah Nusser and Katrin Anacker, "The Pervasiveness of Hetero-Sexism and the Experiences of Queers in Everyday Space: The Case of Cambridge, Masschusetts", in *Planning and LGBTQ Communities: The Need for Inclusive Queer Spaces*, Petra Doan ed., (Routledge, 2015), 94-110.

[295] Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender.*

[296] Scientists for Future Wien, Niederösterreich, Burgenland, "Stellungnahme zur LobauAutobahn und zugehörigen Straßenbauprojekten," 4. https://at.scientists4future.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2021/08/Stellungnahme-und-Factsheet-Lobautunnel-S4F-Wien.pdf

and people who do not conform to heteronormative family and kinship structures, are less likely to be able to afford a car.[294] This is why far-reaching public transport provision is especially important. Marlene remarked disapprovingly on the state of public transport to and from Seestadt. She said:

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[295] Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender.*

[296] Scientists for Future Wien, Niederösterreich, Burgenland, "Stellungnahme zur LobauAutobahn und zugehörigen Straßenbauprojekten," 4. https://at.scientists4future.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2021/08/Stellungnahme-und-Factsheet-Lobautunnel-S4F-Wien.pdf

lots of agricultural land, and it's very cheap to buy the land there. And this is what's happening around the world. If you build new roads, then you will have new projects there. You will have new production facilities—logistics facilities—for example…I've read reports that some of the fields have already been sold for future logistics centres."

Urban sprawl is the epitome of an unsustainable urban planning practice. From an environmental perspective, sprawl leads to habitat loss, deforestation, and fragmentation of natural areas, threatening biodiversity and ecosystems. It also consumes valuable agricultural land, as Klaudia mentioned. As someone born and raised in Donaustadt, the district where Seestadt is located, Klaudia shared that many people in the area harbour a degree of hostility towards Seestadt for necessitating the road construction. It is often perceived as an isolated mini satellite city that receives substantial investment from the City of Vienna, as opposed to other less serviced areas in the district. Building an entirely new neighbourhood from the ground up evidently has adverse effects on the surrounding area, an aspect of the development that is blithely disregarded by the City of Vienna.

Beyond the above-mentioned pernicious effects on the surrounding region, the political economy embedded in this particular smart city venture is also implicated in exploitative and colonial global energy infrastructures. Seestadt's technology partner Siemens, which provides the power grid and conducts continual research and techno-surveillance on the neighbourhood, has a detailed record of facilitating oppressive regimes. Siemens used at least 80,000 forced labourers for arms production "business activities" during the Second World War and more recently built wind farms in the Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara territories.[297] In promotional materials pertaining to this project, Siemens referred to these territories as Morocco, affirming its complicity in settler colonialism.[298] These are but a couple of examples of Siemens' enmeshment with systems of oppression and demonstrate that Seestadt's smart infrastructures do not exist in isolation but are deeply imbricated with global power structures.

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[297] "1933-1945: National socialism and the war economy", Siemens Historical Institute, 2022, https://assets.new.siemens.com/siemens/assets/api/uuid:4a74de87d4fc69ff9142a6f7001e376405ec15fd/074-company-history-phase5-1933-1945-en.pdf.
[298] Joanna Allan, Mahmoud Lemaadel, and Hamza Lakhal, "Oppressive Energopolitics in Africa's Last Colony: Energy, Subjectivities, and Resistance," *Antipode* 54, no. 1 (2021): 50. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12765.

CONCLUSION

This research is, in essence, a theoretical reflection and contemplation on the dynamic tension between the (queer) experimental impulses and neo-liberalising functions of master-planned Seestadt Aspern. I have also sought to uncover the underlying power relations and political economy embedded within its infrastructures. I have been especially captivated by how Que[e]rbau, a genuinely admirable endeavour to queer affordable housing practice, fits into juxtaposing narratives about Seestadt. My discoveries and impressions in that regard have been replete with contradictions. Attending to the dialectic of social relations and urban space, I avow that my analysis captures fragmented moments in time, walking and talking in the smart city. Given the limited sample of in-depth interviews, drawing definitive conclusions about the relative "success" of Que[e]rbau in fostering community life and conviviality amongst residents would be disingenuous. Similarly, I refrain from ascribing "queerness" to the project based on building aesthetics, or the embodied practices and self-identifications of its residents. After all, queerness is fluid and disorderly and defies categorisation. That said, I have strong reservations about the queer potentials of the paternalistic development model exemplified by Seestadt. Queer utopias cannot be imagined without centring environmental justice and processes of decolonisation. And as I have demonstrated, Seestadt, the City, and Siemens are all implicated in practices that adversely weaken regional and global mobilities. The top-down, ordered vision of the master-planned smart city is also an anti-queer proposition, as we know it is the people who make the city. Yet I remain interested in discovering if there is any emancipatory potential to smart technologies.

Over the past two years, I have gathered fascinating insights from long conversations and fleeting encounters with people who interface with Seestadt and Que[e]rbau in myriad ways—be it residents, workers, environmental activists, artists, architects, or tour guides. Since becoming aware of Seestadt, I have been astonished by how many people find connection and attachment to this place. The high degree of visibility and relationality can be attributed in part to the substantial investment and expertise allocated by the City of Vienna to Seestadt. Being one of the largest development projects in Europe, Seestadt is Vienna's prestige experimental venture, shaping the future vision for the city as a whole. The City is working to transform Seestadt into a hub of cultural production, sponsoring an array of experimental arts and music festivals, including "raves" on the still desolate construction site. A deeper analysis revealed that the municipal administration is heavily influenced by the automobile lobby, incentivised to pursue

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environmentally detrimental policies that could lead to urban sprawl and further the degradation of agricultural land in the Aspern region. Seestadt has arguably become the scapegoat and raison d'être for the City's highly divisive highway project; a power play that is not lost on Que[e]rbau residents.

The central inquiry of my research has been whether "smartness" and "queerness" are compatible. I would propose that the City's imagining of smartness is inconsonant with queer impulses and knowledges, based on the information and differing perspectives I have gathered on the intentions and effects of smart urban infrastructures and smart governmentality. I approached this speculative question of "compatibility" primarily by observing the dynamic interplay between Seestadt and Que[e]rbau, reflecting on how these urban spaces are co-constituted through competing narratives and imaginings of the smart city. Acknowledging that this project offered a very partial perspective on queer space in the smart city, there are many ways this research could be furthered. I am most curious to explore how sexual citizenship agendas coincide with smart citizenship governance strategies, as this element of the research was limited in scope and undecipherable, given my small sample size.

My initial contact with Que[e]rbau was mediated through a brochure for Open House Vienna - an annual event where private buildings are opened to the public for architectural tours.[299] I didn't attend the Que[e]rbau open event, but that initial intrigue eventually manifested into this research project. A quick internet search at the time revealed a trove of online news articles, blog posts, and promotional materials on this queer co-housing initiative. Inevitably, the search led me to Seestadt Aspern, which presented an equally intriguing prospect: the integration of a queer housing project into the experimental techno-utopian urban vision of Seestadt. Que[e]rbau is indubitably an asset to the City and Seestadt developers in terms of attracting publicity and serving as a community interface. The people I talked to were cognisant of that fact. But Que[e]rbau is equally a space that produces its own meanings, affinities, and transgressions, epitomised by the exchange with environmental activists, articulating the fluidity of boundaries between visibility and invisibility.

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[299] Open House Worldwide. "Que[e]rbau (Vienna)," Open House Worldwide, 2021.
    https://www.openhouseworldwide.org/films/queerbau.

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