

BATHING IN THE DRAVA – «GOING WITH THE FLOW»**KUPANJE U DRAVI – «IDEMO NIZVODNO»****Karin LORBER****Martin STERMITZ**

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379.846(436.5)“20”**SAŽETAK**

Ovaj nas rad vodi u prošlost, kao da se radi o prvom koraku, kao kada bismo »uronili stopala u hladnu vodu«, napravili nekoliko valova i zatim se vratili u sadašnjost s nekoliko ideja vezanih uz budućnost »kupanja u Dravi«.

Uz riječ »kupanje« se obično povezuju različite stvari: pranje i higijena, rekreacija, opuštanje i fitness. Sve te stvari su se nekada odvijale na rijeci Dravi i sigurno bi se opet mogle odvijati, barem na pojedinim odabranim lokacijama. U Koruškoj, »saveznoj državi s 1,000 jezera« – i ne samo u Koruškoj – kupanje u rijeci bila bi smisljena i atraktivna nadopuna postojeće turističke ponude, te se takav oblik aktivnosti ne treba smatrati konkurencijom postojećoj turističkoj ponudi.

BATHING IN THE RIVER – AN INTRODUCTION

Water has always had a special drawing power for us. Rivers were not only sources of drinking water, but were also used for bathing and laundry.¹ Some of the oldest river bathing places are those along the Danube².

The first public baths came into being around 1400. They played an important part in people's lives. Cold and warm baths were on offer, as were Turkish baths and steam baths. Although many people in the Middle Ages were superstitious and feared that there were monsters in the rivers that could drag them down into the depths in order to drown them, river bathing was very popular.

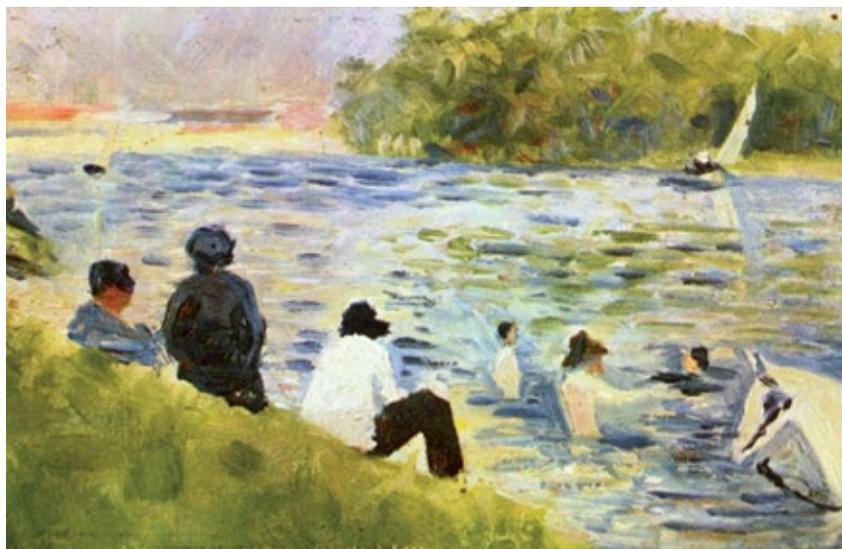
A knight mirror made in Kasel dating from the 15th century actually has swimming listed as one of the seven knightly arts.³ Initially, the church had no objections to swimming in rivers and lakes. As late as the 1470s, nuns from the Cistercian order in the Canton of Lucerne would go swimming in the river Reuss, although they always had to be careful only to go so far into the water, so that their habits would not rise up so far as to violate the required standard of decency. Later, the Cistercian order forbade the nuns to bathe. Within the church, bathing in the river was increasingly regarded as something to be disapproved of, and tended to be deprecated.

More and more bans on bathing were issued by the authorities, for example in Vienna in 1633, 1643 and 1711. There were many deaths, since people would fall into the Danube when drunk, and drown. Subsequently, around the middle of the 18th century, instructions for how to deal with such emergencies were deliberately put up in many places.

¹ The following works that are based on current research in Austria serve as an example and idea on the topic: Chiari Sybille, Raumbedarf für multifunktionale Flusslandschaften – Potentielle Synergien zwischen ökologischen Erfordernissen und den Bedürfnissen der Freizeit- und Erholungsnutzung. (Doctoral thesis. Nat. techn. Vienna 2010). Schmid Florian, Freizeit- und Erholungsnutzung an Fließgewässern: Explorative Interviews mit Erholungssuchenden an der steirischen Enns. (Diploma thesis. Vienna 2009).

² Cf. https://views.austria.info/de/category/text/7_5#!/11078 (Accessed 05/09/2016, 14:20).

³ Alfred Martin, Deutsches Badewesen in vergangenen Tagen. Plus an article on History of German Hydrot-herapy, p. 40, (Jena 1906).



Picture 1: Badende und weißes Pferd im Fluss, 1883. Georges Seurat 1859-1891. Note: The piece of art shown in the picture and its reproduction are in the public domain worldwide. The reproduction is part of a collection of reproductions from The Yorck Project. The copyright is held by Zenodot Verlagsgesellschaft mbH and is licensed under GNU Free Documentation License.

Along the banks of the Seine in Paris, »rescue boxes« were even set up, equipped with woollen blankets, various surgical instruments and medicines for reviving unconscious persons.

In 1761, the first »bathing ship« in history was opened in France: the French were now able to bathe in the Seine. A bathing ship like this took water from the river, using a filter to remove the worst impurities. In the middle of each bathing ship were two large vats, one with cold water and one with hot. These vats were used to supply water to the tubs in which people would bathe.⁴

In 1781 the physician Pascal Joseph von Ferro (1753-1809) announced that he wanted to open a bathing facility on the Danube. His bathing raft on the Danube enjoyed particular favour with the Emperor Joseph II (1741-1790), at whose command the door at the back of the Augarten opposite the Brigittenau was always left open, so that the Emperor could visit the bath at any time at his convenience.

The bathing facility consisted of a raft with bath houses containing perforated caissons, which varied in size so that it was possible to bathe either alone or with other people. Warm baths were not to be had at this bathing facility, since Ferro had introduced the cold »shower bath« from England in the monarchy.

The first manual on swimming was published by Nikolaus Wynmann (1510 - circa 1550) in 1538, under the title of »Colymbetes sive de arte natandi dialogus« (The swimmer, or a dialogue concerning the art of swimming).

In Frankfurt also, there is a long tradition of river bathing in the Main and the Nidda. Between 1800 and 1950, both rivers were used by the public for pleasure bathing. At the end of the Second World War, river bathing in Frankfurt declined. The city decided against revitalising the baths, for reasons of hygiene and also for financial reasons. The Main thus became purely a shipping lane which today separates the two halves of the city from each other.

The Nidda is a river in Hessen which flows for about 90 kilometres before joining the Main at Frankfurt. Even the Romans are said to have enjoyed the river as a place to cool off in the hot summer months.⁵ »Wild bathing« (as it was referred to by the people of Frankfurt) in the Nidda was regulated from May 1911 onwards, when the municipal swimming baths committee set up subsidised open air baths, which were open for the season from 15 May to 30 September.

In 1914 the city of Frankfurt started to straighten the Nidda in a bid to combat the risk of flooding. This came to nothing, however, for this project was ended by the First World War, as were so many

⁴ Volker Rödel, Baden unter Palmen. Flußbäder in Frankfurt am Main 1800-1950, p. 30, (Frankfurt am Main 2013).

⁵ Rödel, Baden unter Palmen, p. 46.

others. From 1921 onwards, the following five bathing stations were to be found strung out along the banks of the Nidda like a pearl necklace: Familienbad Rödelheim, Hausen, Praunheim, the Mackh'sche Bad and the »An den drei Steinen« bathing station owned by the Eschersheim-Hedderheim family.

All of the Nidda bathing places had one thing in common: the romantic »transfiguration« of nature, the newly discovered »light, air and sun« ideology of the 1920s.

After the end of the First World War women were also permitted to visit bathing places. The year 1933 marked the end of the bathing operation on the Nidda, due to the industrial waste water that was discharged into the river.

The physician Johann Gottfried Kohl settled in Frankfurt in the 18th century. With the city's approval he erected a public baths in 1799, near St. Leonhardstor. It was now possible to enjoy a warm bath in Frankfurt at any season of the year. Just a few years later Kohl wanted to erect another bathing facility, but could not find a suitable location. Kohl therefore planned the construction of a bathing station on the Main. The physician was probably inspired by the bathing ships that had been built on the Seine from 1761 onwards. His request was confirmed by the Senate on 25 June 1799. The new bathing ship on the Main was 32.73 metres long and 5.12 metres wide, and contained ten bathing tubs and four cold and hot water vats.

In the 19th century, springs containing a high concentration of different minerals were referred to as »chalybeate springs«. These were the equivalent of healing springs.⁶ Kohl probably supplied his »chalybeate bath« from nearby Gutleuthöferfeld, whose sulphurous water had been known for its healing power since the Middle Ages.

Although medicinal bathing was far from cheap, these baths were nevertheless adopted with great enthusiasm by the citizens of Frankfurt. In 1803 Kohl took a lease on the Mühlenschanze up to 1812, and a further bathing facility was set up here.

Spurred on by Kohl's success, in 1809 Johann Friedrich Kleeblatt (1770-1833) opened a swimming and bathing facility at the Mühlenschanze in Frankfurt. However, the emphasis here was not on medicinal baths but on swimming instruction. Kleeblatt was originally from Munich and had already taught swimming to the military stationed there.

In June 1809, Kleeblatt himself opened his swimming school on the island on the Kleiner Main.

In the period of the first bathing ships and swimming schools, there were still no obstacles constricting the Main landscape. However, the hygiene conditions of the river were problematic. The city fortifications, which had fallen into disrepair as a result of the French occupation, were used by the citizens of Frankfurt to discharge waste water straight into the river. The upper and lower reaches of the Main therefore resembled a sewer rather than a river with clean water fit for bathing.

The water quality of the Main then improved in the 19th century. It was only in 1867 that work began on the completion of the water-borne sewage system.

Around the year 1912 a survey carried out by the Frankfurt Police showed that the city already had a total of 13 river bathing stations.

In 1908 the East Harbour was built in Frankfurt. In consequence, the free public baths which had been constructed as a provisional measure in 1903 had to be closed. One year later, Philipp Ehrlein was given a permit to construct a bathing facility. A design for this project envisaged a length of 41 metres and a width of 18 metres. In addition, there were to be 30 open rooms for changing, each accommodating six to eight people. The swimming pool would have to be 31 metres long and 8.5 metres wide. In addition, a 14 metre long pool for non-swimmers was envisaged. A further requirement imposed by the city was that Ehrlein should build an annex to house a lockable section for storing the necessary equipment, and also a wash cauldron and washing machine, a bedroom for the night watchman, and a urinal and two toilets. The bathing season was set for 15 May to 15 September.

The bath was open from six in the morning to dusk. Bathing was permitted exclusively to men. Schoolboys under the age of 14 could only visit the facility with an accompanying adult. It was berthed on the left bank of the Main, below the »Eiserner Steg«. However, the city reserved the right to transfer

⁶ Rödel, Baden unter Palmen, p. 16.



Picture 2: The Mosler Brothers' bathing ship in Frankfurt am Main in the 1930s. © City of Frankfurt am Main – Institute for the History of Frankfurt. Topographical photos before 1943, photographic bequests, photographic special collections.

the facility to another location. An average of around 500 bathers per day visited Ehrlein's swimming bath.

The following rules were laid down:

1. Proceed slowly along the path to the bathing facility!
2. Undress slowly, and enter the water immediately after you have washed your feet and body!
3. If you are hot, first of all cool down!
4. Dive head first into the water or immerse yourself quickly!
5. Do not stay in the water for too long!
6. Get dressed quickly after bathing!
7. Leave the baths immediately and get the exercise you need!
8. Never bathe with a full stomach, and do not bathe if you are unwell!.⁷

The overwintering of the bathing ships proved to be a major problem for such facilities. They needed a berth in the harbour, to avoid exposure to the ice on the river Main. The existing harbours at Frankfurt were soon too small to accommodate the large number of bathing ships, and therefore many operators had to seek winter quarters for their ships in Offenbach or Hanau.

Almost all bathing facilities struggled with financial difficulties after the end of the war; only the bathing operations owned by the Mosler family were not affected. Up to the end of the Second World War, the Mosler brothers dominated bathing operations on the river. These bathing facilities already offered a whole series of attractive features. Bathers could enjoy palm trees in tubs, relax on the floating platforms, and play tennis or go roller skating as well as swimming.⁸

After the Second World War, a general ban on bathing in the Main was imposed because of the pollution caused by sewage water. In 1960 there was another attempt to build a river bathing facility. However, this plan was rejected by the municipal authorities on economic grounds.

⁷ Rödel, *Baden unter Palmen*, p. 42

⁸ Rödel, *Baden unter Palmen*, p. 63 ff.

BATHING IN THE DRAVA – SOME HISTORICAL FACTS

Public baths and therapeutic baths, such as the numerous mineral springs in Carinthia, are well documented and researched.⁹ However, there are not many sources concerned with bathing and swimming. One reason for this is that in Carinthia the concept of leisure and sport only came into being gradually from the middle to the end of the 19th century onwards. Even on Lake Wörthersee, sailing boats were a rarity around 1800.

Hardly any reports concerning swimming have been preserved. However, it is a fact that not even the raftsmen on the Drava were able to swim. In 1818, when two raftsmen fell into the river, they drowned. No one came to their assistance, neither would there have been many people who would have been able to.¹⁰

Johann Frenner, who swam across the Drava and the Möll several times in 1809, in order to carry messages during the war with France, therefore represents an absolute exception.¹¹



Picture 3: Postcard showing the quay on the River Draava with Draava Swimming Bath in Villach 1903. © Stadtmuseum Villach.



Picture 4: A view of Draava Swimming Bath in Villach. © Stadtmuseum Villach.

⁹ See for instance: Crantz Heinrich Johann von, *Mineralbäder der österreichischen Monarchie*. (Vienna 1777). Hermann Heinrich, *Historische Miscellen aus der Heimat*. II. Das Badewesen im Mittelalter. Carinthia I, Vol. 54, p. 424ff, (Klagenfurt 1864). As well as: Rauchensteiner Michael, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Badens, Schwimmens und Wassersportes in Kärnten*. Carinthia I, Vol. 142, p. 535 ff., (Klagenfurt 1952).

¹⁰ Rauchensteiner, *Beiträge*, p. 536.

¹¹ Rauchensteiner, *Beiträge*, p. 537.

Characteristically, the Villach newspaper the »Draupost« is the first to report on a commercial bathing operation on the Drava. In the edition of 26 April 1866, there is an article about the opening of a bathing station on the Drava at the Willroiderhaus in Villach.¹² This was probably a »box and tub bath«, or it may also have been a shower-bath.

Since the plans have not been preserved, it is not possible to determine what kind of bath this was, although it was definitely a public hygiene facility.

However, if it was a »box pool«, it was a swimming facility on the river. A number of floatable hollow bodies formed a platform on which were pools made of iron. The pools were fed with river water. Around the pool was boarding to a height of between one and three metres. This was intended to ensure that half-naked men (and later, scantily clad women) did not cause a public nuisance. A narrow jetty provided access to the pool. Against the narrow sides of the jetty were changing cabins and a laundry station for towels, bathing trunks and soap.

In 1881 the Nautilus rowing club undertook a trip on the Drava, on the stretch between Rosegg and Völkermarkt. It was found that this section of the river was not suitable for rowing.¹³ The club was formed in 1879 on Lake Wörthersee, and still exists today.

Although the Drava was not suitable for rowing, it certainly was used for washing and bathing. The bathing station set up on the river by the Willroider family acted as a kind of starting signal. A number of bathing stations were set up, now long forgotten.

For example, a postcard dating from 1899 shows the Kohlhof bathing station on the Drava at Völkermarkt.¹⁴ The »Marburger Zeitung« newspaper from the years 1901 to 1930 not only documents the varied history of this bathing station, but also contains references to numerous bathing stations along the Drava.

In 1901, hygiene is still the main focus of interest. However, it is repeatedly pointed out that not everyone is able to tolerate bathing in the Drava, and also that in winter the poorer sections of the population cannot use the river for bathing at all.¹⁵

In April 1906 the new Drava baths are inspected by Major Lindner and Lord Mayor Ornig. The new steps are 40 metres long and lead to the bottom of the water.¹⁶ This was a bath that was supplied with



Picture 5: Drau Swimming Bath Kohlhof near Völkermarkt. 1899. © Landesmuseum Kärnten.

¹² Drau-Post, Thursday 26th April 1866, No. 33, p. 277.

¹³ Rauchensteiner, Beiträge, p. 538

¹⁴ Inventory LMK Rudolfinum. Inv.: LG-view 692.

¹⁵ Marburger Zeitung, Thursday 7th March 1901, No. 28, p. 5.

¹⁶ Marburger Zeitung, Thursday 19th April 1906, No. 47, p. 3.



Picture 6: Maribor on the River Drau. A view of Drau riverside promenade. 1918/1919. © Landesmuseum Kärnten.

water from the Drava. According to numerous newspaper reports, the citizens of Marburg (Maribor) were proud of this new achievement.

The pleasure they took in this new facility was short-lived, however. In May of the same year the newspaper reports that Marburg needed more (and in particular warmer) baths, since »the cold waters of the Drava baths are having a damaging effect on the health of hundreds of delicate school children«.¹⁷

The question of the Marburg baths also concerns the citizens in 1910 – no solution has been found in regard to the location of the baths and the supply of the water.¹⁸

On 25 June 1925 a headline in bold letters complains: »A Drava town without a baths. Partly to blame is a collector duct from the then »Kärntner Vorstadt« which empties into the Drava upstream of the planned baths. This is countered by the argument that most visitors only want to use the showers and sun loungers anyway, and do not want to go swimming in the Drava – which makes it a baths without any bathers!¹⁹

On 16 June 1930, however, celebrations are in order – the Drava baths are open! This »landmark of Styrian Meran was duly celebrated far into the night!«.²⁰

Apart from the bathing operation (whether for hygiene purposes or for the pleasure of swimming), the wild and untamed Drava was also used up to the 1970s, as evidenced by the diaries and correspondence of Jan Oeltjen²¹ and also by the memories of Rainer Adamik from Ferlach.

Jan Oeltjen was born on 15 August 1880 in Jaderberg (now the district of Wesermarsch in the Federal Republic of Germany). Through his second wife Elsa Kasimir the Expressionist painter also made his home in Ptuj/Pettau in present-day Slovenia. He acquired a vineyard near Ptuj, which was expropriated after the Second World War. However, Oeltjen continued to live in what was then Yugoslavia, finding new work as a restorer in the local museum. Oeltjen liked to swim in the river, and river bathing is a recurring motif of his pictures.

We should also recall at this point the work of the Carinthian author Lorenz Mack, who in his book »Treibholz« (and not only in that work) has created a monument to the Drava.

¹⁷ Marburger Zeitung, Tuesday 8th May 1906, No. 55, pp. 2-3.

¹⁸ Marburger Zeitung, Thursday 26th May 1910, No.63, p. 4.

¹⁹ Marburger Zeitung, Monday 25th June, No. 144, p. 1.

²⁰ Marburger Zeitung, Monday 16th June 1930, no. 159, pp. 1-2.

²¹ On Jan Oeltjen see: <http://www.jan-oeltjen.de/> (Accessed: 24/11/2016, 14:00)



Picture 7: Badende im Fluss by Jan Oeltjen 1880-1968. © Martina Mehrmann-Schmidt, Lahr/Schwarzwald.

During an interview with Rainer Adamik on the subject of bathing in the Drava, Mr Adamik told of his youthful experiences. The Drava was regulated and obstructed right up to the 1980s. In consequence, however, a few former branches of the river were left behind. According to Mr Adamik, downstream of Ressnig (142/143 kilometres) there was warm and cold water bathing available. He visited both pools as a boy. One of these ponds did not have any water supply and therefore became warm in summer, while the other had an inlet and outlet into the Drava and therefore remained cool even in the summer heat. A very special test of courage for young people was to climb up the old Heunburg bridge and jump down into the water. At that time there was still railway traffic on the bridge, which may have accounted for the particular attraction of this test of courage. But traditions were also nurtured along the Drava – for example, Mr Adamik reported that the priest of Ferlach, Dr. Scheram (?) would go bathing in the Drava every 1 May. These memories can all be dated before 1976, when the Ferlach-Ressnig power station was expanded, putting an end to these bathing pleasures in the Drava.

As a result of the construction of the power station, the Ressnig bathing pool was also excavated in the meadow, and this was another reason why bathing in the Drava became less popular. In spite of this, according to Mr Adamik, it is still possible, if one goes along the Drava cycle path, to jump in at the places where the boats were hauled out. However, as a result of the fact that regulation has made the waters of the Drava less active, it has also tended to become less interesting to bathers.

BATHING IN THE DRAVA – FOR TODAY AND PERHAPS TOMORROW?

The so called »upper Drava« section of the river is a »Natura 2000« area situated between the south eastern edge of the municipality of Spittal an der Drau and the provincial boundary with East Tyrol. This is a section about 68 km in length covering an area of 1,030 ha. Since the 1990s the water industry and various nature protection projects have been working closely together to carry out a large-scale renaturation measure. With the help of two LIFE projects, the financial resources for these measures have been found.

The river landscape of approx. 1,000 ha comprises a water surface of around 350 ha, together with 450 ha of riparian woodland and agricultural land.



Picture 8: Project description »the Freistil« a new bathing ship in Frankfurt am Main. © Verein Freistil – Badeschiff und Schwimmclub. Frankfurt am Main.

As a result, bathing in this section of the Drava is now possible once more, including at the Drauoase Dellach²², a »water experience area« established in 2007, and to the west of Spittal an der Drau²³ at a point where the bank has been levelled and a sedimentary island has been created in the river.²⁴

Further additions include infrastructure measures such as a visitor tower, picnic tables, information boards and toilet facilities. It would certainly be desirable also to introduce such measures along the Drava cycle path, where they would provide considerable and – in the truest sense of the word – »refreshing« added value.

Two further examples from Germany and Switzerland could similarly act as an example in the context of the Drava.

In March 2012 the »Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung« newspaper reported on the construction of a »bathing ship« on the Main. The driving force behind this project was the Frankfurt-based architect Eckart von Schwanenflug. He plans to revive the bathing facilities which were once highly praised but have now been largely forgotten by the people of Frankfurt. According to Schwanenflug, the more than 200-year-old tradition of river bathing should be rolled out anew. His project could be realised by 2025, by which date the Main should have regained its previous surface water bathing quality. Whether these plans will be implemented, however, depends on the decisions of politicians in Frankfurt. It would be a big »plus« that the project (if implemented) would provide an additional nearby place of recreation in the city. The pool is intended to be open from 6 in the morning to 10 at night. Schwanenflug is planning a 140 x 19 metre platform with a 50m pool that can be separated off and could also be used for competitions. Initial estimates put the costs of the construction of such a »bathing ship« between 3.5 and 5 million Euros.²⁵

The second model, which has already been very successfully realised, is the Frauenbadi in Zurich. The »box pool«, constructed in its present-day form in 1888, is on the left bank of the Limmat and by

²² Chiari, Raumbedarf, pp. 41-42.

²³ Chiari, Raumbedarf, p. 42.

²⁴ <http://www.life-drau.at/> (Accessed 05/09/2016, 15:20).

²⁵ See: <http://www.fnp.de/lokales/frankfurt/bdquo-Ein-Badeschiff-fuer-alle-ldquo;art675,583290> as well as: http://www.hr-online.de/website/radio/hr-info/index.jsp?rubrik=54163&key=standard_document_60907190 and <https://www.welt.de/regionales/frankfurt/article117970648/Projekt-Badeschiff-soll-2015-vor-Anker-gehen.html>. (Accessed: 24/11/2016, 14:00).



Picture 9:
Frauenbadi on the
River Limmat in
Zurich. © Jürg-Peter
Hug, Zurich.

day operates (as the name suggests) as a pool for women only. Since 1997 men have also been admitted for bathing in the evening.²⁶ The Frauenbadi is not just a bathing facility, but a cultural meeting place – a successful mixture of river, luxury, relaxation, social meeting point and bathing, which could also represent an attractive future variant model for the Drava. It would be worth considering establishing a small but sophisticated »Frauenbadi« in Villach or in one of the towns situated on the river.

If we follow these visions, the Drava could be seen as an important »energy supplier« for its regions – not in the sense of electrical power, but as a facility providing vital energy and recreation.

ABSTRACT

This paper takes a look into the past, being by way of a first step, as it were »dipping a toe in the cold water«, creating a few waves and then taking us up to the present day, with some ideas for the future of »bathing in the Drava«.

We associate various things with the word »bathing«: washing and hygiene, recreation and leisure, sport and fitness. All these things were once possible in the river Drava (Drau) and certainly could be again, at least in certain selected locations. In Carinthia too, the »land of 1,000 lakes« – and not just in Carinthia – bathing in the river would be a meaningful and attractive addition to existing tourism facilities, and need not be regarded as being in competition with them.

²⁶ On Frauenbadi in Zurich see: <http://www.badi-info.ch/stadthausquai.html> (Accessed: 24/11/2016, 14:05).