

SUBURBANIZATION WITHIN THE CITY? EXPLORING SUBURBAN LIFESTYLES IN THE INNER-CITY OF LEIPZIG (GERMANY)

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With 6 figures and 2 tables

Received 15 January 2023 · Accepted 14 April 2023

Summary: The long-prevailing image of a clear delimitation between core city and suburbs has been increasingly questioned in research. New qualitative approaches are necessary to describe the urban-suburban relationship based on a sociocultural heterogenization of suburbs and the spread of suburban lifestyles into inner cities. The concept of inner-city suburbanization is one approach to define spaces as urban or suburban regardless of geographical location. Drawing upon this concept, the present paper explores suburban lifestyles in the inner-city area of Leipzig and their role in the socio-spatial urban transformation. For this purpose, we identify and map owner-occupied middle-class family housing estates in central urban locations. Using qualitative individual and focus group interviews with the residents, complemented by site observation, we explore to what extent these single-family houses resemble traditional suburbs in terms of morphology and social structure in four different case studies. All of the cases show how suburban qualities, such as homeownership and socio-economical homogeneity, go hand in hand with the benefits of their urban locations. This hybrid character reflects the dissolution of the classical place-specific distinctions between urban and suburban environments and patterns. Simultaneously, dynamics of upgrading and social exclusion from housing unfold in the residential areas, where middle-class family housing estates emerge. Thus, we raise the question of the interrelation between inner-city suburbanization processes and gentrification trends in Leipzig.

Zusammenfassung: Aktuelle Forschungsbeiträge stellen das vorherrschende Bild einer klaren Abgrenzung zwischen Kernstadt und Vorstadt zunehmend in Frage. Im Zuge der zu beobachtenden soziokulturellen Heterogenisierung des suburbanen Raumes und einer Ausbreitung suburbaner Lebensweisen in die Innenstädte bedarf es neuer Ansätze zur Beschreibung des Stadt-Umland-Verhältnisses. Das Konzept der sogenannten innerstädtischen Suburbanisierung ermöglicht es, Räume unabhängig von ihrer geographischen Lage als urban oder suburban zu definieren. Auf dieser Grundlage untersucht der vorliegende Text suburbane Lebensstile im innerstädtischen Bereich von Leipzig und ihre Rolle in sozialräumlichen Transformationsprozessen. Zu diesem Zweck werden Einfamilienhaussiedlungen in zentraler Stadtlage kartiert und mit qualitativen Zugängen erforscht. Einzel- und Fokusgruppeninterviews mit den Bewohnenden, ergänzt durch Ortsbegehungen, geben Aufschluss darüber, inwieweit diese Einfamilienhaussiedlungen in ihrer Morphologie und Sozialstruktur klassischen Vorstädten ähneln. Die Untersuchungsgebiete verbinden suburbane Qualitäten wie Wohneigentum, private Freiräume und eine sozioökonomische Homogenität mit den Vorteilen der städtischen Lage. Ihr hybrider Charakter spiegelt die Auflösung der klassischen ortsspezifischen Unterscheidungen zwischen urbanen und suburbanen Raummustern wider. Parallel dazu entfalten sich in den Wohngebieten, in denen die Mittelklasse-Familien-siedlungen entstehen, Dynamiken der physisch-ökonomischen Aufwertung und der sozialen Ausgrenzung. Damit stellen wir die Frage nach dem Zusammenhang zwischen innerstädtischen Suburbanisierungsprozessen und Gentrifizierung in Leipzig.

Keywords: Inner-city suburbanization, housing, suburban lifestyles, gentrification, Leipzig, Eastern Germany

1 Introduction

The city of Leipzig, a former industrial center of East Germany, experienced a severe population decline at the end of the 20th century. Due to deindustrialization and structural transformations after the German reunification, Leipzig saw a growing number of brownfields in central locations (HAASE & RINK 2015). Simultaneously, intensive suburbanization processes were observed during the 1990s (KOCH 2020: 2), which can be seen as a certain

catching-up process with the suburban development previously observed in Western Germany and other market economies (HAASE & HAMANN 2008).

Against this background, the City of Leipzig promoted housing policies to reattract the middle classes to the inner city. One of them was to enable the construction of single-family housing estates in the form of newly built detached or semi-detached houses with courtyards in rows or clusters on inner-city brownfields (STADT LEIPZIG 2011: 26). Most of these projects were built in the early 2000s as part



of the ‘Leipziger Selbstnutzer-Programm’ (Leipzig’s Self-User Program) supported by local authorities. The aim of the program was to a) help young families to acquire home ownership, b) bring them back to the city and c) fill the urban voids to stop deurbanization (STADT LEIPZIG 2011: 10).

The emergence of housing estates or even entire neighborhoods in central urban locations that are specifically addressed to meet the needs of middle-class families has been documented in many Northern European cities in the context of reurbanization in recent years (FRANK 2018: 123). These middle-class houses entail elements traditionally associated with suburban living, such as social homogeneity, home ownership, security, and social order. The urban sociologist Susanne Frank describes the phenomenon as “suburbanization of the inner-city” (FRANK 2018) – a terminological contradiction at first glance. Frank’s concept proposes dissociating suburbs from their spatial definition and instead understanding suburbanism as a way of life (WALKS 2013). Following this idea, suburban features seem to penetrate new geographical areas, particularly the centers of some cities in the global north. This results in novel morphological and social typologies of habitation, while inner-city suburbanization also overlaps with other spatial processes, such as gentrification.

This paper has two main objectives. Firstly, it aims to expand the academic discourse on inner-city suburbanization, which has been discussed from a rather theoretical angle so far. We will introduce a qualitative approach to empirically understand the phenomenon by means of four case studies in Leipzig. As one of the first research attempts of this kind, our paper examines whether dominant habitation patterns of the typical suburbs in the city outskirts also arise in central parts of Leipzig. Based on the analysis of urban policy documents and desktop research, we map single-family housing estates in the inner city. This will help to identify neighborhoods with the highest concentration of such housing estates. By means of site visits, three single interviews and four focus group interviews with residents, we investigate to what extent these housing entities resemble suburban features in terms of architectural typology, ownership regime and social composition.

Secondly, this paper explores the overlapping occurrence of middle-class family enclaves and gentrification in Leipzig. Based on Marcuse’s concept of exclusionary displacement (MARCUSE 1985) and new-build gentrification theories (DAVIDSON 2018, HOLM et al. 2015), we sketch out possible socio-spa-

tial implications of the inner-city suburbanization processes in Leipzig, seen from the interviewees’ perspectives.

Our paper will show how the observed inner-city suburbanization process represents a hybrid form that contains both urban and suburban qualities. In the case of Leipzig, the construction of single-family homes in inner-city locations has indeed helped to stabilize the degradation processes in several neighborhoods. However, it also contributes to gentrification processes in the long run, which is why this policy instrument must be discussed from two diverging perspectives. From a conceptual point of view, this challenges the existing belief of how gentrification and suburbanization are linked to each other.

2 Theoretical framework

What exactly characterizes a suburb has been the subject of academic discussions for decades (WALKS 2013: 1473). To this day, there is no clear definition of what the term suburban encompasses (FORSYTH 2012: 260). Claiming that suburbanization also takes place in the inner city may seem contradictory at first glance, as a suburb is typically characterized by its spatial location outside the city (FRANK 2018: 124 ff.). However, we observe how certain elements of typical suburban spaces penetrate inner city areas. Hence, in the following subsection of this paper, we will first question the definitions of core city and suburbs. We will then take a closer look at the approach of perceiving suburbanism as a lifestyle (according to Alan Walks) and describe the concept of inner-city suburbanization. Furthermore, we will examine theoretical approaches that link inner suburbanization with gentrification as two strongly connected processes in current urbanisms.

2.1 Defining suburbs

The lack of a clear-cut delimitation between urban and suburban space has been discussed by several authors (FRANK 2018: 124, 102, WALKS 2013: 1473, MOOS & MENDEZ 2015: 1865). While the dichotomous relationship between core city and its outskirts was questioned in North America already during the 1970s (FRANK 2020: 263), the topic received far less scholarly attention in German-speaking countries (ADAM 2019: 36). It was not until the end of the 1990s that the increasing heterogeneity of suburbs also found scientific recognition in Germany. It was mainly the contribu-

tions by SIEVERTS (1997) and HÄUSSERMANN (2009), which led to a more pluralistic view on suburban developments (ADAM 2019: 36, MLENJEK et al. 2020: 6). SIEVERTS' (1997) popular term 'Zwischenstadt' coined this blurring line of urban, suburban and rural landscapes. Intensified by the debates of the 'renaissance of the inner city' (HESSE & SIEDENTOP 2018: 103) and a differentiation of lifestyles within the post-Fordist society, it is increasingly questioned to what extent the conventional understanding of urban and suburban can still adequately describe current urban development processes (MLENJEK & LÜTKE 2022: 164).

Recent literature on suburbanization focuses on this plurality of suburban spaces, pointing out that conventional place-based definitions no longer sufficiently reflect reality (MOOS & MENDEZ 2015: 1865). In this context, theoretical approaches that understand urbanism and suburbanism as ways of life not bound to specific places gain importance (FRANK 2020: 260).

In his contribution 'Suburbanism as a way of life, Slight Return' Alan Walks develops a theory of suburbanism that opens new ways of understanding the relations between the urban and the suburban. According to his approach, the suburban, identified by tendencies of segregation, homogenization and fragmentation, constantly undermines the urban, characterized by heterogeneity, mixture, encounter and exchange. The two, while distinct, are inextricably linked in a productive tension from which constantly new, hybrid (sub-)urban syntheses emerge (WALKS 2013: 1476 f.). Walks defines the relationship between urbanism and suburbanism in terms of six dimensions that shape the way people form their everyday lives (WALKS 2013: 1479).

Frank summarizes these dimensions as follows: (1) distance from the core city, (2) symbolic distance from positions of power, (3) mix of uses and activities (social, economic, cultural, political), (4) diversity of neighboring people and households, (5) dependence on automobiles, and (6) degree to which spaces and activities are defined as public versus private (WALKS 2013: 1479 as cited in FRANK 2018: 126). To each of these dimensions, Walks assigns typical characteristics of urbanism and suburbanism. Between the two poles, a complex network of interacting and overlapping streams emerge, flowing through and into spaces and characterizing them for a given time. Thus, a space is no longer defined as suburban or urban by its location, but by the way the people who inhabit it shape their daily lives. This concept is particularly useful because it takes into account the diverse, complex and often contradictory processes within contemporary urbanism.

Understanding the reciprocal relationship between urbanism and suburbanism enables us to define spaces regardless of geographic location as, in part, both suburban and urban (FRANK 2018: 126). The multiplicity of suburban spaces is thus transformed from a problem of setting a unified definition to the logical outcome of complex interactions and tensions between urban and suburban tendencies.

2.2 Inner-city suburbanization and gentrification

Uncoupling the suburban's attachment to a specific place is the prerequisite to dissolving the contradicting nature of inner-city suburbanization. FRANK describes in several articles (2013, 2018, 2020) the phenomenon of the increasing spread of suburban lifestyles in the inner-city area in the course of reurbanization. The driving force here is the 'typical' suburbanites: The upper, educated middle class, especially young families, whose choice of residential location increasingly falls on inner-city locations (HESSE & SIEDENTOP 2018: 103). In the recent past, urban development programs and urban redevelopment measures have led to the creation of residential areas in the core city that combine suburban and urban characteristics (FRANK 2018: 124). These "villages in the city" (FRANK 2013: 74) or family enclaves are characterized by a high density of single-family homes with small gardens, often in private ownership, family orientation, social homogeneity and an emphasis on the sense of community acting as a protective shield against the dangers and vagaries of the city (FRANK 2018: 128). The newly built housing estates are designed to meet the needs of young families and are structurally very different from their surroundings (FRANK 2013: 69). These characteristics, combined with rhetoric about unifying the best features of urban and rural life, lead Frank to conclude that modern family enclaves are the functional equivalent of the Fordist suburban settlement (FRANK 2013: 74) and represent a new form of suburbanization.

Addressed to affluent middle-class families who have the necessary financial capital to purchase newly built houses and apartments, such enclaves are part of what is described as middle-class resettlement in the inner city (DAVIDSON & LEES 2005: 1169). Accompanied by increasing demand for higher-quality housing units in the inner-city, this 'return-to-the-city' movement entails an evident

class dimension and often has exclusionary effects (MARCUSE 1985: 197). According to Smith's supply-side understanding of gentrification, "the owner-occupier developers serve as a vehicle for recycling devalued neighborhoods" when redevelopment of the inner city, after its economic depreciation, becomes once again profitable (SMITH 1979: 546).

It was Neil Smith himself, who saw suburbanization and gentrification as intertwined processes (Fig. 1). According to his explanation, inner-city neighborhoods were "affected by this movement of capital to the suburbs" (SMITH 1979: 542). The emerging valley of land values in the inner city (displayed by disinvestment and degradation) was hence a result of (local) maxima in both the center and the suburbs (see Fig. 1, left). Thus, suburbanization was described as an inevitable prerequisite that provoked the rent gap in inner-city neighborhoods to grow steadily and thus trigger gentrification.

However, inner-city suburbanization challenges this concept. This is firstly because this new type of suburbanization no longer takes place in the outskirts but in the inner city – the typical arena of gentrification processes. Secondly, already existing concepts such as suburban gentrification (another form of intersection between suburbanization and gentrification) are less researched (HUDALAH & ADHARINA 2019, MARKLEY 2018) and do not explain how single-family homes in central locations contribute to gentrification. How can we still link inner-city suburbanization to the gentrification process?

In the classic understanding, gentrification takes place through the upgrading of existing housing stock and the displacement of their former residents

(GLASS 1964: xviii, DAVIDSON 2018: 250). The concept of new-build gentrification (DAVIDSON & LEES 2005, 2010) broadens this understanding and also entails new residential buildings on brownfields. Inner-city suburbanization falls into this category. Although direct displacement might not take place here, gentrified landscapes can still emerge as new-build housing estates in inner-city areas provoke indirect forms of displacement. Following Peter MARCUSE'S (1985) thoughts on exclusionary displacement, denying lower-income people access to newly built housing is the first indirect form of displacement (DAVIDSON & LEES 2005: 1170). A second form occurs in the medium term, as larger numbers of new middle-class residents can stimulate the upgrading of surrounding urban areas (DAVIDSON & LEES 2005: 1184). The rediscovery of central districts by the upper middle classes is also approached by demand-side explanations of gentrification that highlight the cultural dimensions. Here, contributions put the focus on the increased presence of families with children, often characterized as 'family gentrifiers' (HOSTENBACH & BOTERMAN 2018: 175). In this context, KARSTEN (2014: 177) detects a significant change in consumer supply as a result of the influx of young families in Amsterdam, while GOODSSELL (2013: 846) introduces the term 'familification' to refer to the emergence of areas adapted to the needs of families, brought about by public development strategies. Within inner-city suburbanization, again, family gentrifiers might play a crucial role, but they differ from those families in conventional gentrification processes as they aim to acquire homeownership of a complete house and a private garden as a symbol of privacy.

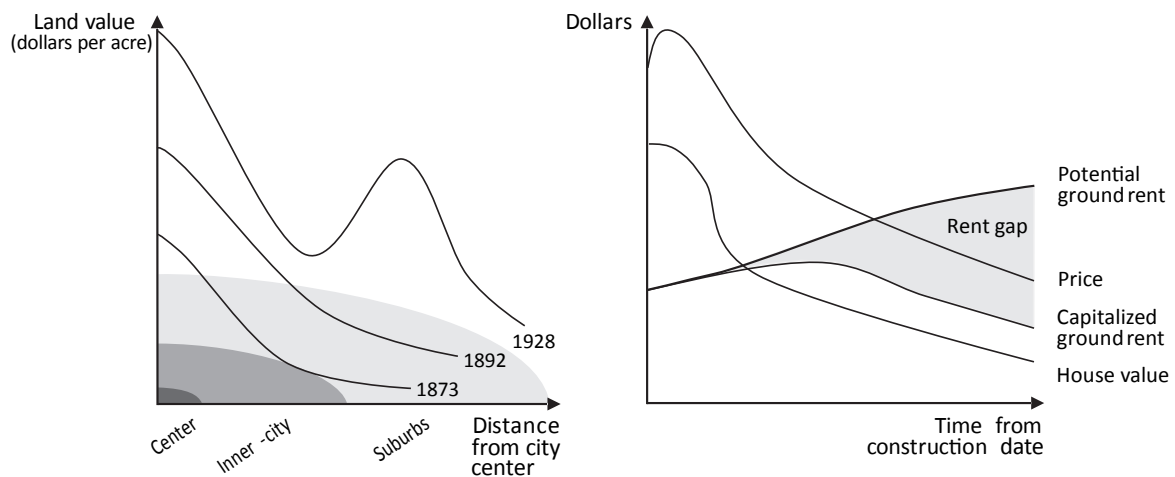


Fig. 1: SMITH's explication of the rent gap. Left: Land value in Chicago. Right: Depreciation cycle of inner-city areas. Source: Own elaboration based on SMITH (1979) and HOYT (1933).

3 Exploring inner-city suburbanization in Leipzig

In this paper, we explore inner-city suburbanization in Leipzig, where we observe a considerable number of such housing typologies spread throughout the whole city. We consider Leipzig to be a compelling case for three reasons. Firstly, in Leipzig, the emergence of single-family houses in the inner city was promoted by municipal policies. Policymakers responded to the severe population shrinkage, urban sprawl, but also deindustrialization and the broader post-socialist transformation that took place during the last decade of the twentieth century (HAASE & RINK 2015). For this reason, we discuss the state-led character of observed suburbanization as one key aspect in this process.

Secondly, Leipzig is experiencing ‘extremes’ of urban development (RINK 2015: 177) and has seen both shrinkage and strong demographic growth. Exploring inner-city suburbanization in such a dynamic context is particularly relevant because the phenomenon can be analyzed in two converse settings.

Thirdly, suburbanization is not only a “recent phenomenon in the post-socialist societies” (KAJDANEK 2014: 182), but also “one of the crucial topics in the study of urban change in post-communist cities” (NOVAK & SYKORA 2007: 147). However, research about inner-city suburbanization is rather a ‘blind spot’ (FRANK 2018: 124), and there is a need for empirical approaches. Hence, we argue that exploring a city such as Leipzig will enrich the ongoing discussion about the existing tension between urbanism and suburbanism (WALKS 2013: 1471) since inner-city suburbanization occurs here as a new product of this interplay.

3.1 (Inner)-Suburban development in Leipzig

Leipzig’s urban development has been subject to extreme changes in terms of shrinkage and growth over the last three decades. As a commercial and university city with considerable industrial activity, Leipzig was the fifth largest city in Germany before the Second World War, with almost 700,000 residents (RINK 2021: 1). During the second half of the 20th century, the city experienced a continuous population decline, reaching a minimum of 440,000 inhabitants in 1998. Particularly in the first years after Germany’s reunification, as a result of low birth rates and out-migration, particularly among young inhabitants and families, Leipzig’s population fell by

almost 20 percent (Rink 2021: 2). During that time, Leipzig was also losing residents to its surrounding municipalities (KOCH 2020: 2). “In the second half of the 1990s, a massive and publicly subsidized suburbanization process” took place, and almost 30,000 inhabitants left Leipzig to move to the suburbs (HAASE & RINK 2015: 233). This population loss led to high vacancy rates, especially in the inner-city, with more than 20 percent of the total housing stock left empty (RINK 2015: 181).

The demographic dynamics described above had a strong impact on Leipzig’s housing market and on the corresponding urban policymaking. Public subsidies and tax reductions were set as measures to mobilize private capital and fuel investment (HAASE & RINK 2015: 234). However, within this context of shrinkage, Leipzig is considered to take a ‘pioneering role’ when it comes to dealing with brownfields and developing interim uses and greening (RINK & HAASE 2022: 148). The promotion and licensing of low-density housing was another instrument to revitalize the inner city. In the early 2000s, over 200 new townhouses were built in the inner-city areas (STADT LEIPZIG 2022a). The initiative ‘Leipziger Selbstnutzer-Programm’ (Leipzig’s Self-User Program) played a fundamental role in the implementation of single-family housing on central brownfields. In order to increase the share of owner-occupiers in the housing market (STADT LEIPZIG 2011: 10), ‘Leipzig’s Self-User Program’ was not established as a classic funding program but as a platform to provide „advice, group moderation, marketing and networking” (ibid.). In addition, it received support from the city of Leipzig (ibid.: 13). This promotion was recognized as an important objective both in urban development and social policy and was anchored in Leipzig’s housing concept called ‘INSEK 2030’ (Integrated Urban Development Concept).

In summary, Leipzig has gone through several contrasting phases in the last decades. The severe shrinkage during the 1990s and the high vacancy rates on the housing market until the 2000s were followed by reurbanization processes and population growth (see Fig. 2). Since the early 2000s, Leipzig has recorded continuous population gains, while the outskirts report stagnation or even population losses (KOCH 2020: 2). During the last decade, Leipzig even became “the fastest-growing urban agglomeration in Germany” (BERNT 2019: 58). This also marked a shift in municipal policy. As the previously promoted suburbanization trends came to a halt, housing renewal, regeneration and restructuring in the inner city became the dominating issues of policymaking (HAASE & RINK 2015: 234).

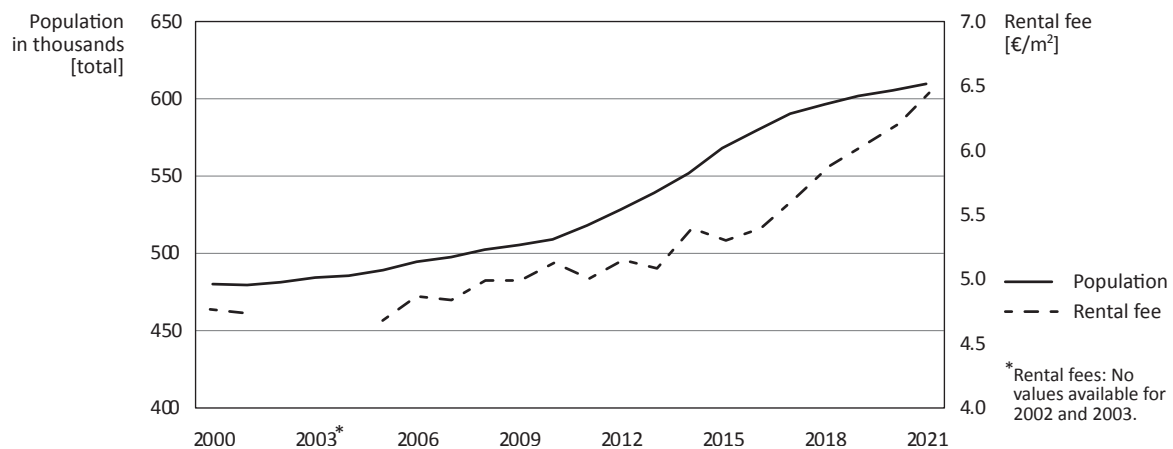


Fig. 2: Population numbers and rental fees in Leipzig. Source: Own elaboration based on STADT LEIPZIG (2022b).

Although in the last few years suburbanization processes have been observed again, they take place at a more moderate level compared to the 1990s and are paralleled by the continuing reurbanization of the city (KOCH 2020: 9). Surprisingly, the current pandemic has not intensified suburbanization processes in Leipzig (MOLDOVAN et al. 2022: 58). Instead, a tense housing market is the central challenge on the city's agenda today (STADT LEIPZIG 2018). Vacancy rates in the housing market decreased from 9.5 % in 2011 to just 2.5 % in 2021 (STATISTA 2022), and the population grew by more than 17% within the same time period (STADT LEIPZIG 2022b). Hence, inner-city suburbanization in Leipzig must be interpreted against two very different contexts, namely both shrinkage and growth.

3.2 Qualitative approach to investigate new-build single-family housing in Leipzig

We propose a mixed-methods approach to explore inner-city suburbanization in Leipzig. Firstly, we identified and mapped the locations of housing estates in central neighborhoods that present features and housing qualities of typical suburban areas (see Fig. 3). The aim here was to find neighborhoods where such housing estates concentrate in order to select different case studies within the city. This was done based on desktop research, analysis of policy documents (official development plans and housing policy strategies of Leipzig) and field visits. Based on FRANK'S analysis (2018), we define owner-occupied family dwellings that are developed in clustered spatial configurations in central locations of the city as our specific field of investigation. The criteria for this decision were the property regime of

the dwellings (individual homeownership and own occupation), their architectural and urban typology (terraced single-family houses with garden and parking lot built-in units) and their social composition (houses inhabited mostly by middle-class families).

Secondly, we chose four case studies that are distributed throughout the whole city. Here, we conducted qualitative semi-structured single and focus group interviews in each of the case studies. In addition, we also did site observation in the selected neighborhoods.

Fig. 4 shows several examples of inner-city owner-occupied houses in Leipzig, most of them built under the initiative of 'Leipzig's Self-User Program' in cooperation and support by the city of Leipzig. The main data source for the production of this map is the document 'Blaue Reihe 51', a publication of the townhall on the emergence and promotion of owner-occupied houses in central districts in the first decade of the 21st century (STADT LEIPZIG 2011). The provided dataset is supplemented by online desktop research to include owner-occupied dwellings that arose in the most recent years.

The mapped housing typologies fall into three categories (Fig. 4).

- a. The first category entails single-family housing. These are housing complexes of around 15 to 40 dwellings, where several townhouses are located within one neighborhood as a unified spatial configuration (STADT LEIPZIG 2011: 26). They simulate "introverted family housing estates, which promise a village-like residential environment and living experience in the midst of the colorful world of urban life" (FRANK 2018: 129) and are regarded as urban villages.
- b. Single-family houses developed as a row of townhouses represent the second entity and consist of

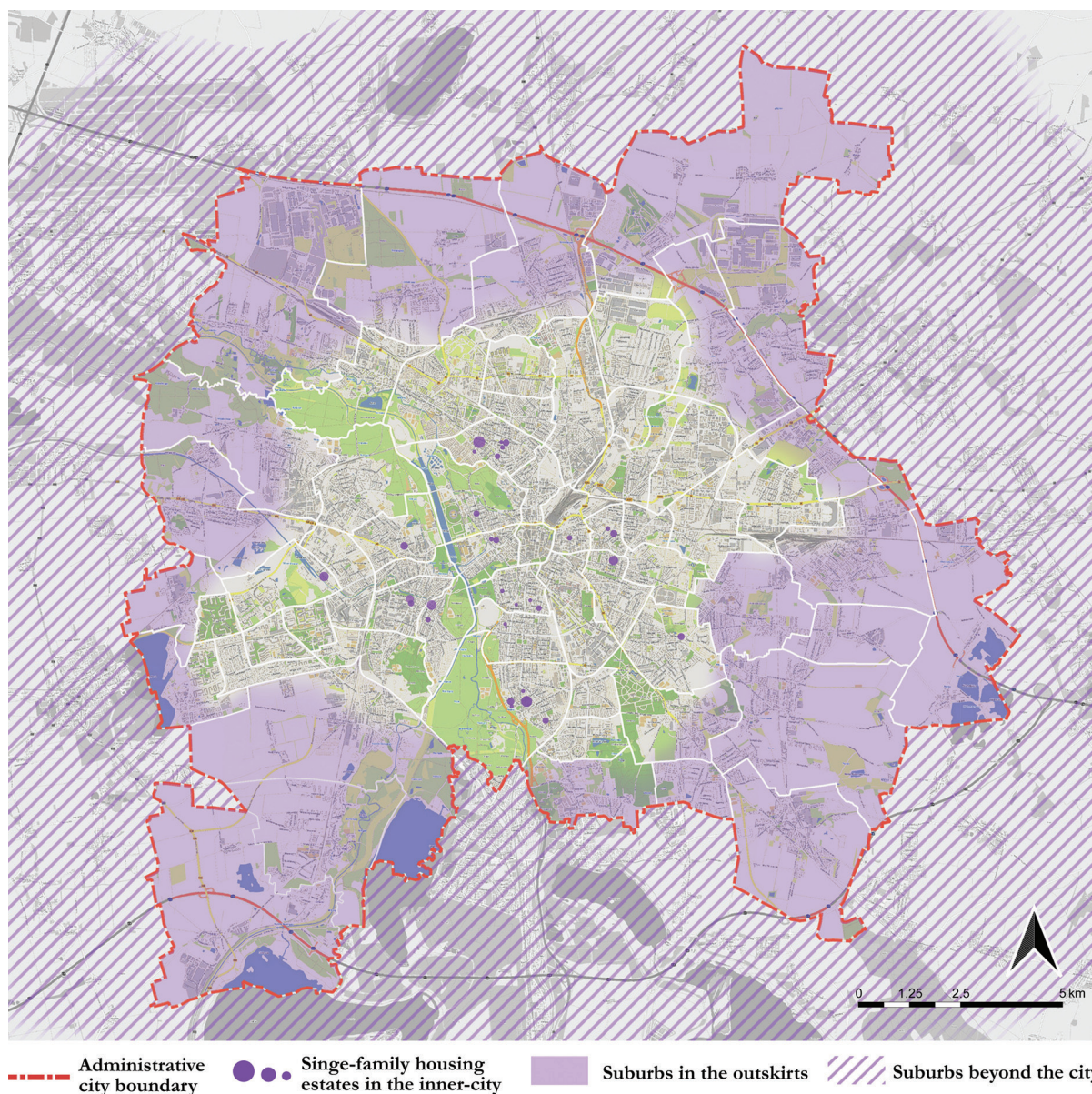


Fig. 3: Map of suburban areas and inner-city single-family housing estates in Leipzig. Source: Own elaboration based on OpenStreetMap (2022) and STADT LEIPZIG (2011).

- dwellings attached to each other in the form of a long block and realized according to a uniform architectural style (STADT LEIPZIG 2011: 42
 c. The last category refers to the single-family houses in vacant plots developed to fill smaller urban voids. (STADT LEIPZIG 2011: 34).

Detecting and mapping the single-family houses in Leipzig were the key steps in order to frame our empirical research. Based on the mapping of these examples, we set the focus on cases where single-

family houses are observed in high concentrations in one neighborhood or where they are built in larger housing constellations. Therefore, we selected several settlements (urban villages) and row houses in four different districts in Leipzig (see Fig. 3 and Fig. 4). After that, we proceeded to a series of semi-structured individual and focus group interviews with 13 residents of single-family houses in the four different locations (see Fig. 5, Tab. 1). We regard qualitative interviews as the most suitable method to gain insights into the habitation patterns and lifestyles of the resi-



Fig. 4: Distribution of single-family housing settlements, row houses and townhouses in urban voids in central Leipzig. Source: own elaboration based on OpenStreetMap (2022), STADT LEIPZIG (2011).

dents and contribute to the empirical exploration of inner-city suburbanization as a theoretical concept.

The focus group interviews were held with residents of the same housing entity or district to ensure group homogeneity (GILL et al. 2008). We see group interviews as an appropriate method to enable a dynamic interaction between the interviewees (MORGAN 2022: 141). With that, we intend to explore features of neighborhood relations and social structures. Compared to single interviews, group discussions entail a less predetermined flow and provide a pluralistic view of the topic (GIBBS 2012: 186). Here, we hope to grasp topics and understand logics that

might not reveal in individual interviews. With regard to content, group interviews are less predictable than interviews with just one interviewee. In order to ensure comparability between these interviews (both between the groups and also between group and individual interviews), our guideline entailed several main topics. Apart from the perception of their own living space and the everyday experience of the residents, we also discussed impressions of the surrounding living environment, thoughts on the previous and current housing policy in Leipzig and reflections upon critical approaches and conflicts that derive from the development of owner-occu-

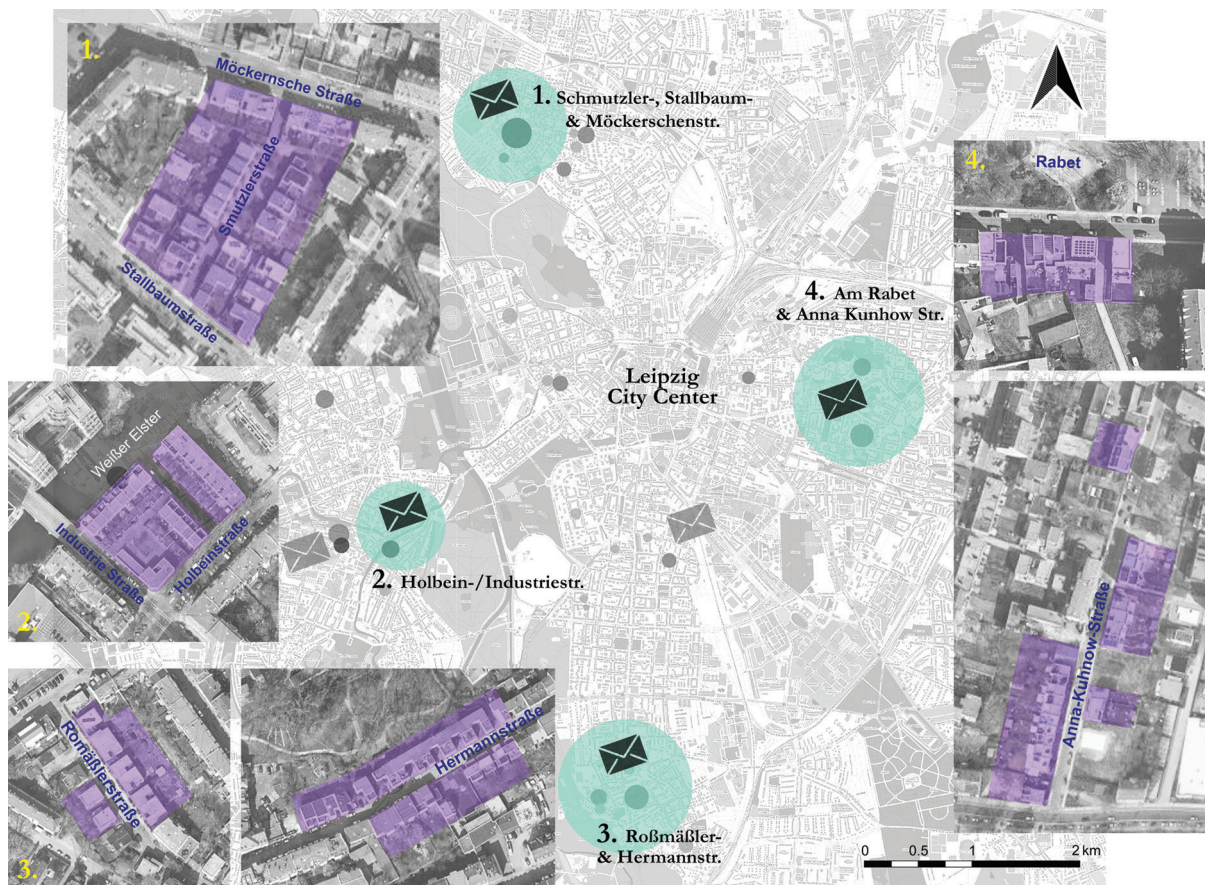


Fig. 5: Selected case studies. Single-family housing settlements and rows in central Leipzig. Source: Own elaboration based on OpenStreetMap, Google Maps (2022) and STADT LEIPZIG (2011).

pied single-family houses in the inner-city. Contrary to that, the last focus group interview was different (Tab. 1). Here, we talked to a group of neighbors that mobilized against the construction of a double-family detached house in their backyard. We chose this case too because according to our investigation, it is the only current project where new single-family houses are planned. This last interview provides a critical perspective on the development of townhouses within the city which will enable us to link these phenomena to urban revalorization and gentrification trends.

Our method to assess and summarize the outcome of the conducted individual and focus group interviews (Tab. 1) is structured content analysis, according to MAYRING (2015). The interpretation of the residents' narrations relies on a deductively generated categorical system based on site observation and relevant literature.

The site visits of the examined single-family housing entities in the four selected study areas in Leipzig provide a better understanding of the liv-

ing environments of the interviewees. On that basis, we demonstrate the different characteristics of each case.

The first case study is Gohlis (Fig. 6, 1a, b). With 32 houses, Gohlis is an upper-middle-class residential area with the largest constellation of recently built townhouses in the city. This settlement consists of a central public space and two to three-story houses with gardens, a unique architectural morphology, and is regarded as an urban village by its inhabitants. Moreover, this case is the pilot project of 'Leipzig's Self-User Program'. The land, a former waste collection area and public property of the city of Leipzig, was sold to the stakeholders at low prices. The construction of the dwellings took place from 2005 until 2008 (Focus Group Interview #4).

During the same time period, our second case study was built, a single-family housing entity in Schleußig, known as the 'Sweetwater Project' (Fig. 6, 2a, b). This prominent project with terraced houses on the waterfront has a more luxurious character, such as private access to the river.

Tab. 1: List of interviews

Interview/ Method	Case study	Place, date	Number of interviewees	Gender, age	Family status	Level of education	Living status
Individual Interview #1	Settlement (Urban village), Gohlis, (Leipzig north)	Online, 21.06.2022	1	Male, around 45	Married, no children	PhD	Homeowner, first wave resident (since 2006)
Individual Interview #2	Row houses Neuschönefeld & Reudnitz, (Leipzig east)	Online, 22.06.2022	1	Male, 42	Married, three children	Higher university education	Homeowner, first wave resident (since 2014)
Individual Interview #3	Settlement Schleußig, (Leipzig west)	Online, 23.06.2022	1	Male, around 55	Married, three children	Higher university education	Tenant, first wave resident (since 2007)
Focus Group interview #4	Settlement (urban village), Gohlis, (Leipzig north)	Leipzig Gohlis, Schmutzlerstraße, 24.06.2022	3	Female, around 55	Married, two children	Higher university education	Homeowner, first wave resident (since 2006)
				Female, around 55	Married, two children	Higher university education	Homeowner, first wave resident (since 2006)
				Male, around 55	Married, three children	Higher university education	Homeowner, first wave resident and architect of the house (since 2006)
Focus Group interview #5	Row houses Connewitz, (Leipzig south)	Institute of Geography Leipzig University, 29.06.2022	5	Female, around 40	Married, three children	Higher university education	Homeowner, Second wave resident (since few years)
				Female, around 55	Married, two children	Higher university education	Homeowner, First wave resident (since 2005)
				Male, around 55	Married, two children	Higher university education	Homeowner, First wave resident (since 2005)
				Male, around 65	Married, two children	Higher university education (pensioner)	Homeowner, first wave resident, moving out, new resident becomes the daughter
				Male, 20	Not married	student	Living in the parental home
Focus Group interview #6	Single-family row houses Neuschönefeld & Reudnitz, (Leipzig east)	Institute of Geography Leipzig University, 30.06.2022	2	Female, around 70	Divorced, adult children	Middle education (pensioner)	Homeowner, First wave resident (since 2013)
				Male, around 75	Widower, adult children	Middle education (pensioner)	Homeowner, first wave resident Living with the son's family (since 2012)
Focus Group interview #7	Group of residents against the erection of single-family houses, Plagwitz, (Leipzig west)	Leipzig Plagwitz, the interviewees' place of living 11.07.2022	5	Female, around 30	No children	-	Tenant, flat share
				Female, around 30	No children	-	Tenant, flat share
				Female, around 40	1 Child	-	Tenant, living with family
				Male, around 35	2 Children	-	Tenant, flat share and family
				Female, around 45	1 Child	-	Tenant, living with family



Fig. 6: Impressions of the study areas. 1(a,b) Single-family houses settlement Gohlis. 2(a,b) Single-family houses complex in Schleußig. 3(a,b) Rowhouses settlement in Connewitz. 4(a,b) Row houses in Neuschönefeld and Reudnitz.

The third examined case study refers to row houses built between 2004 to 2006 in Connewitz, a neighborhood in the south of Leipzig (Fig. 6, 3a, b). Here, there is a typical form of two-story terraced houses with entrances and garages facing the street, while the garden is protected on the inner side of the plot.

Our last case study has a similar architectural typology and lies in the east of Leipzig in Neustadt-Neuschönefeld and Reudnitz (Fig. 6, 4a, b). The dwellings here were constructed one decade later, during the mid-2010s. The development is linked to the strong dynamic in this part of the city, where physical upgrading and socio-economic restructuring have been occurring rapidly in recent years (HAASE & RINK 2015), and the first gentrification processes have been observed (HÜBSCHER et al. 2021).

4 Findings

Our paper examines inner-city suburbanization and its interrelation with gentrification in Leipzig by using a qualitative approach. Firstly, we use the interview material to investigate whether the spread of suburban lifestyles into the inner-city area can be detected in the selected study areas in the sense of inner-city suburbanization described by FRANK (2018). Following WALKS' (2013) ideas on the "morphological and sociological dimensions of urbanism-suburbanism" (FRANK 2018: 126), we put emphasis on the aspects of (a) juxtaposition (co-location of land uses and activities), (b) social diversity and (c) public versus the private character of spaces and we outline our set of criteria that indicate urban or suburban ways of living. The criteria are:

- home ownership (mostly single-family houses),
- social and cultural structure,
- the built environment,
- privacy and security and
- sense of community through social networks.

Secondly, we focus on the perceptions of the inner-city suburbanization process among residents and explore the parallels between the development of inner-city single-family housing estates and gentrification.

4.1 Suburban lifestyles in Leipzig

With regard to suburban lifestyles, our material shows the multiplicity of inner-city suburbanization in Leipzig. In each case study, the majority of houses were privately owned single-family homes, mostly

with small gardens. Most of the residents purchased the properties as part of 'Leipzig's Self-User Program' in the 2000s and 2010s and were also involved in planning their own homes (Interview #1). In many cases, however, the houses had already been resold and were in second or third hands. This is striking, as the share of owner-occupiers in Leipzig is extremely low (12 %) compared to other large Saxonian cities such as Dresden (15.5 %) or Chemnitz (20.9 %) (STADT LEIPZIG 2021: 48, STATISTISCHES LANDESAMT SACHSEN 2023). This underlines the spatial concentration of homeownership that this type of housing provokes in the city.

Regarding the social structure within the area, families with children were the majority. This was particularly the case among the first generation of occupiers. However, the neighborhoods are not homogeneous throughout. In some cases, senior citizens occupy the houses. In one case, three generations of one family live together. Furthermore, according to the interviewees, most of the residents have college degrees, which reveals the middle-class character in terms of social structure.

"We are now five townhouses right next to each other, and a little further on, there are two more. We are all families, except for the mid-terrace house next to me. An older man bought that as a retirement home" (Interview #2)

"As typical as in any single-family housing estate. Both [parents] have a well-paid job and small children. [...] There are only higher incomes [among the residents]; otherwise, you could not afford home ownership. So, it's usually academics." (Interview #1)

With regard to the spatial structures, we can confirm the clear distinction between the case studies and their surroundings, as described by Frank (2018). The single-family housing estates studied are located within the area of Leipzig, where more than one-quarter of all buildings were constructed before 1918 (STADT LEIPZIG 2022b) during the Wilhelminian time (German: Gründerzeit). These multi-story houses (usually two to five stories) have an outstanding architectural style with richly decorated facades and high ceilings. The modern construction of the townhouses (Fig. 6) differs clearly from the surroundings described above. Our case study in Gohlis is particularly striking. Between the two rows of houses, there is a traffic-calmed square landscaped with benches

and greenery, evoking associations of village life. Here, the residents themselves even speak of their “village in the city” (Interview #1).

The qualities of home ownership in terms of privacy were highlighted during the interviews. Interviewees particularly emphasized the benefits of having one’s own private secluded space (Focus Group Interview #5 2022). A need for at least visual separation from direct neighbors through hedges, fences and walls also became apparent (Interview #1). Although there is no deliberate isolation from city life, a certain sense of security prevails due to the architectural quietness of the areas as well as due to social networks. In particular, the resulting safe environment for children was of great importance to the residents. In general, it became clear how strongly life in the study areas is oriented toward the needs of children. Interviewees stressed the short distances to school and kindergarten, which in many cases were decisive for the choice of their residential location.

“[...] and in the past it was like this: behind the house, there was always something going on, the children crisscrossed from one house to the other and had toy car races on the lawn [...]” (Focus Group Interview #5)

As the extent of the social mixture varies from one district to another, we notice differences in the social and spatial integration of the examined single-family housing units into their surrounding area, as well as different forms of neighborhood conflicts. In the urban village of the bourgeois neighborhood Gohlis, we identify evidence of a moderate interaction between single-family dwellers and residents in the surrounding multi-story buildings. For example, there is an appropriation of the non-traffic open spaces by passers-by – as a rest stop for the elderly or a playground for the children (Focus Group Interview #4). Such an interaction hasn’t been stated by interviewees living in the other areas of Leipzig, where the surrounding environment is socially more diverse.

Similarly, we notice different levels of acceptance towards single-family houses between the districts. In Gohlis, the perceived critic refers to the architecture of the settlement and the low heights of the buildings (Focus Group Interview #4). In Connewitz, issues of social status and class inequality became apparent in the interviews. Here, there seems to be a rather conflictual situation between homeowners and tenants, with political statements and graffiti on the houses’ walls or even car vandal-

ism (Focus Group Interview #5). This case is particularly striking as in Connewitz, where gentrification processes were already discussed two decades ago (WIEST & ZISCHNER 2006).

Apart from that, the interviews also shed light on the self-perception of the participants, who see themselves as urbanites. The emphasis on the qualities of urban life, short distances to schools, sports clubs for the children, and leisure and cultural facilities, shows a strong identification with the urban lifestyle (Interview #2, Focus Group Interview #4). “It feels like living in a flat, rather than in a house because there is only a small garden. You cannot create a large vegetable patch or plant fruit trees” (Focus Group Interview #5). The hypothesis of combining the ‘best’ qualities of urban and suburban life seems quite fitting to explain this phenomenon (FRANK 2018: 124). On the one hand, the private retreat, the own house with a garden and a certain security through social networks are prioritized. On the other hand, the proximity to all the amenities of the city is also very much appreciated.

4.2 Socio-spatial effects of single-family housing

The spread of upper-middle-class enclaves in North European city centers and their role in the wider transformation of the socio-spatial urban fabric has been assessed critically by several scholars (MARCUSE 1985, FRANK 2020, HOLM et al. 2015, KARSTEN 2014, VOLLMER 2018). In debates on city planning and housing policies, this phenomenon is associated with social exclusion and spatial fragmentation, as the example of gentrification shows. Fostering low-density housing in central urban areas, just as the owner-occupied townhouses in this prevailing study, raises questions about the just occupation of land and urban (in)sustainability, particularly in times of strong population growth.

In our interviews, it is particularly the group of tenants in Plagwitz (Focus Group Interview #7) who express concerns about the negative socio-spatial impacts of the new single-family houses in the inner city. They also criticize this form of homeownership itself. With the aim to prevent the erection of a double-family detached house in their backyard, the group of neighbors actively tries to influence the land use and development plan of the area to impose stricter regulations (Focus Group Interview #7). Their criticism, which, in fact, is driven by personal interest, is related to broader implications, though. According to the interviewees, they fear a loss of social diversity, as

the construction of such low-density housing units is expected to provoke high housing prices in the neighborhood. In addition, the tenants also criticize the expansion of the private sphere over collective use, as they will lose part of their backyard, and the related speculation: “They [the landlords] bought this house seven years ago with the idea [to divide the property and construct a new house]. They just waited for the right moment” (Focus Group Interview #7).

The construction of single-family housing units and rowhouses in the last two decades in Leipzig goes along with a general physical upgrading of certain neighborhoods. The emergence of such housing typologies in the early 2000s was an urban planning instrument to stimulate the ‘renaissance of the inner-city’ while Leipzig’s population number was shrinking (HAASE & RINK 2015: 238). At this period, under the peculiar condition of simultaneous shrinkage and housing oversupply, gentrification was taking place only in a ‘soft’ form in Leipzig (HEINIG & HERFERT 2012). Although urban upgrading was targeted, social exclusion and displacement were not yet present. However, as HAASE & RINK (2015: 244) claim, urban regeneration strategies induced to support reurbanization, paved the way for the rapid socio-spatial changes that followed in the 2010s onwards. In some cases, the newly built townhouses seem to be a door-opener for the renewal of the surrounding housing stock and the further redevelopment of the city quarter. The most indicative example is the urban village in Gohlis. According to the residents, since their move in around 2005, the existing unrenovated houses of the area were “tackled piece by piece” against the expectations of Leipzig’s townhall itself, which had already approved some of those for demolition (Interview #1). The contribution of the single-family enclaves to the upgrading of the adjacent quarters was pointed out clearly in the group interview with occupiers:

“It was a gamble. So here and there, in the back, a wasteland surrounded by construction fences and houses that didn’t look well-kept. [...] It was an instrument to put people on the spot and initiate development. And that’s exactly what has happened. The surrounding buildings have been renovated, and the Rewe [supermarket] in front has been rebuilt. [...] And that’s when investors said that something is happening here, we have to invest here. And they really did. Within the radius of about 50 meters, six houses have been entirely redeveloped.” (Focus Group Interview #4)

Similar renewal processes are reported by residents of all examined study areas in the four selected districts of Leipzig. The redevelopment has been accompanied overall by a noticeable rise in land and property values, which is also reflected in the rental market (see Tab. 2). As HOLM et al (2015: 182) state for the case of Leipzig, “under the condition of a relaxed housing market, exclusionary housing projects provide an opportunity to extend the potential ground rent over the citywide average.” Specifically, regarding the market value of the single-family dwellings, homeowners observed a tenfold increase in Gohlis or even a twentyfold increase in their houses’ values in Leipzig’s east (Neuschönefeld and Reudnitz), which reflects the ongoing gentrification process in this part of the city (Focus Group Interviews #4, #6, HÜBSCHER et al. 2021).

At the same time, interviewees have observed displacement processes in their surroundings over recent years. The resident of the Sweetwater single-family house project in Schleußig explains:

“In the past, other people have lived here, I suppose. People who could afford such a life on the river and in the urban space with lower financial resources. However, the buildings were already very run-down. [...] Of course, it’s a shame for the people who had to move out. But now people with children are living there again, just in a different salary bracket. It’s a pity, though, because that changes the diversity of the district” (Interview #3).

Homeowners in Gohlis associate the displacement of lower-income groups with the construction of their single-family housing units and thus critically reflect upon their own role in the neighborhood’s dynamic:

“Of course, we are also gentrifiers because we moved here. But in the house at the corner, where Michael’s mini market was located, the bus drivers sat and chugged their beer. And he couldn’t hold on for long. [...] in the beginning, there were really a lot of people here who were annoying. But they all disappeared over time” (Focus Group Interview #4).

The question we would like to raise at this point is whether the development of single-family houses has indeed been a trigger for gentrification. In this

Tab. 2: Key statistics in the studied districts. Source: Own elaboration based on STADT LEIPZIG (2022b).

	Population			Income			Share of population with university degree			Rental fee		
	2001	2021	2001-2021	2011	2021	2011-2021	2011	2021	2011-2021	2011	2021	2011-2021
	Total	Total	Increase [%]	€	€	Increase [%]	%	%	Increase [pp]*	€/m ²	€/m ²	Increase [%]
Leipzig	479457	609869	27.2	1066	1592	49.3	25	28	3.6	5.0	6.5	29.3
East – Neustadt-Neuschönefeld	8093	13371	65.2	797	1500	88.2	19	58	39.0	4.5	6.5	44.4
East – Reudnitz-Thonberg	15518	22836	47.2	854	1700	99.1	25	51	25.9	4.8	6.9	43.8
South–Connewitz	14176	19254	35.8	1076	1900	76.6	35	52	16.5	5.1	6.4	25.5
West–Schleußig	9171	12683	38.3	1164	1900	63.2	39	65	26.2	5.4	7.3	35.2
West–Plagwitz	8722	16669	91.1	1225	1850	51.0	38	55	16.9	5.1	7.6	49.0
North–Gohlis-Süd	12602	18750	48.8	1164	2000	71.8	38	51	13.3	5.5	7.0	27.3

* Percentage points

context, the evident economic revalorization seems to follow a symbolic upgrading (VOLLMER 2018) that occurs through the resettlement of certain social groups in particular central locations. This “process of upgrading can be considered an articulation of class inequality, and it is this class dimension that is broadly referred to in the gentrification literature” (KARSTEN 2014: 175). Direct and indirect displacement are inherent to such gentrification processes (MARCUSE 1985). In our case studies, the examined single-family dwellings were developed on brown-field land. Consequently, no direct displacement was caused. However, according to DAVIDSON & LEES (2005: 1184), new constructions and middle-class resettlement can lead to indirect forms of displacement, too, such as the ones documented throughout our empirical research. In addition, we associate the analyzed enclaves with exclusionary displacement (MARCUSE 1985) since low-income groups are not able to access the new-build housing units.

In her research on middle-class housing in residential areas of Amsterdam, (KARSTEN 2014: 175) attested that “when the upgraded neighborhood becomes the territory of the new middle-class families, this will have exclusionary effects on others, particularly working-class families”. In the case of Leipzig, this seems to occur on the microscale since the middle-class family enclaves remain spatially concentrated at present. The townhouse estates are seen by the residents themselves as socioeconomically homogenous places, characterized as “islands of high-

income”, almost exclusively “households with kids,” where “no one is a blue-collar worker” (Interviews #2, #3, Focus Group Interview #4). Whereas the social homogeneity of certain residential entities is undisputed, this cannot be assumed for the entire neighborhood. The surrounding areas of most case studies show socio-demographic diversity, with only some specific streets or parts developed as islands for upper-income families. An exception is Gohlis in the north of Leipzig, where upper-middle-class families are present throughout the whole neighborhood, which is represented by the highest income per capita compared to the other districts (Tab. 2).

We conclude that owner-occupied low-density housing in urban areas of Leipzig addressed to middle-class families has contributed to the gradual transformation of the neighborhood’s image at a moderate level. At the same time, these processes depend highly on the spatial dynamics of each city district and the general development context of Leipzig.

5 Conclusions and research perspectives

In this paper we examine empirically the concept of inner-city suburbanization in Leipzig, Germany. For this purpose, we apply a qualitative approach and put focus on single-family housing estates in four different central areas of the city. We draw three main conclusions.

Firstly, we identify a variety of typical suburban characteristics in our four case studies. Apart from the buildings' typology (single houses with private gardens and parking lots), we observed parallels in terms of home ownership and socio-economic structure when comparing suburban spaces between the outskirts and inner-city areas. The vast majority of townhouses are privately owned, requiring a high income for their acquisition. Furthermore, a large number of residents with relatively high economic status and academic education, a strong orientation towards families and the resulting sense of community are similar to typical suburban environments. Based on the social structure of these exclusive housing typologies, we regard them as middle-class family enclaves. Apart from that, there are indeed differences with respect to the use of individual motor car traffic and the share of private green space, which are both lower than in the outskirts of the city. Occupiers in inner-city suburbs in Leipzig put emphasis on short distances and good connections to the city center, which were important reasons for their choice of residential location. Hence, we conclude that these middle-class family houses in the inner city represent a hybrid form between the 'urban' and 'suburban', contributing to the blurring lines between both concepts in contemporary metropolitan landscapes. This adds to SIEVERTS' (1997) concept of the 'Zwischenstadt,' where he describes how the compact European City dissolves gradually (HEINEBERG et al. 2016: 47). Although SIEVERTS (1997) originally saw conventional suburbanization processes as the underlying reason for his observations, inner-city suburbanization contributes to this dissolution, too.

Secondly, we argue that the impacts of this inner-city suburbanization depend highly on the broader context of urban development. While Leipzig's population was shrinking and central neighborhoods were facing severe degradation due to emigration, inner-city suburbanization indeed helped to stabilize these areas. Single-family houses, as a novel building typology in central districts, attracted a type of dweller, that a) otherwise might have moved to peripheral suburbs and b) contributed to maintaining a certain degree of social mix in the neighborhoods. This is because young families had difficulties finding appropriate housing in central districts in Leipzig (HERFERT & RÖHL 2001). However, this situation changed completely during the 2010s, when Leipzig became Germany's fastest-growing city within one decade.

In this new context of growth, residents observe a notable revaluation and displacement of lower-income groups in surrounding areas. They link these processes to inner-city suburbanization and reflect critically on their own role. In this sense, we see the emergence of inner-city housing enclaves as a further piece in the puzzle that explains the current upgrading processes in several central neighborhoods in Leipzig – contributing to making their neighborhoods more attractive, both for certain social groups and investment. With regard to gentrification, the exclusionary character (MARCUSE 1985) of these single-family houses becomes particularly obvious in the strongly growing city.

However, the pace and intensity of these dynamics vary among the study areas and must be interpreted within the context of the local setting. In the case of Gohlis, the single-family enclaves seem to integrate easier, as the neighborhood is a popular destination for middle-class families (displayed by the highest income per capita among the researched districts, Tab. 2). Contrary to that, in other areas (eastern districts of Leipzig) middle-class family enclaves appear spatially more segregated, which we trace back to the diverse character of these neighborhoods (BUDNIK et al. 2017). With the prices in Leipzig's housing market increasing, we expect the pressure on single-family houses in all of these areas to grow, too.

Thirdly, suburbanization in Leipzig – both on the outskirts and in inner-city areas – is a process that is strongly shaped by governmental stakeholders. While suburbanization on the outskirts of the city was subsidized (HAASE & RINK 2015: 233), inner-city suburbanization can be regarded as a countermovement by the local government to stop urban shrinkage and devaluation. The decisive role of 'Leipzig's Self-User Program' and local planning authorities must be emphasized once again. This state-led character of inner-city suburbanization is linked to the context of shrinking because "the land problem cannot be solved by the conventional market, as its price mechanism is overridden by a lack of demand" (RINK & HAASE 2022: 148). Evaluating this policy ex-post, we have to acknowledge the success of this state-led inner-city suburbanization. From the current homeowners' perspective, the purchase of land and the construction of a home would not have been possible without this state initiative (Focus group interview #4).

However, in light of the current shortage of affordable housing in Leipzig and strong demographic growth, the role of public policies should be discussed critically. The sustainability of such low-density hous-

ing typologies in central neighborhoods is more than questionable, as the plots of land could have been used for multi-story dwellings, too. Hence, current policies have to adapt to this new context and find means to mitigate and avoid further segregation. What makes it difficult here is that Leipzig possesses only a limited amount of (financial) resources to regulate the housing market and depends on programs on the national or federal level (RINK 2015: 193).

Inner-city suburbanization remains a rather surprising phenomenon in urban landscapes, as single-family houses are typically not associated with central areas (WARDA 2020). However, in this paper, we discuss the evidence of suburban lifestyles in central areas of Leipzig. The extreme dynamics in Leipzig – from shrinkage to rapid growth within only two decades – are the context in which the complex interconnection between suburbanization and gentrification becomes evident. In the case of Leipzig, we see this inner-city suburbanization as a particularly intensive form of new-build gentrification, as the observed single-family houses in Leipzig stand in stark contrast to the high-density buildings documented in other case studies (DAVIDSON & LEES 2010). Consequently, suburbanization is not only one of the central preconditions of gentrification as described by SMITH (1979). In the case of inner-city suburbanization, it might even actively stimulate gentrification. A further exploration of the gentrification pathways (in Leipzig and elsewhere) as overlapping with further socio-spatial differentiation paradigms could expand the local discourses on such processes and open new perspectives for the analysis of the ongoing restructuring of urban spaces.

To interpret the dynamics between these processes, we should challenge the juxtaposition of the urban and the suburban based on mere categories of space. Instead, understanding suburbanization as a proliferation of a particular way of life (WALKS 2013, FRANK 2018) provides a useful approach to exploring such phenomena both in the outskirts and inner cities.

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