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Urban "problem neighborhoods" – problems for whom? Marginalized youths' lived experiences and the *right to the city*

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Abstract
On a societal-political level, urban so-called "problem neighborhoods" are a designated problem. Hegemonic discourses about these neighborhoods are mainly characterized by deficient, problematizing and racist positions. Various approaches and interventions have been developed on different levels of society to get rid of the problem of "problem neighborhoods." The most influential and widespread social policy and urban planning response has been to promote the concept of "social mixing" through the influx of non-racialized, *non-migrantified* middle-class residents into "problem neighborhoods" by making the neighborhoods more attractive to these new residents. The attempt of understanding the problem(s) of "problem neighborhoods," young people's lived experiences of inequality, and their collective and individual actions/"behavior" should include two perspectives: On the one hand, the complex perspective of "the society" on these neighborhoods, their inhabitants and their actions, the historical development of these marginalized neighborhoods, the political and urban planning decisions that shape people's lives today and which is an important frame of reference for all the actions, feelings, plans and self-images of their inhabitants. On the other hand, the perspective of the youth themselves. In their *everyday practices*, they have to refer directly or indirectly to all these social interpretations of themselves, of their actions and to the structural conditions derived from these interpretations. German Critical Psychology (Holzkamp, Markard) as a subjective science in the Marxist tradition provides the analytical category of "generalized vs. restrictive capacity for action" to conceive analytically this double possibility in human activity between adaption to existing conditions and resistance in order to dispose of the conditions. The basic assumption is that people do not only live "under" conditions, but are also able to change and relate to them. In the first section, I present the problems *with* "problem neighborhoods" as they historically have evolved, been created, and exist today in major German cities. In the second section, I use excerpts from ethnographic field notes and biographical interviews from the research project *Living Youth in a migration society: Dealing with social inequality* in the city of Berlin to interpret young people's perspectives on dealing with problems in their neighborhoods. In the final section, I discuss the significance of (the)

problems for the community and the question of a possible realization of the *right to the city* in Lefebvre's sense.

Keywords
social inequality, urban studies, migration society, youth research, biographical research, ethnographic research

Introduction

> The town itself is peculiarly built, so that a person may live in it for years, and go in and out daily without coming into contact with a working-people's quarter or even with workers, that is, so long as he confines himself to his business or to pleasure walks. This arises chiefly from the fact, that by unconscious tacit agreement, as well as with outspoken conscious determination, the working people's quarters are sharply separated from the sections of the city reserved for the middle class; or, if this does not succeed, they are concealed with the cloak of charity.
> (Engels, 1993 [1845], p. 57).

This quote by Friedrich Engels (1993 [1845]) from "The Great Towns" refers to Manchester in the 19th century, but can easily be applied to most European cities at the time and is still valid today. People living in the city's *middle-class neighborhoods* and *villa districts* live their daily lives largely unaffected by the existence of the poorer population living in these segregated former "working-people's quarters." Their children and young people attend different schools, use different recreational facilities and other amenities of public life. Even if there has been a political will for *social mixing* (Bridge et al., 2012; Lees et al., 2012; Rinn & Wiese, 2020) in Germany since the 1990s with regard to the dimensions of inequality of *race*[1] and class – we will come back to this in more detail –, this is rather a *one-way street*. The neighborhoods of the poorer population are supposed to be made attractive for people with a *middle-class background*, but not the villa neighborhoods for the poorer, *racialized* and *migrantified*[2] (El-Tayeb, 2016; Mecheril, 1997) population. The designated "problem neighborhoods"[3] are the neighborhoods of poorer, marginalized residents, not the

[1] I am using the term *race* italicized because it is at times necessary to address *racism* as a *social mediation in societies*. I am aware of all its horrible connotations, but freezing in speechless impotence in the face of this term, sometimes tempts one to mask contexts, relations and experiences and thus (inadvertently) contribute to the silencing of experiences of *racialized* persons (within European societies). *See also:* Sarbo, B. (2022). Rassismus und gesellschaftliche Produktionsverhältnisse. Ein materialistischer Rassismusbegriff. In E. R. Mendivil & B. Sarbo (Eds.), *Die Diversität der Ausbeutung. Zur Kritik des herrschenden Antirassismus*. Dietz.

[2] I use the terms "racialized" (*rassifiziert*) and "migrantified" (*migrantifiziert*) for people who experience racism (regardless of whether they were born in Germany or not) to make clear that it is primarily an *invocation* and *ascription of identity* and *"otherness"* by society, which is referred to and dealt with in everyday practice in different ways.

[3] In what follows, I will use the term urban "problem neighborhoods" in quotation marks. Firstly, to establish a critical link to the hegemonic (racist and classist) discourse on these neighborhoods, and

villa neighborhoods – accordingly, no government-funded *social mixing projects* are implemented there.

However, the existence of these segregated, formerly "working-class neighborhoods" – which today, in the age of neoliberalism, are often referred to as *marginalized* and urban *"problem neighborhoods"* – comes to the attention of society when certain incidents occur involving their residents. The reactions of the bourgeois press and the staged surprise that these neighborhoods and their inhabitants (still) exist confirm Engels' aptly formulated statement. For a brief moment, these neighborhoods are in the spotlight. For a brief moment, the voices of people who have worked there for years as social workers, community psychologists, youth workers and the voices of residents are made audible and heard – albeit mostly within the framework of the *hegemonic racist and classist discourse*, while voices outside of this discourse remain largely marginalized. Shortly thereafter, these neighborhoods disappear again from the general societal attention and are forgotten - after some measures were taken that supposedly solve "the problem" once and for all.

One of these *brief moments of societal attention* for the existence of these neighborhoods was the "riots" on New Year's Eve 2022/2023 in Berlin. A burning tour coach in the immediate vicinity of apartment blocks of one of the so-called urban "problem neighborhoods" in Berlin-Neukölln attracted particular media attention. It was reported that people had to be evacuated from their homes and that police officers and firefighters were attacked by youths when they tried to help – a headline in almost all major mainstream media outlets. "41 injured police officers," "145 people from 18 nations arrested," "45 suspects were German, followed by 27 suspects of Afghan nationality and 21 Syrians," and "355 initiated misdemeanor and criminal proceedings" – these were the figures subsequently published by Berlin police and picked up by the media.[4] The statement that the arrested persons suspected of committing a crime were predominantly *young*, *male*, and *non-German* immediately sparked a heated debate about *integration* and alleged "problem neighborhoods." These original figures were revised downward significantly by the Berlin police two weeks after the New Year's Eve on Jan. 16, 2023.[5] But the initially published figures had already triggered a *fierce media debate* that could not be stopped[6]. A broad media discussion revolved around *youth*, *youth culture*, *youth violence*, *urban "problem*

secondly, to illustrate that there are indeed social and collective problems associated with living and growing up in these neighborhoods, although they may differ from those ascribed from the outside.

[4] For example: https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/news/silvester-in-berlin-ueber-100-randalierer-wieder-auf-freiem-fuss-li.303354
https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/silvesterkrawalle-festgenommene-polizei-weniger-1.5728666 (retrieved November 01, 2023)

[5] The figures originally published referred to all people arrested for various crimes in the city that night, but not necessarily linked to these so called "riots." The new figures published on Jan. 16, 2023 were as follows: 102 criminal charges related to attacks against "emergency personnel," 59 of them against police, 43 against firefighters and rescue services. Criminal complaints were leveraged against 39 suspects. 14 persons had German citizenship, another 10 persons had dual citizenship. See: https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/panorama/silvester-boeller-angriffe-berlin-polizei-100.html- retrieved November 01, 2023

[6] See: https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/silvester-krawalle-berlin-fakten-polizei-100.html - retrieved November 01, 2023

neighborhoods," values of togetherness, and *failed urban policies.* The main topic in all these discussions was the *failed integration* of *migrantified* (young) people into "German society" and the revival of commonly known *racist resentments.* The discussions thus moved *fundamental questions of togetherness* in a *migration society* (*Migrationsgesellschaft*) to the center of the debates (Broden & Mecheril, 2014a)[7]. The Berlin district of *Neukölln* received special social and media attention in this respect.

Neukölln is traditionally referred to as a *working-class district of the Western part of the city*, i.e. as one of the districts in which Berlin's industry was already concentrated before the Second World War. The *greater district of Neukölln* is one of the most densely populated inner-city areas in Germany. Today, the district boasts a population of 330.284 inhabitants, of which *4.,9 % have a so-called migrant background (Migrationshintergund)*[8] and *28.0 % are foreign passport holders*[9]. In 2022, the *unemployment rate* was 9.3% (Berlin average 4.9%). The *at-risk-of-poverty rate* is 29.4% (Berlin average 18.6%). The share of the population receiving benefits from the minimum welfare programs (*Mindestsicherungssysteme*) is 22.3% (Berlin average 15.6 %) – with poor, unemployed people increasingly concentrated in certain *new housing estate neighborhoods* (Amt für Statistik, 2022). As early as the 1930s – as a result of the Great Depression of 1929 – *media coverage of unemployment* shaped Neukölln's image in Germany and abroad. In the context of Hitler's seizure of power and during World War II, Neukölln became known as a *resistant district* in which the National Socialist German Workers' Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei;* NSDAP) was unable to achieve a breakthrough despite its other electoral successes. *Post-Fordist deindustrialization* and increasing *globalization*, moreover, dissolved traditional local and economic structures, and low-income people and welfare recipients increasingly concentrated in Neukölln (and other traditional working-class neighborhoods of the city). With the fall of the Berlin Wall (*Mauerfall*) in 1989, formerly peripheral districts – like parts of the greater district of Neukölln – suddenly became attractive as *central, inner-city areas* for both *real estate speculators* and *a new young alternative (former) student scene* moving to Berlin from all over Germany and Europe (Heinen, 2014; Soederberg, 2017). Strong *gentrification* processes have been taking place until today (Döring & Ulbricht, 2016; Holm, 2011). *Real estate speculation* and

[7] The term "migration society" (*Migrationsgesellschaft*) was shaped in Germany in the 1990s and 2000s and increasingly used to describe the fact that *migration* is an integral part of societal reality. Societal debates relating to the fact of a migration society are accompanied by questions of identity and of which social context is and should be the relevant political-symbolic reference unit (See: Broden & Mecheril, 2014a).

[8] "A person has a *migrant background* if he or she or at least one parent was not born with German citizenship. Specifically, this definition includes immigrant and non-immigrant foreigners, immigrant and non-immigrant naturalized citizens, (late) Aussiedler (ethnic German repatriates) and the descendants of these groups born as Germans. The displaced persons of the Second World War have a separate status (according to the Federal Displaced Persons Act); therefore, they and their descendants do not count as part of the population with a migrant background." (transl.: G. E.) Statistisches Bundesamt, F. S. O. o. G. (2023). *Definition Migrationshintergrun*d.

[9] Population register statistics Berlin June 30, 2023 (Einwohnerregisterstatistik Berlin 30. Juni 2023), data from the Berlin-Brandenburg Statistics Office (Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg), retrieved October 30, 2023.

rising rents have led to an influx of people with higher income and education, especially into the district's old neighborhoods (*Altbauviertel*) near the city-center. Low-income and unemployed people, the former residents of these neighborhoods, are more and more displaced out of the city into the new housing estates (*Neubausiedlungen*) of the district, which increasingly receive (media) attention as so-called "problem neighborhoods" with designated societal problems.

After New Year's Eve 2022/2023, one of these *designated problems* was *youth violence*. Accordingly several *summits against youth violence* were convened in Berlin to draft *interventions for the prevention of youth violence* and attended by representatives of non-governmental organizations (*Freie Träger*), youth education centers, politicians and other education experts, as well as selected Berlin youth themselves. The result of the second summit was 29 concrete measures in *four pillars,* in which 90 million euros are to be invested in the years 2023-2024: *first*, in parental work and school social work; *second*, in youth social work; *third*, in strong neighborhoods and venues for youth; and *fourth* in clear consequences for criminal offenses and boundary violations (repressive measures against juvenile delinquency such as better networking between police and youth welfare services and new positions in the youth departments of the public prosecutor's office).[10]

The political debate in Germany triggered by the *scandalizing coverage in the mainstream press* as well as the measures taken in the form of these youth summits are reminiscent of Nelida Fuccaro's (2016) conclusion to her analysis of violence and cities in the Middle East:

> In short, treating violence as contingent on place and the rhythms of urban life can reveal how the physical, material, and immaterial qualities of the city become enmeshed with various forms of state and social power. At a basic level, it problematizes simplistic binary understandings of the relations between state and society, between rulers and ruled, and between citizens and the government. […] This reading exposes the interface between urban activism and state repression; between street violence and security regimes; between urban norms and institution building; and between civic identity, nationality, and citizenship (Fuccaro, 2016, p. 11).

It is evident that in this renewed debate in Germany and in the reaction to it (which ties in with existing hegemonic discourses), violence has not been treated as a *problem for society as a whole*, not as a *relationship between conflicting parties*, not as part of the ongoing struggle for the *right to the city*, but has been located exclusively among young people from certain places of residence/neighborhoods and ascribed countries of origin or religious affiliations. *Youth violence* thus became a *problem of "the others"* – and *one of the main*

[10] Concrete measures for the prevention of youth violence for the years 2023 – 2024. Second summit against youth violence at the invitation of the Governing Mayor of Berlin on February 22, 2023 (*Konkrete Maßnahmen zur Prävention von Jugendgewalt für die Jahre 2023 - 2024. Zweiter Gipfel gegen Jugendgewalt auf Einladung der Regierenden Bürgermeisterin von Berlin am 22. Februar 2023*) https://www.berlin.de/rbmskzl/_assets/aktuelles/ergebnispapier-zum-2-gipfel-gegen-jugendgewalt-am-22-februar-2023.pdf?ts=1698053766 (Retrieved October 30, 2023).

problems that needs to be solved by societal intervention to prevent such unrest from recurring. Existing societal problems have been *individualized* (partly psychologized and pathologized) and *depoliticized*. *Political* and *social power*, *urban poverty* and the reference to *everyday state repression*, *gentrification* and *displacement* from inner-city areas have been marginally addressed in this heated debate, but have had no influence on interventions against the diagnosed problem of *youth violence*.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the current situation in major German cities and of people living in urban "problem neighborhoods," it is necessary to place the *problem constellations* relating to urban "problem neighborhoods" into the context of *society as a whole* – taking into consideration the *overall societal mediatedness* (*Vermitteltheit*) *of individual existence* (Holzkamp, 1985)[11]: *Which societal conditions, interventions and hegemonic discourses shape the lives of people growing up in urban "problem neighborhoods"? What are the lived experiences of the people themselves?* In the next sections, I will therefore first discuss very briefly *the problem(s) with urban "problem neighborhoods"* as they have historically evolved, been created and exist today in major German cities. It quickly becomes clear that approaches such as *social mixing* and *measures against youth violence* only shift the problems by contributing to the *marginalization*, *othering* and *displacement* of the poorer population from inner cities. In this way, these approaches not only fail to address the problems of the people in urban "problem neighborhoods," but actually exacerbate them. Secondly, after a short introduction to the Critical Psychological approach (Holzkamp, 1985; Markard, 2009) and the methodology of the research biographical-ethnographic project *Living Youth in a migration society: Dealing with social inequality,* I will use excerpts from ethnographic field notes and biographical interviews to interpret *young people's lived experiences of dealing with problems in their neighborhoods*. In the last section, I will discuss the significance of certain *collective ways of dealing with problems* of inhabitants in urban "problem neighborhoods" and the question of a possible realization of the *right to the city* in Lefebvre's sense.

The problem(s) with urban "problem neighborhoods"

According to Henri Lefebvre (2006 [1996]), the emergence of today's *urban problematic* is closely linked to *industrialization* as its trigger. Cities, of course, existed before the onset of industrialization – for example, the oriental city associated with the *Asiatic mode of production*, the antique city associated with

[11] However, this overall *societal mediatedness* (*Vermitteltheit*) of individual existence (Holzkamp 1985) can never be fully captured – especially not in this spatially limited paper. In the following, I will only (be able to) to place the emergence of today's urban "problem neighborhoods" in a larger world-historical context in very abbreviated form, focusing primarily on Germany, in particular on the Federal Republic of Germany. My reference points are based on the interconnections and contradictions that the *co-researchers* themselves address or that I myself have come across in the course of my *participant observation* in these urban "problem neighborhoods" in the Western part of the city of Berlin – in line with the research style of *Grounded Theory*.

the *ownership of slaves*, and the medieval city embedded in *feudal relations*. But the imposition of the *capitalist mode of production* and the emergence of an *industrial bourgeoisie* led to a significant concentration of power in the cities. David Harvey (Harvey, 1975, 1985) speaks of an *urbanization of capital*.

In Germany, the period after World War II was characterized by large *migration movements,* predominantly to the cities with their large factories and industrial plants (Brinkmann & Sauer, 2016; Krummacher, 2017; Oltmer et al., 2012). At that time, economies in all regions of the world were managed by "*state-centered regulatory regimes"*[12] (Evans & Sewell Jr, 2013, p. 35). Partly because of the shortage of male workers after the Second World War, *recruitment contracts* concluded in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) with Italy, Spain, Portugal and Yugoslavia, and later also Greece and Turkey (Rass, 2012) and in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) with its "brother states" Algeria, Angola, China, Cuba, Mongolia, Mozambique, Poland, Hungary and Vietnam. At that time, there was no *communal integration policy* in either the FRG or the GDR – the focus was on *temporary integration into the labor market*, rather than on a comprehensive social integration concept (Bendel & Borkowski, 2016).

Due to increasing *immigration* and the *many buildings* that had been *destroyed* during the Second World War, the preferred housing model between 1950 and 1970 was the *large housing estate* to create functional, modern living spaces for as many people as possible. During this time emerged the very neighborhoods that today are referred to as "social hotspots" or "problem neighborhoods/districts." The *suburbanization trend* with *large housing estates*, on the one hand, and *owner-occupied homes in the countryside* on the outskirts of the city, on the other, contributed to the new composition of the population in the inner-city areas – mainly the unemployed, the poor, migrant workers and their families (Rinn, 2016, 2018). However, this planned *functional restructuring of the city* failed due to several factors according to Rinn (2016, 2018): First, it came into conflict with the *crisis of the Fordist social formation* – I will discuss this topic in more detail below – which led to falling tax revenues, rising government spending (e.g. on social transfers and subsidizing shrinking industries) and a crisis of the urban budget. Secondly, at the same time it met with *resistance from local residents*. The planning of peripheral large housing estates was closely related to the *speculative decay of inner-city residential areas* that were to be cleared for demolition. There, neighborhood initiatives organized against clear-cut redevelopment and "resettlement."

As already indicated, an important turning point for the economy, urban policy, labor market policy and "migration policy" was the *energy and economic crisis in the 1970s* – which turned out to be a *general crisis of capitalism* that was not overcome until the early 1980s. Advanced capitalist economies saw the *decline of heavy industries* – such as coal mining, steel and shipbuilding – and at the same time an *exchange rate system* was introduced in which the price of a

[12] In *capitalist countries*, the economy was based on "free markets" and private property, regulated by Keynesian welfare states. In *real-socialist countries,* the economy almost exclusively took place between state institutions. See also: Evans & Sewell Jr, 2013

country's currency was determined by the relative supply and demand of other currencies, *new electronic trading technologies* emerged, and the reinvestment of the enormous wealth created by high oil prices in Middle Eastern[13] countries opened new opportunities for financial speculation of all kinds, especially in the "City" of London and on Wall Street – to name just a few of the most important aspects of this *global crisis* (Merten, 2017; Wilson, 1987). Together with stagnant industrial production, these speculative activities made the *financial sector* the leading "industry" in the United States and the United Kingdom until the mid-1980s. "Perhaps the most distinctive mark of the deep capitalist crisis of the 1970s was the phenomenon of 'stagflation', a puzzling and troubling combination of persistently high unemployment and persistently high inflation that seemed immune to the remedies on offer from the then dominant Keynesian economics. The conundrum of stagflation threw the economic policies of the major capitalist states into disarray" (Evans & Sewell Jr, 2013, p. 41). As a result of this *crisis of Fordism*, the *improved productivity of machines* and increasing *globalization*, a process of *deindustrialization* began in the Western industrialized countries. The metropolises changed from *places of industrial production* to *centers of administration and services*. New jobs were created in the *service sector*, but most of them required a high level of education. At the same time, simple jobs with low educational requirements disappeared more and more from urban areas (Merten, 2017; Wilson, 1987).

As a consequence, a *recruitment stop* was imposed in West Germany (FRG) in 1973, which meant the temporary end of legal "non-European" labor migration. The so-called *guest worker regime* was replaced by other forms of migration, mainly *family reunification* and *asylum migration* (Oltmer et al., 2012). "*Guest workers"* who left Germany at this time received severance pay. For those who decided to stay, there was, up to a certain point, the possibility to bring their families. The number of foreign workers initially fell as a result of the recruitment stop, but the total number of immigrants continued to rise (Herbert, 2001).

Marcel Berlinghoff (2012) points out that the *oil price crisis* was a welcome opportunity in Western Germany to finally put long-standing plans for restrictive labor migration policies into action – following the politics of other Western European countries like Switzerland, Sweden, England and later also France. The characteristic feature of "*guest worker employment*" was the *temporary length of stay* of the labor migrants; however, as the volume of labor migration increased, so did the length of stay of people who came to Germany as "guest workers." This led to increased family reunification in the second half of the 1960s, which had an impact on the *housing market* and the *conception of schooling* and raised

[13] High oil prices in the Middle East and the resulting prosperity, particularly in what is now Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, enabled the development of long-term economic stability in the region. Revenues from oil sales were invested not only in health care, education, housing, and social security for their own populations, but also in infrastructure development such as roads, airports, ports, and telecommunication networks, which attracted foreign investors. Many Middle Eastern countries have established sovereign wealth funds to manage and invest their oil-derived assets. These funds invest in various sectors worldwide, including real estate, equities, bonds, and infrastructure projects. In addition, Middle Eastern countries often provide financial assistance and investment to other countries, particularly in the global south.

questions of *legal and political participation*. The contradictions of the *immigration reality,* on the one hand, and the *discourse on temporary labor migration,* on the other, were soon discussed throughout Europe under the collective term "problem of/with foreign workers," as were economic aspects of migration and integration and control policies[14] (Berlinghoff, 2012, p. 152 ff.). While "alien employment" was still seen as a guarantor of rising prosperity and the containment of inflation in the 1950s and early 1960s, the infrastructural costs of recruitment came increasingly to the fore as the decade progressed (Berlinghoff, 2012, p. 153).[15]

In the advanced capitalist world, the late 1960s and 1970s were simultaneously a time of *cultural* and *political crisis*. This period was marked by great disillusionment with the status quo. The *youth* and *student movements* of the late 1960s were critical of the prevailing social order and the bureaucratic state, and they experimented with *new political options* and *lifestyles* – inspired by socialist, communist, egalitarian, bohemian, and libertarian strains, among others. In addition, a new *environmental awareness* raised doubts about unlimited economic growth as a sociopolitical ideal (Evans & Sewell Jr, 2013, p. 42). The struggles for *rights of and justice for* workers, people with disabilities, women, trans, gays and lesbians shaped this period, as did those of *racialized* and *migrantified* people – the former "guest workers" and their children (Bojadzijev, 2012).

The *understanding of citizenship* in the 20th century was characterized by a major contradiction – on the one hand, the *aggressive demand for assimilation of foreigners* without "German blood" and, on the other hand, the conviction that such *assimilation was de facto impossible* for *racialized* persons because the term "German" itself was extremely racialized (El-Tayeb, 2016). Two strongly polarizing and mutually exclusive positions characterized the migration discourse: Germany is a "multicultural society" vs. Germany "is not a country of immigration" (Broden & Mecheril, 2014b). In the 1990s, the towns of Hoyerswerda, Rostock-Lichtenhagen, Mölln, Solingen and others became the scene of *the most massive racist (arson) attacks* and *murders* by neo-Nazis and other right-wing extremist groups/individuals in Germany since the end of the Second World War. The *right to asylum*[16] was restricted in 1993 – many of the regulations passed[17] at that time are still valid today (Nuscheler, 2013). However, the amendment of the Citizenship Act in the year 2000 can be seen as *a symbolic step* towards the *official recognition of migration in Germany as a fact* (Broden & Mecheril, 2014b, p. 8) and as a paradigm shift in integration policy. The

[14] The following statement by Max Frisch (*1911 † 1991) has become well-known and is still frequently quoted until today to characterize the "guest worker period": „*Wir riefen Arbeitskräfte, und es kamen Menschen*" (Max Frisch, 1965) – "We called for workers and people came." – first mentioned in the preface to the book "Siamo italiani – Die Italiener" by Alexander J. Seiler, Zurich: EVZ 1965.

[15] As a result, *cost-benefit calculations* were made throughout Europe to find a quota up to which the employment of foreigners would be economically worthwhile – without any satisfactory results for economic representatives and politicians (Berlinghoff, 2012, p. 153).

[16] In 1949 the *right to political asylum* was enshrined in the *Basic Law* of the FRG and in the *constitution* of the GDR.

[17] For example, the so-called "third country regulation" (Art. 16a para. 2 GG) was passed: People who enter Germany via an EU country or a "safe third country" are not legally entitled to asylum.

principle of descent (ius sanguinis), which until then had been the sole principle, was supplemented by the *principle of place of birth* (ius soli), which made it possible to acquire German citizenship. Naika Foroutan and others (El-Tayeb, 2016; Foroutan, 2016, 2021; Siouti et al., 2022; Yildiz, 2017) characterize Germany's society today as a *postmigrant society*[18]. Foroutan (2016, 2021) affirms that *postmigrant* stands for an *analytical perspective* that addresses the conflicts, identity formation processes, and social and political transformations that begin after migration and after *recognition as a migration country*. Questions of *national identity*, *belonging* and *representation* are raised anew, including matters of "national-ethno-cultural (multiple) belonging" (*natio-ethno-kultureller (Mehrfach-) Zugehörigkeit)* of citizens (Mecheril, 2003).

The associated *paradigm shift in integration policies* is reflected particularly in the *integration policy of cities* (Häußermann & Kapphan, 2008). To this day, it is not the state, but the city and the *social space* in the district/neighborhood that is considered the decisive level of action for integration policy (Bundesregierung, 2007). Robert Pütz and Mathias Rodatz (2013) analyze this paradigm shift from the perspective of *governmentality analysis* and place it in a context with superordinate processes of a "neoliberalization of the urban" (Pütz & Rodatz, 2013, p. 166). In the words of Peter Evans and William Sewell, Jr.,

> Neoliberalism as theory, ideology, and policy has also had diffuse but powerful effects on the global social imaginary. The neoliberal social imaginary extols entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and sturdy individualism; equates untrammeled pursuit of self-interest and consumer satisfaction with human freedom; glorifies personal wealth; sees volunteerism as the appropriate way to solve social problems; and associates government programs with inefficiency, corruption, and incompetence. The neoliberal social imaginary shapes individual goals and behavior while simultaneously making neoliberal political ideology and policy paradigms seem 'natural' (Evans & Sewell Jr, 2013, p. 37/ 38).

All these aspects are reflected in the *integration policies of cities* and their implementation. According to the analysis by Pütz and Rodatz (2013), the transition from a deficit orientation to a *potential orientation* with regard to migration leads to a *diversity-related district policy* in the sense of *diversity mainstreaming*, which includes the organization of administrative action and questions of political control. The need for political intervention is accordingly derived from the *benefits for the city* (Pütz & Rodatz, 2013, p. 170). In contrast to *hierarchical control* (city administration), political control now takes place *horizontally* with *network-like processes* (urban governance). Civil society and private sector actors are increasingly involved. The strategy relies on *self-*

[18] Paul Mecheril (2014) argues that the term *postmigrant* distances itself from the wrong object. As with *postcolonialism* or *postmodernism,* "post"-constructions have an empirical and a political-normative dimension. The use of the word *postcolonialism* articulates, for example, both the empirically justifiable collapse of individual colonial regimes and the legitimacy of colonialism in general, thus also a critique of colonial-imperial practices of superiority. But German society at present is about the political, cultural and epistemic occupation of the social aspects of migration/migration society, not about overcoming migration.

governance through strategic incentives, e.g., project-based funding of NGOs (Freie Träger), which in turn aim at *activating existing resources* and *self-integration* on the ground (Pütz & Rodatz, 2013, p. 174) – anything else is considered uneconomical (Rose 2000, 96f.). *Integration policy* has become one of the *central tasks of municipal politics* with new models of administrative control: integration management systems with monitoring and evaluation tools. Through *potential orientation* – as a central element of this new understanding in integration policy – municipalities become *moderators* of integration policy measures; they shift their responsibility for the participation opportunities for migrants to civil society. As it is highly *spatially oriented*, civil society and private organizations are strengthened, explicitly including migrant organizations and religious migrant communities, which are seen as having great "potential" for the city. Migrants are no longer seen as a "special burden on the welfare state"; rather, a normalization of the state's response to migration is taking place (Pütz & Rodatz, 2013, p. 173). In the neoliberal logic of *promoting and demanding*, all people are to be activated, not just migrants. *Diversity* is seen as a *resource of governance* towards the dream of a city „that would almost govern itself" (Rose, 2000, p. 95). The municipalities strategically link their *integration policy* with neighborhood-related measures and programs for the development of "disadvantaged neighborhoods*,"* e.g., the federal-state program "Neighborhoods with Special Development Needs – Socially Integrative City," (Soziale Stadt) launched in 1999. *Activation and awareness strategies* are designed to lead residents of marginalized neighborhoods to successful economic, social, and cultural self-management or self-integration (Pütz & Rodatz, 2013, p. 173) – in line with the idea of an *activating welfare state* (Evans & Sewell Jr, 2013; Lanz, 2009). With its *interdepartmental* and *neighborhood-based steering orientation*, the program has three central components: The *structural* upgrading of the housing stock and the residential environment, the *improvement of social, cultural and educational infrastructures*, and the *image of the neighborhood.*

In this way, *urban poverty* is reinterpreted today as a *problem of disintegration*, concentrated mainly in large housing estates on the outskirts of the city, but also in old housing estates near the city center (Rinn, 2018) – rather than one of *intersectional class relations*, or of a *lack of disposal of the means of production*, or as the result of a continuous *class struggle from above*, nor as a result of continuous *exploitation of the global South* by the global North. According to this line of reasoning, poor people in urban areas would find themselves in a *self-reinforcing downward spiral* (Rinn, 2016, 2018): the outflow of the middle class worsens the quality of life of the "disadvantaged population groups" that remain behind, e.g., by increasing the burden on economic, social and educational infrastructures. These neighborhoods thus become an additional *factor of disadvantage* for the (remaining) people living there. *Socialization deficits*, "welfare dependency" and *spatial-social neglect* would multiply, if the immediate neighborhood lacked those residents who – according to the inherent logic of the argument – represent the norms of *education*- and *wage-work-oriented "Western" bourgeois lifestyles* and who could also campaign for better living conditions and investments in their neighborhood (Rinn, 2016, 2018).

"Disadvantaged" residents who are problematized because of their class situation, ascribed *origin*, *religion* or *culture* are to be socially integrated (Rinn & Wiese, 2020).

In the hegemonic discourse, the coherent response to *poverty as an integration problem* is to promote *social mixing* (Bridge et al., 2012; Rinn & Wiese, 2020) in neighborhoods with poor populations. The concept of *social mix* has become an important urban planning and policy goal in North America and in many Western European countries. Although specific programs have evolved in different countries' policy contexts, which differ in their historical references, promoting *socially mixed neighborhoods and communities* by attracting *middle-income people to low-income neighborhoods* is at the heart of all these programs (Lees et al., 2012). Political-administrative actors work to direct investment and middle-class residents to those neighborhoods where upgrading and re-composition of the residential population is still desired. "As they currently exist, mixed-income housing policies are largely based on the (hegemonic) mantra that low-income people themselves are the problem, and that a benevolent gentry needs to colonize their home space in order to create the conditions necessary to help the poor 'bootstrap' themselves into a better socioeconomic position" (DeFilippis & Fraser, 2010, p. 136). It is assumed that living conditions for the poor improve when people with higher incomes or from the middle class live nearby (which in turn should reduce urban poverty in general). James DeFilippis and Jim Fraser argue that there is a "fundamental confusion about space and society" (DeFilippis & Fraser, 2010, p. 137) in this reasoning. Recognizing that the *spatial concentration of poverty* can exacerbate the experience of poverty is by no means equivalent to assuming that the spatial concentration of poor people *causes* poverty. It is also considered that middle-class or affluent people do not benefit from proximity to the poor because the poor themselves do not (cannot) contribute to improving conditions in the neighborhood. The reasons for the *marginalization of places* are seen in the characteristics of the (poor) people, while the *upgrading of a marginalized place* is associated with overarching political-economic forces of urbanization – the (poor) people already living there then play no role at all in this explanation. Although *segregation* is an *obstacle to social justice*, it does not necessarily follow that integration (per se) is a solution. According to the authors, it is unclear whether the spatial proximity of rich and poor leads the rich to perceive, to interact and try to understand the poor at all.

> Those who live in mixed-income environments do not escape the reality that "communities" are raced, classed, and gendered. These identities have a long history of being made important in larger society and play out in the workings of mixed-income neighborhoods. The criteria that are implemented on a daily basis to distinguish those who have legitimate claims to the "right to the city" (to inhabit and create urban space) usually undercut subsidized renters in obvious ways […] How can we not expect those practices to bleed into the social relations between proximate residents and their unequal sense of the right to be in place? This is because the key issue remains the unequal power relations involved in people's access to the space – people's ability, in short, to claim a right to be in the place (or, more broadly, a right to the city). For mixing to have a role in

> making our cities more just, the people being mixed need to be in proximity on their own terms and those terms need some level of equivalence or comparability. (DeFilippis & Fraser, 2010, p. 144)

The ability to represent one's own needs and desires in shaping *community processes* and *negotiating social norms* is also inextricably linked to the question of *available cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, in conflict and negotiation processes, some people succeed quickly and skillfully in using and activating resources outside the neighborhood for the interests of the neighborhood and for their own – others less so (DeFilippis & Fraser, 2010, p. 145). Residents with greater *social*, *economic*, and *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1986) appropriate so-called "disadvantaged" neighborhoods by *generalizing their own norms and requirements*, for example, for togetherness in the neighborhood or using public space. "The ideal of social mixing refers to hegemonic middle-class values of individual achievement, capacity and lifestyle and thereby stabilizes existing power relations" (Huning & Schuster, 2015, p. 741). *The right to the city* in Lefebvre's sense is thus a call, a demand, and it includes a right to connect to inner-city infrastructures, networks, scenes (centrality), to political participation in decision-making, to bringing differences together in relation to each other, and to thinking and developing collectively alternative possibilities and utopias:

> The right to the city cannot be conceived of as a simple visiting right or as a return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right to urban life. It does not matter whether the urban fabric encloses the countryside and what survives of peasant life, as long as the 'urban,' place of encounter, priority of use value, inscription in space of a time promoted to the rank of a supreme resource among all resources, find its morphological base and its practico-material realization. (Lefebvre, 2006 [1996], p. 158).

Moritz Rinn (2016, 2018) raises the question whether current general changes in urban policy, such as *new housing programs*, instruments such as the *rent brake*, or approaches to *restrict investments in gentrification areas* indicate a *break with urban neoliberalization* or whether they should even be evaluated as *progressive strategies* towards a *city for all*. He (Rinn, 2016, 2018) analyzes the effects of these new *urban policy re-regulations* since the 1970s, using the city of Hamburg as an example (which I regard as easily transferable to other major German cities). He concludes that there are few potentially progressive changes that can be positively described as *social*. The observed *more social* policies are not in opposition to *entrepreneurial-neoliberal policies*; rather, both share central, historically developed normative-strategic foundations that constitute an "urbanism of inequality" (Rinn, 2018, p. 10). This entrepreneurial-integrated urban development policy works primarily with neighborhood-based, *middle-class-oriented normalization strategies* and a population policy of *social mix*. The political-administrative promise of a *city for all* is thus to be realized primarily through strategies of "bourgeoisification" (Rinn, 2018, p. 10) of urban spaces that drive exclusion and displacement and reinforce social inequalities

instead of counteracting them – even if there is no direct economic displacement pressure in these neighborhoods.

The complex perspective of "society" on these neighborhoods, their inhabitants and their "behavior"/actions, which can only be outlined here as an overview, is an important *frame of reference* for all *actions*, *feelings*, *plans* and *self-images* of the young people growing up in those "problem neighborhoods." In their everyday practices, they have to refer *directly* or *indirectly* to the social interpretations of themselves and their actions, and to the *structural conditions* derived from them. In the following, I will focus on the *lived experiences* of young people living in urban "problem neighborhoods" in the former Western part of Berlin – after giving a brief overview of the Critical Psychological approach (Holzkamp, 1985; Markard, 2009) and the methodology of the research project *Living Youth in a migration society.* Using excerpts from recorded conversations and biographical interviews with (young) residents, I will select a few problems as examples that arise from certain narrated incidents in the neighborhood and reflect on *how people deal with these problems.* In conclusion, I will discuss these findings in the framework of realizing the *right to the city*.

Living Youth in a migration society – research project and methodology

All field note and transcript excerpts interpreted and analyzed in this paper are part of the research project *Living Youth in a migration society: Dealing with social inequality*, a *biographical-ethnographic* research project in the tradition of the *Berlin School of Critical Psychology* (Holzkamp, 1985; Markard, 2009). The claim of Critical Science and thus also of the Marxist subject-scientific approach of Critical Psychology (Holzkamp, 1985; Markard, 2009) is generally that it contributes to *(self-) enlightenment* and thus also to the critique of ideological shapes of thinking in the inhuman system of capitalism. That means we are talking about a unity of *epistemic interest* and *change*. The basic assumption is that individual human existence is mediated by society as a whole: In general, individuals do not only live *under* conditions, but actively produce them and can act on them to change them (in cooperation with others). The concrete individual finds her*self of course not in relation to *society as a whole*, but only to those parts of social reality that are relevant for her* life. Not all these societal fields have to be consciously accessible any time – on the contrary, processes of *becoming aware of one's own mediatedness* (*Vermitteltheit*) in society take place especially when societal *crises* (financial, environmental, pandemics, wars) occur, which set in motion processes of change and subversion on various levels that (also) concretely affect one's own life. It follows that individual behavior cannot be derived from the social conditions captured by social theory, but that these *social theoretical analyses* are indispensable because individual behavior can only be understood by taking into account the *social conditions affecting the individual's life*. Both the *objective determinacy* (by conditions) and *subjective determining* of human existence must be taken into account. Accordingly, both are necessary in order to understand people's actions, *social theoretical analyses*

of societal conditions – as I have (briefly) undertaken in the first part of this paper – and *subject scientific empirical research* in order to gain an understanding of how these conditions can be interpreted and acted upon – as will be illustrated in the following.

Klaus Holzkamp (1985) establishes *two levels of mediation* between the individual and the society: "position" and "life situation" (*Lebenslage*). While *position* refers to the individual's contribution to social production/reproduction in the overall organization based on the division of labor and the associated possibilities and limits of influencing her* life circumstances, *life situation* is conceived in a much more comprehensive way. It includes the social *position,* but goes substantially beyond it. Holzkamp refers here to *actual real living conditions* of an individual; exemplarily, he mentions love relationships, leisure time, engagement in political parties and associations. However, assuming that the global capitalist mode of production is based on *gendered* and *racialized* relations and that *racist* and *patriarchal ideology* are an integral part of the *global capitalist system*, it is not sufficient to locate *position* only within the framework of an economic relationship of exploitation, as Holzkamp suggests. It is necessary to expand the horizon of *position* to include an *intersectional perspective* (see also: Riegel, 2016). It must be possible to mark and name the *social positions* from which certain experiences can be made and others cannot – at least in relation to *class*, *race*, *gender* and *dis/ability*. As a *subjective science* in the *Marxist tradition, Critical Psychology* (Holzkamp, 1985; Markard, 2009) provides the *analytical category* of *generalized vs. restrictive agency* to conceive analytically this *double possibility in human agency* between *adaption to existing conditions* and *resistance* in order to dispose of the conditions. Picking up on this concept, Athanasios Marvakis (1996) speaks of "subjective orientations" for acting/ behavior, feeling, thinking, which can either be rather "conventional" and not question the given, dominant meanings, or "transcendent," if attempts can be reconstructed in the *subjective orientation* to exceed the hegemonic social orientation meanings (Marvakis, 1996, p. 56).

Methodologically the research project relies on *empirical-reconstructive research methodology* (Strübing & Schnettler, 2004), particularly *ethnography* (Breidenstein et al., 2015) and *biographical research* (Dausien, 2015; Dausien & Kelle, 2009). For the methodological implementation, a method of *triangulation* of *ethnographic field research methods* (LeCompte & Schensul, 2013; Spradley, 2016), *expert interviews* and *biographical-narrative interviews* (Rosenthal, 1995; Rosenthal & Loch, 2002) was used, as well as elements of *autoethnography* (Roth, 2005). The *research style* as well as the analysis of data is based on *Grounded Theory methodology* (Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and its advancement into a *Constructing Grounded Theory* (Charmaz, 2014) – complemented by *sequential analysis* (Rosenthal, 1995). The excerpts[19] from *interview transcripts* and *field notes* analyzed in the following sections were obtained from field research in an urban "problem neighborhood" in the city of Berlin.

[19] All excerpts have been translated into English and anonymized.

Dealing with problems in urban "problem neighborhoods"

> "But what really unites people here is the process of gentrification. That's mainly what all the people are affected by or have been affected by, and that's why they came here. They've all moved here from different regions of the city because rents have gone up and so on. A lot of them moved here because they can afford to live here, and that's why the rents here have gone up to some extent."
> "Here, too, already?"
> "Now it's starting here too. Here, for example, you can't get an apartment anymore if you have a Turkish-Arab name and not even if you have a lot of children. There are already big apartments here, but they'd rather rent them to seven to eight students than to a family."
> "Really? Here are student shared apartments, too?"
> "Yes, yes, by now there are. Everything is changing here. And that's increasing here now, too."

In this transcribed excerpt from an interview conducted during field research in a "problem neighborhood," Anas, a resident, summarizes what currently sets his neighborhood apart and what is the common point of reference for all people actually living in this neighborhood. Most of the current residents had already been displaced from other inner-city neighborhoods, because they could no longer afford the rents. But this *process of displacement* is not yet complete; it is slowly taking hold of this neighborhood as well. If we understand displacement with Rinn and Wiese (2020, p. 24) as a *selective change in the appropriation and use of urban resources* such as *housing*, *neighborhood infrastructures*, or *public spaces*, *social mixing strategies* contribute to the *exclusion of marginalized residents*. This mixture-oriented urban policy, which Anas refers to, actively works on a "loss of place" (Davidson, 2008, p. 2402) and thus on *displacement* for especially *racially problematized residents* (Rinn & Wiese, 2020). Anas is aware that this process has already begun in his neighborhood and that it will bring major changes – which will not make his life or the lives of others who live here any easier. The selection of new tenants is now based on *racial characteristics* – this is the first noticeable step. The move of a *student shared housing community* into one of the large apartments that used to be available to families with many children is just the beginning.

What does this societal framework mean for the everyday practices and lived experiences of young people growing up in their neighborhoods? Taking the examples of *three problem constellations* – the *problem of noisy neighbors*, the *problem of challenging existing social rules* and the *problem of protecting the community from external threats* – I will analyze which values and norms of togetherness in the neighborhood are negotiated in these problem constellations. *Who has which problem and what significance do the problems have?*

The "problem of noisy neighbors": *Touching values of togetherness*

> Leila and I are sitting in the family's living room. In front of us on the table is a huge bowl of sweets, chips, nuts. We drink tea and eat ice cream. She begins to talk about life in the neighborhood and that there are often police operations, but "that the beauty of living in the neighborhood is that you always hear sounds and noises. It's never quiet, you always hear people, all the time: children, adults, music."
> I notice that there is a Hollywood swing on the balcony, which is actually too big for the balcony. It fills it completely and is turned inward. When you sit on it, you look into the living room. From the outside you can't see if someone is sitting on the swing or not. She bought this Hollywood swing for herself, with her own money. She loves sitting on it, studying for her university degree, and listening to the people (sounds) in the neighborhood, she tells me.

For Leila, one of the most important aspects of the *beauty of the neighborhood* is always hearing people. She even has her Hollywood swing set up so that she can *hear*, but not see, what's going on outside. She herself *cannot be seen from the outside* when she is sitting on the swing studying for her university degree. In this way, she is connected to the neighborhood when she is engaged in an isolated activity such as studying, but without being actively involved.

A staff member of the federal-state program "Socially Integrative City," (Soziale Stadt), however, frames the "problem of noisy neighbors" quite differently:

> And the neighbors complain, who want their peace and quiet because they might be going to work. Our Muslim families are also used to living outside until 11 pm. But when you go to work, you want to have your peace at 9:30 pm at the latest. So there are also arguments among Muslim families because one child is screaming downstairs and the other child is sleeping upstairs. That leads to neighborhood conflicts.

She speaks of *disturbance of the peace and quiet* as the cause of "neighborhood conflict," which conveys the ideal of a *quiet, conflict-free neighborhood* that is not (yet) being achieved. Three aspects are worth highlighting in the community worker's statement, which show how the *entrepreneurial-integrated urban development policy* outlined above with *neighborhood-based, middle-class-oriented normalization strategies* and a population policy of *social mix* (Rinn, 2018, p. 10) is reflected in her interpretation of the problem of "noisy neighbors": *First*, the reference to religion in "our Muslim families" stands out. Although "our" suggests a community to which the community worker counts herself (i.e. not a "parallel society of Muslims"), she nevertheless feels the need to mark "the Muslims" in particular and to portray them as a *closed homogeneous group* with specific needs and cultural practices that is opposed to another group, the *less problematic norm-conforming "non-Muslims*." She places *these values* of "our Muslim families" *in the context of religious practices* of Islam, without further specifying the role of religion in the context of "disturbing the night's quiet." *Second*, she speaks in a *paternalistic way* about the neighborhood in which she

herself does not live, but for which she feels responsible such that she believes she knows the people who live there as "her" people – not personally, but as a *homogeneous group with shared (problematic) values*. She speaks from a position above things in which she herself is not personally involved. She feels obliged to keep order, educate the residents and lead them to a better life – she knows what is good and right for the residents. *Third*, the relationship between *wage work* and the need for quiet after 9:30 pm is striking. Of course, this is very reminiscent of house rules – in Germany, it is customary to sign house rules as part of the rental agreement. The night's rest stipulated in the house rules usually starts at 10 pm – after that, noisy activities are to be refrained from. The "Muslim families" probably regularly exceed this regulation by one hour – this is how it has been reported in the form of complaints to her. A connection is made between *working for wages*, *having to get up early* – and correspondingly *wanting to rest early* – and *not being Muslim.* Quite apart from the fact that this statement seems somewhat outdated in relation to wage labor in the age of neoliberalism, with lived practices of *shift work*, *home office*, and increasing *workplace flexibility*, it sets the *working, non-Muslim middle class*, with its ascribed needs for peace and quiet, as *the norm for neighborhood togetherness*. In support of her thesis of the existing problem of noisy neighbors, she cites Muslim neighbors who also feel disturbed by the failure to observe the night's quiet – but not because of wage labor, but because of their children's sleep.

Further insight into residents' lived experiences of "neighborhood conflict," noise, and disruption is provided in the following section from the interview with Leila:

> I: Here in the house you know everyone?
> L: No, you actually say hello and know each other. People also talk from one balcony to the other. Here is quite a different mentality. I don't want to be racist, but it's different than with Germans. It's simply the case that people greet each other here and ask "how you're doing?" out of politeness, even if you're not interested. Then you just listen for five minutes and you move on. And that's how you get to know each other – or because of the kids, who are annoying because they scream through the halls and then you have to talk to the parents. I don't know, we have a neighbor downstairs, for example, whose child knocked over our clothes rack. I don't know, the kids explained that it was an accident. But I was really angry at the child at first, and then I told my mother, and my mother told their mother. But (she laughs) then I said to my mom, because the boy is actually really nice, he was really polite, and he also apologized. "Why are you tattling on him?" I don't know, we know each other through stories like that. Then I said to the mother: "No, he wasn't that bad, he tripped over the clothes rack". Or neighbors smoke shisha on the doorstep. And that's how you get to know each other a little bit. And then we also sit down on the doorstep, like in Lebanon actually, but still a bit more distanced. Not in a way that you visit each other all the time.

Leila speaks here as an expert for her neighborhood, for *neighborly togetherness*, not only for her own perspective on neighborhood relations. This phrasing "I don't want to be racist, but..." is a common opening into racist statements – from

the part of the *non-migrantified, non-racialized people* towards the *racialized* ones. She herself – contrary to the common practice of this introduction – does not devalue "the Germans," but uses "the German mentality" to abstract from it the *mentality in her neighborhood*. She assumes that the German mentality, unlike the mentality in her neighborhood, does not require explanation – she is talking to a non-migrantified, non-racialized interlocutor. There is a *common horizon of experience* of the people in the neighborhood to which she refers, a certain bond. It's about *belonging* and *identity* and about differentiation from "the Germans," who do things quite differently. A "mentality" is lived that differs from the "German" one, but also from the "Lebanese" one. It is a *hybrid mentality, a hybrid space,* in which influences in the sense of *closeness and distance in neighborly relations,* from *both reference mentalities,* are combined in a new kind of *specific local community mentality*. Not as close as in Lebanon and not as distanced as German neighbor relations.

This very specific *neighbor relationship* described here, is about being *polite*, not sharing your whole life with the neighbors. It's about *appropriateness* and *negotiating closeness and distance*. Five minutes of listening is *appropriate* to be considered *polite*. In this example of a concrete conflict about the clothes rack between neighbors, the *violation of politeness* as an *order of interaction* is resolved with *politeness* – with a polite apology and forgiveness. It is about *loyalty* and *trust*. A high value is to be able to trust each other, to be loyal and not to snitch. Moreover, this small example shows that the conflict is dealt with *collectively* and not individually. There are *parallel communication channels* – between the mothers, between her and the kids – with different meeting points and complex overlays. Relationships are established through these kinds of conflicts between neighbors. They are occasions to get to know each other – at a specific distance.

The problem of challenging existing social rules: *The negotiation of norms of togetherness*

Leila recounts the following incident she observed from her apartment:

> I was here once and was eating (*in her family's second floor apartment with windows and balcony overlooking the small neighborhood shopping center*) when we heard noises from outside. It was young people and these young people met two other people. And then a lot of them joined in and they were talking and then they were arguing. And then they were really arguing. And started hitting each other and stuff. And my German neighbor who recently moved in was really funny, started yelling out the window "No, I saw that" and so on, and "I'm going to report that" and the woman downstairs was also given a slap and then she screamed "Can someone help me? Can someone help me?" – "Yeah yeah, I'll help you. I'm going to report this." And then I went to her and said to her, "If you want to live here for a long time, close your mouth before the young people here break also into your apartment. Because they've all seen you." Because she is so crazy, screams out of the window and when she so obviously says that she will

> help her, I thought to myself that she is putting herself in danger. Then she thanked me a thousand times "Thank you, thank you".
> I: But what kind of people are they? Younger people?
> L: I don't know. A couple. They are together, maybe married, a man and a woman and two cats, and I had to laugh, I thought it was funny that she dares to say, "Yes, I will report it" in front of them.
> […]
> I: I'm still a bit hung up on this story with the woman.
> L: It's not about the fact that she's a woman, it's more about the fact that she's just sticking up for the enemy of the one, that she wants to support the woman downstairs and thus makes enemies. Because the police are simply not welcome. Anything that has to do with accusations, they prefer to sort out among themselves. And when the police came, their parents also came and settled the matter with these people who were here. Then they probably settled the matter among themselves and the charges were withdrawn.

In this narrated incident, too, everything starts with *noises* coming from outside, from other residents of the neighborhood – which, in contrast to the community worker's perception of the neighborhood conflict, are not problematized per se, but are the *reason for wanting to understand what is going on* – and possibly intervene, feel responsible. These noises are the starting point for *opening different channels of communication and interaction* and for *collective solutions*, which in this example leads to a new concrete interaction between newly arrived non-racialized German neighbors. Leila gets to know these new neighbors a little better through this incident with other neighbors on the street outside her window. In the narrated incident itself, there is the *mode of watching* and the *mode of hitting*. Violence needs legitimacy. There is something that happens *rightfully*, and if one does not know who is *in the right*, it is better not to interfere. To interfere means to *hit* or *to be hit*, to put oneself in *danger*. The neighbor follows her *German-bourgeois understanding of order* in accordance with her socialization, and interprets the situation she observes as one that requires her *moral courage*. She does not know that the *conflict parties* know each other, that in her new neighborhood everyone knows everyone (from a distance), that there are *strict rules of social interaction*, ways of *resolving conflicts*, and that many people who are not visible at first glance are ultimately involved in this conflict, can intervene at any time and are standing by in the background. She doesn't know that it is a *collective way of conflict resolution* that is lived here, where values like *loyalty*, *trust*, *no snitching to the police* are lived. Things are resolved independently, in a way that is legitimized by the community. In this way, the parents of the young people are involved and the police are relieved of their "duty." The statement "the police are simply not welcome" is a *collectively shared tacit comprehension*, which can be interpreted as an indication of a *collective horizon of experience* with police interventions to the detriment of the residents of the neighborhood.

Rida's biographical narrative also picks up on these *strict social rules of togetherness* in his neighborhood – from a different context:

> I never sold to older people because the older people here buy from the core folks, because it's also like, if someone sells here, you can't just go to the same place and sell there. You see? Otherwise there will be a fight. So, for nothing, and in the end, they'll also say, "You're not in the right because he was there before you.", you know? Nobody will stand on your back, that's why. But there are places, for example the Moon Shadow Path, where there are also many people who sell, but there is no one who is dangerous, you know? There are people here who are dangerous. So, what does "dangerous" mean? You are not afraid of them, but it is better not to get into trouble with them, you know?

Similar to Leila, Rida speaks as an expert who knows his neighborhood well, the places, spaces, social rules and keeps an eye on them – in terms of selling drugs. He shares his inside knowledge: There are rules set by the people *who first appropriated the space* about who is allowed to sell drugs in this place and who not. He himself is not one of those who have taken a fixed place, he tries to find his niche without getting into trouble with others. There is the *right of the first* and *of the elder*. The one who comes first sets the rules and permits others to sell drugs in this certain space. The first one is always *in the right* and is supported by all others in enforcing his right. Those who come later or are younger have to be subordinate. There are "dangerous" people who have appropriated spaces and "non-dangerous" ones, which means that they either grant others, new and younger people, the right to sell drugs in "their" spaces, or that they do not immediately and violently enforce their right when others sell there; they tolerate others. It is a *tense* situation when new people try to sell drugs in the same places. It can be very dangerous for the person to try to disregard the rights of the first and eldest.

The problem of threats to the community

> L: Yes, that is also something positive about this area. It's like the kids can usually play outside. But for example, there were two boys riding their bikes and then somehow two men tried to take both boys away. That was recently. That was so blatant, I was there in my exam period, studying. And they really tried to take the boys by force. And they managed to take one and not the other.
> I: To pull him into a car or how?
> L: Just to take him with them. I don't know. I didn't see that. Because there was a lot of hullabaloo. I've never seen the neighborhood like that. That was so blatant, how everybody got up and ran around. It was really so intense. It was like there was a war going on. But the people, I saw them stick together when it came to something like that. And then they called the police. A man had kind of beaten up the boy. Somehow, that's what happened. Supposedly the man said that the kids had been ringing his doorbell, playing pranks, and that's why he wanted to slap him or beat him somehow, he and his wife. But then they caught them and confronted them. Then they took the boy to the hospital.
> I: But you were here?
> L: I was here at home and then my mother came. No, she called me, that's how it was, and then she came. And I was just studying for an exam. Because I had no

> time left and I was completely cut off from everybody and I had to study all the time, I wasn't out at all. And then I noticed it and I thought, "Oh my God, what's going on?" and then I looked out the window and all these people were walking around. I didn't notice it at first because the windows were closed. Then I heard people yelling and saying, "The son of such and such," I don't know. That's when I asked what happened. "A boy was kidnapped"
> I: Did you ask out the window?
> L: Yes, right. Then I went down for a minute. Then they told me the same thing. There were people everywhere, and it was really strange. Because all the people gathered here, where the boy was kidnapped. They were all there right away. You have to imagine that. I was like, "Oh my God, what is this?" Everybody was asking, looking, I don't know. This is an area where you can rely on others. For example, if you walked by here and somebody was hitting you, they wouldn't just watch. But if you were an enemy, they wouldn't just watch either, you know? Then they would all hit you, too.

In this incident, again the different *channels of communication and interaction* between neighbors immediately become evident – the people on the street, the mother, she herself is asking people in the street. There are *rumors*, everyone knows approximately what happened, but no details, few have observed what happened, but *everyone is involved*. This concerns everyone, everyone is leaving everything and helps where and how they can. A child is being snatched from the community, and that is not a legitimate act. Order is disturbed, a "war" breaks out. It is an attack on the *entirety of the community*, on the *safety* of all children and all families in the neighborhood. The problem is a *collective* and *supra-individual* one. Many people, beyond the core family, are involved, many feel affected. A *common space* is created by *affects*, which does not stop at closed windows and apartment doors. The police are called and come because the usual framework of sorting things out themselves and within the neighborhood is exceeded. Anyone who helps is now welcome – but the police are not more important than anyone else. They are one of many actors trying to find the boy and restore order.

Rida reports another threat to his neighborhood, the presence of junkies and alcoholics:

> I told you earlier that there's no heroin here, there's no cocaine here, because they chase these people away. They don't want that. It's also official because these people want the pot business to burst here. And when they sell heroin here, there are heroin junkies walking around. You have to imagine that there used to be heroin junkies everywhere, but now when you look at the main square and so on, you don't see so many alcoholics and heroin junkies hanging around. They chased them all away. You're starting to see heroin junkies here on the forest path, you know? And they chase the dealers away, too. The pushers know, "It's too hot here, we have to go somewhere else," and the junkies are where the dealers are. The pusher is not where the junkies are. With pot it's something else, here you have your place. Everybody knows that this is your place, nobody comes in there. People know they can only buy weed from you. Everything is chill. Everything is serious. You know what I mean? But if there's some junkies walking around and you meet junkies, you know somebody's selling heroin here.

> (…)
> In this flower meadow park, Afghans used to go at night and sell heroin, and after a week they noticed, and then there was a big brawl. Everybody had stabbing injuries. And now you don't see them anymore. That's just the way it is.

In the neighborhood there are *strict rules*, not only who is allowed to sell in which place, but also which drugs are allowed to be sold in general. Space is appropriated according to *strategic interests*. There are people who *chase away* and there are people who *control*. The spaces overlap, where different interests are negotiated. There is a rule that says junkies and alcoholics are not wanted in the neighborhood, and as junkies are following the heroin pusher, selling heroin is not allowed in the neighborhood. Only the sale of marijuana is allowed for certain people in certain places. The neighborhood should remain free of junkies and alcoholics, and children should be able to play outside safely and unmolested. There is the *serious* drug trade in a fixed place, which everyone knows, and the *unserious* drug trade, which is associated with neglect, with junkies and alcoholics. The *neighborhood as a collective* uncompromisingly distances itself from the latter. Nevertheless, if there are attempts from outside, from other groups and contexts, to undermine this rule, for example at night in the park, the presence of the junkies betrays the presence of the dealers. The dealers are expelled with the use of physical force with knives - and remain with stabbing injuries.

Conclusion

The *first part* of this paper provided a brief overview of the problem(s) *with* urban "problem neighborhoods" as they have evolved and been created *historically* and how they exist in major German cities today, in order to show the main *societal conditions*, *interventions* and hegemonic *discourses* that shape the lives of people who grow up in so-called urban "problem neighborhoods." In their *everyday practice,* they have to refer directly or indirectly to *social interpretations* of themselves and their actions as well as to the structural conditions derived from them. Hegemonic *urban planning approaches* that are currently being practiced in major German cities, such as *social mixing,* only shift the problems by contributing to the *marginalization*, *othering* and *displacement* of the poorer population from inner cities.

In the *second part*, the focus was on the *lived experiences* of the people themselves. The transcript excerpts of interviews and field notes interpreted were collected during field research as part of the research project "*Living Youth in a migration society"* in an urban "problem neighborhood" in the city of Berlin, Germany.

In summary, this neighborhood is still at the very beginning of *social mixing*. There are strict *social rules of togetherness* in the neighborhood, that protect people and keep dangers away (e.g. junkies, alcoholics, and child abductors). However, the rules differ from the rules of togetherness of people

from the *non-racialized middle class*. The newly arrived middle class residents (students, a couple) are in the minority and are introduced to the rules of the community by the long-term inhabitants, also to grant protection and freedom from danger for them. The *middle-class values* of quiet, compliance with house rules, appropriate use of public space have so far been represented by the community workers, not (yet) by the newly arrived middle-class residents themselves. What is opposed here are two *sets of rules* that operate according to different modes. On the one hand, there are *house rules*, general ideas of an *ideal quiet and conflict-free neighborhood*, rules designed to prevent people from having to negotiate their own needs, so that problems, disputes or conflicts do not arise in the first place. It's about rules that protect *individual peace and privacy*. On the other hand, there is the *lived practice of dispute and reconciliation*, of boundary violations, defense, (physical) violence and demands for being committed to values of *loyalty*, *politeness* and *trust* in neighborly relations and in the community. Through problems, conflicts and disputes, people get to know each other; *neighborly togetherness* is lively, noisy and "beautiful," and offers the feeling of being connected and the feeling of *individual security* through seeing and hearing others. It's about rules that ensure *the security and peace of the community*.

What is the purpose of the problems in this urban "problem neighborhood"? There is a *common subject/theme*, which keeps people busy, problems are productive, they are solved collectively. Patterns are interrupted. It is not only about the solution, but also about new acquaintances that are made, *values* that are renegotiated and tested for their validity, through *collective problem solving* with *different channels of communication* and *interaction*. New members of the community are introduced to the community through the *collective problem-solving process* and thus learn the values and social rules.

Can this lived community of collectivity and support be understood as an attempt to realize *the right to the city* in Lefebvre's sense? On the one hand, without a doubt, urban space is appropriated and used according to the community's own rules. A strategy to use, shape and *inhabit* the neighborhood is realized. Central to Lefebvre's theory (Lefebvre, 2016) is the distinction between *habiter,* which means -in the sense of *vita activa*- the way of living and *habitat*, the residential area, the urban housing program. Urban life involves both. It provides living space (*habitat*) and enables the inhabitants to inhabit it (*habiter*). In this tension, according to Lefebvre, lies the potential for *urban revolution*. As described in the first sections of this paper, the neighborhood is a *large housing estate* that should oppose urban order – along with single-family homes. Lefebvre argued that the *capitalist city* houses its inhabitants in sterile, meaningless spaces, to monitor them, order their lives, and constantly reinforce their roles as *workers* and *consumers*. The findings of this research in a concrete urban "problem neighborhood" counteract this. Even if large housing estates are designed to realize *habitat* instead of *habiter*, people succeeded to realize *habiter*, vita activa, a community life, which means *security for the community*, for each individual, for children and families. In the words of Marvakis (1996), "transcended orientations" can be identified because attempts can be

reconstructed in subjective orientations that *transcend* hegemonic *social orientation meanings*.

On the other hand, a mode of use seems to be emerging that does not mean freedom for all, but is based on a *strongly collectively defended and enforced consensus* – if necessary with strong physical and verbal violence. Challenging and breaking these social rules means *danger* for the person or the group. It is the *right of the first* and the *eldest* which is realized. Some of these people who hold these positions of power are "dangerous," others less so. But in any case, there are *hierarchical structures*. There are people who provide protection, who defend, who chase others, who are empowered to enforce the norm. It is a *hierarchical form of space use*, where a few allow the others to use the space. *Togetherness in the neighborhood* is permeated by structures and power relations that require a certain amount of insider knowledge in order to find one's way around, but which also offer *protection* from external threats. Problems are solved within the neighborhood according *to its own rules*, which serves not only to *strengthen togetherness*, but also *to reproduce existing power relations in the neighborhood*. Above all, this *collectivity* is strongly *patriarchal.* The *pressure from the neighborhood* preserves *existing gender relations*[20], which is an important topic for feminists in Turkey for example (Somersan, 2011). Already these short transcript excerpts show differences in the *appropriation of spaces* by "men" and "women." The spaces outside the blocks of apartments tend to have a *male connotation*, while the spaces inside the apartments are mostly *feminine*. Also, the *symbolic spaces of courtesy*, of *everyday social interaction* between neighbors, tend to have a more *female connotation*.

If we return to the "riots" on New Year's Eve described in the introduction, it becomes clear that there is a lot of *frustration*, *anger* and *dissatisfaction*. *Racism*, poor chances in the (legal) *labor market*, *gentrification*, *discrimination* from growing up in these urban "problem neighborhoods," social stigmatization – to name only some – are the sources. The strong *social isolation* of young people growing up in these neighborhoods during the *Coronavirus pandemic* in recent years is also relevant in this context. Most families did not have sufficient financial and spatial resources to provide (all) their children with several separate, quiet and undisturbed, technically equipped *homeschooling workspaces*, which resulted in many students dropping out of school and further education. This has exacerbated the already high level of social exclusion. There are societal problems that affect the life of the people growing up in these "problem neighborhoods" that cannot be solved within their own community.

It becomes clear that the problem is not *poverty* per se, but the *social isolation* (Merten, 2017; Wilson, 1987) that accompanies it. It is this *social isolation as a collective* into which people are pushed and into which they have to go, far away from the villa districts and the purely bourgeois old town. Every family, every individual has to find a way to cope in the world inside and outside

[20] The negotiation of *gender relations*, the *doing gender* in neighborhood relationships in so-called urban "problem neighborhoods," can only be briefly touched on here, because it was not the focus of this paper. It is certainly worth an *in-depth analysis* with further excerpts from the research data material – in the framework of an additional stand-alone paper or a comparable publication.

the neighborhood. *Education* is not seen by many as a realistic possibility for social advancement, which would be a way to stay connected to "the outside world." Leila is certainly an exception here. Drawing welfare or selling drugs thus become alternatives for making a living. Spatial isolation creates *social isolation*. In addition, there is the increasing external threat of *state-sponsored gentrification* and *racial discrimination in the housing market* through the imposition of concepts such as *social mixing* at various levels. These cannot be combatted through physical violence and people living in urban "problem neighborhoods" today are not protected by the means available to them.

In all of these problem constellations, *normality* is being struggled with. How many people should live in one apartment? How many children should a family have? Who is responsible for the safety, the care and education of the children? The police? The community? When does someone have the ability to choose where they live and when do they not have that choice? When is someone considered "integrated"? Integrated into what? What is to be learned? What should people from urban "problem neighborhoods" learn and from whom? It is about the whole, about fundamental questions of our *migration society*. But as long as summits against youth violence and concepts such as *social mixing* remain the response to the frustration and rage that were taken to the streets on New Year's Eve 2022/2023, as long as people are talked *about* and not talked *to*, powerlessness, social isolation and the realization of protection needs in strictly hierarchical segregated structures maintained with violence remain a realistic possibility for action.

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