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THE ROLE OF NATIO-ETHNO-CULTURAL DIFFERENCE IN NARRATIVES OF NEIGHBOURHOOD CHANGE – AN ARRIVAL AREA IN THE EAST GERMAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The article investigates the representations and perceptions of an arrival neighbourhood in the broader context of an urban society with a post-socialist migration history. The study is situated in the East German city of Leipzig, which is characterised by a particular dynamic demographic development and a newly emerging plurality through immigration. By juxtaposing public media coverage about the neighbourhood and subjective perspectives of migrant homeowners and entrepreneurs, the paper approaches societal inclusions and exclusions that take effect through attributions of ‘natio-ethno-cultural difference’. The media and individual-subjective narratives around the neighbourhood referring to the differentiated logics in dealing with migration reflect power hierarchies on different scales and are linked with the national East-West relation.

Key words: diversity; media discourse; migrant entrepreneur; neighbourhood change; newspaper analysis

INTRODUCTION

This paper is situated in the broad field of studies dealing with the potential of urban diversity on the one hand and the exclusionary, racialised implications in the course of neighbourhood change and urban renewal on the other (Kirkland 2008; Millington 2011; Hwang 2015; Richardson *et al.* 2019; Doucet 2020). Against this backdrop, it aims to shed light on the entanglements between spatiality and natio-ethno-cultural attributions in the context of the increasing pluralisation of an East German urban society. Here, the concept of natio-ethno-cultural difference refers to the problem of the everyday construction of

otherness, where categories such as ‘nation’, ‘culture’ and ‘ethnicity’ are often mixed in ambiguous ways (Mecheril 2010). In East German municipalities, the growing importance of migration and integration issues for urban policy and findings of low tolerance and more pronounced forms of racism point to a particular need for research (Canan *et al.* 2018; Glorius 2020). An instructive example is the city of Leipzig, whose demographic development was characterised by distinct out-migration processes after reunification, but which recently shows strong population growth and is considered a pioneer in terms of international migration in the new federal states of Germany (Bernt 2019). Using the example of an ‘arrival’

neighbourhood (Saunders 2010; Haase *et al.* 2020; Hanhörster & Wessendorf 2020), the paper examines how differentiated exclusions and belongings referring to 'migration' are reflected and reproduced in media discourses and subjectivities of local actors. The following complimentary research questions are at the heart of the analysis:

- Which narratives determine the reporting on the area around the Eisenbahnstrasse and what role is attributed to natio-ethno-cultural difference respectively migration?
- How do homeowners and entrepreneurs with a biography of immigration perceive their position within an East German urban society and in the process of neighbourhood change?

By juxtaposing public media coverage and subjective perspectives of migrant business persons and homeowners regarding debates about a neighbourhood shaped by migration, we want to approach social hierarchies that take effect at different levels through attributions of migration or natio-ethno-cultural difference. Regarding research on representations and staging of migration and diversity in the process of neighbourhood change and the role attributed to migrants in these processes, the study example will be placed in the particular context of East Germany and Leipzig's urban development. The description of the research design, which is based on media analyses and in-depth interviews, is followed by a comparison of the empirical results, which show that the differentiated representations of the inclusion and exclusion of migration in the narratives surrounding the neighbourhood are produced by social power relations in which the national East-West relationship also comes into play.

Inclusions and exclusions of migration in the process of neighbourhood change – Upgrading processes of disadvantaged inner-city areas with a high proportion of 'ethnic minorities' and infrastructures for immigrants have already been frequently documented and analysed in urban research (Zukin 2008; Murdie & Teixeira 2011; Tissot 2015). Particularly relevant is research that has focused on immigrants' agency by studying the role of ethnic enterprises in the process of economic, functional and symbolic upgrading

(Aytar & Rath 2012; Steigemann 2020). In this context, a neoliberal lens has often been criticised, viewing the ethnic and cultural diversity of actors primarily in terms of their positive influence on innovation and economic growth, but largely ignores existing exclusion and disadvantages in everyday life (Zukin 2008; Leslie & Catungal 2012; Martin 2014; van Eck *et al.* 2020). The finding that migrant actors experience social inclusion only when they prove successful and overcome adversity is also found in the context of studies that shed light on public discourses, policies, and strategies in the nexus of immigration, ethnicity and neighbourhood change (Collins 2020). Here, it could be shown that the narratives linked to urban development processes, which refer to 'diversity', 'multiculturalism' or special 'authenticity', mark fundamental shifts in the social treatment of immigration and natio-ethno-cultural differences. Not least, for example, the displacement of more politicised terms such as 'race' by the more positive and often depoliticised terms 'ethnicity' and 'diversity' points to a shift in the discursive framing of migration-related attributions and spatialisations. This is reflected in the fact that images of problematic and threatening migration are increasingly overlaid by notions of desirable, successful multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism (Murdie & Teixeira 2011; de Oliver 2016; Schmitz 2017; Rhodes & Brown 2019). This is in line with discourse analyses which show that media representations demonise certain migrant groups and thus exacerbate their exclusion, while other migrants are categorised according to their 'deservingness' and 'usefulness' and therefore experience partial social inclusion (van Dijk 2015). Also, city branding strategies follow corresponding discursive logics, preparing formerly stigmatised spaces for a new appropriation by (white) middle classes and corresponding valorisation (Zukin 2008; Langegger 2015). Although related narratives celebrate diversity and positively value the rise of ethnically diverse neighbourhoods as development progress, a long tradition of studies shows that the socio-economic upgrading process often further exacerbates racial and socio-economic inequality within cities and between neighbourhoods like in the wake of displacement processes (Kirkland 2008; Hwang 2015; Richardson *et al.* 2019; Doucet 2020). At the same time, the often oversimplified distinction between

(displacement-prone) immigrants and (white) gentrifiers is increasingly being critiqued. Thus, recent attention focuses on the complexities and ambiguities of these relationships, illuminating the nuanced intertwining of class and ethnic relations in the context of neighbourhood uplift and devaluation (Moore 2009; Tissot 2015; Lees 2016; Doucet 2020). The following analysis is situated in this briefly outlined field of tension between studies dealing with the agency of newcomers on the one hand and the inclusive and exclusive discourses of difference and diversity in the process of neighbourhood change on the other. It explores which localised formations of inclusion and exclusion of migration and natio-ethno-cultural differences the increasing pluralisation of an East German urban society produces on different scales. This consideration requires a brief look at East German migration history since reunification.

Dealing with diversity in the East German context

– Due to dominating out-migration processes and a lack of offers on regional labour markets, the share of international migrants in larger East German cities initially remained conspicuously low after 1990. Accordingly, immigration was more strongly associated with the allocation of asylum seekers, quota refugees, and Germans from the former USSR (Spätaussiedler) than with employment-related immigration (Bernt 2019). It was not until the 2000s, and especially in the wake of the ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015, that municipal policy efforts to promote participation and inclusion of migrants increasingly moved onto political agendas. City leaders welcomed migrants as helpful agents of urban renewal and signifiers of a cosmopolitan and tolerant image – as they did in Leipzig, our study example (also Çağlar & Glick-Schiller 2018 for Halle). At the same time, processes of socio-spatial segregation within cities have intensified, and clusters of immigrant and socially disadvantaged households are increasingly overlapping, not least due to the limited options for municipal housing allocation (Helbig & Jähnen 2018).

Moreover, growing civil society and administrative efforts to integrate and include immigrants are contrasted by emotionalised sentiments and exclusionary attitudes in everyday dealings with natio-ethno-cultural

difference and migration (Canan *et al.* 2018; Glorius 2020). Thus, political phenomena such as the emergence of the AfD, a populist and xenophobic party in Germany, and the founding of the populist organisation PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident) in the winter of 2014/2015 are disproportionately anchored in the Eastern German states, especially in the state of Saxony (Canan *et al.* 2018). The way migration and diversity are dealt with is often seen as a gauge of societal developmental differences between East and West Germany, or as an expression of an ‘East German’ special path, being part of a specific trajectory located in the field of knowledge production of areas referred to as post-socialist or ‘Global East’ (Glorius 2020). In local urban development policies and municipal economic promotion, on the other hand, the image of East Germany as a society characterised by stronger xenophobic attitudes in comparison with West Germany, which the public debate has shaped, is interpreted as a threat to interurban competitiveness (Çağlar & Glick-Schiller 2018).

Against this background, relational orders of belonging and the partly contradictory discursive inclusions and exclusions of migration will be traced, which are reflected in different narratives around the neighbourhood under consideration. Thus, the focus of our study is not on the formal-legal dimensions or concrete acts of participation or non-participation, as defined by citizenship or integration policies, among others (Ataç & Rosenberger 2013), but on socially dominant notions of belonging or non-belonging, that are discursively produced and to which members of society refer in their actions. This goal is reflected methodologically, through the approach of critical discourse analysis, which deals with the (re)production of social inequalities through representations and focuses ‘on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance in society’ (van Dijk 2008, p. 86). Accordingly, the objects of investigation are differentiated representations of inclusion and exclusion of migration in the journalistic narratives surrounding the neighbourhood under study. Additionally, to approach some aspects of the formation of collective representations

of belonging and difference within the urban migration society, individual experiences of inclusion and exclusion in the everyday life of migrants will be explored.

THE CASE STUDY – AN ARRIVAL AREA BETWEEN STIGMATISATION AND GENTRIFICATION

The socio-spatial development of the neighbourhood under study is closely related to the socio-economic transformation, demographic change and migration history of the East German city of Leipzig. The city, which suffered from strong population loss after German reunification, was only able to achieve economic stabilisation and transform into a moderately growing metropolis at the beginning of the 2000s. Since the 2010s, the city has experienced dynamic growth and economic recovery (Haase *et al.* 2020). In the course of these developments, the formerly low share of residents with a migration background¹ has also increased noticeably (Figure 2).

The research example reflects many facets of these dynamic urban processes in a particularly striking way: The neighbourhood east to the inner city around the Eisenbahnstrasse, with the districts of Neustadt-Neuschönefeld and Volkmarshausen, was initially planned as a residential area for the workforce moving to the town in the mid-19th century. Even in GDR times, the area was considered socially stigmatised. In the 1980s, state-directed eviction policies led to vacancies and a loss of residents, which rapidly intensified in the first years after reunification. Socially selective out-migration dominated until the 2000s, leading to concentrations of poverty and educational disadvantage. Since 2013, a remarkable demographic shift took place. Not least, due to supraregional immigration primarily driven by young population groups with limited financial resources, the district developed into one of the areas with the most substantial population growth within the city of Leipzig. In addition, the neighbourhood stands out with a share of around 40 per cent of the inhabitants labelled as people with a migration background (Figure 1). Not least because of its grocery stores and mosques, Eisenbahnstrasse is nowadays considered a

central location for the life of Muslim communities in Leipzig.

At the end of the 1990s, the neighbourhood increasingly became the focus of urban development strategies aimed at counteracting the extensive vacancies and further devaluation. Through various support programmes (e.g. admission to the Federal States Programme ‘Social City’, designation as an ERDF development area) social and structural changes were set in motion, which related to the challenges of a ‘social problem area’ but also to the resources of an ‘integration gateway’ for new residents (City of Leipzig 2013). Consulting services informed about cheap loans, tax incentives and low-threshold restoration of historical buildings. To create favourable conditions for the settlement of immigrants the planning authority has tolerated uses such as backyard mosques or informal market stalls on empty plots of land. Under the pressure of shrinkage, promotion of local economies was intended to contribute to the urban development and functional stabilisation of the area and bring forward newcomers’ integration. With qualification and consulting offers, migrants were considered an important target group (City of Leipzig 2013).

In addition to social and economic support, already in the late 1990s, regulatory and control measures have been implemented. Several video-monitored surveillance areas have been set up, as the drugs problem has been pushed from the central railway station to the site. In the course of this, increased controls and raids have been carried out. In particular, the target of the declaration of the so-called ‘weapons ban zone’ in November 2018 was to gain better control over the neighbourhood (Figure 1). As this legislation allows police to carry out controls regardless of concrete suspicions, critics suspect that it also exacerbates racial profiling practices and reinforces spatialised exclusion mechanisms (Hurlin 2020). In sum, these measures exacerbate the stigmatisation of the area, becoming a pathological, racialised space (Rhodes & Brown 2019). It can also be understood as a strategy of place making, preparing the ground for gentrification and the entry of more affluent classes (Belina 2006). The interrelation between neighbourhood upgrading and neighbourhood control is becoming

particularly explosive with an increasingly tight housing market in Leipzig.

With the recent influx of younger, alternative milieus and students protest against upgrading and displacement is gaining importance, triggered by changes in the neighbourhood's image and investors' growing attention. Thus, revaluation processes in Leipzig's East are reflected in a residential revaluation and the first signs of functional and commercial upgrading. In this course, many 'ethnic' enterprises in the street are newly investing in their facilities. They mobilise, beyond others, aesthetics and special offers that meet the expectations and tastes of the changing clientele in the neighbourhood (Stock & Schmitz 2019). Simultaneously, local authorities have implemented first measures to counteract the growing pressure on the housing market and the upcoming displacement of low-income households by introducing a social protection statute (Figure 1). Notwithstanding the influence of urban policy on neighbourhood development, the following analysis focuses on media coverage and the subjectivities of homeowners and entrepreneurs with a biography of migration. On this basis, it will be shown how social inclusion and exclusion are reproduced via ethno-national-cultural attributions in the context of an East German urban society.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The following results are based on two projects that put forward different perspectives on dealing with migration-related ascriptions in the process of neighbourhood change: The first project examined how the issues of migration and diversity are negotiated in an East and a West German urban context. The analysis of newspaper coverage represents one cornerstone of this project. In this context, local media were considered as influential bodies that reflect the self-image of urban societies and contribute to the (re)production of social inclusion and exclusion (Collins 2020). In the second project, in-depth interviews with homeowners and entrepreneurs were conducted as part of a PhD thesis on immigrants' role in the renovation process of residential buildings in the eastern area of Leipzig. Beyond that, a total

of 25 discussions and interviews with representatives of the city administration, advice centres, immigrant associations and members of the cultural industries were carried out across both research projects, considering diverse perspectives on dealing with migration in the city of Leipzig. Both studies cover the particularly dynamic period of urban development since 2010, characterised by rising housing costs and exceptional population growth (Figure 2). In this period, also first signs of gentrification of the arrival neighbourhood became apparent (Haase *et al.* 2020).

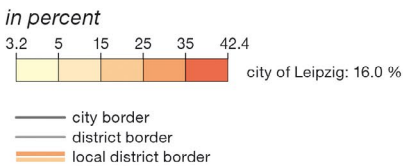
The local newspaper analysis – In line with demographic change and the growing importance of migration policy issues in the city of Leipzig, the media analysis focused on the period from 2010 onward.² The Leipziger Volkzeitung (LVZ) as Leipzig's only local daily newspaper and the Leipziger Internetzeitung (L-IZ), which has been published since 2004, as the first Internet-based daily regional newspaper, were used as primary sources of the analysis. It was supplemented by selected reports in supra-regional newspapers (Süddeutsche Zeitung, DIE ZEIT, taz, Neues Deutschland) and on television (ProSieben, ARD/ZDF). The overall analysis corpus was based on article research that focused on the keywords 'migration', 'integration' and 'diversity' in a Leipzig-specific context. About one-third of the newspaper articles collected on these keywords dealt with incidents in the area around Eisenbahnstrasse. The 440 articles that reported on the area around Eisenbahnstrasse from this pool form the basis for the following quantifying representation of topics and terms as the first step of the media analysis.

Based on this, in a second step, 15 individual articles from this corpus, which were considered characteristic for the discursive production in terms of discourse positions, main topics and reporting style, were selected for a further in-depth qualitative analysis according to the method of critical discourse analysis (Jäger 2006; van Dijk 2008). The material preparation for the in-depth, interpretative analysis of discourse fragments focused, among other things, on the institutional

Location of the study area, Scopes of governmental regulations and support programs



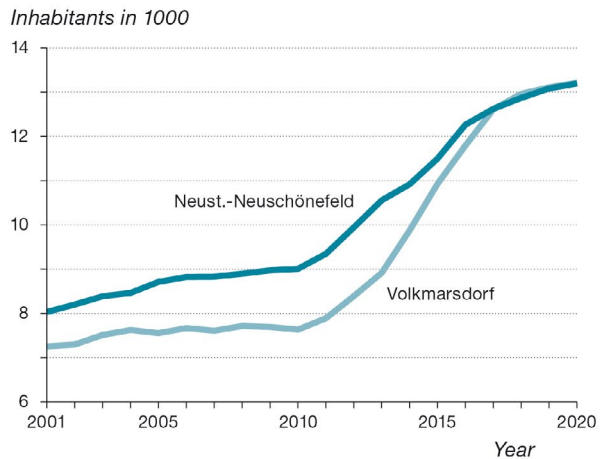
Proportion of migrants in the population 2020



Source: State Statistical Office, Federal State of Saxony



Population development in the research areas 2001–2020



Street situation with migrant economies



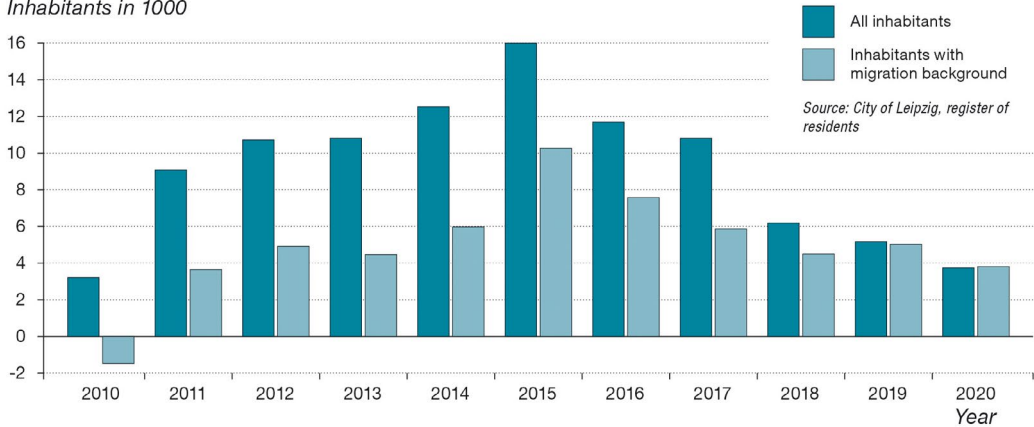
Figure 1. The studied neighbourhood.

framing, the text surface, linguistic-rhetorical means, content-ideological statements and the interpretation of the discourse fragments (Jäger 2006; van Dijk 2008).

In-depth Interviews with owner-occupiers and entrepreneurs – Between 2013 and 2016, eleven problem-centred interviews were conducted with immigrants who originate from

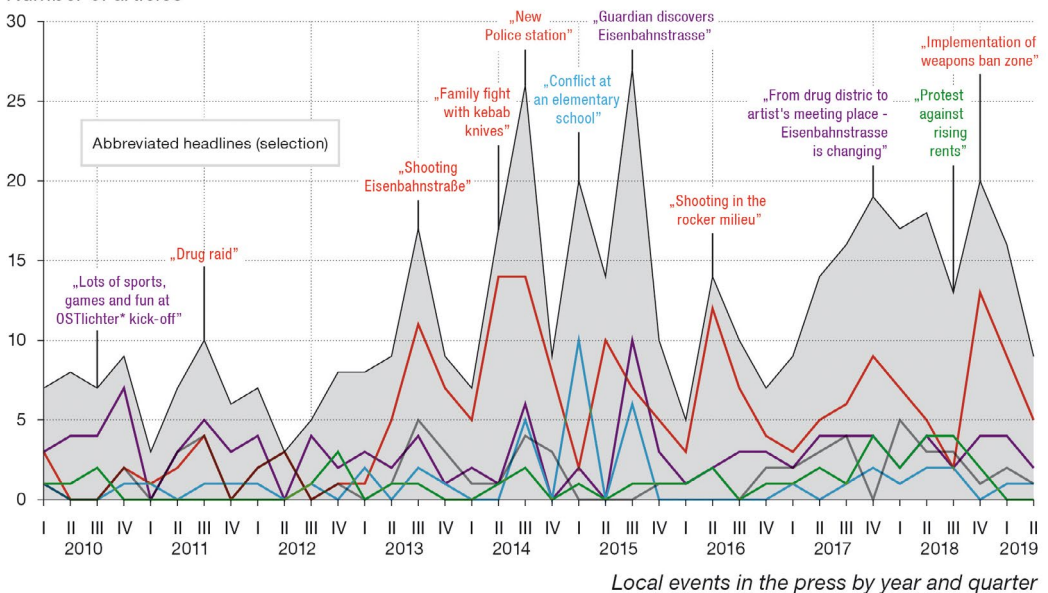
City of Leipzig
Balance of population development 2010–2020

Inhabitants in 1000



Eisenbahnstrasse in local newspaper**
Topics and events 2010–2019

Number of articles



- Total number of articles (N=440)
- Criminality & Security (N=197)
- Arts & Cultural events (N=114)
- Education/Educational institutions (N=44)
- Housing market (N=40)

* OSTlichter: annual district culture festival
** Leipziger Volkszeitung

Figure 2. Leipzig’s demographic development and Eisenbahnstrasse in local reporting.

Turkey, the Balkan States, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia and who are professionally and privately engaged in the area around Leipzig's Eisenbahnstrasse (see supplementary file). The group comprises entrepreneurs in the construction sector who partly acquired the property for themselves and owner-occupiers who predominantly run businesses in the area. The respondents were identified via personal requests at shops, offices and institutions. The talks focused on the process of building renovation, the cooperation with the local authorities, and the perceived role of the interviewed actors in the process of neighbourhood change. However, they also reveal underlying debates about belonging and exclusion in an urban society, especially reflecting particularities of the East German context. The talks and supplementary informal discussions usually took place in the properties of the respondents. The interviewees are long-time residents; some of them were also actively engaged in the neighbourhood's religious or cultural 'minority' institutions. The survey procedure followed the Grounded Theory guidelines; the data were analysed according to qualitative content analysis (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Mayring 2015). In the context of the interviews, inclusion/exclusion is conceptualised in terms of subjective (non-) belongings to urban society and the majority society's ideas of 'us' and 'them' that the interviewees were confronted within their everyday life.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Narrative constructions of natio-ethno-cultural difference in the media coverage – Using the empirical example of media coverage of the area around Eisenbahnstrasse, the following analysis explores how societal inclusions and exclusions of migration or natio-ethno-cultural difference are reproduced through journalistic narratives about the neighbourhood. The articles' overall quantification demonstrates how intensively reporting was carried out and the main topics during the review period. Major thematic clusters include 'crime and security', 'arts and cultural events', 'education', and developments in the housing market. In general,

a significant increase in the number of articles about Eisenbahnstrasse in the media can be seen from 2013 onwards – a period that coincides with a pronounced influx of residents (Figures 1 and 2). Particularly in connection with criminal incidents in the neighbourhood, the coverage shows clear highlights: intensive and partly sensational reports are released in the summer of 2014 about an armed conflict between two extended families and the subsequent establishment of a new police station, which should help to enhance the feeling of security in the neighbourhood (Kreuz 2014). At the beginning of 2015, there are also intensive reports about problems at a primary school with a high proportion of migrant pupils, which are generally interpreted as a failure of integration efforts in the educational field (Welters 2015). Eisenbahnstrasse hits the negative headlines again in the summer of 2015 with a conflict between biker gangs ending deadly and the implementation of a 'weapons ban zone' in 2018. In contrast to incidents framed by the dominant 'problem discourse', a weaker narrative strand is dealing with the activities of the numerous social and cultural initiatives in the neighbourhood, regularly celebrating an unspecific diversity of the district and its residents (Fritz & Hoffmann 2015).

In order to obtain indications of the extent to which different perspectives on natio-ethno-cultural difference in the process of neighbourhood change are produced through specific linguistic links in reporting, it was first examined in which thematic contexts the terms 'migration' and 'diversity' are predominantly used. In general, the term 'diversity' is used much less frequently than terms in the 'migra*tion' field (Figure 3).

Furthermore, it can be seen that while the term 'migration' appears mainly in the context of crime and security, the term 'diversity' is used stronger in the context of art and culture. Both conceptual fields thus point to a contradictory narrative about the neighbourhood, which is reflected in the stereotypical images of the colourful trendy neighbourhood as well as the social conflict area (Le Blond 2015; ARD/ZDF 2016). In the process of neighbourhood change, these familiar urban figures form a kind of Janus-faced alliance that parallels the

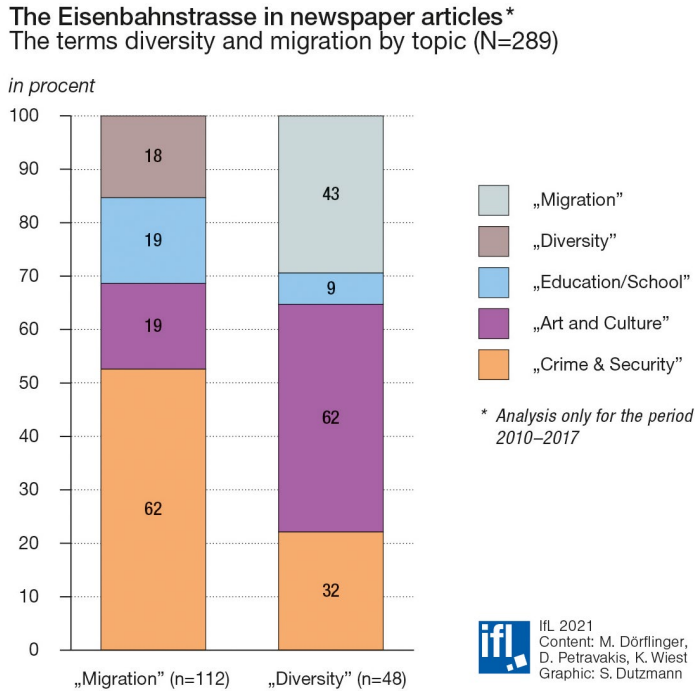


Figure 3. The terms ‘diversity’ and ‘migration’ in reporting on the Eisenbahnstrasse.

established narratives of ghettoisation and gentrification (Doucet 2020). However, the following quote from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, describing a street situation in the study shows, that corresponding representations of migration and neighbourhood are considered atypical for East German cities: ‘*There, in the Turkish Café Brothers, you sit in the centre of the anomaly, the likes of which do not exist twice in Eastern Germany. This anomaly is called Eisenbahnstrasse. It is about 1.4 km long and the registration address of residents from more than 70 nations.*’ (Pollmer 2017, p. 3).

Migration as a problem – The discursive interpretative framework ‘problem area’ serves the interlinking as mentioned above of migration-related phenomena and criminality: This co-construction dominates the reporting in particular in the years 2014 and 2015 as an essential element of the medial representation of Eisenbahnstrasse as the ‘*most dangerous road in Germany*’ (Taff 2013). The imaginaries of a dystopian urban space appear in demand for particular treatments like harsher persecution

of crimes (Meine 2014; Döring 2015). They also show that the district’s representation as a ‘dangerous place’ is frequently based on connotations of ‘migration’ and associated national and ethnic ascriptions. The following quotation exemplifies how social inclusion and exclusion are justified by simplifications of a wide variety of migration biographies, but also through links to the place ‘Eisenbahnstrasse’ in local reporting: ‘*In East Leipzig, it is primarily citizens with a migration background who are involved in the conflicts. [...] On the one hand, there are people from other countries who live here – and who commit crimes, as in Eisenbahnstrasse. For this, they must be punished like everyone else. On the other hand, some people seek refuge with us because they are threatened, persecuted and tortured in their home countries. We must grant them asylum for this.*’ (Meine 2014, p. 1).

Besides, two ethnically marked figures play a prominent role in this narrative: the representative of an ethnic enterprise and the ethnically marked criminal as a kind of counter-image construction. The natio-ethno-cultural

difference of entrepreneurs tends to favour discursive inclusion in newspaper reporting on the condition that they position themselves as supporters of local security policy (e.g. Multimedia report 2017). Students, artists, estate agents or representatives of initiatives, on the other hand, are portrayed as indicators of a new upheaval around the topic of gentrification. Their role in reporting is instead to relativise the harmful and dangerous image of the district (LVZ Frank 2017; Multimedia-Reportage 2017). The striking fact that they do not bear any natio-ethno-cultural ascription can be considered as a racialising facet of the gentrification discourse (Kirkland 2008).

Diversity as an asset – In the course of Leipzig's upswing, the district is increasingly evoked in terms of its productive and exotic otherness and celebrated as a space of diversity. The newspaper analysis shows that the term 'diversity' is primarily used in articles that focus on the neighbourhood's potential in terms of upgrading. However, 'diversity' is interpreted in different ways. It refers to open space for creativity as well as to the positive coexistence of the residents' unspecified cultures and origins. Characteristic of this narrative is the emphasis on the peaceful and creative interplay of different lifestyles, which is captured above all in the image of the 'multicultural neighbourhood' like in the following quotation, announcing an annual cultural festival: '*The diversity of cultures and offerings in Leipzig's east is also the emotional wealth of this district. The OST-Lichter 2016 want to make it tangible – as colourful as the people who live here.*' (W. A. 2016, p. 14; also Fritz & Hoffmann 2015; LVZ-Multimedia-Reportage 2017). Migration as a factor of social participation plays only an implicit role in this artistic-experimental appeal to the neighbourhood's diversity and thus forwards to a depoliticised negotiation and only partial social inclusion of natio-ethno-cultural difference. As a social reality or even as a point of reference for cultural debates, however, actors with a migration biography remain somewhat invisible in this discourse. Instead, the neighbourhood is reconfigured in terms of the urban symbolic economy. Here the internationality of the residents is

reinterpreted into the image of a well-behaved leisure variety for Leipzig's (white) middle class, like in the following example: '*The district in the east of Leipzig is home to people from many nations – its range of activities for families is just as diverse: whether sports, ice cream or handicrafts.*' (Grimm 2020).

Moreover, the analysis of the journalistic discourse also reveals that, through the paradoxical debates on migration around the neighbourhood, Leipzig's position as an East German town is negotiated on a supra-regional or rather national level.

A benchmark for Leipzig's connectivity to 'Western' migration societies? – The newspaper analysis shows that narratives that refer to the country's East-West history impact different levels of reference on how the socio-spatial developments and events around Eisenbahnstrasse are interpreted. In this context, the debate on this district often becomes the touchstone for the extent to which the city of Leipzig is a role model, pioneer or outlier within Eastern Germany in dealing with the issue of migration. Accordingly, attempts to explain the incidents in the neighbourhood are also being sought in the country's migration history, like in the following newspaper report:

A share of foreigner about 15 per cent is not much from a West German perspective. However, it is a lot from an East German perspective. In the East [German context], with its tendency towards more xenophobic public discourses, the Eisenbahnstrasse quickly gained its reputation as a foreigners' neighbourhood that the good German can't dare to enter ... (Raabe 2016, p. 4)

However, the problem discourse, referring in particular to crime, reveals moments of inclusion as well as exclusion, depending on the respective scales of reference. While at the local level, it is primarily the neighbourhood's otherness and lacking possibilities of inclusion within the city society that is reconfirmed, the line of argumentation changes when it comes to the national or international significance of Leipzig. This applies especially to supra-regional reporting, as in the following quote from the national newspaper DIE ZEIT:

At that time, social scientists developed the thesis that Leipzig was on its way to becoming a big city – with all its advantages and disadvantages: Crime is part of urbanity. The more inhabitants, the more criminals. (...) Leipzig is the ‘crime stronghold’ of the new federal states (...) The Eisenbahnstrasse is possibly the street, where all this is concentrated. (Machowecz 2016, p. 9)

Even if natio-ethno-cultural plurality is not explicitly mentioned in this text paragraph, it is hidden in the growth of the urban population through immigration, to which the increase in crime is causally attributed. Paradoxically, the depiction of the otherness of the neighbourhood-related parallel society³ is becoming proof that Leipzig has the potential to be a ‘real’ big city. In comparison with western cities, the ‘problem’ of Eisenbahnstrasse thus becomes an asset and interwoven into a discursive strategy reacting to the suspicion of Leipzig’s provinciality (Le Blond 2015).

Thus, densified in the narrative of a parallel society and social problem area, exclusionary discourse dynamics on the local level become an inclusion marker for belonging to the league of ‘real’ West German metropolises. Through both narratives, which are closely entangled – that of a dangerous parallel society and that of a cosmopolitan diversity – the arrival area ‘Eisenbahnstrasse’ is becoming proof of Leipzig’s importance and connectivity in the supra-regional context. However, both representations of the neighbourhood conceal the complex social, spatial and racial realities on the ground. They also largely neglect the views and interpretations of the people in the district itself, which will be the focus of the next section.

Belonging and boundary making in the narratives of migrant owner-occupier and entrepreneurs – The following paragraph presents viewpoints of immigrants who have acquired property or started a business in the neighbourhood. Some of them have been living and working in the West or South of Germany before settling in Leipzig. Self-employment has partly been chosen due to an unfortunate employment situation and discrimination

in the labour market (B4, B9, B10). The interviewees from the group of entrepreneurs in the construction sector have acquired houses for investment and private use (B3, B4, B8, B9, B10, B11). The other group consists of property owners who invested their earnings in a house, using it for their family and business (B1, B2, B5, B6, B7). Many of them invested their capital in the 2000s when prices for vacant apartment buildings in Leipzig and especially around Eisenbahnstrasse had reached a low point. They are focused on social advancement and see the investment as financial security for their children. Renovations are being carried out by themselves to a great extent. Private and professional networks often compensate for small budgets. However, considering the recent upgrading process, they did not see the threat of being displaced. Instead, the discussions revealed an overall entrepreneurial attitude, entirely in line with the market conditions and, in some cases planning to sell the property when prices rose (B2, B4).

Efforts to become a good citizen – Belonging through demarcation – The interviewees highly appreciated the recent infrastructure improvements regarding education, environment and transportation. They usually welcome the influx of new inhabitants, like students, as a new customer base. Often the interviewees perceived themselves as established economically and aspiring. In this respect, they deliberately distinguish themselves from disadvantaged, marginalised long-term residents and newly arriving refugees (B2, B7, B10). From their perspective, belonging to the city society has to be ‘achieved’ by contributing to the development of the area and even the city, for example, with the provision of commercial facilities that serve customers citywide, or religious facilities that attract parishioners nationwide (B1, B4, B11). However, also settling in the early 1990ies and witnessing the post-reunification years is partly considered proof of local belonging. In the following quote, an owner of a Turkish bistro emphasises his recognition and establishment within the neighbourhood but also the city society, making clear that he has earned this status through uncompromising work:

We are not just any strangers who have come here from somewhere. My parents have been in Leipzig since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and they've lived here ever since. (...) Since we started here, about four new shops have opened on the street, such similar like ours. And that's what we always said at the very beginning: competition is always the best for us. (B11)

As investors and business people, the respondents were primarily interested in upgrading their buildings. The area's poor reputation is mainly seen in its detrimental effect on the marketing of their properties. Basically, in the sense of double discrimination, the entrepreneurs are sometimes both victims of crime in the neighbourhood (examples are conflicts with members of the criminal milieu in front of shops or material theft on building sites) and at the same time suspected of being involved in these acts. With racist experiences on the one hand and criminal incidents on the other, specific strategies are chosen in everyday life – such as avoiding public transport or maintaining only a few contacts to 'Germans' or other groups of residents (B2, B9). According to the socio-economic status, strategies of social distinction and withdrawal can be recorded, which are typical for territorial stigmatisation (Wacquant 2008). Reinforced by the current political climate, individuals tend to be cautious, as, at the time of the interviews, increasing migration gained attention by the news coverage and growing anti-Muslim campaigns⁴ formed. While younger, better-educated city dwellers often deliberately move to the area, people with often precarious migration biographies instead try vehemently to distance themselves from the neighbourhood around Eisenbahnstrasse – often referring to the negative headlines in the newspapers. A representative of a self-help organisation for immigrants⁴ puts this observation as follows:

But I must also add that there are already people among our customers who do not want to live on the Eisenbahnstrasse, under any circumstances, who say this quite vehemently when looking for accommodation. That they want to live in districts where 'Germans' also live, so to speak... (A19)

Apart from experiences with racist discrimination, due to possible police inspections, this explicit distancing from this place was first of all justified with the intention to be recognised as an honourable citizen in Leipzig. These examples suggest that by constructing an internal moral hierarchy at the interface of place, race, and class, the protagonists carry on negative stereotyping and do not entirely reject the area's stigmatisation (Albeda *et al.* 2017; Pinkster *et al.* 2020). While some city dwellers with a migration biography thus plainly distance themselves from the district, not being stigmatised in the 'bad migrant' image, the neighbourhood has become attractive among politically active, left-wing inhabitants. Some of these new residents try to counteract the stigmatisation of the place and its people – entirely in the sense of a political statement – through their conscious choice of place of residence and neighbourly commitment: In defence of diversity, the advocacy of immigration, and as a counterweight to right-wing positions, not least in the political climate of East Germany. However, the symbolic economies of the new, alternative initiatives and bars in the neighbourhood, which often deliberately include diversity in their programmes, contradict the partly still visible marginal economies of the pre-reunification period as well as the people with a biography of migration who moved in after reunification.

Dealing with difference – 'The West' as a comparative framework – Although most of the interviewees have accomplished economic integration, and some even acquired German citizenship, many still feel regarded as strangers within the city society. Part of the feeling of being excluded is connected with public debates – also journalistic ones – about Leipzig's Eisenbahnstrasse. One aspect here is a stereotyping, mostly problematising equation of the residents with the topic of 'Islam'. This has an effect of a socio-spatial 'othering' and does justice neither to the diversity of Muslim articulations nor to the diversity of migration movements in this area – a matter of fact which is also likely to be relevant for arrival neighbourhoods in other European cities. However, this observation is usually somewhat simplistically attributed to

the 'lack of East German experience with the topic of "migration"', as in the following quote:

Eleven years ago, I came here for holidays, the people stared at me, with my dark hair. Now, they are getting used to it. In [city in West Germany], people don't recognise any difference; they are open. Here, they are now focused on one topic; they think we belong to the Islamic State ... (B7)

About dealing with migration and national-ethnic-cultural differences in urban society, many of the discussion partners refer to the living conditions in West Germany. In this respect, they almost naturally assume that East Germany's development will adapt in the way of linear logic to that of the West. This is reflected in frequent phrases like '*it takes time*' or '*Our children may achieve this later, but we are the first generation here.*' Thus, the district's pronounced stigmatisation is also relativised by comparisons with other arrival districts in West German and larger European cities in terms of developmental differences and learning processes. Often attempts are made to ensure that the district is commonplace by referring to the concentration of 'ethnic' businesses in other European or West German cities (B7, B9).

When I look at M. (a city in West Germany), the districts where foreigners live are also very desirable residential areas that are very lively. Everything is rented, and everything is great. And I think that can be the same here. (A8)

The often tacit comparative view towards the West with references to a catch-up development shows that the hegemonic relations between East and West Germany also feed into individual perceptions of how urban society deals with immigration, and particularly the Eisenbahnstrasse as an 'arrival district'. Hence, the district's negative unique position within the local urban society is attributed to particular East German migration experiences and the different migration trajectories in East and West German cities. In this respect, an adaption process is expected, with the city of Leipzig considered as a learner in the process of social pluralisation. At the same time, gradual changes in cohabitation are observed, like experiencing the new young residents as less exclusionary or racist.

CONCLUSIONS

Leipzig's development from a shrinking into a growing city in the course of post-socialist transformation can be seen as a fundamental process that has also created a contradictory relationship in the local discourse on migration. In this field, the arrival area 'Eisenbahnstrasse' represents a prototype for the threats and the benefits perceived in immigration. Accordingly, problematising and stigmatising debates on 'migration' are strongly focused on this district, which was discovered only slowly in the course of growing pressure for capitalisation through gentrification. In the public discourse, the neighbourhood and its inhabitants tend to be assigned an excluding unique position – in the sense of a deviation from Leipzig's urban society's norm. At the same time, immigrants were addressed as helpful rescuers in need in this area, which was characterised by pronounced vacancies and decay for many years. However, the mutual dependencies of discursive inclusion and exclusion are not only evident at the local level but also unfold at the supra-local scale. The district is increasingly used as positive proof of Leipzig's internationality and cosmopolitanism. Its existence and public attention allow a counter-narration to East German problems and stereotypes, such as increasing xenophobia and racism. The exclusion of the 'Eisenbahnstrasse' from the local urban society, which is connoted with natio-ethno-cultural difference, then paradoxically becomes an inclusion marker at another, regional and national, scale – namely Leipzig's belonging to the 'real' big cities in 'the West'. The only partial inclusion of migration can be interpreted in terms of a 'rewarding' narrative strategy that allows demarcations to be maintained via natio-ethno-cultural ascriptions while embracing a depoliticised and exoticising figuration of 'otherness'. In doing so, it simultaneously establishes a framework for how actors with migratory biographies can position themselves within the narrative construction of the neighbourhood: Their work on belonging to urban society can be understood, first, in terms of demarcation from the 'deviant other,' a racist figure that continues to be an essential facet of the narrative. Second, their status as successful entrepreneurs allows them to claim a subjectivity that is part of the urban narrative and plays

a fundamental role in the neighbourhood's success story. Work – literally and figuratively – is the condition on which their discursive inclusion is based. While struggling for recognition and membership of the Leipzig city society, at the same time, they perceive themselves as pioneers in the process of reforming a migration society in East Germany. What follows is a distancing from certain places and events and the maintenance of stereotypical views of more inferior social groups or crime-related images of immigrants. This suggests that the usual distinction between the creation of the stigma by the outside world and those who bear and suffer the stigma as residents or entrepreneurs is less clear than is often assumed (Pinkster *et al.* 2020). An explosive question here is the extent to which, in the wake of the area's revaluation, the potential-oriented, inclusive discourses regarding the sometimes precarious migrant economies will continue to be part of the narrative about the street, or whether new, exclusionary shifts in discourse will emerge. While the story of the prosperous arrival district is used as proof of the East German municipality's ability to act in dealing with integration, the promotion of migrant businesses and the fight against crime, the city's social problems are increasingly spatially shifting. The marked segregation and stigmatisation of the urban district may indicate that dealing with 'otherness' and difference is particularly challenging and conflictual in the post-industrial, post-socialist context (Millington 2011). Hence, the findings suggest further engagement with research questions related to spatialisations of racialised anxieties and stratification processes concerning certain marginalised forms of whiteness, which are particularly evident in East Germany due to its history of population loss, deindustrialisation and decline and are part of the explanatory framework. Much suggests that the research example represents a spatial-material crystallisation point for the social, cultural and political frictions and lines of conflict that have shaped East German development since reunification. Thus, local patterns of interpretation and logics in dealing with migration are co-shaped by a kind of post-socialist trajectory interwoven with national power relations. Accordingly, the findings could be interpreted in a broader understanding – namely regarding concerns to develop further the still dominant

Western-centred focus on ethnicity and urban change or gentrification in the sense of a cosmopolitan change of perspective (Lees 2016).

Notes

- ¹ The statistical term 'migration background' is evaluated critically, not least concerning its tendency to promote 'othering' and ethnicising views of society. Nevertheless, it is a relevant indicator to describe degrees of societal internationalisation.
- ² Due to the duration of the project, the quantifying analysis originally included the period 2010 to 2017. It was later extended to the years 2018 to 2019.
- ³ The term 'parallel society' refers to the notion of self-organising ethnically homogeneous population groups that isolate themselves spatially, socially and culturally from the majority society.
- ⁴ E.g. PEGIDA movement see page 2.

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