



**University of
Zurich**^{UZH}

**Zurich Open Repository and
Archive**

University of Zurich
University Library
Strickhofstrasse 39
CH-8057 Zurich
www.zora.uzh.ch

Year: 2024

Operationalizing the problem of political alienation for housing studies

Gehriger, Luisa

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2023.2238643>

Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich

ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-235249>

Journal Article

Published Version



The following work is licensed under a Creative Commons: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) License.

Originally published at:

Gehriger, Luisa (2024). Operationalizing the problem of political alienation for housing studies. *Housing Studies*, 39(11):2963-2983.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2023.2238643>

Operationalizing the problem of political alienation for housing studies

Tenants experiencing mass cancellations of rental contracts in Basel, Switzerland

Luisa Gehriger 

Department of Social and Cultural Geography, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

ABSTRACT

This paper adds to a revitalization of alienation as a political problem in the field of housing studies, pointing us to property relations that fragment tenants from acting together with other residents in similar positions. Analyzing ethnographic observations and interviews conducted in Basel with tenants facing mass cancellations of rental contracts, it operationalizes the problem of alienation to more closely examine the interplay of property relations and the subjective or collective experience of tenants: The consolidation of landlords' interests through complicit legal frameworks fragments tenants not only by producing insecurities within affected blocks. This consolidation also drives processes of individualization and conflict between fellow tenants and between tenants and their union, as well as harms tenants' belief in (local) political institutions. On the other hand, experiencing these fragmentations and the widespread inhibition of people to act together with others is, in some cases, the most sorrowful aspect for tenants facing rental contract cancellations in Basel. With the proposed understanding of alienation, the paper adds to two debates in housing studies: Outlining alienating property relations, it first foregrounds institutional constraints regarding the question of why many residents do not confront landlords' plans. Secondly, political alienation highlights the sorrow that can stem from the inhibition of collective action. Here the paper contributes to the debate around displacement and un-homing, showing them to be much more than the loss of original habitat. Lastly, the paper responds to the query of how to empirically apply the theoretically driven concept of alienation by moving questions of collective agency to the fore in housing and alienation theory.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 9 August 2022
Accepted 13 July 2023

KEYWORDS

Alienation; displacement; un-homing; renoventions; tenants

1. Introduction

I said to the others [*the other tenants*]: Well, what was the use of going to this tenants' court? Now they've given us new notice, and that's it. And you know, this tenants'

court, they're employed by the government, so what else can they say? No, of all the involved parties ... do you think anyone can just tell them not to give notice to these people? Nobody has that power! They [*the landlords*] own these buildings. You understand what I mean? It's all a show to me.' (Emma, 06.09.21)

I meet Emma in her favourite café, across the street from an old block of flats she had lived in for 46 years. Six months earlier, her rental contract had been cancelled, as had the 38 contracts of her neighbours. I asked her why she did not join the small group of tenants who were legally fighting their cancellations, together with the tenant union. She responded that she considered the whole contestation in front of the arbitration board nothing more than a 'show'. Emma is just one example of many tenants in Switzerland who reject what Rinn *et al.* (2022, p. 3) term a 'confrontational' reaction to cancellation. This paper sheds light on institutional constraints leading to such reactions of tenants and, in turn, what these inhibitions imply for tenant's relationships with other tenants, the tenant union, or other (local) political institutions.

In recent years there has been a growing interest in social movements around tenancy (Künstler & Schipper, 2021; Reichle & Bescherer, 2021; Vollmer, 2018), as well as in processes of 'un-homing' that expand our idea of displacement to be much more than the relocation of residents (Elliott-Cooper *et al.*, 2020; Listerborn & Baeten, 2022). In such work, displacement is seen to include multiple types of affective and emotional ruptures in residents' lives. However, there remains a research gap regarding the relationship between political (non-)participation and processes of un-homing and displacement.

To address this gap, this paper revisits alienation as the deeply relational problem of over-powering and politically *closed* property relations and an experience of fragmentation that hinders residents who find themselves in similar positions from acting together against their common displacement (see for a similar take on alienation: Reichle, 2021). The paper mainly draws on ethnographic observations and interviews with tenants affected by 'renovictions' (Baeten *et al.*, 2017; Listerborn *et al.*, 2020) in Basel. The term 'renoviction' refers to practices of extensive housing renewal that lead to the displacement of tenants, and this phenomenon has become common in Swiss cities (Debrunner *et al.*, 2022; Meuth & Reutlinger, 2021, 2023; Reutlinger *et al.*, 2019; Furrer *et al.* 2020). The process of upgrading through renovation or demolition of existing housing stocks results in both the evictions of tenants and the destruction of affordable housing. The consolidation of landlords' interests through complicit legal frameworks fragment tenants within affected blocks producing insecurities, conflict, and processes of individualization, but also harming tenants' belief in political institutions. However, the experience of fragmentation is in some cases what is most sorrowful for tenants facing rental contract cancellations, while this sorrow in turn also grounds the possibility for class-based solidarity. With this understanding of alienation, the paper adds to two discussions in housing studies: First, it expands debates on displacement as un-homing and foregrounds the violence and sorrow which can result from the inhibition of collective action. Second, it highlights the institutional reasons why many affected residents in Basel comply with the cancellation of their contracts or rising rents and leave without a 'confrontational' (Rinn *et al.*, 2022) reaction. Part of what can make property

relations in Basel so over-powering and alienating is that residents are drawn to appropriate structures and related ideologies like individualizing market logic. The need for appropriation then touches on the question of how market-conforming subjectivities are produced (among others Brown, 2019; Flint, 2004).

The paper is structured in five parts: In the second section, which follows, I discuss theories that foreground alienation as a political problem and place them in conversation with literature emphasizing displacement as a deeply relational process of ‘un-homing’. Section three presents how I operationalize alienation empirically and reflects on some methodological consequences and limits. In section four I introduce the context of mass cancellations of rental contracts in Swiss cities. Section five operationalizes the issue of political alienation in the processes of displacement in Basel. In the conclusion, I summarize these findings and advocate for a range of practices to challenge the occurrence of alienation in displacement processes.

2. Theories of alienation and displacement as ‘un-homing’

Recent debates in housing research in a European context highlight the ‘social, economic and cultural’ (Elliott-Cooper *et al.*, 2020, p. 504) but not so much the political effects of gentrification and displacement on affected populations (Draper, 2022, p. 1; Reichle, 2021, p. 14). In the following, I introduce these literatures as well as accounts of the (im)possibilities of tenant struggles by thinking about what home or belonging implies when looking at alienation as a political problem (Medearis, 2015; Sørensen, 2016). Alienation is concerned with an interplay of alienating institutions or structures—in the field of housing studies, a certain way property relations are designed—and alienated, fragmented experiences of tenants: Fragmentations are theorized on the level of practices and as conflictual or sorrowful fragmentations between tenants or within tenants’ beliefs.

2.1. Alienation as a political problem

Following a Marxist understanding of alienation (Marx 2012 [1990]), scholars writing on the re-production of space argue that the problem of alienation stems from the difference between use-value and exchange-value, which leaves people to live and recreate in space without having control over it (among others Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2018; Belina, 2013). With the term ‘residential alienation,’ Madden & Marcuse (2016) have famously translated the problem of alienation to the sphere of housing: The lack of ‘social power’ of residents over their housing situation is linked to the fact that their housing is ‘the instrument of someone else’s profit’ (Madden & Marcuse, 2016, p. 56). Especially in the last five years, the topic of alienation has hence returned to housing studies that focus on gentrification, evictions, and displacement (Pull, 2020a, 2020b; Reichle, 2021; Reichle & Bescherer, 2021; Westin, 2021).

Rahel Jaeggi (2016, p. 329) speaks of alienation as a subject-structure problem that is connected to an interplay of an *experience* (of a subject or a collective) and the institutional and structural *conditions* as reasons for this experience. Experiences of meaninglessness, sorrow, and powerlessness that appear simultaneously lay at the

core of such an understanding. Alienation then enables an analytical link between ‘negative emotional implications of dispossession’ and ‘systemic trends [...] facilitating capital accumulation’ (Bayırbağ & Penpecioglu, 2017, p. 2056). Paul Sørensen (2016) conceptualizes alienation foremost as a political problem: a problem of political action that points to ‘the inability to relate oneself—on the level of practices—to others’ (Jaeggi 2016, p. 301; Medearis 2015). He reinterprets political alienation as fragmentation of social experience, underlining that political institutions are not only a realm from which and in which one can become alienated. Political alienation is then related to the complex fragmentations of collective experience, and, as Reichle (2021) has recently very fruitfully argued in the context of housing studies, to the role these fragmentations have in the (lack of) residents contestation from below. Sørensen (2016, p. 82) writes:

Deprived of the possibility of politicization and transformation by lack of alternative or naturalization, the institutions and structures in question seem to move beyond the political; they are *closed institutions*. ‘Homeless’ subjects in this case are deprived of the possibility to be ‘at home’ in the world in the mode of politics.

These take on alienation are interesting for displacement studies because the ability of a subject to feel ‘at home’ is crucially connected to people’s possibility to (re)design institutions or structures according to their needs (see also Rosa, 2016). Alienation is a problem of non-responsive institutions and structures: While these structures are more or less closed for *some* people, they consolidate the interests of others, which, as argued by Medearis (2015, p. 106), means that alienated relations enable domination and exploitation. People then most obviously participate in the reproduction of alienated property relations because they benefit from them or assume that they do (Medearis, 2015, p. 109). However, some people reproduce these relations because they have little alternative, as ‘they must make a living, or avoid violence’ or, lastly, ‘do not know’ how they reproduce them (Medearis, 2015, p. 143). Hence, what is interesting but also responsible for a variety of problems social scientists face when applying alienation theory empirically to the experience of a subject or a collective (Shantz *et al.*, 2014) is that these inhibiting institutions and structures that fragment people include practices and interpretations that are reproduced by these same people. This reproduction includes processes of appropriation and subjectivation. To understand fragmentations—no matter whether they are theorized spatially, or on the level of practices, or as conflictual or sorrowful fragmentations between or within actors’ beliefs—implies accounting for a ‘gap’ between a past and present spatiality, practice, sociality, or belief (Hardering, 2020). Alienation as a subjective experience of fragmentation is then a deeply temporal process (Emery, 2020): Only something that has first been appropriated can then become alienated.

My emphasis on alienation as a political problem thus speaks to accounts foregrounding gentrification to hinder ‘social perspectives’ and favour community disintegration (Draper, 2022). The paper also relates to work that highlights the loss of political participation as a major cause of resentment in urban conflicts (Bescherer *et al.* 2021). Alienation as a complex of fragmentations of collective experience connects to accounts underlining processes of isolation and individualization within

residential communities (Levenson, 2022) and their role in (lacking) contestation. Discussing institutional constraints when asking why many residents do not confront landlords' plans relates additionally to accounts emphasizing the challenges an increased financialization poses for tenants' struggles (Fields, 2017; McElroy, 2020) against displacement or renovictions (Ferreri, 2020; Polanska & Richard, 2021; Rinn *et al.*, 2022).

2.2. Displacement as 'un-homing'

David Harvey's notion of 'accumulation by dispossession' (2005; Hodgkinson, 2012) points to the ongoing, dispossessive processes of capital accumulation based on the valorization of non-capitalistic or undervalued resources. Investments in housing promise secure and comparatively high returns in times of negative interest rates, a lack of other profitable investment opportunities, or the threat of overaccumulation (Harvey, 2001, 2008; Holm, 2021; Mösgen & Schipper, 2017). However, focusing on the economic drivers or spatial outcomes of dispossessive practices, such as displacement, scholars have noted that the problem of displacement has been under-theorized and poorly specified (Atkinson, 2015; Baeten *et al.*, 2017; Helbrecht, 2016). Recent literature therefore underlines the dual character of housing dispossession, including not only material losses but also affective and emotional ruptures (Brickell *et al.*, 2017), which expand the conceptualization of both eviction and displacement as intensely felt processes of 'un-homing' (Baxter & Brickell, 2014). Such contributions describe the process of un-homing as severing various relationships to one's self and to the community (Elliott-Cooper *et al.*, 2020, p. 498), expanding our understanding of displacement beyond the notion of a physical relocation of people (Atkinson, 2015; Davidson, 2009).

Literature focusing on displacement as deeply processual and relational un-homing enables a better understanding of the temporal-spatial continuum of displacement beyond both an absolute 'place' of belonging and a one-time event labeled 'eviction' (Baker, 2021). The paper adds to the question of what constitutes 'not-belonging' (Butcher & Dickens, 2016, p. 800) and, conversely, 'home making'. It concretizes one under-considered aspect in 'the multiple and interrelated events, or factors, that co-produce domestic injustice' (Baxter & Brickell 2014, p. 140): political alienation. Thinking about displacement through the lens of political alienation implies accounting for the question of the impossibility of (political) participation in one's housing situation in accounts of displacement as un-homing. What constitutes displacement as violence in the case of tenants in Basel is thus once more not merely the loss of a place, but the impossibility to find something else, losing the 'right to decide' where one lives (Audycka, 2021), and the inhibitions residents experience regarding participating with others in similar positions (Draper, 2022).

With this approach, the paper connects to studies relating displacement to feelings of powerlessness (Reutlinger, 2019) and the 'right to dwell' to the possibility of 'exert a reasonable level of power over one's basic living conditions, with all the physical and mental benefits that entails' (Baeten *et al.*, 2017, p. 631; Stabrowski, 2014). Lastly, it foregrounds asymmetries in the tenant-landlord relationship (Byrne &

McArdle, 2022; Chisholm *et al.*, 2020) and how they undermine people's possibility to make a 'home' (McKee *et al.*, 2020, p. 1475).

3. Methodology: operationalizing political alienation empirically

Alienation as a political problem points us to property relations that fragment residents in similar positions in different ways. As outlined in the theoretical section, implies such an understanding to be attentive to fragmentations occurring spatially and/or on the level of practices, but also to conflictual or sorrowful fragmentations between or within actors' beliefs and interpretations. Alienation as a subjective experience of fragmentation requires a 'gap' between a past and present spatiality, practice, sociality, or belief. Hence, mass cancellations were selected as a case study following a theoretical sampling (Strübing, 2019), as they imply that an entire tenant population is simultaneously affected by the same problem. This implies, in the least, spatial proximity between tenants. I was interested in under what conditions a seemingly common problem does (or not) lead to common practices (Mullis, 2021, p. 144).

However, the paper foregrounds how the tight housing market situation in Basel can draw residents to engage in what I call practices of appropriation, which can also affect how tenants interpret cancellations. This points to problems within alienation theory 'if the experience of suffering is used as the starting point for normative critique' (Hardering, 2020, p. 56). The same can be said for scholarship on housing which emphasizes the experiential process of un-homing lying at the heart of gentrification-induced displacement, 'rather than the revaluation of land per se' (Elliott-Cooper *et al.*, 2020, p. 498). Operationalizing political alienation as proposed means to interrogate displacement *via* a 'subject-oriented' but not 'subjectivist' perspective (Meuth & Reutlinger, 2021, p. 23): Especially patterns of interpretations or subjectively felt emotions of residents cannot be a basis to generate moral-philosophical proof that displacement is an undesirable process. Alienation implies analytically reconnecting both interpretations and feelings to the question of how past and present experiences of affected populations have been shaped by the specific regime of land (re-)valuation.

As alienation is the result of an interplay of property relations and the experience of tenants, this paper combines an analysis of the macro- as well as micro-dimensions at work in displacement processes in Basel (see also Reichle, 2021, pp. 62–77). Its analysis of institutional frameworks is based on secondary data analysis of a report on housing precarity (Aebi 2021), including expert interviews with housing market experts and representatives of the local government, the tenant union, as well as social organizations involved in housing placement. Additionally, it relies on a document analysis of housing market reports, publications on investment strategies, and a media review on rental contract cancellations in Basel.

The paper draws mainly on ethnographic observations and 15 semi-structured interviews (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2014) with tenants who live in blocks affected by mass rental cancellations. For the observations made between April 2021 and January 2022, I repeatedly returned to the housing blocks, all built between the

1950s and 1980s. Cancellations were issued between late 2019 and 2022 by financialized actors. The realization of any mass cancellations can take multiple years, as some tenants remain in the buildings due to objections against the contract cancellations and/or delays in construction schedules. The selected buildings are located in various inner-city neighbourhoods. In addition, I took part in informal discussions held by tenant groups as well as meetings organized by the tenant's union. The latter is designed to help affected tenants both of the selected buildings and of other city blocks or houses where rental contracts have been cancelled.

Most interview participants had lived in the buildings for some time, from 4 up to 60 years. Three interviews were conducted with tenants who had only recently moved into the blocks, after eviction notices had been issued, and who held limited, short-term contracts. Four respondents did not choose to contest their contract cancellation in a confrontational manner when they received notification. The other 8 were part of the groups of tenants within the different buildings who joined the tenant's union. Nearly all of the members of the latter group left their flats during the long process of contestation, however. Hence, my interview sample is not representative of how populations usually react to cancellations, as the majority of tenants leave the building early on and without contestation. A reflection on which types of tenants have time to talk to me and are—additionally—most outspoken about problematizing landlords' practices, I discuss in [section 5](#). Some of this data was collected with the help of a small group of master's degree students at the University of Basel. Tenants were contacted *via* letters distributed in mailboxes, or orally by fellow neighbours or myself. My previous engagement with the housing movement in Basel was in helping the recruitment process. Six of the residents interviewed for this study were older than 75, while the rest were middle-aged, either couples with children or unmarried. Nearly all the interviewed tenants were highly dependent on affordable housing, as they were people who live on the minimum pension, from a small salary gained through relatively low-paid work (e.g. construction), or from unemployment money. I use pseudonyms for my respondents. The study was approved by the geographic ethics council of the authors home institution, while all respondents were asked for their consent to use the collected data for the specific research at hand.

In the first part of each interview, participants were asked about their prior experience as tenants, i.e. where they lived before and under what (contractual) conditions. Secondly, tenants were asked to narrate how they experienced their contract cancellation, what strategies they chose in response to it, and why they did so. The second part of each interview aimed for a better understanding of the relationship between tenants, their fellow neighbours, and other actors involved. With a particular interest in tenants' reactions and the interplay between feelings of powerlessness, sorrow, and conflict, the interview material was transcribed and then analyzed *via* open and selective coding (Strübing, 2019; cf. Strauss, 1987), using the software MAXQDA 2020.

To apply the proposed understanding of alienation to processes of gentrification-induced displacements, an overview of the specificities of the property relations at work in renovations in Basel will be given. In [section 5](#), I then show how these relations produce fragmentations within affected blocks.

4. Mass cancellations of rental contracts in Basel, Switzerland

Most people in Switzerland (61%) live in rental housing, while the rental shares are especially high in urban regions (e.g. Basel-Stadt 83% or Geneva 78%) compared to rural areas (BFS 2023a). Rental housing is mainly supplied by the private sector, with a little less than half of the units belonging to private individuals (47%). The rest belongs to real estate companies and financialized actors, such as banks or insurance companies (41%). The public sector (3.9%) and housing cooperatives (8.1%) account for only a small proportion of rental housing throughout Switzerland, with some regional exceptions, such as Zurich (BFS 2023b).

Studies focusing on transformations in the Swiss residential real estate market point to a dynamization and an increase of financialized actors, especially in urban regions (Jans *et al.*, 2011; Theurillat *et al.*, 2015). Rent increases in cities are then explained by the modernization and upgrading of the existing housing stock (Althaus *et al.*, 2016; BWO, 2016), policies of densification (Debrunner *et al.*, 2022; Kaufmann *et al.*, 2023), and insufficient legal protection for tenants (Debrunner *et al.*, 2020, p. 58). While rent increases in existing tenures are legally only permissible if the investment costs rise, landlords can exploit collecting higher rents for new leases after renovations with fewer legal restrictions. Hence, protection against cancellations of rental contracts due to renovation is weaker in Switzerland compared to Germany and Austria, two other European nations with a comparatively high proportion of renters (Hechfellner, 2017). Cancellations are permitted due to renovation or demolition if the planned construction project is already at an advanced stage (Aebi 2021, p. 14/15). However, cancellations can be challenged by tenants as invalid at the cantonal arbitration board, responsible for negotiating conflicts under rental law. If successful, a challenge can trigger protection against rental contract cancellation for up to four years. More common is however that tenants have to prove a ‘hardship event’ due to, for example, difficulties in finding a new flat. If such hardship is proven, a less extensive extension of the cancellation date is issued. This period of extension can again be extended if tenants challenge the decisions by bringing their case to the cantonal civil court. However, considering these restrictions, renovations due to upgrading or demolition remain legal. Since 2014, so-called ‘Massenkündigungen’ (mass cancellations) are increasingly publicly debated (Republik, 2019). The term refers to the replacement of the entire tenant population in one building after renovation or demolition (Meuth & Reutlinger, 2021, 2023; Reutlinger *et al.*, 2019).

With 84% of its population living as tenants, the city of Basel offers an exemplary case for these dynamics observed in the Swiss rental housing sector. The city-canton of Basel had a long phase of suburbanization which—due to the tight cantonal and close national borders—meant a significant loss of tax income until the 2000s. In the 2000s, the canton adopted entrepreneurial policies directed towards the (inter-cantonal) competition for ‘good’ taxpayers (Aebi & Flachmeyer, 2018). For years now, the vacancy rate for flats in Basel has been historically low (1.2%, Statistisches Amt BS/BL, 2022), while *affordable* housing is even more scarce. Affordable rents are usually found in the older housing stock, whereas housing built after 2010 is more expensive (Aebi, 2021, p. 40).

The difference between current and future rent prices in the old housing stock with formerly affordable rents is attracting financialized actors, such as banks, pension funds or insurance companies (Aalbers, 2016; Fields & Uffer, 2016; Wijburg & Aalbers, 2017). In Basel and other Swiss cities, these actors mostly buy and upgrade larger multi-family housing blocks in a variety of inner-city neighbourhoods (Sager *et al.* 2018). Data on changes in ownership structures over the last 40 years within formerly affordable neighbourhoods in Basel show how the prevalence of private landlords has decreased in favour of financialized actors (Stadt für Alle Basel 2021, 2022). Mostly driven by bigger return rate expectancies, rental contract cancellations can, however, also be executed by private landlords. Some of these buildings or blocks show traces of disinvestment and/or managed decay (Baxter & Brickell, 2014; Brickell *et al.*, 2017). Hence, the upgrading of the old stock poses a double-edged problem for tenants: Not only is affordable housing lost, but the displacement processes these renovations produce increase the number of apartment-seekers dependent on affordable housing (Aebi, 2021, p. 49).

However, the issue of affordable housing is increasingly the subject of political initiatives in Basel-Stadt, an urban half-canton characterized by an unprecedented representation of left and centrist party representatives in parliament. In the city's referendum of June 2018, four housing policy initiatives were approved by the voting population. Three of these initiatives were launched by the tenant association of Basel 1891 (MV Basel), and one by the network of housing shortage (Netzwerk Wohnungsnot) consisting of social services organizations. All four initiatives were won due to what has been an unusual alliance of these actors joining forces with communities affected by displacement processes, actors engaged in cooperative housing and local political parties. The initiatives introduced by law a mandatory document whereby landlords must transparently disclose rent increases for new tenancies. The new initiatives also force a cap of court fees set at 500 Swiss francs, which secures the affordability of court proceedings for tenants. In addition, two constitutional initiatives were approved: The first obliges the canton to protect residents of Basel-Stadt from displacement through cancellations. The second urges the canton to ensure residents have opportunities to obtain housing that meets their needs. However, due to the constitutional character of the last two initiatives, the question of their implementation remains contested.

5. Political alienation in processes of displacement in Basel

Alienation points us to an interplay of property relations and a subjective or a collective experience of tenants as fragmented. The following section operationalizes such an understanding of alienation, firstly, by showing how the consolidation of landlords' interests through complicit legal framings fragments tenants through the production of insecurities, driving the majority of tenants to leave the cancelled blocks 'silently'. In relation, the paper secondly discusses fragmentations on the level of practices, analyzing how individual negotiations with landlords or an extensive search for another flat can foster processes of individualization. Thirdly, individualization processes fragment tenants further by producing conflicts between tenants, or between tenants and supposedly allied organizations, such as the tenants

union, but also harms tenants' belief in (local) political institutions. However, such experiences of fragmentation and individualization are in turn themselves what is—for some tenants—most sorrowful in displacement processes in Basel. These expressions of sorrow, and the question by whom and under which conditions they are expressed, are crucial in the question of how class-based solidarity becomes possible.

5.1. First fragmentations: spatial fragmentation and the reinforcement of insecurities

As introduced in [section 4](#), the strong consolidation of landlords' interests (although under constant contestation from housing advocacy groups) has meant that rental contract cancellations are largely legal. This consolidation creates heavy power imbalances between tenants and landlords (Byrne & McArdle, 2022; Chisholm *et al.*, 2020; McKee *et al.*, 2020) in Basel. Power imbalances are responsible for insecurities within affected blocks, whether or not there is a tenant challenge to landlords' plans or not. Hence, a large number of tenants in Basel do not choose what Rinn *et al.* (2022, p. 3) call a 'confrontational' reaction; many tenants do not legally contest rental contract cancellations but move out in a haste, not necessarily happy with where they then end up. Hence, the majority of tenants leave 'silently', a first spatial fragmentation which, as we will see, is connected to fragmentation on the level of practice that can also drive conflict. Only in some buildings did groups of tenants meet with fellow neighbours, notify the tenants union, and then, in conjunction with the union, began to legally fight the cancellation. Some of the groups also sought media attention (ex. Basler Zeitung, 2021a, 2021b). However, as the union emphasizes, many cancellations remain entirely unnoticed by any political or social organization, or by the media. Hence, I have sat in meetings the union has organized after hearing about rental contract cancellations, and not a single affected tenant arrives, let alone taken legal action. Due to these silent cancellations, it is difficult to estimate the exact number of tenants affected by mass cancellations.¹

Insecurities within affected blocks are amplified by narratives of experts justifying renovictions: Landlords, in some cases represented by contracted architects or social workers, frame cancellations as architecturally inevitable and/or ecologically necessary (Basellandschaftliche Zeitung, 2021; Furrer *et al.* 2020, p. 234, sometimes reinforced by the local media, Basler Zeitung, 2021c). Narratives on safety and ecology shift changing business models and related rent increases to the background (see for Sweden: Polanska, 2023). Landlords and associated partners established a series of real estate management courses that advocate for early information of tenants (Mieten + Wohnen, 2020). Early information increases tenants' preparation time until the moving-out date and can mitigate residents' difficulties to find new flats. In opposition, the tenant union foregrounds examples of non- or low-profit housing providers, such as housing cooperatives or private landlords, where necessities of renovation do not entail the complete exchange of a less affluent tenant population for a more affluent one.

5.2. Second fragmentations: between solidarizing and individualizing practices

In the next section, I discuss how the strong consolidation of landlords' interests and resulting insecurities among tenants drive processes of individualization on the level of practices: Although often marked by solidarity at the beginning of cancellation, tenants are drawn to engage in practices, such as individual negotiations with their landlords or an extensive flat search.

To address how tenant's legal situation is related to the extent residents are drawn to engage in negotiation with their landlords, I first want to discuss the example of the 'letter of agreement' tenants can sign. The notice of a rental contract cancellation is often accompanied by such a letter: When residents agree to a fixed moving-out date, tenants can end their side of the contract within a shorter period than the normal three months. Often having to move ad-hoc once tenants found a new flat, a shorter period gives them more flexibility in the apartment search and prevents them of paying double rent. Once residents moved out, they are in some cases replaced by tenants with limited short-term contracts. The letter of agreement increases the already dominant insecurities among tenants within cancelled blocks when it comes to the question of confronting cancellation or not. Although unwillingly, Marcella decides to start negotiating with her landlord. She does not challenge the landlords' plans together with her fellow neighbours. She says:

This is how wrong it can go. And there is nothing you can do, there is no law, nothing. You have nothing you can hold yourself on. It's only individual negotiation. And there is no one that will say: No, this you cannot do. (Marcella, 01.07.21)

A crucial reason why most tenants do not challenge their landlord's plans is that residents are aware that under the given institutional framework, they themselves will end up having to find a definite solution to cancellation: As we have seen in [section 4](#), such a solution implies finding a new flat in a housing market with few affordable housing options. This is most apparent in the meetings the tenant association organized to offer legal support for those facing such cancellations. The pressure to find a future flat often seems, in practical terms, to stand in strong opposition to challenging a present landlord's plan by going to the arbitration board, or efforts to attract media attention, or to participate in public sit-ins organized by the tenants union and allied organizations. Also, time is of the utmost importance in the long and difficult search for an affordable new flat. One of the most dominant themes in the interviews with residents was then how to find a new flat in such a housing market. Respondents know that it will be difficult to find housing adequate to one's income and needs. Esther's quote exemplifies how tenants search every day for a vacant flat on platforms or through mailing lists—if they have the resources to do so.

I'm up to date with the Internet. But I have people in number one [*another affected block*] who don't know how to handle a tablet or a PC or anything. I don't know how they're looking for a flat. And that is a total disaster. From yesterday to today I got 30 e-mails with flats that I should look at, that I applied to get. It takes so much energy and time. [...] This is really problematic. Because I've already sent out so many

applications. And I've heard back from zero. Out of all of them: Zero. (Esther, 17.06.2021)

Many residents search extensively and in a state of panic. Long hours at their jobs, irregularly scheduled shift work, or limited capacities to use digital aids, often because of age, are three main factors that make the search additionally difficult. However, and while each party may need to find its own new flat, the search for a new apartment is not necessarily an individualizing practice: Especially at the beginning of the cancellation process, neighbours help each other with the search for new housing, while neighbourly contacts can be marked by great empathy and solidarity (Furrer *et al.* 2020).

5.3. Third fragmentations: conflicts and the harm of belief

As time passes after receiving notice of a rental cancellation, the need to engage in practices like housing searches can however drive conflictual fragmentations between fellow tenants. Conflicts are also tangible between tenants and supposedly allied organizations, such as the tenants union, as well as in tenants' belief in (local) political institutions.

5.3.1. Alienation from fellow tenants

That we gave up so fast, I really hadn't expected that. We weren't standing together from the beginning. No one started a campaign and said 'Wait!' or went from flat to flat and said 'Don't sign that.' Two years! You can't kick out 40 families at once. [...] But no! It wasn't even a month or two and then you heard people saying: 'I signed,' 'I did too,' 'me too.' But hello!? We had two years. Where the hell did they all go? (Merdijan, 03.12.21)

Scrutinizing how relationships between tenants change during the process of cancellation, tenants report tensions between those fighting cancellation and those who agreed to the terms of the owners, as well as those other parts of the population who move out because they found something permanent. This disappointment is tangible in the above quote from Merdijan. The need to engage in an extensive search for a new flat enhances processes of individualization by increasing the danger of conflictual fragmentation, even of former quite unified groups of tenants. How increasingly conflictual but also sorrowful the need to engage in individualizing practices can feel is exemplified in Paul's quote, below. Although he and a neighbour promised each other to not look individually for flats and to fight their rent cancellation together, he finds out that his neighbour found a new flat nonetheless. Although happy for her, he feels even more abandoned. He is unhappy about his friend moving out, and when asked how he feels, he says:

P: 'Bad. Because we had been fighting together. For the whole thing. And I feel a little abandoned now. Whereas she had always said she was still waiting: 'I'm not looking now.' But then she seems to have kept looking anyway. [...]

S: [...] And who's still here now to fight with you?

P: No one. I don't have anybody anymore. She had more contact with people, me not so much. I had contact with her, and then with the woman next door – but this one, she died soon after. (Paul, 01.07.21)

Tenants become fragmented due to their impossible and individualized search for housing. Former neighbours or allies sometimes become competitors for scarce affordable and appropriate housing (Furrer *et al.* 2020, p. 237).

5.3.2. Alienation from the tenants union

And then the tenants' association [...]. They're the biggest pack of rabble of all. Let me tell you. First, we had a meeting, then they wanted 85 francs, and then nothing happened. Nothing at all. Supposedly they never got back to us [...]. And then I said to them: 'You can kiss my ass!' (Emma, 06.09.21)

While tenants report feeling abandoned by social institutions or services, the tenants union is the one actor residents often know to approach in case of rental contract cancellation. However, as exemplified in Emma's quote, the relationship with the union is in some cases marked by conflict, stemming from the limited legal possibilities the union has for challenging cancellations as well as from the double-edged role the union tries to play: The union is caught between pursuing individual legal cases and needing to address cancellations through political initiatives—something it did successfully by winning the cantonal initiative for better tenant protection in 2018, discussed earlier. However, conflicts between tenants and the union can increase because the union has a scarcity of personnel and financial resources to help a growing number of affected tenants. This conflict is palpable in the disappointment some tenants voice towards the union.

5.3.3. Alienation from a belief in (local) political institutions

There is so much that could be done and it's just a pity there doesn't seem to be the culture, or awareness, that this could be a responsibility of the state. [...] It's so much embedded in everyone's mindset that this is normal. [...] I don't know if it's always about people finding an agreement by themselves. In a sense, then you can go extremist and say you don't need a government. No one seems to be caring about this. (Marcella, 01.07.21)

Closely linked to the alienation associated with tenants' legal challenges and the institutions and actors who negotiate these, tenants show they are disturbed by the absence of social institutions mitigating the effects of cancellations, especially in cases involving the most vulnerable populations of the buildings. Relatedly, residents express resentment towards representatives of the local government, political parties, or the welfare system. 'Post-democratic alienation' is what Heumann & Nachtwey (2021, p. 66) call a 'paradoxical consequence' of modern societies marked by market-mediated individualization which in turn produces anti-democratic or even

authoritarian individuals. Heumann and Nachtwey argue that the necessity of an adaptation to the requirements of the economy—which the housing market can be one example of—applies to the extent that people are drawn to leave behind these same ideas of a subjectivity equal in possibilities ‘to which the idea of democracy appeals’ (Heumann & Nachtwey, 2021, p. 66). The experience of powerlessness resulting from the non-realization of claims to equality is, in the end, what feeds resentment towards political institutions and their representatives (Bescherer *et al.* 2021; Mullis, 2021; Reichle, 2021). The alienation from allied organizations, such as the tenants union, as well as from political institutions where the institutional frameworks causing alienation would have to be addressed, is one crucial aspect in the processes of displacement in Basel (see for a similar claim on Sweden, Polanska & Richard, 2019).

5.4. Fourth fragmentation: sorrow, solidarity, and the question of (power) lessness

The last sections discussed how power imbalances are responsible for insecurities among tenants, while sometimes also driving processes of individualization and conflict. Most tenants engage extensively in the often-individualizing search for a new flat or are left to individual negotiations with the landlord. The next section argues, how experiencing these processes of individualization and the widespread inhibition of people to act together with others is, in some cases, the most sorrowful aspect for tenants facing rental contract cancellations in Basel. These engagements are however at the same time examples of practices of appropriation of structures, in this case, the market and its logic. Part of what I would like to discuss as over-powering in alienated property relations in Basel is, then, that residents are drawn into participating within structures and logics, such as those of the housing market in order ‘to make a living or avoid violence’ (Medearis 2015, p. 143).

Such appropriations can shape the understandings subjects have of the market as well as their place within it (among others Brown, 2019; Flint, 2004). The search for a new flat or negotiation with a landlord may fragment tenants spatially, favour processes of individualization, and nurture conflict—especially over time. However, fragmentations on the level of practices and related conflicts are not necessarily seen as problematic by all tenants. These developments do also not always produce sorrow or disappointment. My sample, including interviews with tenants who look back at histories of limited, short-term tenancies, suggests a connection between an ongoing past exposure to market logic and, for example, a less pronounced problematization of the power imbalances between landlords and tenants. Also, the question of housing supply in these interviews is more strongly framed as an individual task people can be either more or less successful at, where some families simply ‘didn’t make it’ (Interview Ivana, 22.11.21).

The need for appropriation, in turn, points us to the limitations of alienation being empirically traceable as (voiced) feelings of sorrow or powerlessness, as discussed in section 3. Not legally challenging a rental contract cancellation, as well as searching for a new flat, can both be read as a sign of tenants’ pragmatism and agency. Tenants that do so cannot rightly be described as being powerless, nor

would they necessarily consider themselves as powerless. On the other hand, feeling powerless is voiced by tenants who experienced the impact that the change in ownership structure had on their treatment as tenants firsthand, from residents who were already members of the tenant union before the cancellations were issued, and/or from tenants with a strong social connection to other tenants in the block. These tenants are then often crucial members of the groups who struggle to stay put. Although they voice feeling powerless, this group can also not be described as without power or agency. However, alienation as an experience of sorrow or feelings of powerlessness becomes especially empirically accessible within this group. Sorrowful or conflictual fragmentations stem from relations and associated expectations acquired in the past—of wider beliefs in political institutions, or a more balanced tenant-landlord relation, or neighbourly community—which are now disappointed (see also: Hardering, 2020).

5.4.1. When feelings of sorrow and powerlessness coincide

Aligned with research on rental contract cancellations in Switzerland as a whole, feelings of shock and abandonment (Reutlinger, 2019) dominate amongst tenants who received notice in Basel. The more the respondents are limited in finding a new home due to economic disadvantage or increasing age, the more incisive the effects of these cancellations are: Tenants report anxiety, stress, and insomnia after receiving notice. Consequential economic effects of moving can be indebtedness or a reduction of living standards due to a rent increase. In many cases, housing presents the prerequisite for an independent life. Cancellation can trigger a crisis that results in social isolation (Reichle & Bescherer 2021, p. 24) or, in some extreme but for Switzerland not singular cases, death wishes or death (Mieten + Wohnen, 2021).

We pay too little rent. [...] At the end of the day, they [*name of the landlord*] are a giant – a billion-dollar business. And us? We are just [*makes a pffff' noise*]. We are little, little people. [...] We're fighting, David against Goliath. We're fighting against companies that are too big, corporations that are too big. (Merdijan, 03.12.21)

Feelings of meaningless coincide with feelings of powerlessness, something the quote from Merdijan, a middle-aged father, is one example of: Tenants voice feeling powerless in the face of the interests of the (new) landlords. Especially tenants who went collectively to the board returned disillusioned when confronted with the lawyers of the landlords and the line of reasoning they represent (see for a similar argument on Sweden Baeten *et al.*, 2017, p. 643).

5.4.2. When the inhibition to act with others constitutes sorrow

I talked to my neighbour and she almost cried. That's what hurt me. So, when the cancellation notice came, I knew I would fight. I felt sorry for these people. When they realized that they're alone. And have no power. They moved out relatively quickly. I've seen a few people who said, 'I've found something new. But I'm not happy.' [...] Unfortunately, there aren't so many people who are still here – just today someone

moved out. [...] That's what hurts. I've also seen a lot of people who [...] didn't have any strength to fight at all [...]. And that's just the damn way they do it. (Guisep, 29.06.2021)

Guisep is a middle-aged tenant who had been living in one of the blocks for 20 years. What the written form of the quote is not able to express is the quiver in his voice as he speaks. Going back to the notion of alienation as an experience of powerlessness or sorrow, I argue that an important part of what constitutes processes of cancellation in Basel as sorrowful is not only the threatened loss of place or familiarity. One of the most sorrowful points for tenants who have been living long-term in these buildings is the felt loss of community, deriving crucially from the fragmentation tenants experience, limiting them from acting together with fellow neighbours. To be left to individually negotiate with the landlord for better conditions or to compete with fellow neighbours for scarce affordable housing might in these cases be pragmatic, but it remains a source of sorrow and alienation. The sorrow Guisep voices when saying that he feels for the others and seeing them remain powerless, is one key element in the explanation of why people decide to join the union or fellow neighbours in their struggle to stay put. To be attentive to this experience, and to the condition under which it occurs, means to be attentive to the often-fragile conditions under which class-based solidarity becomes possible.

6. Conclusion

This paper operationalizes the problem of alienation within processes of displacement in Basel, pointing us to property relations that fragment tenants in different ways: Property relations produce not only insecurities within affected tenants but also drive processes of individualization and conflict between fellow tenants, tenants, and the union, as well as tenants' belief in (local) political institutions. On the one hand, experiencing this complex of fragmentations inhibiting people to act together with others is, in some cases, the most sorrowful aspect for tenants facing rental contract cancellations in Basel. On the other hand, the paper advocates for dependence between over-powering property relations, the needs of tenants to engage in practices of appropriation, and the way tenants react to and interpret cancellations. The mere presence (or absence) of voiced sorrow or feeling powerless can then not serve to ensure moral proof that gentrification-induced displacement is (or is not) an unwanted process. The latter is important to mention in the face of unstable housing conditions in Swiss cities being on the rise, caused not only by renoventions and people facing multiple displacements but also by an increase in short-term contracts or so-called 'temporary leases' (Debrunner & Gerber, 2021).

It is the (threatened) loss of a home understood both as a material loss as well as an affective or emotional rupture that enables us to conceptualize displacement as an unjust dynamic (Atkinson, 2015, p. 377). At the same time, I share the concern of Valli (2021, p. 79) that well-intentioned researchers might be drawn to 'fetishize gentrifying neighbourhoods' or the 'home' as a place of absolute belonging (Atkinson, 2015; Cahill, 2007). Operationalizing the notion of alienation when

evaluating tenants' reactions to rental contract cancellation, as I have demonstrated, highlights that it is not only the transformation of a neighbourhood or the loss of a place that creates sorrowful alienated experiences. For many tenants in Basel, it is the experience of fragmentation and individualization that co-constitute displacement as violent and sorrowful. These findings advocate towards both an alienation theory and a displacement theory whose point of reference is not the recovery of original familiarity but the oppositional and collective appropriation of the question of how housing is supplied for.

Künstler & Schipper (2021, p. 277) state that underdeveloped social networks or a pessimistic perception of one's own power are important factors to inhibit tenant's struggle. They call for increased involvement of social services organizations in displacement processes. In the case of Basel, the role of the tenants union is crucial in encouraging affected communities. Increasing the financial resources of the union could then be one approach to support struggles, as well as stronger cooperation between the union and other political organizations supporting the facilitation of tenant meetings. However, this paper also adds to a discussion about the limits of initiatives that aim at creating a stronger bottom-up organization of affected communities. It underlines to be cautious to call upon affected communities mainly when asking about conditions necessary to form political collectivity (Reyes *et al.*, 2021). Practices of day-to-day survivability that create 'replicable micro-worlds of alternative urban relationships' (Kern & McLean 2017, p. 419) are then not sufficient. The case of Basel shows, how fragmentations are often a result of a strong consolidation of landlord's interests through complicit legal framings, as well as market mechanisms that promote individualization and conflict. Experiences of fragmentation must then be opposed by reconfiguring the legal as well as economic frameworks that make these experiences possible.

Note

1. Aebi (2021, p. 50, 83) estimates there were over 1000 households affected by cancellations in 2018 in Basel. The newspaper Republik (2019) writes about 2600 affected tenants in 2019. These calculations are, however, based on the number of legal proceedings by the tenants union.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

ORCID

Luisa Gehriger  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9205-8829>

References

- Aalbers, M. (2016) *The Financialization of Housing: A Political Economy Approach* (Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge).
- Aebi, J. (2021) *Wohnungsnot sozial benachteiligter Personen im Kanton Basel-Stadt. Bestandsaufnahme und Massnahmen. Vorstudie im Auftrag der Koehlin-Vischer Stiftung* (MuttENZ: ISOS FHNW).

- Aebi, J. & Flachmeyer, M. (2018) What if your pension fund destroys your home? Financialization and right to the city struggles in Basel. Paper presented at the ISA World Conference Toronto, 15 July 2018.
- Althaus, E., Glaser, M. A. & Schmidt, M. (2016) Angebote nicht-monetärer Dienstleistungen im Bereich Wohnen für armutsgefährdete und-betroffene Menschen: Eine Untersuchung von staatlichen und nicht-staatlichen Angeboten. *Beiträge Zur Sozialen Sicherheit. Forschungsbericht*, Nr. 2/16 (Bern: Bundesamt für Sozialversicherungen).
- Atkinson, R. (2015) Losing one's place: Narratives of neighbourhood change, market injustice and symbolic displacement, *Housing, Theory and Society*, 32, pp. 373–388.
- Audycka, B. (2021) “The right to stay put” or “the right to decide”? The question of displacement in the revitalization of Łódź (Poland), *Housing Studies*, pp. 1–15. doi: [10.1080/02673037.2021.1992358](https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2021.1992358)
- Baeten, G., Westin, S., Pull, E. & Molina, I. (2017) Pressure and violence: Housing renovation and displacement in Sweden, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 49, pp. 631–651.
- Baker, A. (2021) From eviction to evicting: Rethinking the technologies, lives and power sustaining displacement, *Progress in Human Geography*, 45, pp. 796–813.
- Basler Zeitung (2021a) «Ich rate allen, zu kämpfen». Hauser K, Montag, 26. Juli 2021.
- Basler Zeitung (2021b) *Mietern wird wohl ein zweites Mal gekündigt*. Hauser K, Samstag, 20. März 2021.
- Basler Zeitung (2021c) *Bürgergemeinde wirft Mietparteien raus*. Simonsen L, Mittwoch, 30. Juni 2021.
- Basellandschaftliche Zeitung (2021) *Nein-Komitee warnt vor «Gammelwohnungen»*. Krauser H, Mittwoch, 3. November 2021.
- Baxter, R. & Brickell, K. (2014) For home un making, *Home Cultures*, 11, pp. 133–143.
- Bayırbağ, M. K. & Penpecioglu, M. (2017) Urban crisis: ‘limits to governance of Alienation’, *Urban Studies*, 54, pp. 2056–2071.
- Belina, B. (2013) *Raum. Zu den Grundlagen eines historisch-geographisch Materialismus* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot).
- Bescherer, P., Burkhardt, A., Feustel, R., Mackenroth, G. & Sievi, L. (2021) *Urbane Konflikte und die Krise der Demokratie: Stadtentwicklung, Rechtsruck und Soziale Bewegungen* (Münster: Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot).
- BFS (2023a) Bundesamt für Statistik, Mietwohnungen, Strukturhebung. Available at <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bau-wohnungswesen/wohnungen/mietwohnungen.html> (accessed 7 July 2023).
- BFS (2023b) Bundesamt für Statistik Statistik, Tabelle Eigentübertyp der Mietwohnungen 2022, BFS-Nummer je-d-09.03.03.50(1).
- Brickell, K., Arrigoitia, M. F. & Vasudevan, A. (2017) Geographies of forced eviction: dispossession, violence, resistance, in: *Geographies of Forced Eviction*, pp. 1–23 (London: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Brown, W. (2019) *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- Butcher, M. & Dickens, L. (2016) Spatial dislocation and affective displacement: Youth perspectives on gentrification in london, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 40, pp. 800–816.
- BWO (Bundesamt für Wohnungswesen, 2016) *Bericht Energetische Gebäudesanierungen im Mietwohnungsbereich* (Grenchen: Eidgenössisches Departement für Wirtschaft, Bildung und Forschung WBF).
- Byrne, M. & McArdle, R. (2022) Secure occupancy, power and the landlord-tenant relation: A qualitative exploration of the Irish private rental sector, *Housing Studies*, 37, pp. 124–142.
- Cahill, C. (2007) Negotiating grit and glamour: Young women of color and the gentrification of the lower east side, *City & Society*, 19, pp. 202–231.
- Chisholm, E., Howden-Chapman, P. & Fougere, G. (2020) Tenants’ responses to substandard housing: Hidden and invisible power and the failure of rental housing regulation, *Housing, Theory and Society*, 37, pp. 139–161.

- Davidson, M. (2009) Displacement, space and dwelling: Placing gentrification debate, *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 12, pp. 219–234.
- Debrunner, G. & Gerber, J.-D. (2021) The commodification of temporary housing, *Cities*, 108, pp. 102998.
- Debrunner, G., Hengstermann, A. H. & Gerber, J.-D. (2020) Die Wohnungsfrage ist eine Bodenfrage. Bodenpolitische Instrumente zur Sicherstellung des preisgünstigen Wohnraums im Bestand in Schweizer Städten, in: B. Schöning & L. Vollmer (Eds) *Wohnungsfragen ohne Ende?! Ressourcen für eine soziale Wohnraumversorgung: Vol. 1*, pp. 49–68 (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag).
- Debrunner, G., Jonkman, A. & Gerber, J.-D. (2022) Planning for social sustainability: mechanisms of social exclusion in densification through large-scale redevelopment projects in swiss cities, *Housing Studies*, pp. 1–21. doi: [10.1080/02673037.2022.2033174](https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2022.2033174)
- Draper, J. (2022) Gentrification and everyday democracy, *European Journal of Political Theory*, pp. 1–22. doi: [10.1177/14748851221137510](https://doi.org/10.1177/14748851221137510)
- Elliott-Cooper, A., Hubbard, P. & Lees, L. (2020) Moving beyond marcus: Gentrification, displacement and the violence of un-homing, *Progress in Human Geography*, 44, pp. 492–509.
- Emery, J. (2020) After coal: Affective-temporal processes of belonging and alienation in the deindustrializing nottinghamshire coalfield, UK, *Frontiers in Sociology*, 5, pp. 38.
- Ferreri, M. (2020) Contesting displacement through radical emplacement and occupations in austerity Europe, in: *The Handbook of Displacement*, pp. 739–752 (Cham: Springer).
- Fields, D. (2017) Urban struggles with financialization, *Geography Compass*, 11, pp. e12334.
- Fields, D. & Uffer, S. (2016) The financialisation of rental housing: A comparative analysis of New York City and Berlin, *Urban Studies*, 53, pp. 1486–1502.
- Flint, J. (2004) The responsible tenant: Housing governance and the politics of behaviour, *Housing Studies*, 19, pp. 893–909.
- Furrer, H., Hilti, N., Lingg, E., Meuth, M., Roth, P., Paulus, S., Reutlinger, C., Rutz-Spiroudis, E., Stiehler, S., Hartmann, S. & Makowka, S. (2020) Solidarisation und Entsolidarisation von Mieterinnen und Mietern im Kontext vonbedrohtem Wohnen – Zum Umgang mit, Entmietungsstrategien, in: *Mechanismen der Sozialen Frage. Hin-und Ableitungen zur Sozialen Arbeit*, pp. 231–242 (Berlin: Frank & Timme).
- Hardering, F. (2020) The critique of alienation and the integration of the actor's perspective: Understanding alienation in biographical identity work processes, *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, 21, pp. 46–62.
- Harvey, D. (2001) Globalization and the “spatial fix”, *Geographische Revue: Zeitschrift Für Literatur Und Diskussion*, 3, pp. 23–30.
- Harvey, D. (2005) *The New Imperialism* (London: OUP Oxford).
- Harvey, D. (2008) The right to the city, *New Left Review*, September–October, 53. Available at <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii53/articles/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city> (accessed 7 July 2023).
- Harvey, D. (2018) Universal alienation and the real subsumption of daily life under capital: A response to hardt and negri, *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, 16, pp. 449–453.
- Hechfellner, M. (2017) *Wohnungspolitik und Mietrecht in Wien: Ein Vergleich mit den Städten München und Zürich und Wien*. Doctoral dissertation, Technische Universität Wien.
- Helbrecht, I. (2016) *Gentrifizierung in Berlin: Verdrängungsprozesse und Bleibestrategien* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag).
- Heumann, M. & Nachtwey, O. (2021) Autoritarismus und Zivilgesellschaft: Eine empirische Studie zum neuen Autoritarismus #16 (Frankfurt am Main: Institut für Sozialforschung).
- Hodkinson, S. (2012) The new urban enclosures, *City*, 16, pp. 500–518.
- Holm, A. (2021) *Objekt der Rendite. Zur Wohnungsfrage, oder: was Engels noch nicht wissen konnte* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag).
- Jaeggi, R. (2016) *Entfremdung: zur Aktualität eines sozialphilosophischen Problems* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag).

- Jans, A., Graf, S. & Leu, T. (2011) *Aktuelle Herausforderungen auf dem Wohnungsmarkt. Studie im Auftrag der Sozialdemokratischen Fraktion der schweizerischen Bundesversammlung* (Winterthur: ZHAW Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften).
- Kaufmann, D., Lutz, E., Kauer, F., Wehr, M. & Wicki, M. (2023) Erkenntnisse zum aktuellen Wohnungsnotstand: Bautätigkeit, Verdrängung und Akzeptanz. ETH Zürich, SPUR-Raumentwicklung und Stadtpolitik, März 2023.
- Kern, L. M. & McLean, H. (2017) Undecidability and the urban: Feminist pathways through urban political economy, *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 16, pp. 405–426.
- Künstler, F. & Schipper, S. (2021) Prekäre wohnverhältnisse, verdrängungsdruck und die entstehung politischer kollektivität in frankfurt westhausen, *Soziale Passagen*, 13, pp. 273–292.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- Levenson, Z. (2022) *Delivery as Dispossession: Land Occupation and Eviction in the Postapartheid City* (London: Oxford University Press).
- Listerborn, C. & Baeten, G. (2022) Struggling with conceptual framings to understand Swedish displacement processes, in: *Socio-Spatial Theory in Nordic Geography*, pp. 207–216 (Cham: Springer).
- Listerborn, C., Molina, I. & Richard, Å. (2020) Claiming the right to dignity: New organizations for housing justice in neoliberal Sweden, *Radical Housing Journal*, 2, pp. 119–137.
- Madden, D. & Marcuse, P. (2016) *In Defense of housing. The Politics of Crisis* (London; New York, NY: Verso).
- Marx, K. (2012 [1990]) *MEW/Marx-Engels-Werke Band 40* (Berlin: Diez).
- McElroy, E. (2020) Speculating upon san francisco's futurity: from shell company evictions to decolonial action, in: *Housing Displacement*, pp. 97–112 (London: Routledge).
- McKee, K., Soaita, A. M. & Hoolachan, J. (2020) 'Generation rent' and the emotions of private renting: self-worth, status and insecurity amongst low-income renters, *Housing Studies*, 35, pp. 1468–1487.
- Medearis, J. (2015) *Why Democracy Is Oppositional* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).
- Meuth, M. & Reutlinger, C. (2021) Von gentrifizierung betroffen: Ein exemplarischer beitrag zur diskussion konzeptioneller und methodisch-methodologischer fragen qualitativer verdrängungsforschung, *Sub\Urban. zeitschrift Für Kritische Stadtforschung*, 9, pp. 11–30.
- Meuth, M. & Reutlinger, C. (2023) *Entmietet und verdrängt: Wie Mieter* innen ihren Wohnungsverlust erleben* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag).
- Mieten + Wohnen (online, 2020) Kündigen heisst jetzt «entmieten» *Banz E*, 21.12.2020. Available at <https://www.mieterverband.ch/mv/mitgliedschaft-verband/zeitschrift-mw/artikel/2020/Kuendigen-heitst-jetzt-entmieten.html> (accessed 7 July 2023).
- Mieten + Wohnen (2021) «Ihre Lebensfreude war weg». *Banz E*, Nr. 3. Juni 2021, pp. 6–8.
- Mösgen, A. & Schipper, S. (2017) Gentrifizierungsprozesse im frankfurter ostend. Stadtpolitische aufwertungsstrategien und zuzug der europäischen zentralbank, *Raumforschung Und Raumordnung-Spatial Research and Planning*, 75, pp. 125–141.
- Mullis, D. (2021) Urban conditions for the rise of the far right in the global city of frankfurt: from austerity urbanism, post-democracy and gentrification to regressive collectivity, *Urban Studies*, 58, pp. 131–147.
- Polanska, D. V. & Richard, Å. Å (2019) Narratives of a fractured trust in the swedish model: Tenants' emotions of renovation, *Culture Unbound*, 11, pp. 141–164.
- Polanska, D. V. & Richard, Å. Å (2021) Resisting renovictions: Tenants organizing against, *Radical Housing Journal*, 4, pp. 187–205.
- Polanska, D. V. (2023) Legal geographies of displacement through renovation: Legal interpretative practices in Sweden, *Antipode*, pp. 1–21. doi: [10.1111/anti.12957](https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12957)
- Przyborski, A. & Wohlrab-Sahr, M. (2014) Forschungsdesigns für die qualitative Sozialforschung, in: *Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung*, pp. 117–133 (Wiesbaden: Springer).
- Pull, E. (2020a) Displacement: Structural evictions and alienation, *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 19, pp. 364–373.

- Pull, E. (2020b) *The Original Sin: On displacement through renoviction in Sweden*. Doctoral dissertation, Malmö University & Roskilde University.
- Reichle, L. R. (2021) *Alienated Social Reproduction: A study on the politics of neoliberal urban restructuring in Leipzig, East Germany*. Doctoral dissertation, De Montfort University.
- Reichle, L. R. (forthcoming) Alienation and authoritarian appropriation – The spatio-temporality of political subjectivation in an East German boomtown. *ZREx – Zeitschrift für Rechtsextremismusforschung*.
- Reichle, L. R. & Bescherer, P. (2021) Organizing with tenants and fighting rightist resentments – A case study from east Germany, *Radical Housing Journal*, 4, pp. 11–31.
- Republik (2019) Was tun gegen steigende Mieten? published online 7.8.2019. Available at <https://www.republik.ch/2019/08/07/was-tun-gegen-steigende-mieten> (accessed 7 July 2023).
- Reutlinger, C. (2019) Allein, machtlos, verdrängt – wie sich die neue (alte) wohnungsfrage zeigt, *Zesó. Zeitschrift Für Sozialhilfe*, 2, pp. 18–21.
- Reutlinger, C., Furrer, H., Hilti, N., Lingg, E., Meuth, M. & Roth, P. (2019) Perspektive: Wohnungsverlust – untersuchung zur sozialen seite baulich-planerischer strategien, *Soziale Passagen*, 11, pp. 215–219.
- Reyes, A., Vilenica, A., McElroy, E., Chen, H. Y., Lancione, M., Thompson, S. & Muñoz, S. (2021) Tenant organizing, scholar activism, and global South perspectives as alternative infrastructures of knowledge production, *Radical Housing Journal*, 3, pp. 1–10.
- Rinn, M., Wehrheim, J. & Wiese, L. (2022) How tenants' reactions to rent increases affect displacement: an interactionist approach to gentrification, *Urban Studies*, 59, pp. 3060–3076.
- Rosa, H. (2016) *Resonanz: Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag).
- Sager, D., Grob, M. & Schmidt, T. (2018) Auswirkungen des Schweizer Miet- rechts im Umfeld stark steigender Angebotsmieten – eine empirische Untersuchung, in: *Strukturberichterstattung Nr. 58/2* (Bern: Staatssekretariat für Wirtschaft).
- Shantz, A., Alfes, K. & Truss, C. (2014) Alienation from work: Marxist ideologies and twenty-first-century practice, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25, pp. 2529–2550.
- Sörensen, P. (2016) *Entfremdung als Schlüsselbegriff einer kritischen Theorie der Politik* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft).
- Stabrowski, F. (2014) New-build gentrification and the everyday displacement of polish immigrant tenants in greenpoint, brooklyn, *Antipode*, 46, pp. 794–815.
- Stadt für Alle Basel (2021) Betongold II: Rosental. Available at <https://staging.stadt fuer alle.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Plakat-Rosental-2.pdf> (accessed 7 July 2023).
- Stadt für Alle Basel (2022) Betongold III: Klybeck Kleinhüningen. Available at <https://stadt fuer alle.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Betongold-Klybeck-Kleinhuehningen.pdf> (accessed 7 July 2023).
- Statistisches Amt BS/BL (2022) Leerstandserhebung. Herausgeber Statistische Ämter der Kantone Basel-Stadt und Basel-Landschaft, Ausgabe August 2022.
- Strauss, A. L. (1987) *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press).
- Strübing, J. (2019) Grounded theory und theoretical sampling, in: *Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung*, pp. 525–544 (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien).
- Theurillat, T., Rérat, P. & Crevoisier, O. (2015) The real estate markets: Players, institutions and territories, *Urban Studies*, 52, pp. 1414–1433.
- Valli, C. (2021) Emotional displacement. Misrecognition, symbolic violence, and loss of place, in: B. G. L. Carina, P. Maria & P. Emil (Ed) *Housing Displacement. Conceptual and Methodological Issue*, pp. 67–81 (London: Routledge).
- Vollmer, L. (2018) *Mieter_innenbewegungen in Berlin und New York: Die Formierung politischer Kollektivität* (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien).
- Westin, S. (2021) Un-homing with words: Economic discourse and displacement as alienation, *Cultural Geographies*, 28, pp. 239–254.
- Wijburg, G. & Aalbers, M. B. (2017) The alternative financialization of the german housing market, *Housing Studies*, 32, pp. 968–989.