

The State-Made Rental Gap

Gentrification in Subsidized Rental Housing

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1 Gentrification in Subsidized Rental Housing: A Thematic Approach

The term "gentrification" has become a catchphrase in the current discourse on the development of international cities, including Berlin. It is also increasingly popular outside the circle of those actively involved with urban development issues from the spheres of policy, academia and civil society: Gentrification has become an established concept in Berlin's daily newspapers, and has entered into the everyday speech of the city's residents. Since "gentrification" was mentioned for the first time in the early 1990s, in the context of the economic boom expected for Berlin and the trends underway in Berlin's redevelopment areas (as, for instance, in Bernt and Holm 2009), the term has become increasingly associated with the increasingly strained housing market in the new capital.

To begin this chapter it should be noted that gentrification is understood as a "*process* of appreciation and displacement" (Holm 2011a, p. 213, original emphasis) and not as a *state*. Considering gentrification as a process makes it possible to distinguish the different stages underway simultaneously in various inner-city districts of Berlin, which, according to Andrej Holm (2011a, p. 213ff.), can be located as spatial-temporal developments. Proceeding from the redevelopment areas in Kreuzberg, what Holm calls the "Berlin gentrification circle" runs further across Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg up to the current developments in (northern) Neukölln, and currently leads back to a renewed wave of upgrading in Kreuzberg. As the findings of the research by Christian Döring and Klaus Ulbricht (2017, in this volume) show, by now this wave also includes additional districts of Berlin like Moabit, Gesundbrunnen and Wedding, which is why these authors—going even further than Holm—speak of a "Berlin gentrification spiral".

Holm explains the wave-like progression of this upgrading, similar to Neil Smith's rent-gap theory (1979), with the economic valorization strategy of the

real estate industry, which invests in modernizations as soon as a yield gap emerges between current and potential future use (Holm 2011a, p. 216f.):

Gentrification is defined as all residential valorization strategies and politically desired revaluations in neighborhoods, which require for their success the direct or indirect displacement of lower-status population groups and/or cause a reduction of inexpensive housing stock (Holm 2011a, p. 213).

This logic emphasizes the economic and political roots of the process, which is described in greater detail in the following sections. Yet, it neglects the influence of the growing interest group in the last decades, which has demanded inner-city residences. In the development of the "post-industrial society" as postulated by Daniel Bell (1973), for which "the centrality of theoretical knowledge and the expansion of the service sector as against a manufacturing economy" is characteristic, the system of social stratification is changing (Bell 1985, p. 13f.). Many authors speak of the aspiration of a "new middle class", shaped by the highly skilled, by managers and engineers. These are the conveyors of the specific knowledge that constitutes the fundamental resource of a service society (see, among others, Bell 1980; Giddens 1973; Gouldner 1979). At the same time, the places the employees in the service sector work are "highly selectively" concentrated in the inner-city areas of urban business centers, so that these urban spaces undergo an extreme functional shift (Helbrecht 1996, p. 16). Within this new social stratum, according to David Ley (1996), the social group of the "cultural and social professionals" plays a decisive role in the process of gentrification. With their preference for a life in the inner city as opposed to the suburban region, they support the emergence of new inner-city cityscapes/environments, in which they act in equal measure as producers and consumers (Ley 1996, p. 15). Those seeking cheap living and development space, the so-called 'pioneers', consume the existing alternative milieu of certain inner-city areas, which are more in line with their cultural values and aesthetic sensibilities than a suburban residential area. In so doing, these creative social groups develop the city spaces further, thus producing a shift that comprises in the upgrading of the social and cultural infrastructure, and thus a change in image as well as an increase in the market value of these areas (Helbrecht 2011). These developments generate a rise in rents as well as growing demand by higher-status population groups, the so-called 'gentrifiers', who want to benefit from the social and cultural infrastructures (Blasius and Dangschat 1990, p. 11ff.). They use inner-city locational advantages, including vicinity to the workplace, to cultural institutions like theater, cinema and concert halls, as well as to restaurants, bars and to "the scene" (Blasius 1994, p. 408).

Consequently, the gentrification process does not originate in the real estate business alone; it is actually part of a comprehensive economic and urban structural transformation. This is connected with the tertiarization of the labour market, changes in the social structure, and the cultural orientation of new lifestyle groups (Helbrecht 1996).

In recent years Berlin has experienced especially strong growth in the "creative" interest group, as evinced in the constantly growing service sector of the creative and cultural economy as well as in the media attention focused on this group of society (see IHK 2012; Schönball, Tagesspiegel 2010; Müller, Berliner Morgenpost 2011; Paul, Berliner Zeitung 2012a). Growing national and international migration was attracted by the image of the city of Berlin, which was composed of the cultural values of a tolerant creative scene, in particular, and by a special attitude towards life, and is correlated above all with living in inner-city Wilhelminian quarters (see Berlin Partner GmbH 2012; Hank 2012).

In addition to the in-migration, a surplus of births is also providing for constant population growth, so that the pressure on the Berlin housing market is growing (see AfS Berlin-Brandenburg 2013; SenStadt 2012).

As a result, even less-attractive residential areas in inner-city locations are in demand by the relevant interest groups and the real-estate industry. Such residential properties also include subsidized rental housing, in which private modernization measures have intensified for nearly a decade now, and where conversion into individually owned apartments is taking place, such that much of the settlement of higher-status population groups is coupled with the concomitant displacement of the previous tenants. These developments are the research interest of the study introduced here.

The investigation of a gentrification and displacement process in Berlin's subsidized rental housing has become particularly explosive because this segment of the housing market, especially intended for low-income population groups, is actually presumed to be immune to transformation processes like gentrification. Yet this study shows that, as a consequence of state deregulation measures, gentrification phenomena can be ascertained in precisely these residential properties.

Through political decisions made by the Berlin Chamber of Deputies, a yield gap was created in subsidized rental housing, so that a number of actors in the real-estate industry were given the opportunity to use this gap for their valorization strategies and close it through rent increases. We have called this politically created yield gap the "*state-made rental gap*".¹

1 The term "state-made rental gap" comes from Ilse Helbrecht, who developed it in the framework of shared oral discussions on our empirical study.

With the Senate resolution of February 2003 on phasing out follow-up financing for subsidized rental housing in Berlin, the initial 15-year funding which expired after 1 January 2003, the Senate basically created the possibility for owners to raise rents in their properties to what is called "cost rent" (Abgeordnetenhaus 2012a, p. 7). This cost rent amounts to an average of €13/m², made up of the financing costs determined during construction of the building plus the operating costs, whereby the former makes up the lion's share of the cost rent (Kotti & Co and Sozialmieter.de 2012, p. 19f.). By phasing out the subsidies stipulated in the support program, which were designed to reduce the cost rent to a "social rent", lawmakers legitimized rent increases on the cost rent calculated when the building was constructed (Kotti & Co and Sozialmieter.de 2012, p. 19f.). As a consequence, from this time on owners were allowed to charge rents far higher than "comparative rents" for non-rent-controlled housing of a similar standard in similar locations.² Phasing out follow-up financing has affected a total of 27,786 housing units in Berlin (Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin 2012a, p. 2). At the same time, by the end of 2013 subsidized housing was freed—in principle—from *tenancy controls*, so that landlords could seek out a wealthier clientele.

We classify these resolutions by the Senate and their consequences as a new facet of upgrading inner-city areas in Berlin. Observing multiple dimensions of the gentrification process makes it possible to comprehensively investigate the phenomena of gentrification in subsidized rental housing. Besides economic and sociocultural dimensions, the process also has a decisive political dimension. Political (de-)regulation measures can precede a gentrification process and/or actually initiate it (for studies in this vein, see, among others, Atkinson et al. 2011; Badcock 1989; Helbrecht 1996; Holm 2011a, 2011b; McCarthy 1974). Only since the mid-1990s has this conviction increasingly begun to penetrate the scientific debate about gentrification (Holm 2012b, p. 663). The fact that displacement processes are often made possible only by dismantling mechanisms that protect affordable rents and through other economic incentives has already been the subject of several studies carried out in the US, Great Britain, Australia and Germany (see, among others, Bernt 2011; Davidson 2008; Hackworth and Smith 2000). From the perspective of city planning, the displacement of low-income households is countered, above all, by the positive effect of an emerging social mixture in a residential area (see Davidson 2008; Holm 2012b). Aside from the fact that this conviction is contradicted by many empirical investiga-

2 The "comparative rent" (*Vergleichsmiete*) is the rent customary in the given location, calculated from the usual rents charged in the city in the past four years for housing of a comparable type, size, furnishings, condition and location, including its energy efficiency and facilities. The comparative rent does not take publicly subsidized housing into account.

tions (Holm 2012b, p. 674f), whether there is a 'right' replacement rate for residents remains an open question.

In Berlin the debates about political (de-)regulation measures and an increasing threat of displacement of residents from inner-city areas has brought a new dynamic and urgency to the housing policy discussion. Many initiatives and associations of tenants have been founded, and the social activism of these organizations has shifted the discussion about Berlin's subsidized rental housing back onto the political agenda and into public focus (see Scheer 2017 in this volume). A wide spectrum of such organizations can be found, ranging from associations of tenants within certain buildings, all the way to tenants and advocates active throughout Berlin. The groups Kotti & Co. and Sozialmieter.de, with support from the group mietenpolitisches Dossier, attracted great publicity with a conference on subsidized rental housing held on 12 November 2012. The striking characteristic of this event was that it took place in the Berlin Chamber of Deputies, with politicians involved in housing policy participating.

Our empirical study investigates the displacement phenomena of the gentrification process in subsidized rental housing with regard to these new dynamics. Here *displacement* is not only restricted to the moment when the long-established social tenants are forced to change their place of residence involuntarily, but is understood to be a procedural conflict inherent in the gentrification process, which is manifested in various phenomena. Describing these phenomena is the content of the following remarks.

Correspondingly, we focus on the following research question: Which phenomena of displacement occur in the framework of the gentrification process in Berlin's subsidized rental housing buildings that are affected by the phasing-out of follow-up financing? Subsequently, does it matter which fundamental factors cause the gentrification and displacement processes in Berlin's subsidized rental housing?

With this chapter we would like to make a contribution to extracting empirical data on the issue of gentrification in subsidized rental housing blocks in Berlin. To do so, quantitative data on three (former) subsidized rental housing blocks in the district of Kreuzberg and in the northern part of the district Neukölln were collected, and the former and current tenants of these properties interviewed to acquire qualitative findings.

A major problem in previous qualitative studies on displacement has been the difficulty of gaining access to displaced tenants (see, e.g., Atkinson 2011). To alleviate this problem, we developed and tried out an approach we call the 'micro-perspective of the apartment building' (*Mikroperspektive Mietshaus*). Concentration on the microcosm of the apartment building entails researching the fluctuation in residents of individual buildings as well as interviewing current and former residents. With this approach, which is introduced in greater

detail in the second section, we can gain profound insight into concrete gentrification and displacement processes. Its concrete implementation entails operationalization in terms of the thematic focus of the problem of gentrification in subsidized rental housing. Beforehand, the housing policy mechanism discussed above, and the yield gap it generates, are discussed in greater detail. The interplay between these two factors underlies the developments presented in the following sections.

On the basis of the research and interview results, we first depict the process of gentrification in the three investigated subsidized rental housing properties in detail, we then reflect upon the phenomena of displacement detected there. We are able to distinguish the phenomena of displacement, fear of displacement, discrimination and resistance.

2 Temporarily Subsidized Rental Housing

The subsidized rental housing buildings at the focus of this study started out as publicly funded housing. In Berlin, the term subsidized rental housing designates various state programmes to support the construction of private rental housing since the end of World War II, which were financed in part by public funds. Around one-tenth of the housing stock in Berlin (according to statistics from 2010, with 190,000 residential units) is subsidized by the state (Oellerich 2010, p. 4).

The buildings studied were built from the early 1970s on, with the help of state funding through degressive investment loans and subventions. The structure of this support scheme, and the political decisions described in the following, constitute the explanatory foundation of a yield gap in subsidized rental housing created by the state—the *state-made rental gap*.

Public funding contains, first, the guarantee of loans by the state-owned Investitionsbank Berlin for the construction of subsidized rental housing. Second, the high cost rent was reduced to what is called the 'social rent' through expenditure subsidies to the owners. Cost rent is the sum of the owner's capital costs and operating costs, and amounts on average to €13/m² net ex services,³ with peaks of up to €21/m² (Kotti&Co and Sozialmieter.de 2012, p. 18). Because the state had declared its support, investors did not economize on their building or business strategies, with the consequence that construction costs and the resulting rents to cover these costs turned out to be quite high. The public authorities made this practice possible, as they accepted "pretty much everything the devel-

3 All of the rent prices below refer to rents (utilities excluded).

opers, the banks, the building materials suppliers charged" (see Holm 2010; Oellerich 2010, p. 4). In 1987, for instance, the subsidized, socially acceptable rents were considered to equal €3/m² (Oellerich 2010, p. 5). An annual rent increase generally amounting to 13 cent/m² was supposed to at least minimize this difference (Kotti&Co and Sozialmieter.de 2012, p. 19).

Originally planned for a funding period of only 15 years (basic financing),⁴ these subsidies were extended for another 15 years. The decisive reason for the decision in favour of follow-up financing was that the investors had yet to finish paying off their loans to commercial banks. This decision made it possible to ward off, or at least postpone, a drastic rent load when the basic financing was over, as when the basic financing ran out, owners would be able to demand the entire cost rent from the social tenants (see Sethmann 2010).

In many subsidized rental housing blocks, depending on the year of construction, basic or follow-up financing has since been phased out. Against the backdrop of the drastically increased level of public debt since reunification, and the fear of potential paralysis because of unbearable interest rates, the city-state of Berlin felt it necessary to cut its expenses in all areas (see SenFin 2006). In order to determine the possibilities and consequences of savings in expenditures in subsidized rental housing, in 2002 the Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing appointed a commission of experts. At this point in time the decision to grant follow-up financing for the subsidized rental housing built in the years 1987 to 1989 was pending. As authorization for housing construction programmes in the years after 1987 would have meant around €2.5 billion in spending for the Berlin budget (Empirica 2003, p. 2), the commission's proposal was accepted and the decision made to phase out housing subsidies. The consequence is that no follow-up financing is available to those owners of subsidized housing whose 15 years of basic financing ran out after 01/01/2003. This affects all housing units built as part of the housing construction programme from 1985 on, whereby the subsidies for the last buildings ran out in 2016 (see SenStadt 2015). This affected a total of 536 building companies with 713 residential properties and 27,786 rental units in Berlin. For the majority of the properties (23,631 apartments), basic financing ran out by 2011, whereby the subsidies for 4,155 apartments continued until 2016. In the period from 2003 to 2011, subsidies expired for 2,009 apartments in the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district. By 2016 another 236 apartments in this district were affected (Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin 2012a, p. 2f.). Without follow-up financing owners are no longer

4 "Basic financing" (*Grundförderung*) to subsidize loans for the construction of housing for low-income tenants was limited to a period of 15 years, with an additional 15 years of "follow-up financing" (*Anschlussförderung*) granted if certain criteria were fulfilled. In 2003 the Berlin Senate voted to phase out all follow-up financing.

granted the state subsidy to cover the high costs of the properties and thus can no longer pay off their loans. For this reason the previously mentioned provision now allowed owners to raise rents "to above the comparative rent for residential space that is not subject to price controls in compliance with the Berlin rent index (*Mietspiegel*),⁵ up to the level of the complete cost rent" (Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin 2012a, p. 7). Many of the owners were no longer able to cover the higher costs, however, and had to declare bankruptcy (see Kotti&Co and Sozialmieter.de 2012).

The buildings affected were sold at a low price, as most of them initially retained their "publicly subsidized" status, so that the new owners were able to collect the cost rent. What is more, the tenancy controls, which were supposed to apply until 31/12/2014 even if no follow-up financing was granted, were repealed—and this took effect not when the basic financing ran out, but a full five years beforehand (see SenStadt 2015). Thus the publicly subsidized units could be rented not only to tenants possessing a *Wohnberechtigungsschein* certifying their eligibility for such housing,⁶ but also to wealthier tenants. The apartments in question are thus incorporated into a general decrease in price-controlled rental apartments in Berlin (Mücke 2012, p. 2). The new owners can earn especially high yields: first through the low purchase price, and second by means of the high income that became possible through the unparalleled rise in rental prices (interview 6⁷). The new owners took advantage of the *state-made rental gap*. Through the cancellation of follow-up financing and the exemption for tenancy controls, the gap between the social rent sought by the tenants and the rent that covered the previous owners' costs, which had previously been bridged by state incentives, became a yield gap for the new investors. They can use the *state-made rental gap* in two ways. First, the social tenants whose rents offer little in the way of yields can be forced out of their apartments by abrupt rent increases, so that new clientele can be attracted. Second, the owners can demand from these new tenants above-average prices for new rentals, which may be as high as the cost rent. Two other possibilities are to convert rental units into individually owned apartments, or to opulently restore properties built as subsidized rental housing—and both of these phenomena are taking place.

5 The *Mietspiegel* is more than just a guideline for tenants and landlords, it is one of the most important tools for adjusting (i.e., increasing) rents and also helps investors to identify where the greatest potentials for rent increases exist. The Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing publishes the rent index every second year.

6 A *Wohnberechtigungsschein* (WBS) is a document issued by the state Housing Authority to people who can document that their income is below a certain level. Apartments that have been built using state subsidies can only be rented to tenants with a *Wohnberechtigungsschein*.

7 The data collected from the interviews were anonymized, designated with the abbreviation Int x, and numbered consecutively.

To combat the clearly evident negative consequences of this mechanism, in 2011 the Senate passed a resolution stipulating that buildings which were sold to new owners as a result of their previous owners' bankruptcy could no longer enjoy the status of "publicly subsidized" and, accordingly, that "cost rent" could no longer be charged to their new tenants (Senatsverwaltung für Justiz 2011b, §5). This regulation was too late to affect the buildings investigated in the framework of this study, as changes in ownership had already taken place before it came into force.

The commission of experts established in 2003 assessed Berlin's housing market as relaxed. They concluded that increases to cost rents were generally unlikely, and would only affect the customary rents for comparable, non-rent-controlled apartments. The Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing stands by this assessment as the reason why follow-up financing was phased out. Since 2012 Senate reports have included an annual survey of property owners for whom basic financing expired at the end of the previous year. All three of the surveys published so far boasted participation rates of at least 60%.⁸ Of the rents provided by respondents in 2011 and 2012, nearly 60% were concentrated at a rental price between €5.50 and €6.50/m². In 2013, 69% of the rental prices of affected residential units were already between €5.50 and €7.00 €/m². Generally speaking, an upward shift in rental prices is clearly evident. While the rents for 13.07% of the properties covered by the survey were still between €5.00 and €5.50/m² in 2011, only 4.30% of the rents were in this range in 2013. Demands for cost rent reduced over the three-year period; according to those responsible to dispose of the properties in question, cost rent was demanded for 106 residential units in 2011, for 97 residential units in 2012, and for eight residential units in 2013 (Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin 2012a, p. 7f.; Abgeordnetenhaus 2013, p. 7; Abgeordnetenhaus 2014, p. 7).

However, our study makes clear that the effect of phasing out follow-up financing cannot be described by snapshots of rent levels, and that the numbers in the Senate's study must be scrutinized critically. In connection with the gentrification process in Berlin, Holm (2010) speaks of "publicly supported displacement management", through which undesired tenants are forced out of their publicly subsidized rental housing by a lack of tenant controls in subsidized flats and the principle of cost rents. The reason for this is the *state-made rental gap*, which makes it possible for investors to transform housing that was publicly subsidized for decades into speculative properties on the Berlin housing market (see Holm 2011b). In the process, the flats, as mentioned above, can fetch lucra-

8 Survey participation rates by the persons authorized to dispose over residential units with controlled tenancy up to the end of the previous year reached 61% (2011), 65% (2012) and 76% (2013).

tive prices when sold as individually owned apartments or offered (in renovated form) on the rental market, once the social tenants have been pushed out by rent increases or the application of other means of pressure (ibid.). Of the properties that emerged from the "Social Urban Renewal Programme" (*Programm der Sozialen Stadterneuerung*), a total of 64 buildings with 1,398 units have been converted into individually owned apartments, of which 18 properties with 478 units are located in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg (as of November 2012; Gothe 2012b, p. 2f.). The housing pressure on the neighborhoods in the midst of the gentrification process encourages investors to realize their valorization strategies for buildings constructed as subsidized rental housing.

On the part of the Senate, several decisions were made through which the consequences of phasing out follow-up financing were (supposed) to be made socially sustainable: For instance, the Senate drew up a hardship provision for tenants as well as a provision for temporary rent compensation and an allowance to help with moving costs. In addition, the Investitionsbank Berlin informs tenants beforehand that the basic financing for their block of flats will be expiring.

The Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Sozialplanung und angewandte Stadtforschung e.V. (*Association for Social Planning and Applied Urban Research, abbreviated to AG SPAS*) was commissioned to support tenants affected by the phasing out of follow-up financing (see Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin 2012b: Drucksache 17/10951, p. 1). Of the 1,223 households assisted, a majority of 714 are located in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg (Gothé 2012b, p. 1). As of 31/08/2012, of the 113 wishing to move out, a total of 80 households had been referred (ibid.). The work of AG SPAS is generally regarded quite sceptically by active tenants, who refer to it sarcastically as 'AG SPASS' ('AG JOKE').

The state support measures can be described as temporally restricted management of the legally protected displacement of social tenants through the political deregulation measures described above.

In addition to the fundamental political decisions, the individual determinants for the gentrification processes taking place in the buildings affected by the discontinuation of follow-up financing are: The year the building was constructed, the date the basic financing ended, the different objectives of the investors, and the activism of the tenants. To study the consequences of the financing system for the tenancy structure and the tenants, we decided to analyse the effects on the building level. The advantages of this micro-perspective focused on the apartment building are elucidated in the next section.

3 The Micro-Perspective of the Apartment Building

Empirical research on gentrification and displacement, which started in the 1970s, has become ever more spatially and thematically differentiated over the course of its development in Great Britain and the US. The first studies followed quantitative approaches, with which the transformations in a neighborhood were investigated on the basis of census data and other kinds of household surveys (see Cousar and Sumka 1978, 79; Grier and Grier 1980; LeGates and Hartman 1981, 1986; Marcuse 1985). One of the goals of this kind of research was to identify gentrification areas ('G-locations'), among others, by proving that a significant number of residents was replaced. This is done by comparing the number of higher earners with a high education level moving in, to the number of lower earners with a lower education level moving out. This comparison offers a first indication of possible displacement, but is not sufficient as a sole indicator. More recent quantitative studies therefore investigate the reasons residents move out of areas affected by gentrification (see Freeman and Braconi 2004; Newman and Wily 2006).

Qualitative studies frequently build on the quantitative identification of gentrification areas, yet are primarily concerned with the personal consequences for those affected by displacement, or the consequences for the upgraded area in connection with the socioeconomic shift (see, among others, Atkinson et al. 2011). A considerable advantage of the quantitative portrayal of gentrification is its persuasiveness in calling for, or legitimizing, political regulatory measures. However, the numbers recorded can be subject to significant inaccuracies (see Marcuse 1985). On the other hand, qualitative research can provide a more detailed picture of the consequences of redevelopment processes, albeit often one depicting only changes within the gentrified areas. Therefore it is extremely difficult to include in the investigation those displaced tenants who have moved out of the gentrified area. Atkinson et al. (2011) thus attempted to contact former residents, mainly via advertisting in newspapers (Atkinson et al. 2011, p. 21). However, this approach had the disadvantage that only those former residents feel addressed who define themselves as "displaced". The majority of those affected, however, do not identify themselves as "displaced" (see Atkinson 2001, 2011) and thus disappear from the surface of research. In his study of gentrification and displacement in London, Atkinson (2000) speaks of "measuring the invisible". The difficult research conditions for studying displacement processes could be one reason why there is not yet any qualitative description of the subject (Holm 2012b, p. 679).

4 The Microcosm of the Apartment Building

A possible solution for the problem of making contact with displaced residents is offered by the *investigation on the building level*. This approach makes it possible, first, to capture the consequences of redevelopment processes for the resident structure in greater depth on a small scale, and second, to locate the former residents who have already moved away. The study of gentrification on the basis of a data analysis on the building level was already described as desirable in Harald Rohlinger's reflections on empirical social research (1990): The changes in a neighborhood or even on a single street can be characterized by very different residential properties and residents (Rohlinger 1990, p. 235). The apartment building, in contrast, serves as the given framework within which residents are unified under relatively similar conditions: All residents of a multi-storey apartment building are located in the same neighborhood and subject to generally similar residential conditions such as, for example, the architectural history and renovation conditions, as well as the same building management companies and owners. These framing conditions are of vital importance for a differentiated treatment of the gentrification and displacement processes. Through household surveys with semi-open-ended questionnaires, three kinds of information can be acquired in particular:

- Substantiation and tracking of the development stage of gentrification via statistical information like education level, income, age, household size and occupation.
- The tenants' situation with regard to the changing residential environment and possible effects on housing conditions such as rent increases, different treatment by the landlord or the building manager.
- Pointers on the current places of residence of displaced tenants and the possibility of making contact with former residents.

Investigating the gentrification process via one building means conducting research on the micro-level. The decisive advantage of this approach is its potential for capturing displacement and the fear of displacement: It allows the relocations from one apartment building to be tracked and then visualized. Further, on the level of the microcosm of the building it is also possible to trace back any changes in residential quality and the resident structure retrospectively. In so doing, it is also possible to draw conclusions about the strategies of the building managers and or owners, which, according to Holm, have not yet received sufficient attention (Holm 2011a, p. 222).

5 The Research Process

The schematic diagram of our research process, illustrated in Figure 1, shows how the approach of the micro-perspective of the apartment building described above was *operationalized* in the framework of this qualitative study. The concrete implementation of this perspective is to be described here and visualized by means of the schematic, ideal-typical course of research.

Determining the spatial plane of reference and the thematic focus are two steps that define the substantive content. As the investigations like that by Holm 2011 and the further studies by Döring and Ulbricht (2017 in this volume) show, the Berlin district of Kreuzberg has once again become a current gentrification hot spot (Holm 2011a, p. 215; Holm and Schulz 2017 in this volume). At present Kreuzberg and parts of Neukölln are experiencing a major shift in population structure as well as many conversions from housing for rent into individually owned apartments.

Moreover, the share of rental apartments in Kreuzberg is far above average (see Niendorf 2011), and there is a great deal of low-income housing in the district.

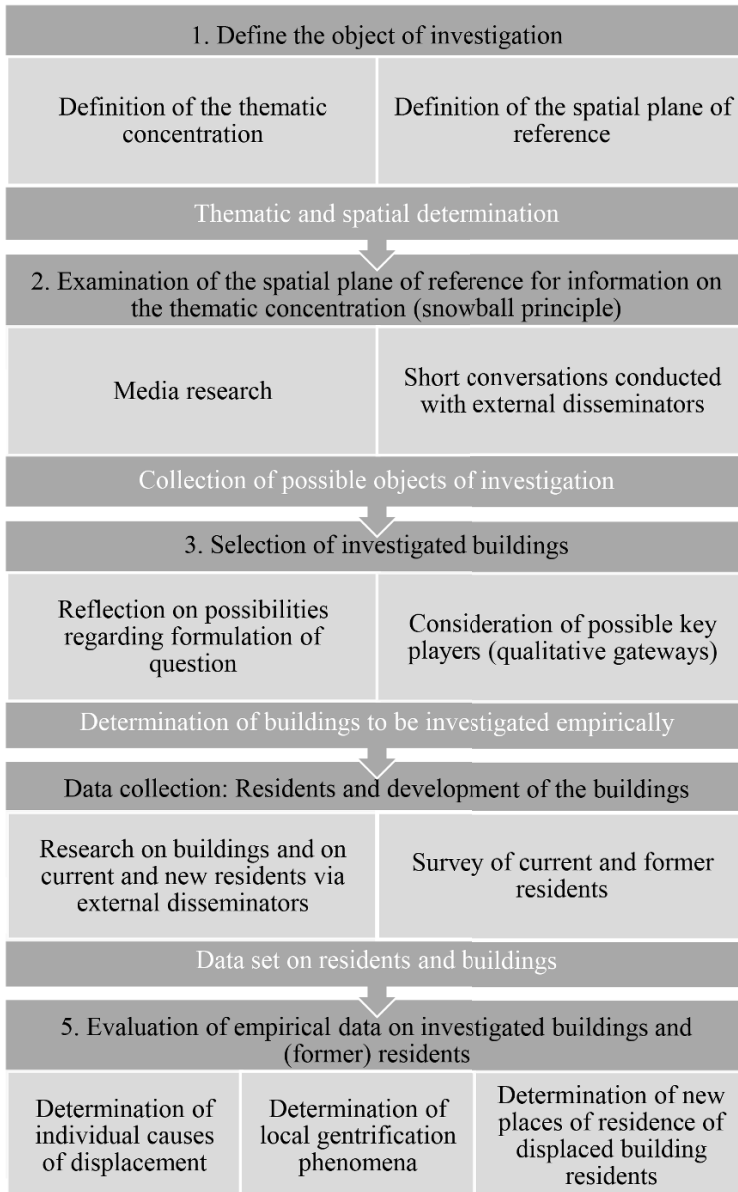


Figure 1: Operationalizing the micro-perspective of the apartment building (source: own diagram)

In a second step, the spatial plane of reference (Berlin-Kreuzberg) is to be examined for concrete indications of the thematic concentration (investigation of phenomena and consequences of the gentrification process in subsidized rental housing).

Applying the snowball principle, we recorded information on the buildings that had to do with the thematic and spatial concentration. By means of comprehensive media research, direct data about the buildings were determined, and information on disseminators like neighborhood organizations and tenant delegates collected. Brief conversations conducted with these external disseminators added to this store of information. The focus of these conversations was on both acquiring information on potential buildings and on already displaced tenants, as well as on the search for any key persons involved with the given investigated properties.

Media research yielded an important reference in the website www.sozialmieter.de and the list published there of subsidized rental housing affected by gentrification as of September 2011. Above and beyond this, important information was gleaned from conversations with representatives of various accommodation management offices, silent participation in protests by local citizens' initiatives in Kreuzberg against the current rent policy, and subsequent conversations with participants. On this basis it was possible to compile an initial overview of which buildings were actually affected by gentrification at the time of the investigation. In order to draw case studies from this aggregate of potential properties to investigate, contact to key players in the given buildings was determined to be a significant selection criterion. These key players, caretakers, long-term tenants, and tenant delegates, function as important information sources for the subsequent analysis of the former resident structure. In the step of selecting the buildings to be investigated empirically, the subsidized rental buildings at Lindenstraße 36–37, Schöneberger Straße 5–6a and Maybachufer 18 were chosen, all of which are located in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg or the neighboring district of Neukölln.

The investigation of subsidized rental apartments at Maybachufer 18 is an exception in that it is located in Neukölln, and thus not in the previously specified spatial plane of reference Kreuzberg. However, through the public relations work of the district initiative *Café Reiche* in Kreuzberg, along with direct contact to a key resident of the building, there was a strong basis for further research. The property investigated is located directly on the southern boundary of the specified spatial plane of reference (location in the neighborhood straddling Kreuzberg and Neukölln, 'Kreuzkölln'), so that residents of Maybachufer 18 are also active at *Café Reiche*. The research results of Döring and Ulbricht (2017, in this volume) further demonstrate that the indices in these two districts frequently exhibit the same characteristic values.

The objects of investigation at Lindenstraße 36 and 37 are located in the northern part of the investigated area and have reached a relatively advanced stage of the gentrification process. While this may make investigation more difficult, at the same time it justifies research interest.

	Maybachufer 18	Lindenstraße 36–37	Schöneberger Straße 5–6a
State of research	July 2012	December 2012	February 2013
Gentrification period⁹	2009	2008/09	2010
Residential units¹⁰	16	23	44
<i>of these:</i>			
- for rental	4	1	37
- individually owned	12	22	-
- holiday flats	2	-	5
- vacant	1	-	2
Interviewed residents	6	12	34
<i>of these:</i>			
- former	2	-	11
- current	4	12	23
<i>of these:</i>			
- previously tenants	3	1	12
- new tenants	1	11	11
Interviewed key players	former caretaker	last tenant before gentrification	tenant delegate

Table 1: Overview of empirical data collection (data basis: own survey)

The investigation of the subsidized rental housing at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a constitutes the centrepiece of this paper. The activities of a committed tenant delegate directed toward social policy, tenancy law and media impact, and the size of the housing complex, were categorized as two characteristics that prom-

9 The gentrification period is the time during which the subsidized rental property investigated underwent gentrification. This is usually accompanied by abrupt rent hikes and/or conversions into individually owned apartments, and a subsequent wave of previous tenants moving out, succeeded by new tenants moving in.

10 The number of housing units is composed of vacant, rental, individually owned and holiday flats, whereby individually owned apartments are also used as holiday flats.

ised a wide range of information and data. It became clear that the residential estate was undergoing an acute transformation process.

By selecting these three properties we were able to study subsidized rental housing at various stages of the gentrification process and thus collect the widest possible variety of data. We interviewed a total of 39 current tenants or owners from all three properties under investigation. Table 1 summarizes the results of the conducted interviews. A further 13 former tenants were also interviewed. Moreover, key players associated with all three properties were interviewed as experts on their given properties.

6 Subsidized Rental Housing in the Gentrification Process

We first demonstrate that there are typical characteristics of gentrification in the three properties we investigated—these are important as a basis to understand the analysis on gentrification and displacement processes further below. For each property in the study, the categories *rent development*, *change in resident structure* and *restructuring and upgrading processes* are used to trace the gentrification process that took place or is still underway as a consequence of phased-out follow-up financing. The decisive moments that can be identified as the cause of considerable changes in *rental prices* in the buildings we investigated were the expiration of basic financing, and as a consequence, the change in ownership. At these junctures different rent increases were determined at all of the buildings we examined.

In the properties at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a, the owner declared private bankruptcy when the basic financing ran out, as a consequence of which the property was sold in 2009. In November 2009 the new owner increased rents for the first time, but tenants were able to prevent this increase due to a procedural error. In February 2010, however, there was an abrupt rent increase from €5.33 to €7.04/m² (+32%). Furthermore, in April 2010 an additional rise in the rents of individual tenants selected by the building management company was implemented, to the cost rent level of €13.02/m² (see BMV 2010; Dunger-Löper 2010; Int 6).

In the buildings at Lindenstraße 36 and 37, as a consequence of the end of basic financing in 2007/08 and a change in ownership after a bankruptcy proceedings and foreclosure in 2008, considerable rent increases were introduced in that year and the next. Due to the foreclosure, tenancy controls were also eliminated. The only tenant residing in the building with an ‘old’ rental contract (i.e., contract from the previous owner) pays €10/m², while new rentals after the sale range from €10 to €17/m², or purchase prices between €1,690 and €2,100/m².

The building at Maybachufer 18 was completed in 1991, so that basic financing ran out in 2006. Until it changed owners in 2008 there were only moderate rent increases, but afterward rents were increased by up to 80%, up to a rate of €12/m². After nearly all previous tenants moved out, the units were converted into individually owned apartments, the purchase prices of which were between €3,000 and €3,500/m², depending on the storey.

In all of the buildings we investigated, the upgrading process was marked by structural modernizations, some of which are described as luxury upgrades, followed by conversion into individually owned apartments. This is where the phenomenon of secondary residences or holiday flats emerges. The renovations that took place when tenants moved out, and the conversion into individually owned apartments, can be interpreted as an indication for targeted displacement of the previous tenants.

At Schöneberger Straße 5–6a renovation began in 2010. Potential new tenants were able to view a show apartment and then choose a flat which would then be renovated. The previous tenants' apartments remained unrenovated, with only minor damage repaired and touched up, and larger problems like mold remedied only insufficiently and with long delays. At Lindenstraße 36 the owner's attempts to let the renovated apartments were unsuccessful, with only one new tenant moving in during 2010. Therefore the owner changed strategies, letting unrenovated flats and gradually selling those that had been renovated by 2011. For the apartments at Lindenstraße 37 a similar process can be assumed.

At Maybachufer 18, renovation work took place each time a tenant moved out, and conversions to individually owned apartments also took place.

In all three blocks of flats there was a nearly complete substitution of residents, accompanied by a social shift in the residence structure. Of the surveyed tenants who moved out, around one half are unemployed or retired, or participating in a training course. In addition, two of those who are gainfully employed rely on state support to supplement their income. With a few special exceptions (pensioners and students) the new tenants are employed, with only the remaining tenants from previous ownership receiving state support.

Over the course of 2010, nearly 40% of the tenants at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a moved out. The old tenants who remained, listed their monthly incomes as between €1,500 and over €3,000, and claimed either a secondary school certificate or vocational training as the extent of their education. Most of the new tenants have higher incomes, and the majority has completed a university degree or post-secondary qualifications. At Lindenstraße 36 two waves of tenants left: The first directly after the rent increase in 2007/2008, the second as a consequence of impending renovations with the goal of luxury upgrades in 2009. Afterward all flats were vacant except for three, whereby only one of these three tenants is still residing there. This tenant describes the new resident structure

with the words that there are "no more neighbors from precarious situations" (interview 10). With a single exception, all of the new residents here have a general qualification for university (*Abitur*) or have completed university degree or a post-secondary qualification. The remaining social tenant is the only resident who does not work, aside from a few households of students or pensioners. At Maybachufer 18 only three of the previous social tenants have stayed; the others moved out in 2008.

The developments outlined here portray the gentrification process in subsidized rental housing, which occurred as a two-stage process of displacement: In the first stage the rent increase directly compels those tenants to move out who receive either a low income or state support. In the second phase, after the first wave has moved out, renovation measures are performed and some of the apartments are taken off the rental market as individually owned apartments. Through these valorization strategies in the the real-estate market, the formerly subsidized rental housing is no longer accessible for the majority of the former tenants. Thus both dimensions of the gentrification of a neighborhood according to Holm (2011) can be identified: "direct or indirect displacement of lower-status population groups" and the "reduction of affordable housing stock" (Holm 2011a: 213).

7 Phenomena of the Displacement Process in Subsidized Rental Housing in Berlin

As has already been demonstrated above, the gentrification process in Berlin's subsidized rental housing is the consequence of the interplay between the structures created politically by the Berlin Senate and the valorization strategies of the real-estate sector designed to take advantage of these structures.

The transformation process of gentrification has far-reaching effects on the (former) residents of subsidized rental housing. On the basis of empirical research results, a multi-dimensional process of displacement can be detected, which is categorized on the basis of four phenomena. In addition to basic *displacement* from the living area, these are *fear of displacement*, practices of *discrimination* and *resistance*, each of which will be discussed in greater detail below.

8 Displaced out of Subsidized Rental Housing

In the framework of the process of gentrification described above, various forms of displacement from the subsidized rental housing properties investigated in Berlin can be differentiated from each other analytically: Abrupt rent increases were introduced in all of the buildings studied, as a consequence of which many tenants had to move out because the new rents demanded were higher than they could pay. Marcuse designated this form of displacement *economical displacement* (Marcuse 1985, p. 205). It was legally possible to impose the rent increases in subsidized rental housing to such a large extent only because of the cost rent regulation described in the first section. The alignment of rent prices up to cost rent was deployed as a targeted form of leverage in order to carry out a selective displacement of certain groups of tenants. The "Discrimination" subsection below will discuss this in greater detail. Under general tenancy law, which links rents to the rent index, neither such extreme increases to the rents for existing flats nor the extent of economical displacement described thereafter would have been possible.

At Schöneberger Straße 5-6a, nine of the eleven former tenants surveyed said that the rent increase(s) in early 2010 was/were the reason they moved out. The rent increases indicated by the former tenants amounted to 20–30%, and in one case even 45%. Tenants were unable to pay these additional monthly costs of €130 to €400.

At Lindenstraße 36 and 37, according to the only tenant who has remained after gentrification, "all previous tenants [were] displaced by extreme rent increases" (interview 10). This was confirmed in a statement by the new owner: "everyone [moved out] except the tenant in the handicapped-accessible flat, all of them because of the higher rents" (interview 16).

The three former residents of Maybachufer 18 who we surveyed also state that the rent increase was the reason they moved out. One old tenant spoke of a "rapid rent increase to €12/m²" (interview 5) and another claims that her rent rose by €230, forcing her to move out after eviction proceedings. Another respondent received a rent increase of 51%, such that the rent (utilities included) rose from €581 to €881. According to the key informant's testimony, displacement was a consequence of increased rents for at least two further former residents of Maybachufer 18.

For a number of the former tenants surveyed, economical displacement is further influenced by an external factor: Depending on the number of persons and entitlement to benefits, the *Jobcenter* (office for unemployment benefits and

job placement¹¹) takes over payment of a specified amount of rent for tenants dependent on social benefits (Senatsverwaltung für Justiz 2011a). For two of the former tenants of Schöneberger Straße 5–6a, we surveyed, this amount had already been exceeded before the rent increase, so that they were adding their own capital to the maximum housing benefit from the Jobcenter in order to cover the cost of rent. After the abrupt rent increase, six of the former tenants we surveyed were indirectly encouraged by the Jobcenter to move out, as the cost of rent exceeded the amount it would pay and thus needed to be reduced. This was also the case for at least one of the former tenants of Maybachufer 18. Nelly Grotefendt et al. (2017, in this volume) provide an insight into the residential changes of unemployment benefit recipients that are the result of a Jobcenter request to reduce rent costs.

Those social tenants whose capacity to pay was exhausted had to decide within 14 days whether they would accept the rent increase or terminate their leases and find a new place to live within a stipulated period of eight weeks (interview 6).

All of the former tenants we surveyed decided to reduce their rent costs by relocating. They sought a new apartment in the immediate surroundings, so that they could continue to benefit from the familiar social infrastructure, especially schools and nursery schools. Yet as they searched for a new place to live, they were confronted by the "increasing reduction of housing stock" in Berlin-Kreuzberg for social groups with lower incomes (Holm 2011a, p. 221). This development in the rental price levels is confirmed by the responses of the tenants displaced from Schöneberger Straße 5-6a. Four of those surveyed pointed out not only the excessive prices of rents, but also the difficulty of being able to find a flat large enough for their families under these financial limitations. One of those surveyed commented: "I looked in the area with my family of seven, but the building managers refused to give us anything we could have afforded because the flats were too small for so many people. All of the larger flats that would have been suitable for us were too expensive" (interview 64). One of the tenants we surveyed, who had been forced out of Maybachufer 18, commented in a similar vein: "Where am I supposed to find a handicapped-accessible flat for €378? I have my pension, but that doesn't cover €300 more. Where am I supposed to find a flat *here*?" (interview 3). These phenomena can be described analytically with the term *exclusionary displacement* from Atkinson et al. (2011): Due to the ever smaller supply of housing for those with low-incomes, these households are prevented from finding a suitable flat in their preferred

11 German "Jobcenters" are run jointly by the Federal Labour Office and local authorities, and are responsible for deciding on and dispensing benefits to the unemployed, and for providing opportunities for them to re-enter the labour market through training measures and job.

location and surroundings (Atkinson et al. 2011, p. 50). Tendencies toward segregation and polarization of social groups within the city are thus reinforced by gentrification and displacement processes (Holm 2005, p. 4ff.; LeGates and Hartman 1986, p. 217ff.). Accordingly, five of those surveyed stated that despite their wish to remain in the district, they were not able to find a suitable flat. On the other hand, six of the surveyed tenants forced out of Schöneberger Straße 5–6a and the three former tenants of Maybachufers 18 stated that they were ultimately able to find a flat in their preferred part of town.

Two of the affected families were not able to meet the three-month deadline for vacating their flats. As a result, the building management initiated eviction proceedings, although the Jobcenter had promised to pay the entire rent along with the increase for as long as it took them to find a new flat. One of the tenants had already been promised a new flat, but because he would not be able to move in until after the deadline, he was sued nonetheless. For the tenant in question, the €20,000 in dispute would have meant not only losing a place to live due to displacement, but also bankruptcy. Ultimately these lawsuits were averted and the deadline for moving out extended for another three months. These examples illustrate the owner's rigorous methods and his attempt to exploit the existing legal framework to the fullest.

At Schöneberger Straße 5–6a the displacement of social tenants was also due to the failure to renovate flats infested by mold. As a result, in this context a case of *physical displacement* can be analytically detected. According to Marcuse (1985), physical displacement is when tenants are forced to move out due to "physical" interventions in their housing units (Marcuse 1985, p. 205). The occurrence of mold may not be a direct physical intervention on the part of the landlord, yet an appraisal performed by the construction supervision authority for Schönebergerstraße 5–6a in 2007 found "causes of damage related to both construction and use" (Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin 2010, p. 2). The landlord is thus at least partially responsible for the "physical influence" of the mold on the health of the tenants. "Following a court settlement, a construction schedule [for the removal of the causes of mold growth related to construction] was submitted, which stipulated that renovation would be performed between September 2007 and June 2008. The board of partners as owners, however, refused to give its consent" (ibid.). A comprehensive renovation of the affected flats rented by social tenants was, accordingly, deferred. The building was sold in 2009, as already described in the previous section. The new owners did not perform any renovations in the flats either; instead, the social tenants received the above-mentioned rent increases and were in some cases accused of causing the mold infestation.

Those two of the eleven surveyed former tenants of Schöneberger Straße 5–6a who did not list the rent increase as the reason for moving out were forced to

move out exclusively due to the continued failure to remove the mold in their flats. According to a statement by the former social tenant, her children were suffering from adverse effects on their health—which disappeared after they moved out. This is confirmed by another former social tenant, whose daughter suffered from symptoms of asthma.

A further five of the social tenants surveyed also stated, in addition to the rent hike as the main reason, that the failure to remove the mold was another reason they moved out. The combination of deliberately poor living conditions hazardous to their health and a high rent increase is unjustifiable in the eyes of the former residents. Appropriate renovation measures, which would have justified a moderate rent increase, were not initiated until after the social tenants moved out. There is thus reason to presume that this neglect was intentional, which means it can be interpreted as a further means of exerting pressure on the social tenants. At *Schöneberger Straße 5–6a* it is therefore possible to identify a combination of economical and physical displacement. Marcuse, too, already noted that "in most cases both [forms of direct displacement] occur simultaneously" (Marcuse 1985, p. 205).

It becomes clear that not only the rent increase(s) is/are to be regarded as the cause(s) of displacement for the social tenants surveyed. In-depth analysis reveals that individuals relocated due to the different ways they were affected depending on their various life circumstances, and because of deficiencies in the building.

9 Where Do the Displaced Relocate?

As Figure 2 shows, the residential locations of the displaced reveal an ambivalent picture. Despite the above-mentioned indications of exclusionary displacement or a reduction of housing stock for socially disadvantaged groups in Kreuzberg, the new places of residence are apparently concentrated in the close surroundings of their former neighborhoods. Eleven of the displaced social tenants we located had moved into flats close to their previous residence and were thus able to remain within the inner circle circumscribed by Berlin's urban ring railway (*S-Bahn ring*). This affirms a phenomenon already detected in the US, of displaced tenants relocating in the direct vicinity of their previous residences (LeGates and Hartman 1986, p. 190f.). Four of the former social tenants of *Schöneberger Straße 5–6a* we surveyed were able to find a flat in the immediate vicinity. Another four live in the district of Kreuzberg once again, or in the adjacent inner-city districts of Mitte or *Schöneberg*. All three of the former tenants of *Maybachufer 18* also continue to live in the immediate vicinity.

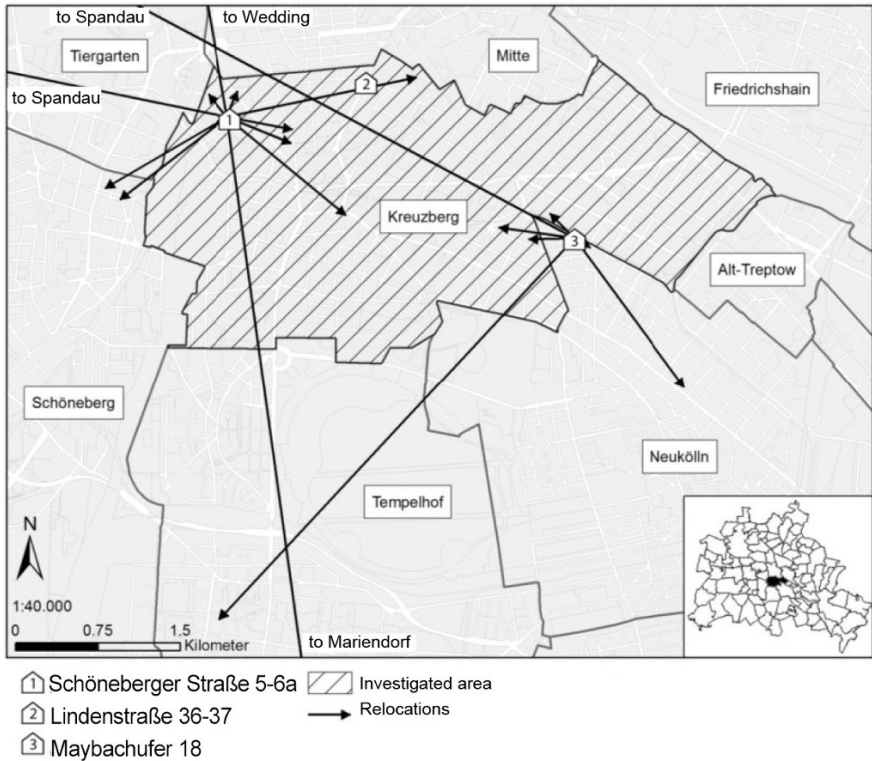


Figure 2: Old and new places of residence of the tenants of subsidized housing (source: own diagram)

Yet distinctions must be made: Because of the large-scale public relations work by the tenants at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a, various political actors were actively engaged in finding the tenants suitable new flats. On the part of the Senate Department for Urban Development, *AG SPAS* was charged with contacting housing companies, which for their part, were supposed to submit suitable offers for flats. The tenant delegate of the estate also served as mediator and assisted in the apartment search. The housing companies went beyond sharing information to offer rent reductions for the new flats, so that displaced tenants were able to move into housing in inner-city locations that corresponded to their financial possibilities. These 'benefits' for finding a flat and this rental pricing constituted a special case. Usually only help with relocation is provided, but even this is temporally restricted and thus was unavailable to many displaced social tenants. It can be assumed that the search would have been considerably more difficult

without these special measures, and that many of the options in inner-city locations would not have been offered to the displaced tenants. The claims of two displaced tenants confirm this: "Without the assistance services we would not have found anything" (interview 61); "Thanks to the help of the Senate we found something new; fortunately we received help" (interview 66). This statement exemplifies a controversial correlation that was picked up in the polemics of opposition activists like Kotti & Co (see Kotti&Co 2012): The gratitude toward those who made displacement from subsidized rental housing possible in the first place, by means of the cost rent regulation and the exemption from tenant controls, that is, the *state-made rental gap*. These Senate measures seem like mere means of limiting damage by the structures it created itself. They are reactions intended to calm tempers around the tense situation, and to keep it from attracting greater public attention (interview 6).

Furthermore, two of the three surveyed tenants displaced from Maybachufer 18 had already moved out in 2008. In recent years, new rents for flats in the postal codes of the new areas of residence (12047, 10967) have risen by about 15% each year, so that searching for a flat in the vicinity revealed considerably more alternatives for the displaced tenants in 2008 than would be the case in the meantime (data basis: GSW 2013, 2012 and 2011). Moreover, those surveyed claimed that they never would have been able to get flats in this location without personal contacts.

No data on the new places of residence could be obtained for the former tenants of Lindenstraße 36 and 37.

Yet the phenomenon of a reduced market for rental housing in Berlin, and Atkinson's conclusion, on the basis of empirical investigations in London (2000), that socially disadvantaged groups were being displaced from gentrified inner-city areas to the suburbs, cannot be confirmed on the basis of the new places of residence of several survey subjects. Three of the former residents of Schöneberger Straße 5–6a surveyed were only able to find new residences outside of the inner-city area. Another two of the displaced tenants, who did not want to participate in the survey, also found a new place to live only far away (>10 km) from their former home. This was also true for two former residents of Maybachufer 18. The new places of residence are located in Reinickendorf, Mariendorf and Spandau, and thus outside the Berlin S-Bahn ring (on this, see also Förste and Bernt 2017 in this volume).

The small number of cases means that we cannot confirm a homogenous pattern in the process of displacement from subsidized rental housing in Berlin. On the one hand, the tendencies toward segregation and polarization are clear in Berlin. On the other, the successful settlement of several displaced tenants in the immediate vicinity of their former homes, which they were able to find with the help of committed supporters and/or the assistance measures undertaken, show

that solutions can be found for the displaced tenants' problems with acquiring new housing. Yet the prerequisites for this appear to be public attention and expertise about the complex structures.

10 Individual Consequences of Displacement

Independent of the location of the new place of residence, for many of the social tenants displaced from Schöneberger Straße 5–6a, displacement meant separation from the existing neighborhood community. For socioeconomically weaker groups, in particular, social networks and neighborhood structures are especially important. "These possibilities for compensation are destroyed in cases of displacement" (see Holm 2012a). Eight of those surveyed speak of a very marked and supportive neighborhood connection, which then no longer exists. On this topic, one of the interviewees stated: "While the children played together we met up and drank coffee; we were a big family" (interview 62). One former tenant also criticized the criminal milieu in his new place of residence: "We don't open the door for anyone in the evening any more; that's not the way it used to be" (interview 66).

Two of the former residents of Maybuchufer 18 expressed different opinions in the survey. One commented: "Neighborhood relations were not very strong; now the community in the building is great. That's a gain for us" (interview 4). The other interviewee however commented that the move did not bring any social changes.

It becomes clear among those we surveyed that *how* they expressed the availability of social contacts and existing infrastructure depended on the location of their new places of residence. Fewer social contacts and further distances to friends and relatives, and to schools and nursery schools they continued to use, were mentioned by two of the former residents, whose new residences were located far (>10 km) from their old homes. Moreover, according to these respondents it is particularly difficult for the children to build up a new social environment. In contrast to this, one of the former tenants of Maybuchufer 18 stated: "You know, the contacts you have, you'll still have them in Charlottenburg or Spandau as well" (interview 4). A tenant of Schöneberger Straße 5–6a expressed it similarly: "I still have good contact to my former neighbors, we still get together for coffee like we used to" (interview 66).

The individual consequences mentioned for the former residents of the properties we investigated at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a and Maybuchufer 18 illustrate the wide range of social consequences and/or costs of displacement in dependence on the respondents' individual perceptions. On the basis of the ex-

amples studied, it is not possible to detect any indication of a unified trend as to what meaning displacement has for the respondents. According to the evaluation of many studies from the US, LeGates and Hartman (1986) also came to a quite strongly varying result regarding the satisfaction of displaced tenants in their new places of residence. They attribute this to the subjective perception of the neighborhood, but also to the socioeconomic diversity of the displaced tenants (LeGates and Hartman 1986, p. 181ff.; 193).

Just as strong a variance becomes apparent with reference to the size and prices of the new flats that the former residents of Schöneberger Straße 5–6a moved into. For four of the former tenants, the move has meant lower rent (utilities included) than before the rent increase. On the other hand, there are four social tenants who have to pay more since relocating. For three of the tenants surveyed, the price of rent has remained more or less the same.

Therefore the survey results offer indications that suggest a rise in rent prices as a consequence of displacement. This connection was already documented in many studies conducted in the US in the 1970s/80s (LeGates and Hartman 1986, p. 191f.). However, the reduction in rent costs for a number of former social tenants as a result of being forced out of Schöneberger Straße 5–6a suggests that the opposite can also be the case.

It is not possible to detect a clear trend in terms of flat size, either: Five of the displaced tenants have more space after the involuntary relocation, three of those surveyed have less, and another three have roughly the same amount of space as they did at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a.

The remarks paint a fairly differentiated picture of the effects of displacement on the life of the former residents: Many further consequences and their reasons could be formulated, and the connections between them established. There are some indications that the consequences of displacement are directly dependent on the location of the new place of residence, on the given life context, on social contacts and on the recognition of the problem by political authorities. As was also established by Blasius (1994) in a quantitative study on displacement in the Nippes district of Cologne, no general deterioration of living conditions for social tenants through displacement can be confirmed (Blasius 1994, p. 412). The distribution of the positive and negative effects is not homogeneous, but quite individual. There are indications that the kinds of effect also depend on happy coincidence in the search for a new flat. "We were simply lucky, in contrast to many others", stated one of the respondents (interview 62). Yet a topic as fundamental as the availability of living space for displaced social tenants should not be dependent on luck and/or coincidence.

11 Fear of Displacement

Fear of possible displacement was a psychological consequence of gentrification in one's own building, which we detected in our study. In keeping with the various forms of displacement from subsidized rental housing discussed in the previous sub-section, the reasons for feeling this fear can also be described in three forms: fear of economical displacement (following Marcuse 1985), of exclusionary displacement (following Atkinson 2011) and fear of displacement through eviction proceedings (own data collection) or physical displacement (following Marcuse 1985).

In all three of the properties studied, fear of displacement can be detected among current tenants. Eleven of the 13 tenants surveyed who had lived in subsidized rental housing before the gentrification process began, and three of the new tenants, expressed fear of displacement. By their own account, the most common reason is the concrete fear of rent increases (economical displacement). The last tenant from before gentrification at Lindenstraße 36, one of the last tenants at Maybachufer 18, and seven of the eleven pre-gentrification tenants surveyed at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a experienced the developments in their building and name this as the reason for fearing that their rent would be increased (once again). They worried that they would not be able or willing to pay the next increase and would have to move out as a consequence.

In the case of one long-term tenant at Maybachufer 18, but especially at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a, it is clear that many tenants are aware that the cost rent regulation has given landlords the possibility to realize a dramatic increase of up to €13/m² at any time. Many declare that this is being used by building management as an instrument to selectively force out unwanted tenants: "I'm scared that I'll have to move out when they charge cost rent. We have been afraid of this for six years. The people they wanted to get out were forced to leave" (interview 23). In many cases this awareness damages the relationship of trust between tenants and building management. Especially long-term tenants (those who moved in before 2010) are in a constant state of anxiety regarding the security of their lease. According to statements by a tenant of Schöneberger Straße 5–6a who is very active in legal issues, new leases include a clause that legally allows building managers to demand cost rent retroactively for up to 23 months (interview 6). This was confirmed by several new tenants; others are not aware of the clause's existence. Accordingly, it cannot necessarily be assumed that all new tenants are acutely afraid of displacement as a consequence of possible rent increases to the level of cost rent.

Two of the new tenants at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a who expressed the fear of displacement are also aware of obvious changes in their direct residential surroundings. One emphasizes the deterioration in the retail infrastructure; the

other formulated the statement: "The middle class has replaced the previous tenants" (interview 53). Both perceptions can be seen as an indication for the fact that what is felt here is a mix of perceived displacement pressure due to the change in the residential surroundings and fear of economical displacement through rent increases.

11.1 Fear of Exclusionary Displacement

Besides the fear of displacement as such, residents of Schöneberger Straße 5-6a and Maybachufer 18 express fears that they will not be able to find a suitable flat in their preferred area if they move out. This fear of exclusionary displacement (see Atkinson 2011) is expressed in statements about a change in residential surroundings or in resident structure, which results in the residents no longer being able to rent a flat in the direct vicinity, let alone in their building or apartment block. At Lindenstraße 36 the only resident of a rental unit is afraid he will have to move out: "I am the last renter in this building, all previous tenants were forced out by extreme rent increases" (interview 10), and all of the other units have since been sold as individually owned apartments.

At Maybachufer 18 an affected tenant relates that he had searched for a new flat intensively at the beginning of his legal dispute with the building manager, but had stopped looking in the meantime, as he had not been able to find anything affordable in the area for his family of five (interview 1). Similarly, a displaced tenant from the same building relates: "I believe I would no longer get an apartment today under these conditions" (interview 4). Surveyed tenants at Schöneberger Straße 5-6a, who expressed the fear that they might have to move, mention their fear of rent increases and report about changes in the housing estate, but none of their statements can be unequivocally interpreted as fear of exclusionary displacement. It merely appears to be known that the residential surroundings are changing radically: "Many hotels have popped up, lots of restaurants for tourists, not for the people who live here. Younger people, including flat-shares, are moving in, couples instead of families, primarily Germans or West Germans as opposed to foreign families" (interview 60).

11.2 Fear of Displacement through Eviction or Physical Displacement

At both Schöneberger Straße 5-6a and Maybachufer 18 there are cases where tenants fear eviction. Two of the current tenants at Schöneberger Straße 5-6a have been in litigation with building management for years. At Maybachufer 18 one of the two tenants facing legal action initially won eviction proceedings due to a formal error on the part of the building management company. However, he remains in constant fear of displacement: "With a new rent increase or something else the landlord will try to get us out of here" (interview 1). None of these

tenants is willing or able to pay the rent increases, which are unjustified in their eyes. In the case of tenants at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a, legal proceedings were still in progress in May 2015. If the trial should end with a decision that is negative for the tenants, the consequence could be an immediate demand for payment of the accumulated back rent or else imminent eviction.

At Schöneberger Straße 5–6a one tenant expressed the fear that she might have to move out due to the mold infestation in her own flat (like others before her). This condition can, as was described in the previous section, be interpreted as a form of fear of physical displacement. Yet the examples of landlords directly attempting to displace tenants they have taken to court are consciously not designated as cases of physical displacement in Marcuse's sense (1985). Essentially, the litigation was initiated by the given tenants themselves by refusing to comply with the demands for rent. This illustrates that the cases of eviction proceedings can be also be analytically categorized as fear of economical displacement.

In closing this sub-section, it must be mentioned that it was not possible to establish that any of the phenomena observed here occurred for private owners or tenants of the new individually owned apartments at Lindenstraße 36 and 37 and at Maybachufer 18.

12 Discrimination

The displacement and fear of displacement described above are reinforced in part by discriminating mechanisms on the housing market. Studies document the discrimination of people especially from immigrant backgrounds (see Kilic 2008; Barwick 2012), as well as on the basis of their social status (see Oellerich 2011; Pestel Institut 2012).

What counts as discrimination are statements and actions that achieve disadvantages for a person or a group of people on the basis of certain characteristics (Hormel and Scherr 2010, p. 7). Proceeding from terminology and the background of subsidized rental housing, which was set up by the second Housing Act of 1956 with the objective of accessibility for "broad strata of the population" (Henckel et al. 2010, p. 428ff.), the initial assumption of discrimination seems absurd. However, the majority of the respondents from all three of the investigated subsidized rental properties reports that foreigners, immigrants and recipients of social benefits face different treatment by the landlord or building managers.

According to Berlin's Senate Administration for Integration, Labour, and Social Affairs, racial discrimination can be directed toward external characteris-

tics, or "toward an (attributed) ethnic origin, a nationality, an immigration background, a language, a religion or a world view, to the extent that these are associated with marginalizations and abasement, which have their basis in the presumption of an essential inferiority" (see *Senatsverwaltung für Arbeit, Integration und Familie* 2013). In an interview with the tenant delegate of *Schöneberger Straße 5–6a*, we discovered that, after a first rent increase directed at all tenants, a second was implemented only selectively. This affected only three flats. The addressees of this selective rent increase were families of Turkish or Arab immigrants and women who wore headscarves for religious reasons.

In the case of the properties investigated at *Schöneberger Straße 5–6a*, racial (or ethnic) discrimination can be determined on the basis of two crucial points: The selective rent increase, and the attribution of negatively portrayed characteristics, behaviour patterns and lifestyle that are associated with a constructed Islamic cultural space.

Thirteen of 35 respondents at *Schöneberger Straße* confirm the practice of allocating different rent increases to "foreigners" and "immigrants" or "Muslim residents" (interviews 6, 27, 43, 51, 55, 57, 58, 60, 62, 63, 65, 66, 68). Five residents accused the building manager of explicit discrimination towards female residents who openly profess their culture or faith by wearing a headscarf. The different treatment is particularly obvious in the statement of one resident, who claims to have observed that one family with a Turkish name did not receive a second, selective rent increase: The only recognizable difference was that in this family no one wore a headscarf. What is more, the Polish neighbors of the Arab and Turkish families did not receive a second rent increase, either.

The landlord further expressed to several former and current residents that the mold infestation in some flats constituted personal negligence, which was caused exclusively by the lifestyle of the Turkish and Arab families. Six of the nine former residents of *Schöneberger Straße 5–6a* surveyed testified that, according to the landlord, they "cook too much and air too little" (interviews 43, 61, 62, 65, 66, 68). Furthermore, the children of those families were accused of making noise and running riot, and made responsible for the destruction of glass doors in the stairways, without any proof of their involvement. The assumption of discriminating behaviour is further reinforced by the landlord's initiation of eviction proceedings for two tenants with Turkish or Arab names. Because these families did not succeed in finding a suitable flat within the prescribed period of eight weeks before the rent increase took effect, they requested the deadline to be extended. At the same time, a German family in the same situation was granted permission to contest their eviction.

In the cases of the properties investigated at *Lindenstraße 36* and *37* and at *Maybachufer 18* it can also be speculated that the displacement from the rented flats through their conversion into individually owned apartments is intrinsically

discriminatory behaviour. According to the statement of a long-term resident of Lindenstraße with a German name, discrimination by ethnic origin can also be presumed. According to his account, all residents had been displaced by the end of 2010, but the Turkish tenants received a rent increase five times greater than his own. At Maybachufer 18 three of the five tenants surveyed spoke of a selective rent increase, yet no precise orientation of this practice can be identified in their testimony. However, two respondents stated that the landlord did not want to take their query about the future purchase prices of their apartments seriously.

It should be pointed out that the conversion of accommodations from subsidized rental housing with tenant controls into individually owned apartments can be regarded as a targeted replacement of the old tenants with new, wealthier residents. The question seems justified as to whether discrimination is generally linked with the mechanism that emerged through the phasing-out of follow-up funding and the exemption from tenancy controls in subsidized rental housing. For in contrast to the free housing market, living space in subsidized rental housing is supposed to be accessible to everyone. In general tenancy law, rent increases are controlled and thus cannot entail the effects which have allowed for some immense cost rents in Berlin's subsidized rental housing. For example, the current rent prices at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a are currently approaching those of the first wave of rent increases. Accordingly, the argument of targeted displacement according to cultural-racist and social indications can hardly be rejected.

In the surveys of current tenants, five state that the ethnic origin of the new tenants can be classified as primarily German or Central European. Five long-term residents further claim that the tenants have been exchanged for a wealthier middle class.

Such discriminating behaviour on the part of building management can also be a hurdle when the displaced tenants seek new flats: For many landlords, a name that cannot immediately be identified as German appears to be a criterion for excluding a candidate from obtaining a free flat, as was established in a test trial¹² on renting flats in Berlin (see Kilic 2008). The result is an exclusionary effect, along with the reduction of the real housing market for people with immigration backgrounds. At Schöneberger Straße 5–6a a comparable situation is reported: One respondent had one Turkish and one German friend call the landlord, one after the other, to inquire about a free flat. The woman with the Turkish last name was informed that the flat had already been rented, whereas the German woman with the same inquiry was offered a viewing shortly thereafter. Considering that people dependent on social benefits receive differential treatment, which can be regarded as discriminatory, in some cases double discrimina-

12 A test trial can reveal discriminating actions. On this, see Yigit, Vazquez and Yazar 2010.

tion occurs due to a potential tenant's immigration background and social status. In such cases of intersectional discrimination it is not clear which characteristic leads to the denied access to housing. In the case of displaced tenants affected by racial discrimination, we can presume intersectional discrimination, although it is difficult to prove.

A further peculiarity to observe is the highly differentiated treatment of people in wheelchairs. These individuals were rarely confronted with rent increases and, in the properties which were turned into individually owned apartments, continue to enjoy the privilege of being the only renters in the building. In view of the rigour of the process of displacement process in other cases, it is striking that the handicapped-accessible flats are subject to special tenancy controls (Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin 2012a).

13 Resistance

Resistance against the developments in the properties we investigated faced two main hurdles: First, understanding the facts of the situation requires an enormous investment of time and effort; and second, at first glance any resistance appears to have little chance of success. In addition, dealing with the legal situation is an even greater barrier for people with little knowledge of German. Nevertheless, there are a few forms of protest which were organized by those affected.

At Schöneberger Straße 5–6a there were several forms of resistance. Residents were successful in staving off the first attempt to increase rent, which affected the entire estate, due to a formal error. Further legal action regarding the rent increase implemented in late 2009/early 2010 is still pending. At least two tenants have avoided immediate eviction and found themselves in legal proceedings with the successful result of an extension to the deadline for evacuation. A further family has been involved in litigation for five years, fighting to pay reduced rent because of the serious mold infestation.

Furthermore, in January 2015 the owner of the above-mentioned buildings on Schöneberger Straße was sentenced for violating the General Equal Treatment Act (*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*, AGG) in the case of two families who were affected by the second, selective rent increase. According to the AGG, discrimination by ethnic origin—as regards access and provision of housing—is illegal. This law passed in 2006 has a special status, due to the compensation of immaterial damage and the reversed burden of proof. The first case where the law was implemented a landlord was required to pay €15,000 to each of her former tenants as compensation (see Senatsverwaltung für Justiz 2015).

The judgment is not yet final, however, and the defendant can still submit an appeal. This sentencing for violating the AGG in connection with residential housing could set a legal precedent, for up to now it has been applied seldom in general, and never before in the context of housing.

A further resident at Schöneberger Straße is also involved in a legal dispute with the landlord because the latter is charging the full cost rent only from him, and not from any other tenant, and is demanding that he pay it retroactively for the longest period possible. According to the tenant's testimony, he is being penalized for his activities in the neighborhood's protest organization. The residents at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a have already organized demonstrations in front of the Berlin Chamber of Deputies. The above-mentioned conference on subsidized rental housing at the Chamber of Deputies, which was entitled "Nothing is working right here" ("*Nichts läuft hier richtig*"), can similarly be assessed as successful protest work that influenced the public. Within the conference, the Fanny Hensel Estate and thus also the apartment house at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a served as an important example for the discriminatory allocation of rent increases, as the course of developments has been documented there better than in other residential properties, and because the tenant delegate has been extremely active.

As to Maybachufer 18, two of the residents actively resisted their eviction and joined the organization of the Kotti & Co group as well as the Initiative against Evictions (*Initiative gegen Zwangsräumungen*). Both were unsuccessful and ultimately had to move out. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find information about any acts of resistance in the properties we investigated on Lindenstraße.

The forms of resistance we detected that aimed to eliminate tenancy controls and the discriminatory mechanism of cost rent have had only few and small victories. Only a minority of the residents in the buildings we investigated is actively involved in protests. The bulk of the resistance, and the in part dedicated efforts by residents at Schöneberger Straße, are highly dependent on the commitment of individual activists. The first decision referring to the General Equal Treatment Act in the legal dispute of two former tenants at Schöneberger Straße was not yet final (in May 2015), but hopefully constitutes a path-breaking result nevertheless.

14 Summary and Reflections

This study demonstrates that the process of gentrification can also be identified in Berlin's subsidized rental housing. The displacement process inherent in this

development occurs in a particularly intensive and chronologically compressed form. The reason for this is Berlin's system of cost rent, in combination with the temporary exemption from tenancy controls. Through this mechanism a yield gap was created politically, which we designate here as the *state-made rental gap*. This allowed the residential properties to become objects of real-estate speculation. The landlords used the possibility created within the system to displace tenants who were unemployed, or only precariously employed, from their flats in order to make room for a wealthier clientele. It is possible to demonstrate that most of the social tenants we surveyed were displaced by rents that increased beyond their capacity to pay. In the subsidized rental housing properties we investigated in Berlin, it is thus possible to prove the displacement form known as economical displacement. The owners of the subsidized rental housing properties imposed rent increases up to the level of cost rent. The results of this research show that the rent increases are not arbitrary, but imposed selectively on those social tenants who did not correspond with the valorization strategies of the owners. In the process, owners used discriminatory practices, above all at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a and Lindenstraße 36. Many of the remaining previous tenants—and even some of the new tenants—express fear of displacement, whereby individuals have resisted by means of legal proceedings and by generating media attention against the (discriminatory) methods of the building owners.

No clear trend can be identified with regard to the locations of the new residence of the displaced tenants. Many of the former social tenants we surveyed found new flats in locations on the edge of the inner city and in geographical proximity to their previous homes. However, the search for a new flat was influenced positively by the fact that nearly all former residents received outside help. Based on the statements of residents who moved out, only limited conclusions can be drawn about the general consequences of displacement, as the assessment of the new or the former place of residence is influenced by many individual factors.

By utilizing the micro-perspective of the apartment building approach, we acquired detailed information on the issues surrounding displacement in Berlin's subsidized rental housing. By observing developments on the micro-level, the gentrification process can be traced from its emergence to its consequences on the basis of examples on the individual level. In so doing, the various levels of detail achieved for each apartment building make clear the methodological dependence of the process on individual key persons and/or other disseminators. While it was possible to locate and interview many displaced social tenants of the investigated property at Schöneberger Straße 5–6a through existing contact with the remaining long-term tenants, a lack of intermediaries precluded making contact with former residents at Lindenstraße 36 and 37. Nevertheless, by sur-

veying current new tenants and owners, it was possible to reflect on the gentrification process of the property and on phenomena of the displacement process.

The phenomena described in the residential properties we investigated serve as examples of developments taking place all over Berlin after the discontinuation of follow-up financing for inner-city subsidized rental housing. More in-depth research appears useful, especially against the backdrop of the Housing Act of 2011 and the Berlin Senate's ambitions for new subsidized rental housing. Especially from the perspective of the affected tenants and their supporters, a further systematic record could supply valuable arguments. The need for political action is apparent, above all because of the constant population influx to Berlin and the resultant increasing pressure on the housing market. Gentrification and displacement processes will continue as long as there is insufficient living space for socioeconomically weaker population groups and ineffective legal protection of these groups against displacement from inner-city areas.

This chapter was able to show that state deregulation measures, which are often underestimated in their scope, can create a *state-made rental gap*. As a result, displacement from subsidized rental housing is intensified, or initiated in the first place.

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