



# Coping with financialisation. Understanding socio-emotional dynamics in urban housing markets

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## ABSTRACT

Financialisation increasingly exposes asset-poor households, often reluctantly, to the adverse effects of urban property inflation. This phenomenon is characterised by experiences of ‘unwillingness’ within financialised housing systems. Yet, there remains limited understanding of how households across diverse housing tenures confront and navigate the socio-emotional repercussions of financialisation. Moreover, the specific ways in which different asset-owner categories shape and define household agency and well-being are still ambiguously addressed. To advance this discourse, this study explores the dialectics of *unwilling objectification and contested subjectification*. Drawing on comprehensive qualitative empirical research in Leipzig, Germany, we develop a typology that connects asset owners’ managerial strategies with residents’ perceptions and coping mechanisms. Our findings elucidate that, while financialisation imposes material and cognitive constraints, the persistence of social safety nets and collective coping strategies can offer pathways to mitigate these pressures. Consequently, household agency under financialisation is complex and multifaceted; it remains persistently constrained, yet is also continuously negotiated and contested.

## 1. Introduction

Recent scholarship acknowledges that asset- or wealth-driven financialisation has reconfigured urban housing markets and living conditions for tenants worldwide (Adkins et al., 2021; Hochstenbach & Aalbers, 2024). In particular, younger and lower-income households are being increasingly marginalised from property ownership and the associated benefits. These households are often subject to rental market dynamics, and forced to confront escalating housing costs (Aalbers et al., 2021; Forrest & Hirayama, 2015; Lima, 2020; Ronald & Kadi, 2018).

While the socio-emotional and everyday consequences of debt-driven housing financialisation have received significant academic attention (García-Lamarca & Kaika, 2016; Langley, 2007), the experiences of households under wealth-driven financialisation remain under-

explored. Against this backdrop, Fields’ (2017a) concept of ‘*unwilling subjects of financialisation*’ is notable. By highlighting reluctance, dissent, and dissatisfaction, this perspective provides conceptual insight into housing experiences, as illustrated by the case of a New York private equity investor and the unintended domestic repercussions of their strategies (Fields, 2017a).<sup>1</sup> However, various scholars argue that the logics of wealth-driven financialisation extend beyond institutional investors to encompass private investors, owner-occupiers, and non-profit housing entities (Aalbers et al., 2017; Aalbers et al., 2021; Beswick & Penny, 2018; Cook & Ruming, 2021). This suggests that diverse ownership structures mediate how financialisation is experienced. Moreover, while ‘unwillingness’ captures the ambivalence inherent in daily encounters with financialisation, it does not fully explain how financialisation influences individual and collective agency.

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<sup>1</sup> Importantly, this concept has already demonstrated analytical purchase beyond its original North American context, informing studies of housing reform resistance in Morocco (Kutz, 2018) and the experiences of lower-middle-class families navigating state-orchestrated shared-ownership schemes in China (Shen et al., 2022).

To address these gaps, this article examines the socio-emotional ramifications of financialisation at the household level,<sup>2</sup> emanating from varied asset ownership and management strategies. Building on Fields' (2017a) concept of 'unwillingness', we present a dialectical framework comprising 'unwilling objectification' and 'contested subjectification'. In line with McFarlane and Silver's (2017), p. 459) interpretation of the *dialectics of everyday urbanism*, we contend that this requires a nuanced comprehension of the perpetual, interdependent shifts of "contradiction, reinforcement, fragmentation and reconstitution". Within this framework, financialisation curtails residents' agency, even as they resist, challenge, and reshape financialisation, thereby reclaiming aspects of their subjectivity (Baldissari et al., 2022).

Based on this dichotomy between *objectification* and *subjectification*, we define objectification as the reduction of individuals to mere instruments valued primarily for their economic utility (Baldissari et al., 2022). Focusing on housing assets, we argue that asset-poor households are increasingly viewed as mere conduits for asset owners' revenue streams. By contrast, subjectification refers to processes of self-actualisation and becoming a 'subject'. While Foucauldian perspectives emphasise inherent ambivalence and *subjection* to overarching structures, contemporary scholarship recognises subjectification's potential to challenge hegemonic power dynamics and foster both political and collective agency (Di Feliciano, 2016).

These fundamental processes shape how households emotionally engage with and respond to the pressures of wealth-driven financialisation. To conceptualise these emotional responses, we draw on the notion of coping in social psychology – the cognitive and behavioural efforts employed to tackle problems and mitigate the stress they generate (Baumstarck et al., 2017). While neoclassical economics and resilience research often emphasise the capacity of households to cope with financial hardships, recent studies highlight the limitations of individual coping and problem-solving strategies in the face of the forces of financialisation that induce precarity (Waldron, 2024). Accordingly, we view households' emotional responses and domestic activities as indicative of cognitive and behavioural coping mechanisms that reflect the interplay of objectification and subjectification. Furthermore, building on research into dialectical cognition, mixed emotions and dialectical sentiments (Wilken & Miyamoto, 2018), we recognise that contradictory emotional responses may coexist within households due to the inherent tension between objectification and subjectification. With these reflections in mind, we provide analytical insights into the following two interrelated questions: (i) how do households within financialised and non-financialised housing tenures cope with the socio-spatial and emotional repercussions of financialisation?; and (ii) how do distinct asset-ownership models shape household agency and their experiences of housing financialisation and contestation?

Our argument is presented in five sections. The first section reviews how households negotiate financialisation, expanding the concept of unwillingness. Subsequently, we examine the specificities and commonalities of financialisation that are relevant for our empirical context. Leipzig, with its significant population growth since 2010 and high proportion of tenants (90%), offers a pertinent case study. The Connewitz neighbourhood, which combines self-managed housing initiatives with new premium developments, epitomises the city's transformation. The third section outlines our research methodology and analytical approach, which is based on 70 in-depth interviews with

residents. The fourth section condenses our empirical data into an asset-owner typology that captures investor strategies and residents' coping mechanisms. The final section discusses the broader conceptual implications for understanding objectification and subjectification, and suggests avenues for future research.

### 1.1. Objectification and subjectification in housing financialisation

In this section, we examine the repercussions and adaptations imposed on the domestic sphere by urban property inflation. Drawing on debates surrounding the financialisation of housing, we demonstrate how international shifts towards post-homeownership societies, the increasing prevalence of private and institutional landlords, and the growing reliance of large sections of the population on the private rental market result in tenant dissatisfaction. Expanding upon Fields' (2017a) notion of the 'unwilling subjects of financialisation', we present a broader conceptualisation that incorporates the dialectics of unwilling objectification and contested subjectification.

Financialisation, as a "systemic transformation of capitalism" (Lapavistas, 2013, p. 792) profoundly shapes the state, the economy, and households. It reflects the financial sector's growing influence on capital operations, institutional contexts, wealth management, stakeholders and narratives, defining the current phase of capitalism. However, some scholars argue that the term 'financialisation' is sometimes used too broadly, conflating it with related processes such as globalisation, neoliberalisation, and commodification, and overlooking its specific geographical and historical context. Following Jacobs and Manzi (2020), we argue that financialisation can be usefully understood across structural, organisational, and individual dimensions within appropriate frameworks.

Our analysis focuses on the household realm rather than solely on organisational or macro-structural levels. As a micro-level social institution, the household encompasses activities such as housing production, consumption, reproduction, financial management, and co-residence. It is the primary nexus where the effects of financialisation materialise through power relations and value transfers (Bobek et al., 2023).

Within this scholarship, we deliberately centre on the housing wealth perspective (Arundel & Hochstenbach, 2020) to examine how different ownership revenue structures influence household experiences. Over the past decade, financialisation has evolved from a *debt-driven* to a *wealth-driven* model (Aalbers et al., 2021; Hochstenbach & Aalbers, 2024). During a period of declining welfare provision and stagnating wages, the debt-driven model diffused investment logics into households' daily lives. Governments and financial actors promoted real estate wealth accumulation through the liberalisation of debt, effectively positioning it as a substitute for social protection under privatised Keynesianism (Crouch, 2009). While this initially aligned the material interests of households with asset price inflation, their debt liabilities also became linked with the speculative dynamics of global markets (García-Lamarca & Kaika, 2016). In this sense, the debt-driven model generated an inherently precarious and uncertain environment for self-constitution from its inception (Langley, 2007).

Following the Global Financial Crisis, a clear decoupling emerged between mortgage debt and housing price growth, marking a shift towards post-homeownership societies (Aalbers et al., 2021). This has been driven by declining purchasing power amid precarious employment, asset price inflation outpacing wage growth, stricter mortgage lending and rising demand for rental housing (Adkins et al., 2021; Forrest & Hirayama, 2015). Consequently, homeownership has become more elusive and is now shaped by generational, socio-economic, and geographical factors (Lima, 2020; Ronald & Kadi, 2018).

In the current phase, asset ownership and rent-based revenue generation are pivotal to widening inequalities. Scholarly debate engages with concepts such as 'assetisation', the 'asset economy' and 'rentier capitalism' (Birch & Ward, 2024; Fields, 2018; Langley, 2021; van Loon

<sup>2</sup> Our analysis encompasses all asset-poor households navigating financialised housing markets. While tenants constitute the majority, we also include owner-occupiers who face similar constraints from financialisation processes, such as those in condominium associations dominated by investor-owners (see empirical section). This approach follows recent scholarship that suggests reconceptualising housing tenure beyond strict owner-tenant binaries, instead examining households' relationship to and constraint by financial markets (Zhang, 2023).

& Aalbers, 2017). Key actors include institutional investors (Fields, 2018; Janoschka et al., 2020), multiple-property owners (Forrest & Hirayama, 2018; Ronald & Kadi, 2018), small-scale landlords (Ronald & Kadi, 2018), and owner-occupiers (Cook & Ruming, 2021). Typically, these groups achieve asset growth through real estate ventures using buy-to-let and build-to-let models (Aalbers et al., 2021; Brill & Özogul, 2021; Nethercote, 2020).

However, this sequential transition from debt-driven to wealth-driven dynamics is largely specific to advanced capitalist economies and former homeownership societies in the Global North. Elsewhere, financialisation has bypassed debt-driven phases entirely: in China, housing financialisation has proceeded primarily through the assetisation of both owner-occupied housing (Wu et al., 2020) and rental housing services such as rental loans (Chen et al., 2022); in Singapore, owner-occupied public housing has been transformed into an inflation-dependent asset for retirement (Chua, 2015); and in post-socialist Cuba, transnational remittances and non-debt bearing assetisation pressures have emerged as drivers of housing marketisation (Wijburg, 2023).

Across these variegated trajectories, the resulting dynamics generate scale-dependent spatial strategies (Luo et al., 2024), which are particularly evident in tenant-dominated societies such as Germany. At the macro-level, Germany's housing financialisation emerged later than in other European contexts and was investment-driven from the outset (Metzger, 2020). This was due to failed bank-led liberalisation, privatisation of social and public housing, and a long-time low-interest rate environment. While recognising this specificity, we use *wealth-driven* to align with international scholarship, noting that Germany's trajectory mirrors broader trends across Europe (Gabor & Kohl, 2022).

At the meso-level, this institutional background facilitated substantial financial transactions, speculative investment by both individual and institutional owners with divergent, profit-oriented management strategies, and the growth of big stock-listed housing firms through aggressive acquisition strategies (Wijburg & Aalbers, 2017; Wijburg et al., 2018). From 2011 to 2018, real estate assets value increased by €2.8 trillion, primarily benefiting the wealthiest households (Baldeus et al., 2020).

At the micro-level, these systemic transformations translate into specific risks and crises for residents. Many tenant households, who are typically asset-poor, are struggling with escalating housing costs (Tegeer & Helbrecht, 2007; Wetzstein, 2017). Corporate landlords like Vonovia or investment-driven private landlords directly affect residents' daily lives through creating an environment of neglected maintenance and aggressive renovation practices, rent and ancillary cost increases, low accountability and heightened insecurity. This creates a totally different housing experience: whereas the debt-driven model temporarily benefited a wider public (Langley, 2007), the wealth-driven model excludes many households from property ownership and its associated advantages (Adkins et al., 2021). This dichotomy fuels discontent, leading Fields (2017a) to describe tenants as the *unwilling subjects of financialisation*.

The concept of unwillingness encompasses diverse forms of active and passive resistance to financial practices and everyday encounters with financialisation (Kutz, 2018). In this sense, unwillingness highlights the contingent and uneven nature of financialisation, which is marked by incomplete, contested and context-specific developments (Aalbers, 2017).

Building on this, we identify two conceptual gaps. Firstly, while research has mainly focused on professional landlords in financial markets (Fields, 2017a; Janoschka et al., 2020; Metzger, 2020), assetisation logics also influence the practice of private landlords (Aalbers et al., 2021; Cook & Ruming, 2021; Forrest & Hirayama, 2018; Ronald & Kadi, 2018). Moreover, constrained municipal budgets mean that even non-profit housing providers increasingly prioritise profit over tenants' concerns (Aalbers et al., 2017; Beswick & Penny, 2018; Botzem & Besedovsky, 2021). Consequently, under wealth-driven financialisation, the expression and negotiation of unwillingness likely cuts across

various housing tenures.

Secondly, while the concept emphasises residents' agency, which is defined as their ability to act with intention and self-control (Baldissari et al., 2022), research has primarily examined its tangible effects within individual households (Fields, 2017a). We argue that fully capturing 'unwillingness' demands close attention to: (i) the range of active and passive strategies through which residents negotiate, confront, or disrupt the financialisation of their homes or sustain non-financial domains (Gehrig, 2024); and (ii) the limits of agency, considering how far individuals can ultimately evade financial imperatives.

We therefore advocate an approach that conceptualises financialisation and discontent at the household level through *the dialectics of unwilling objectification and contested subjectification*. This approach is consistent with recent research on tenant mobilisation, which suggests that rights infringements can catalyse collective action, transforming individual tenants into organised actors capable of negotiation with landlords (Appel et al., 2024). This transition exemplifies the dialectical movement between objectification and subjectification in today's rental markets.

We understand *unwilling objectification* as a dehumanising process (Baldissari et al., 2022; Nussbaum, 1995). When housing is treated exclusively as an asset, its social function is disregarded and households are reduced to mere conduits for rent extraction. While residents may reject this logic internally, objectification implies that their discontent often remains unvoiced. Their daily choices become anchored in the pursuit of financial stability and housing security, shifting the focus of social reproduction towards rental obligations and away from cultivating meaningful lives. Similar to the emotional and psychological impacts of displacement observed elsewhere, we argue that objectification fosters alienation and spatial disidentification, since asset-management strategies erode the sense of home and belonging (Butcher & Dickens, 2016; Fullilove, 1996; Watt, 2023). Building on Gehrig's (2024) observations of alienating property relations, we argue that these tenure-dependent, asset-centred forces also fragment neighbour relations and stifle collective action. At its most damaging, objectification fractures the potential for class solidarity and fosters authoritarian divides (Reichle, 2021).

Conversely, *contested subjectification* arises when residents overcome alienation, reclaim their individual and collective agency, and actively re-engage with their environments. Unlike objectification, however, subjectification can be vulnerable to subjugation. Nevertheless, reconstituting oneself in opposition to financial pressures can disrupt and unsettle the prevailing order. This is consistent with housing movement research on collective subjectification (Di Feliciano, 2016). Under wealth-driven financialisation, contestation extends beyond urban social movements to encompass various forms of resistance, including neighbourhood networks, mutual support, legal action, and subtle acts of subversion.

These logics reach beyond housing alone. Financialisation objectifies social relations more broadly by transforming housing, health, education, environmental resources, and human capabilities into tradeable assets and investment opportunities. This reduces complex socio-ecological relations to risk profiles and returns (Fine, 2024). In this sense, subjectification implies that financial logics do not infiltrate social life unchallenged, but instead generate alternative individual and collective subjectivities that question the everyday dominance of finance.

We view objectification and subjectification as forming a continuous, co-evolving dynamic marked by "contradiction, reinforcement, fragmentation and reconstitution" (McFarlane & Silver, 2017, p. 459). In line with the variegated nature of housing financialisation (Aalbers, 2017; Luo et al., 2024), these processes are contingent, non-teleological, and intertwined in everyday life. *Contested subjectification* further highlights that self-realisation under financialisation is constantly changing and requires active reaffirmation. There are always possibilities of reversal; for instance, resistance may fade as households decide to leave, even semi-voluntarily.

In line with research on dialectical thinking and mixed emotions (Wilken & Miyamoto, 2018), we recognise that objectification and subjectification generate a variety of coping strategies, which can sometimes be contradictory. Following Waldron (2024), we view coping as the cognitive and behavioural efforts households make to manage tenure-dependent housing conditions and navigate rising costs. Unlike passive ‘experience’ or ‘reaction’, coping involves actively negotiating structural constraints, even when such efforts are thwarted by abstract financial forces. Coping encompasses the entire range of household responses, including organised resistance, resignation, collective mobilisation, personal defeat, creative adaptations, expenditure minimisation, weary compliance, and mental adjustment (Power, 2023). Crucially, even failed attempts embody active engagement: late-night calculations about paying rent or heating bills; energy spent building networks of neighbours; and the emotional labour of sustaining hope while preparing for being displaced. Through the lens of coping under the dialectics of objectification and subjectification, we can better understand how households adapt within a highly constrained environment. This reveals both the structural violence of financialisation and the human drive to shape one’s living conditions.

This conceptual framework offers a more nuanced understanding of the origins of discontent within wealth-driven financialisation, illustrating how financialisation simultaneously constrains and enables agency. We therefore contend that the dialectics of unwilling objectification and contested subjectification are crucial for elucidating housing experiences in post-homeownership and tenant societies. Drawing on our in-depth empirical data, we expand on this framework in subsequent sections, preceded by a brief contextualisation of our case study.

### 1.2. Particularities and commonalities of housing financialisation in leipzig

Reflecting international debates on housing financialisation, Leipzig’s real estate sector shows both distinctive features and clear commonalities. Post-1989 political decisions laid the groundwork for housing financialisation in East Germany, and especially in Leipzig. Policies such as the restitution of the pre-World War II inner-city housing, public housing debt assistance schemes, and generous tax deduction encouraged privatisation, speculation, and wealth transfers. These policies also produced displacement (Holm & Bernt, 2021). Although these measures were originally intended to attract private investment to renovate deteriorating housing stock, many residents lacking financial resources and market knowledge remained in the rental sector. Today, Leipzig still has a large proportion of tenants, with 87% of households renting their homes (Rink, 2020). Similar trends can be observed in other East German cities, such as Berlin, where housing is largely owned by non-local private and institutional investors (Holm & Bernt, 2021). Yet ownership remains highly fragmented: non-local investors frequently hold individual units in pre-World War II buildings, making condominium associations a common form of management (Rink, 2020). In this respect, Leipzig mirrors the fragmented ownership patterns seen in contexts such as the UK or Poland (Büdenbender & Aalbers, 2019; Orr et al., 2023).

Post-reunification urban restructuring brought welfare gains, including economic revitalisation, job creation, and expansion of the housing market (Rink et al., 2022). Paralleling trends identified by Hofman and Aalbers (2019) in the UK, Leipzig has experienced a steady professionalisation of its real estate sector. As Germany has become an attractive destination for real estate investment since the Global Financial Crisis (Gabor & Kohl, 2022), the past decade has witnessed rising investment activity by financial and housing intermediaries, listed housing corporations, and international developers. Many Western German investors, having recovered their 1990s investments and facing rising refurbishment costs, are selling off their properties and brownfield sites in increasing numbers. The scale of this transformation is strikingly evident in Leipzig’s property market dynamics: the purchase price for

unrenovated multi-family houses increased from €154/m<sup>2</sup> in 2012 to an astounding €1716/m<sup>2</sup> in 2022 – more than a tenfold increase within a single decade.<sup>3</sup> However, for residents, this urban restructuring has resulted in house price inflation, declining vacancy rates, and the marginalisation of long-standing tenants (Rink, 2020; Rink et al., 2022).

In response to the strained housing market, municipal authorities have revised Leipzig’s housing policy (Rink et al., 2022). Yet it remains largely the private sector that drives new development, focusing predominantly on upscale and luxury apartments (Rink, 2020). Echoing build-to-rent financialisation trends elsewhere (Nethercote, 2020), the identities of private and institutional investors, and the ultimate beneficiaries of these developments, often remain opaque. This lack of transparency complicates efforts to assess the scale and impact of financialised rental housing (St-Hilaire et al., 2024).

Leipzig’s rapid and opaque urban transformation has generated social tensions, as evidenced by a unique local protest culture that mobilises significant proportions of the population (Rink, 2020). While comprehensive housing activism networks are still emerging and often hesitate to demand direct market intervention, isolated protests have become more intense, with aggressive actions targeting new developments, especially in the Connewitz neighbourhood (Guhl, 2020). Residents’ responses range from overt opposition to more ambivalent forms of dissatisfaction. While our proprietary database shows steady real estate investment across Leipzig as a whole, the marked increase in new construction in Connewitz, accounting for 11% of the neighbourhood’s housing since 2015, is particularly striking. Connewitz, known for its squatting history and leftist milieu, has gained notoriety beyond the region and remains unique in the German context. Long-term residents share relatively homogeneous lifestyles, political orientations, and socio-economic backgrounds. These characteristics may offer stronger social safety nets against the fragmenting and alienating effects of objectification than in other parts of the city (Reichle, 2021). However, given the intertwined dynamics of build-to-rent investment, rising property values, and complex ownership structures that resonate globally (Büdenbender & Aalbers, 2019; Nethercote, 2020; Orr et al., 2023; St-Hilaire et al., 2024), our study of how residents cope with financialisation in Connewitz holds broader relevance. The following sections examine these dynamics in greater depth, grounding them in the everyday experiences of households.

## 2. Materials and methods

This study draws on 70 in-depth interviews with residents of Leipzig’s Connewitz neighbourhood, which were conducted between October 2020 and August 2022. To inform our case selection, we developed an exhaustive database detailing ownership structures, portfolio sales, construction projects, and developer information. This compilation also integrated data from the 2011 and 2022 housing census, financial and property journalism, real estate and architecture online portals, publications from listed housing corporations, and the Orbis database. Our semi-structured interview guide focused on residents’ experiences of tenancy, their perceptions of neighbourhood change, their experiences of tenant-landlord relations, and their emotional responses. The interviewees represented a range of socio-demographic backgrounds, including variations in age, gender, employment status, education, and housing tenure. Interview transcripts were anonymised and analysed using MAXQDA software.

The sampling strategy was purposively designed to capture the full spectrum of housing tenures present in Connewitz. To recruit participants, we employed a multi-faceted approach: over 10,000 leaflets inviting voluntary participation in the study were distributed to

<sup>3</sup> These secondary data were drawn from the annually published property market reports (*Grundstücksmarktberichte*) of the Leipzig Valuation Committee (*Gutachterausschuss Leipzig*).

household mailboxes, followed by snowball sampling based on initial contacts. Additional recruitment took place via local chat groups, online neighbourhood networks, and street festivals.

In total, we conducted the following interviews: (i) 12 with tenants of non-profit housing companies; (ii) 8 with members of collaborative housing projects; (iii) 10 with owner-occupiers; (iv) 15 with tenants of small-scale landlords; (v) 9 with tenants of strategic profit optimisers; (vi) 11 with residents affected by dramatic housing transformers; and (vii) 5 with tenants dealing with intermediaries. This distribution reflects both the housing composition in the neighbourhood and our analytical interest in comparing experiences across tenure types, which are discussed in detail in the empirical section. These seven tenure types were not pre-defined categories for sampling, but emerged inductively from the empirical material.

In-depth interviews are particularly suited to exploring emotional responses to financialisation as they enable participants to contextualise their feelings within their broader life narratives and housing trajectories. Rather than merely capturing isolated complaints, our approach illuminated how emotions such as anxiety, frustration, and solidarity develop and endure within specific tenure arrangements.

### 2.1. Asset-owners' management and households' coping strategies: An empirical typology

Based on our qualitative fieldwork, we present a new typology of asset owners to shed light on the diverse socio-emotional consequences of financialisation at the household level. This typology shows how different models of asset ownership systematically influence residents' emotions and experiences by linking investors' management strategies with households' coping mechanisms. In doing so, it addresses a previously under-explored dimension of wealth-driven housing financialisation. Our analytical framework operates at two interconnected levels: (i) the structural level of asset ownership and the associated management logic, and (ii) experiential level of residents' socio-emotional responses and coping mechanisms, ranging from individual discomfort to collective organisation.

Several factors highlight the analytical and practical value of this typology, particularly in debates concerning finance-driven unwillingness (Fields, 2017a; Kutz, 2018). Firstly, although ownership categories are present in census data, they fail to capture the evolving and nuanced roles of stakeholders over the past decade (Rink, 2020). Crucially, they do not illuminate how residents navigate these ownership models or develop coping strategies amid diverse housing tenures and changing management practices. Secondly, our typology provides an accessible overview of the various management strategies and tenures that residents often experience as fragmented and opaque. By making these patterns visible, we demystify the often abstract realm of finance (Fields, 2017b). This is significant as residents rarely connect their daily struggles, such as paying rent, facing neglect or finding affordable housing, to the overarching processes of financialisation (Jover, 2021). While they may not use the term 'financialisation', their encounters with anonymous ownership, profit-driven management, and displacement pressures are its tangible manifestations. The disconnect between everyday experience and the academic concept does not diminish its relevance, but rather highlights the importance of research that bridges this gap. Finally, by stressing the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of coping, we demonstrate how financialisation influences individual and collective agency.

The typology has two main attributes centring on security. Following Hulse and Milligan (2014), we do not limit ourselves to *de jure* security of tenure. Unlike in Anglophone contexts, Germany has a highly regulated rental market with comparatively strong tenant rights and contractual securities. However, security cannot be captured purely through legal frameworks; it is multidimensional, shaped by market criteria (accessibility, affordability), policies (such as rental assistance and renovation support), cultural norms (actors' views and treatment of

rental housing), and psycho-social dimensions (the ability to feel 'at home' and exercise control over one's environment). In this context, *secure housing tenure* refers to arrangements, regulations, or agreements that protect residents from sharp rent increases or sudden eviction. However, such security does not automatically guarantee overall satisfaction. *Insecure housing tenure* involves property owners exploiting opportunities to maximise profit, producing discontent yet sometimes leading residents to accept suboptimal conditions. Crucially, objectification and subjectification processes operate across both secure and insecure tenancies, as security "is not a dichotomous concept" (ibid, p. 643). While not every housing tenure is equally affected by or an outcome of financialisation, certain processes operate transversally; even in ostensibly protected, non-market segments, financialisation processes ensure that market logics nevertheless take hold and residents must actively challenge objectifying forces. The dialectical nature of these dynamics means that security and insecurity are fluid rather than fixed, and are shaped by the pervasive reach of financialisation.

This distinction matters not because it demarcates zones of safety from financialisation but because it reveals financialisation's differentiated mechanisms, ranging from gradual erosion and creeping precarity in seemingly secure tenures to more direct extraction schemes – yet also more overt forms of resistance – in insecure ones. For example: (i) Tenants of non-profit housing companies experience a paradoxical mix of security and frustration: they appreciate stable tenancy, but resent poor conditions and paternalistic management; (ii) Members of collaborative housing projects gain satisfaction from creating non-commodified spaces, but they also face exhaustion from self-management and market pressures. They sustain themselves through solidarity networks, but they reluctantly accommodate rising costs; (iii) Owner-occupiers feel relieved to have secured a foothold, but they also feel guilty about gentrification and struggle to assert their rights against non-local investors in condominium associations; (iv) Tenants of small-scale landlords value personalised relationships, but live with anxiety over potential sales, maintaining cordial ties while preparing for possible disruption; (v) Those renting from strategic profit optimisers experience chronic powerlessness and cope through defensive hypervigilance and informal networks of neighbours that transform isolated frustration into collective awareness; (vi) Households affected by dramatic housing transformers confront an existential threat and respond with organised resistance, legal action, and neighbourhood-level protests that foster solidarity from shared precarity; (vii) Residents dealing with intermediaries negotiate frustration with unresponsive management alongside unexpected autonomy in neglected properties.

The analysis does not suggest a simplistic causal link whereby a certain ownership type produces a specific emotional response. Instead, we illuminate how the dialectics of objectification and subjectification unfold differently yet with profound commonalities across tenure types. While the immediate triggers vary, these disparate experiences share a deeper logic rooted in the core contradiction of financialisation: the irreconcilable tension between housing as financial asset and housing as lived home. This contradiction manifests as the simultaneous promise and denial of secure dwelling. Even secure tenures produce insecurity as residents recognise their fragile position within financialised markets, revealing how financialisation generates universal precarity. Our theoretical contribution does not merely catalogue isolated experiences, but demonstrates how this contradiction reverberates through different ownership structures, producing distinct forms and shared patterns of unwilling objectification and contested subjectification. This shared precarity and the coping strategies it engenders form a theoretical thread that links our empirical observations and highlights the pervasive objectifying force of financialisation.

## 2.2. Secure housing tenure

### 2.2.1. Non-profit housing companies

*'It is frustrating that our housing cooperative is such a small-minded penny-pincher.'*<sup>4</sup>

Non-profit housing, including the public housing company and housing cooperatives, accounts for more than one quarter of the city's housing units (approx. 85,000), many located in Connewitz. These entities aim to provide affordable and adequate housing, aligning with their welfare orientation. While they do not necessarily need to adhere to market criteria, the overall trends of public debt management and state financialisation nonetheless compel them to take on an entrepreneurial approach. As a consequence of the post-1990 restitutions, old debt assistance schemes and further debt consolidation sales to (partly international) investors, the amount of public housing gradually declined and non-profit housing companies (NPHCs) are pressured into adopting more financial management metrics for the remaining units. Following policy changes in recent years, the city now aims to build new housing and significantly expand its stock in the affordable segment by around 5000 units by the mid-2020s (Rink, 2020; Rink et al., 2022).

Non-profit housing tenants voice high satisfaction concerning their housing safety, because as opposed to tenants in the private housing market, housing-related hardships such as excessively rising rents or home losses are unlikely. Moreover, they report positive experiences with readily available maintenance services and repairs. Many are long-term residents and feel strongly rooted, thanks to the supportive, close-knit relationships with their neighbours.

However, tenants note that NPHCs are partly driven by financial imperatives due to municipal debt constraints. This becomes evident when higher rents are sought for new rentals and developments, causing residents to question whether self-imposed social standards can still be fully upheld. Furthermore, though especially cooperatives technically should guarantee member participation, tenants often do not feel that NPHCs meet their needs in decision-making processes, i.e. regarding the equipment of the facilities. Contrary, some NPHCs' top-down approach and strict rules for shared spaces feels patronising to tenants. A major dissatisfaction is the relatively poor standard of living; flats are often too small, and necessary modernisations for accessibility and energy efficiency are lacking. This yearlong neglect creates significant resentment among tenants. Given the scarcity of affordable options, tenants often express modesty, downplaying the need for high standards.

### 2.2.2. Collaborative housing projects

*'Why didn't more people do that? Because, you can really see how badly everyone is suffering...'*<sup>5</sup>

Consistent with Lang et al. (2020), collaborative housing refers to various tenures defined by collective self-organisation in controlling production, conception and management. In Leipzig, these projects often have a no-speculation rule to avoid resales and ensure long-term affordable rents. The share of collective housing projects in the housing market is marginal. However, they constitute a defining and characteristic feature in some neighbourhoods like Connewitz (Wendt, 2014).

Members express dissatisfaction with mainstream tenures and

strongly believe in the 'agency of networking and community building'.<sup>6</sup> This is united with the aspiration to de-commodify housing and create collectively and individually secure forms of housing tenure 'against this misguided housing policy'.<sup>7</sup> They exhibit high levels of satisfaction related to the empowering experience upon successful project implementation, the sensation of living in an 'extended family',<sup>8</sup> and the feeling of security in daily life that liberates residents from financial concerns and fears of social isolation.

However, establishing and stabilising these projects can be challenging. Projects often fail due to personal and financial issues, like unsuccessful negotiations, private investor competition, high prices, and tougher mortgage terms for collectives. Additionally, there is always a certain compulsion to operate according to market-based logics: high purchase and construction costs often require higher member rents. Those experiences discourage enormously, as residents willing to commit to non-marketised forms of tenure doubt whether they still have 'any agency left at all'.<sup>9</sup> To balance market pressures and support insolvent members, projects adopt solidarity-based rent payments, yet financial challenges still cause discomfort. Thus, even seemingly de-commodified spaces ultimately cannot fully evade the logics of wealth-driven financialisation. In successful projects, the intense workload of the founding phase often strains relationships and friendships. The collective negotiation of decisions in self-governed housing projects may generate frustration and insecurity, as members usually lack previous experience. While there are local counselling services helping to navigate the process step-by-step, the workload to establish projects deters many from even trying.

### 2.2.3. Owner-occupiers

*'We always have problems asserting our rights against non-local investors.'*<sup>10</sup>

Despite incentives for ownership, owner-occupiers are few in Leipzig (12%) and fewer in Connewitz (7%), mainly in suburban single-family homes (Trautvetter & Knechtel, 2023: 30). Leipzig's population decline in the 1990s and early 2000s, leading to low property prices, enabled several single-family home projects in the neighbourhood. Eventually, also some tenants purchased the flat they inhabit. These owner-occupiers feel fortunate, having gained material independence, wealth, retirement security and future stability.

While many consider buying property, inexperience, high risks, low incomes, and rising prices often present significant barriers. Being effectively excluded from ownership as a consequence of wealth-driven financialisation constitutes therefore the foundation of upset and despair. This also relates to the reluctance to finance others' property with their rent payments, which is why ownership is experienced as a process of liberation. Property acquisition often reflects a long-term commitment to a neighbourhood: owner-occupiers in Leipzig-Connewitz are typically drawn to its alternative, leftist character.

Owner-occupiers are, however, critically aware of their role in housing market changes, uneasy that their purchases might contribute to price hikes, rent increases, and displacement. Even long-term owner-occupiers retrospectively reflect upon their role in urban transformation. This is because they also experience the ongoing densification of the neighbourhood and the concomitant influx of new financial actors and developers as a loss of place, space and socio-cultural

<sup>4</sup> In this section, all mentioned citations reflect our empirical analysis. This quote is from interview #56, female resident aged 54 years, living in a flat rented from a housing cooperative (Lipsia).

<sup>5</sup> This quote is from interview #62, two female residents aged 31 and 32, living in a self-founded collaborative housing project (ZusammenLeben eG).

<sup>6</sup> This quote is from interview #64, female resident aged 28, living in a flat rented from a local property management company (Hildebrand und Partner).

<sup>7</sup> This quote is from interview #22, female resident aged 32, living in a flat rented from a non-local private landlord.

<sup>8</sup> This quote is from interview #62 (see above).

<sup>9</sup> This quote is from interview #22 (see above).

<sup>10</sup> This quote is from interview #52, female resident and owner-occupier aged 51.

diversity. This corresponds to very different logics than those observed in contexts such as Australia, where owner-occupiers emerge as financialised ‘investor-activists’ who seek to influence urban and planning policies against densification, but primarily from the calculus of preserving the ongoing profitability of their own assets rather than necessarily safeguarding the social value of the neighbourhood (Cook & Ruming, 2021).

Living in condominium associations poses challenges for owner-occupiers, particularly in asserting their rights against non-local private investors regarding maintenance and shared space investments. This includes complying with rules set by housing management companies on behalf of the condominium association, such as regulations restricting neighbourhood gatherings. Confronting these problems, requires a lot of persistence. In this sense, even owner-occupiers who formally possess assets are not entirely liberated from the logics and constraints of financialisation, having to contend with the consequences of profit-driven buy-to-let investments which frequently entail neglected, cost-minimising maintenance that runs counter to residents’ needs and desires.

#### 2.2.4. Small-scale landlords

*‘Personally, I can’t complain. However, I do not know if there will be drastic changes in my house at some point, too. You never know.’<sup>11</sup>*

In line with the general ownership structures in East Germany (Holm & Bernt, 2021), most housing rented out by individuals is owned by private, domestic, non-local, small-scale investors. Very few of these owners live in Leipzig and its metropolitan region (Trautvetter & Knechtel, 2023).

Domestic small-scale landlords chiefly focus on long-term value preservation instead of short-term profit. Often emotionally attached to their properties, especially if inherited, these owners typically manage them personally, organising maintenance and refurbishment themselves. Many landlords prioritise good relations and show empathy towards their tenants: some are more tolerant with financial and personal hardships, which is a great source of relief for tenants. Tenants believe domestic landlords are more attuned to dissatisfaction and local issues; they have more ‘skin in the game’<sup>12</sup> and worry more about bad publicity. Therefore, resident satisfaction, concerning housing standards, rents, contractual stability, maintenance, and availability, is high.

Nevertheless, daily life can be ambiguous. While neighbour relations are often friendly, with landlords sometimes involving tenants facility decisions, landlords living in the same building may produce a diffuse sense of unease, as tenants feel more monitored. However, tenants worry more about housing security, as landlords might sell their property or use it for family needs. With few affordable options available, tenants fear tenure disruptions due to ownership changes. This makes them experience their safe tenure as something fragile. This anxiety reflects residents’ awareness of prevailing market conditions, which offer landlords strong incentives to realign their housing management more profitably with the logics of financialisation.

<sup>11</sup> This quote is from interview #34, female resident aged 53 living in a flat rented from a private landlord.

<sup>12</sup> This quote is from interview #9, female resident aged 55, living in a flat rented from a private landlord, after having lost her former home due to modernisation measures and concomitant rent increases.

### 2.3. Insecure housing tenure

#### 2.3.1. Strategic profit optimisers

*‘You always have to call the hotline. They make the system so opaque that you do not even know where to call and then prefer to pay at some point. That just makes you feel uneasy, insecure.’<sup>13</sup>*

Strategic profit optimisers (SPO) represent the most emblematic form of financialised rental housing provision and refer to the growing sector of stock-listed housing companies, private equity, and other institutional investors that comprise approximately 15% of Leipzig’s housing stock and whose significance has rapidly increased in recent years. Emerging mainly from public housing privatisation, SPOs focus on long-term investments and various strategies to maximise returns, i.e. rental increases; capturing social transfer; automatization and optimisation of finance, tax burden, and housing management; territorial expansion; insourcing of services (Metzger, 2020; Wijburg et al., 2018).

For tenants, this often means facing unnecessary surcharges, like for cable TV, used to justify rent adjustments. The associated demands and notifications are often incomprehensible and non-transparent. This seems deliberate, as tenants often ‘prefer to pay at some point’<sup>14</sup> to avoid spending time and resources trying to sort every detail out. Moreover, property management often involves outsourced, hard-to-reach hotlines. The opacity of SPOs and the lack of trustworthy caseworkers creates uneasiness and insecurity. This is also because the housing management of SPOs is contradictory and seems to be focused on maintaining a clean, sterile image instead of hearing tenants’ needs: SPOs tend to conduct only superficial, cost-cutting refurbishments and maintenance, while restricting residents’ use of shared spaces. Tenants experience this as an annoying incongruence and feel illegitimately limited.

This produces varying coping strategies. Annoyance and frustration with SPOs often lead to unconnected residents bonding, potentially enhancing well-being. In some cases, neighbours coordinate their strategies, i.e. in email/WhatsApp groups etc. However, this does not translate into collective resistance. As long as no dramatic housing transformations occur, many residents prefer ‘letting sleeping dogs lie’.<sup>15</sup> Making too much noise, they argue, could even trigger more adverse conditions. However, this is only partly reassuring. Not knowing SPOs’ long-term plans makes tenants feel ‘on a springboard’,<sup>16</sup> fearing displacement for years. In this sense, the non-transparency, exigencies and constraints inherent to long-term financialised investment and management strategies generate permanent discomfort and uncertainty in everyday life.

#### 2.4. Dramatic housing transformers

*‘You can’t sleep anymore, you can’t eat anymore, and you’re constantly online because you’re afraid that you might miss out on a good apartment.’<sup>17</sup>*

Dramatic Housing Transformers (DHT) embody financialisation’s most aggressive value extraction strategies and cause significant upheaval in neighbourhoods. The category comprises the construction of

<sup>13</sup> This quote is from interview #63, female resident aged 26, living in a flat rented from a stock-listed housing company (Adler Group SA).

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> This quote is from interview #53, two female residents aged 24 and 25 living in a flat rented from a stock-listed housing company (Deutsche Wohnen SE).

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> This quote is from interview #42, female resident aged 41, living in a flat rented by a housing cooperative (WBG Kontakt) after having lost their former home due to apartment sale.

build-to-let and buy-to-let models but also the sale of rental apartments and entire buildings either to high-income owner-occupiers or to large real estate companies (Aalbers et al., 2021; Brill & Özogul, 2021; Nethercote, 2020). Driving players are capital investors, private landlords, private real estate companies and project developers. Financial market players are increasingly dominating project development, as rising construction and land costs make funding difficult for smaller entities.

Leipzig-Connewitz has seen significant construction-led densification, adding over 1100 apartments to the market since 2015. The resulting construction-related noise exposure results in higher stress in everyday life. Completed projects lead to sadness over lost urban spaces and alienation, as the new high-priced luxury apartments make residents feel 'out of place'.<sup>18</sup> Particularly dramatic, however, are rising housing and apartment sales and concomitant changes in ownership. These changes have the potential to trigger displacement and cause great upheaval for tenants, leaving them feeling helpless and confronted with profound existential concerns. New owners often apply rent-maximising management strategies against the remaining residents; for instance, when modernisation provokes unnerving construction noises and is then used to justify considerable rent increases pushing long-term residents out. In this sense, un-homing is not an unfortunate side-effect but essential for realising returns in this most aggressive form of financialisation.

In this regard, the severity of housing transformation evokes strong desires to voice one's dissent. Especially flat viewing arouses anger, as tenants find it offensive that potential buyers act 'f...ing friendly'<sup>19</sup> when speaking with households they potentially directly displace. Purchase choices appear 'imprudent',<sup>20</sup> 'as if buying a bread'<sup>21</sup> and inconsiderate to the fates of households, which may create emotionally charged encounters. The shared threat of housing transformation spurs neighbours to organise and coordinate. Such resistance involves, for instance, exhausting legal proceedings with the (new) owners and neighbourhood-level protests, but also more creative forms like solidarity-based rent payments, or supporting the nesting of protected birds to prevent modernisation. Interestingly, it is collective resistance that brings neighbours closer to each other, triggering cohesion that compensates to some extent for the burdensome housing struggles.

Eventually, many resign, overwhelmed by the persistent demands of housing struggles and the daunting nature of litigation, likened to 'tilting at windmills'.<sup>22</sup> In that regard, residents question the fairness of law and presume a strong bias of the legal system in favour of owners. Resignation works in two dimensions: In some cases, residents arrange with their new housing situation by constructing a narrative that they are still somewhat better off than other tenants. In other cases, residents prefer to move out because they do not feel psychologically strong enough to continue struggling. As a result, social ties may break and neighbourhood care structures may collapse. Meanwhile, the displaced residents carry a considerable emotional strain, feel permanently insecure, heteronomous and without agency.

#### 2.4.1. Intermediaries

*"The house has its own property management, but each apartment belongs to a different landlord. That was completely suspicious to me. I did not know that at all."*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> This quote is from interview #70, male and female resident aged 51 and 47, living in a flat rented from a non-local private landlord.

<sup>19</sup> This quote is from interview #42 (see above).

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> This quote is from interview #7 (see above).

<sup>23</sup> This quote is from interview #4, female and male resident aged 51 and 55, living in a flat rented from a non-local private landlord.

Following ownership structures in East Germany (Holm & Bernt, 2021), non-local private and institutional investors dominate Leipzig's pre-1918 housing sector (Rink & Schlotte, 2016). As apartments usually belong to different investors, condominium associations are the norm. Non-local owners often outsource management, maintenance and rental operations to local property management firms. Thus, property managers, which are professionals that do not require any formal qualification to operate, assume a key role as intermediaries between owners and residents, or as middlemen between transregional financial capital and local housing markets (Stirling & Gallent, 2023).

This often leads to imbalance, resulting in unresponsive or poor property management and sometimes even abuse. Tenants and owner-occupiers feel that intermediaries, acting for mostly non-local owners, overlook local needs and concerns. In doing so, intermediaries operationalise the logics of profitable, return-oriented housing management driven by wealth-driven financialisation on behalf of a fragmented ownership structure. This also concerns information flows: tenants are often unaware of who owns their house. In some cases, the anonymity of owners also creates anonymity among neighbours. The sense of lacking this overview makes people uneasy. Additionally, poor management often means neglected maintenance, repairs, overall low housing standards. Disproportionately, though, rental contracts are sometimes 'adhesion contracts'<sup>24</sup> and tied to additional conditions and undue obligations concerning the use of the flat and the shared spaces. Often lacking the possibility of better housing offers, tenants then do not feel treated as equal contractual partners and experience a sense of heteronomy.

Yet this produces not only dissent and annoyance. Many residents appreciate minimal contact with owners. Often, intermediaries do not monitor shared spaces, sometimes even allowing or paying tenants for repairs and maintenance. While this is again emblematic for the unresponsive cost-saving management strategy, residents also find pleasure in adopting measures of self-sufficiency and autonomy when maintaining the house. However, this is also due to a lack of alternatives: residents are aware that they would not find a comparably sized apartment at current market prices. Thus, some feel privileged despite precarious housing conditions, and mentally accommodate insecurity accordingly (Power, 2023).

#### 2.5. How asset-poor residents cope with financialisation

The typology of asset owners reveals the diverse ways in which people with different housing tenures experience and express emotional hardships. Using the dialectics of *unwilling objectification* and *contested subjectification*, our findings provide valuable insights into residents' lived experiences of financialisation, and how they cope with ownership structure, changes to the built environment, and different housing management strategies. The conceptual lens illustrates that agency under financialisation is never straightforward, but is always constrained, negotiated and contested. Furthermore, dialectically, objectification and subjectification do not follow a linear sequence, rather intersect and coexist in daily life. Neither process is ever complete, just as financialisation itself is partial, variegated and non-monolithic (Aalbers, 2017; Luo et al., 2024). Spelling this out, in this section, we demonstrate how these dynamics manifest across different housing tenures in detail.

*Unwilling objectification* illustrates how financialisation restricts the agency of asset-poor households. Although residents are *unwilling* to submit to these forces, they often feel powerless and paralysed, which can stifle any active expression of dissent. This sense of helplessness has multiple causes: Opaque ownership structures and managerial anonymity hinder personal connections and weaken neighbourly ties, while neglect of maintenance and top-down enforcement of rules generate

<sup>24</sup> This quote is from interview #64 (see above).

frustration. Additional charges and sudden demands also exacerbate feelings of insecurity. In such settings, residents are treated less as equal human beings and more as instruments for rent extraction. While many perceive this as unjust, they often find collective action difficult or futile. It is often not aggressive refurbishments, but rather subtle, non-transparent management strategies that create a pervasive sense of threat and displacement anxiety, producing a disciplining effect. Many residents therefore adopt a 'let sleeping dogs lie' attitude until change becomes unavoidable. Changes to the built environment can further compound this, triggering dislocation, anxiety, stress, and feelings of alienation (Atkinson, 2015; Butcher & Dickens, 2016; Watt, 2023). Residents may feel excluded from the social fabric of the neighbourhood. Thus, unwilling objectification operates beyond the scale of the home itself and extends through the wider chain of real estate development. Crucially, it is the combination of limited affordable alternatives and the spread of high-end developments that prevents residents from moving or resisting openly, thereby generating a sense of partial satisfaction with tenancies that remain governed by financial logic.

Even residents in relatively secure and affordable tenancies can experience this tension. For instance, individuals renting from small-scale landlords often perceive their tenancy as fragile due to their awareness of broader market pressures. In this sense, objectification can affect even secure housing situations. Across private, collective, and public ownership models, market criteria increasingly dictate management in order to meet financing needs. Moreover, despite nominal asset ownership, non-financialised actors may remain asset-poor due to external financial constraints that limit their autonomy. For instance, owner-occupiers in condominium associations may find that non-local investors restrict their choices. In short, financialisation creates material and cognitive barriers across all tenures.

*Contested subjectification* emerges when residents reclaim agency and challenge objectification. Materially, this may involve pursuing security and autonomy through collaborative housing projects and owner-occupation. Socially, acts of resistance, negotiations and strategic dissent often arise when residents feel directly threatened, particularly by landlords who aggressively transform housing stock. When facing existential risk, residents move beyond passive resignation and actively express their opposition. Meaningful, trust-based social relations become vital in this context: neighbourly networks and self-organisation help counter alienation and strengthen subjectivity. Indeed, non-fragmented social ties and collective action provide residents with a sense of security and the capacity to act.

Reclaiming their sense of self through social relations and collective organisation can temporarily offset the objectifying forces of financialisation. Yet, this self-constitution remains unstable and vulnerable to reversal. Neighbourhood ties may fragment if households, after exhausting legal battles, decide to leave (Gehriger, 2024). Others may settle for individual arrangements that reduce the impetus for collective dissent. In the absence of hope for broader political solutions, some reinterpret neglect as an opportunity for self-sufficiency or precarious tenure as a privilege. Such strategies – 'putting lipstick on a pig' – can temporarily pacify households but also illustrate the active effort required to maintain a sense of agency in unfavourable conditions. In other words, financialisation is never simply imposed; it is constantly negotiated.

## 2.6. Final reflections and delimitations

This research examined a largely under-researched aspect of housing financialisation: the socio-emotional repercussions of financialisation at the household level, which are shaped by various asset ownership and management strategies. Based on extensive qualitative research conducted in Leipzig, Germany, we developed a typology identifying seven distinct tenure situations, each reflecting different forms of asset ownership and associated management principles. By linking these to residents' emotional responses and coping mechanisms, we expanded on

Fields' (2017a) notion of unwillingness by introducing the dialectics of *unwilling objectification* and *contested subjectification*. Using this approach, we demonstrate how the wealth-driven model of financialisation gives rise to various forms of discontent among households lacking assets, with differences in tenure being a key factor, but with common structural constraints forming the underlying basis.

Nevertheless, important questions remain. Firstly, whilst the concept of contested subjectification highlights the fragmented nature of financialisation, the longevity of housing struggles and the potential for local de-financialisation remain uncertain (Wijburg, 2021). Given the multi-scalar policy entanglements of housing financialisation, the transformative potential of local initiatives and campaigns remains constrained (Aalbers, 2017). Future research should identify the conditions that sustain resistance, connect housing movements across neighbourhoods, and enhance residents' self-determination.

Secondly, comparative research is needed on the socio-emotional impacts of wealth-driven financialisation. While our case study reflects Leipzig's unique context, the coping strategies we identified resonate more broadly. Their wider relevance is due to the intertwined dynamics of build-to-rent financialisation, urban property inflation, and fragmented ownership structures, which are also evident in other cities (Büdenbender & Aalbers, 2019; Nethercote, 2020; Orr et al., 2023; St-Hilaire et al., 2024). Moreover, the variegated pathways through which financialisation bypasses debt-driven dynamics in contexts such as China (Wu et al., 2020), Singapore (Chua, 2015) or Cuba (Wijburg, 2023) raise the question of how the dialectics of unwilling objectification and contested subjectification unfold differently outside the advanced capitalist economies. Comparative work could test these 'common trajectories' and sharpen our understanding of local variations within global patterns (Aalbers, 2022).

Thirdly, while our analysis focused on households as micro-level sites where the socio-spatial impacts of financialisation unfold (Bobek et al., 2023), future research should examine how the dialectics of objectification and subjectification operate across organisational and individual scales, and among urban residents more broadly.

Finally, our findings emphasise that the socio-emotional impacts of construction-led densification and transformations to the built environment, influenced by experiences of unwilling objectification and contested subjectification, have an impact that extends well beyond the home. While our analysis could only touch on these multi-scalar linkages, future research should explore in greater depth how wealth-driven financialisation shapes emotions, perceptions and coping strategies at neighbourhood and city-wide levels. By placing everyday coping strategies and agency at the centre of debates on financialisation, this study emphasises the importance of understanding how residents navigate, resist, and reconfigure the structural constraints of contemporary urban housing markets.

## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Dennis Hof:** Writing – original draft, Validation, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Michael Janoschka:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization.

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## Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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