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„Vienna's private housing market. An explorative qualitative case study on the impacts of increasing housing costs on the quality of life.“

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1. Vienna in the context of tightening urban housing markets: Introduction

1.1 Initial observations on the topic

In current society, social inequality in many cities around the world is getting intensified (Musterd *et al.*, 2017, pp. 1062–1063). One main reason for this intensification consists in the continuously rising costs for housing in cities, resulting in a general housing affordability crisis in cities around the world (Wetzstein, 2017). The tightening situation on urban housing markets is *inter alia* caused by privatization of housing, what is a component of the neoliberal ideology (Gilles and Morel Journel, 2017, pp. 1–2). In addition, economic competition is intensifying on a global scale, what also affects housing markets (Beswick, Imilan and Olivera, 2019, p. 289). One outcome of the trend towards increasing housing prices in cities may be the emergence of residential segregation, as it gets harder for less well-off societal groups to afford adequate housing in attractive urban locations (Musterd *et al.*, 2017, p. 1064). Furthermore, housing space in cities gets scarcer as a result of the worldwide ongoing process of urbanisation (van Doorn, Arnold and Rapoport, 2019, p. 3). This increasing scarcity sharpens the decline in housing affordability both generally and in individual cases. If individual housing affordability is declining on a large scale, the emergence of negative impacts on the quality of life of the people affected gets more likely. Important to consider here is that individual housing affordability predominantly depends on integration into the labour market. From the global financial crisis in 2008 ongoing, the overall situation even got worse (Berry, 2014, pp. 1–2). The financial crisis analogically has led to a critical reflexion of the neoliberal ideology though, with a corresponding cultivation of a selection of urban policies to be defined as post-neoliberal. Nevertheless, privatization as a neoliberal component is still noticeable in contemporary cities.

The global developments concerning urban housing markets outlined in the introductory paragraph are also true for the Vienna. When strolling through Vienna's inner city nowadays, one can notice several construction projects that are aimed at providing apartments being advertised as "Anlegerwohnungen" (investor's apartments). Investor's apartments mainly belonging to the luxury category are built by private construction companies for the target group of wealthy people. Such luxury projects foster the revaluation of the corresponding city parts with a corresponding rise in the general tenure level (Belina, 2017, p. 36). Furthermore, the abovementioned problem of scarcity is aggravating even more through such projects, since space of such category gets provided mainly for the small economic upper classes. In the case of Vienna, the extents of these developments are limited, because Viennese housing policy has traditionally been understood as a public affair by the city government for nearly one century (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021, p. 78). Hence it is oriented towards welfare policies in an extraordinarily

intense way. Such types of policy aim at enhancing the broadest access possible to social housing in Vienna still until today.

1.2 Aim of the Master's Thesis with research question and sub-questions

The aim of this Master's Thesis consists in conducting a qualitative case-study with explorative character in the research field of increasing costs on urban housing markets. The target group shall be people who have a new dwelling on the private rental housing sector of Vienna. Such a new housing situation can either be caused through recent re-moving within the city or initial installation of a place of residence in Vienna because of coming in from a place outside. A new housing situation concerning the temporal aspect shall be defined rather broadly and can potentially consist of a timespan of several years. The reason for laying the focus on this group of people consists in the fact that especially people with a new housing situation are likely to be affected by unfavourable conditions on the private sector like limited contracts or higher tenure levels (Mundt, 2018, p. 17). The central relationship that I seek to do my research on are the impacts of the rising housing costs on the target group's quality of life. Due to the fundamental role that access to the labour market plays for peoples' financial situation and therefore to their individual affordability of different types of housing, this area of life shall be additionally considered.

The Master's Thesis is being taken out in the context of the housing-section of the academic project "Vienna in Transition. (Dis-)Continuities of Urban Change in a European City" (hereafter abbreviated with "VieTra" throughout the entire text). The dimension of labour market-integration also included in the Thesis forms another major area of research in the VieTra-project. The empirical part shall be carried out with inhabitants that are faced with a new housing situation on the privately tenured Viennese housing sector according to the temporal conditions outlined above. Concerning parts of the city to be integrated into the case study, parts shall be taken throughout the entire city in order to approaching a cross section throughout Vienna. One important city part to be included is the Sonnwendviertel, which offers an example of an outlook on future forms of urban living. It is located in the south of the main railway station in the 10th district. Through small-scale-planning, the Sonnwendviertel had been conceptualized as a city part of short ways, which makes it possible to perform a wide range of activities of everyday living in the nearby area (GB Stern, 2021a). Sustainable mobility is also being stimulated in the quarter, as inhabitants are able to do many ways going by foot or on bicycle (GB Stern, 2021b). Such concepts shall ensure the emergence of some high quality of life for the residents. In addition, there are offers from the institution of the "Gebietsbetreuung

Stadterneuerung” (GB*Stern) for newly moved-in people that shall support them in the process of getting included into the affairs of daily living.

The research question that follows out of the observations and thoughts mentioned so far is the following:

What impacts do rising rental prices in the private housing sector have in Vienna, in particular on the quality of life of people who have a new housing situation in that segment?

This main research question is supplemented by two sub-questions:

- a) How is the housing situation of such people connected to their type of labour market-integration?
- b) What role do the specificities of the Viennese housing market play here and how accessible are special types of dwelling?

Another latent aim of the Thesis consists in the critical reflection on and the stimulation of awareness towards the problem of social outcomes caused by declining urban housing affordability.

1.3 Sociological relevance of the topic

The investigation on the impacts that declining housing affordability has on people’s quality of life shall offer a contribution to the current academic research-stock dedicated to tightening urban housing markets. By taking the example-city Vienna with its special housing policies which include the Sonnwendviertel as a new innovatively conceptualized city part, also possible mitigation strategies against current societal challenges in cities are a part of the Thesis. The aspects of mitigation strategies and future urban living are important to consider, as it can be assumed that the situation will further intensify itself in the future due to the ongoing economic competition and urbanization taking place on a global scale (UN-Habitat, 2022, p. xv).

When considering these phenomena, it becomes evident that investigation in this research area is of high relevance for sociology. It is important to pursue sociological understanding of the dynamics behind rising social inequality in cities. Such understanding could provide a basis for developing strategies to avoid segregation because of declining housing affordability, maybe resulting in high variations in quality of life. Potential diversity in quality of life concentrated in small urban areas may results in polarization and turmoil between groups of different economic situations (Novy, Swiatek and Moulaert, 2012, pp. 1878–1879).

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The Thesis will be kicked off with a chapter on the theoretical items used. This chapter is introduced with a spatial sociological foundation, as cities are inherently spatial entities. The

overall foundation will be followed by outlines on important phenomena that shape urban housing markets, before proceeding to outlines on housing affordability. These outlines will also include a section on the relevance of the labour market-situation out of a biographical perspective. The next theoretical part to be elaborated is quality of life in the context of individual housing affordability. The theoretical items will be condensed into an analytical framework in a final part of this chapter, before a chapter on the specificities of Vienna will follow. Afterwards, I will outline the methodological approach used prior to the presentation of central results gained from the interviews. In the discussion, the results get re-connected to the analytical framework. In the conclusion, I am going to approach the research question and to give an outlook on further research needed in this vast field of research.

2. Tightening urban housing markets and quality of life: Theoretical frame

In this first chapter, I seek to develop the theoretical frame of the Master's Thesis. The basis is formed by spatial sociological thoughts that aim at defining the approach to space used in the Thesis. Building on this, I elaborate on both the circumstances behind rising housing costs and on the topic of housing affordability. In the latter part, also the relevance of the labour market situation in a biographical perspective will be considered. An elaboration on quality of life bearing individual housing affordability in mind will be connected here. A condensation of the items into an analytical framework to be used for the analysis of the results will form the end of the chapter.

2.1 Spatial sociological postulate: Space as a relational entity

As cities are spatial phenomena in which societal relations of power are reflected, it is important to set a **spatial sociological concept** at the beginning of the outlines. A basic postulate of spatial sociology developed by German sociologist Martina Löw says that space needs to be understood as a product emerging out of the relational arrangements of living beings and material goods at places (Löw, 2001, p. 154). This approach to space does not take the existence of space for granted, like as some form of container that has already existed for all time and needs to be filled with entities. Instead, it understands space as a product of relations which themselves emerge out of continuous interactions between living as well as material entities. Such interactions reflect relations of power between the people concerned, like e.g. in the material appearance of a city. This appearance has been defined as urban morphology by classic Henri Lefebvre (1996, p. 103). The manifestation of power-relations is true both for the emergence of newly built facilities within a city and for the impacts that the existing environment has on the inhabitants affected. For the first topic, one can e.g. wonder oneself which actors have the power to influence construction activities in specific parts of a city and which target group(s) potential constructive interventions at stake are supposed to serve. In this context, a city can be understood as a "projection of society on the ground" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 109), whose fundamental basis is thought and hence materially reflects the current ideological state of society (Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 114–115; Harvey, 2008). In the case of capitalist urbanism, a city gets subordinated under the logic of exchange value instead of that of the use value in order to maximize profit (Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 67–68). The issue of who is in charge to shape urban environments also includes the critical question of which societal members are getting excluded through specific types of constructive interventions. When thinking of spatial manifestations of power-relations, one also needs to consider the potential social outcomes produced by already existing material manifestations. One such manifestation for example consists in the predominance of privately

tenured luxury apartments instead of housing dedicated to the social sector. Hence, the built environment's structure not only gets determined and re-formed by societal currents all the time, but also has recursive effects on the quality of life of people who move in it.

The **temporal aspect** is included both in the definition of Martina Löw as well as in the outlines on the alterations of the urban morphology. Its relevance in the study of urban shapes has remained quite under-acknowledged in research until recently though (Frehse, 2017, pp. 513–514). This fact needs to be seen critically, since space and time are inevitably entangled with each other. So, space not only is constituted through the beforementioned arrangements, but is also being altered continuously over time. Fluctuations in societal and political arrangements might get relevant when thinking of people who are forced to relocate themselves in a city due to rising housing costs in their area of living. Trends concerning housing affordability both in general and individual terms therefore shape the concrete location where people can live and with it the individual quality of life to achieve.

Throughout the entire Thesis, this postulate shall form a theoretical background for the topics of rising housing costs in cities and quality of life. In the discussion, there will be a reflection on the postulate included based on the empirical findings. Following this foundation, I am now going to elaborate the theoretical items dealing with rising housing costs in cities. These include parts on general societal developments responsible for the problem as well as on contextual dimensions to consider when doing research on case examples.

2.2 Factors shaping urban housing markets in current times

In the following part, I am going to elaborate deeper on societal developments and phenomena that shape urban housing markets in current times. These are split up into general societal causes and contextual dimensions which are of importance for case-examples.

2.2.1 Societal developments responsible for rising prices of urban housing

To start with this part, there is firstly the topic of **neoliberalism** to be outlined, for which the usage of a critical perspective albeit is essential. The concept of neoliberalism can fundamentally be understood as a general paradigm based on the notion of free markets and competition that is thought of pervading all major areas of contemporary society (Springer, Birch and MacLeavy, 2016, p. 2). With reference to the economic area, neoliberalism can be interpreted as the descendant form of the liberal ideology. The basic thought of classic liberalism is the postulate that economies run at their best depending on dynamics emerging out of their mere operation (Berry, 2014, p. 2). This thought was first developed by classical economist Adam Smith in his famous book “*An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*” in

1776. Smith illustrates this logic using the symbol of the invisible hand which would steer the dynamics of the unregulated market (Smith, 2007, pp. 349-350). Based on this saying, markets should work in a completely freed way, what includes the prevention of all kinds of external interventions. Such interventions are practically mainly being performed by governmental bodies. Through such a type of economy, the most efficient operation of markets shall be realized which in theory caused the highest welfare for the maximum of the population possible (Berry, 2014, p. 2).

To outline briefly on the **logic of liberalized markets**, one important component of this logic consists in the theory of general equilibrium developed by Arrow and Debreu (1954). According to this theory, the dynamics emerging out of the myriad of individually performed economic acts would result in a pareto-optimal outcome (Arrow and Debreu, 1954, p. 265). In other words, the wealth accumulated by rich people would trickle down to the less well-off spheres of society, leading to an improvement of the latter's financial situation. This dynamic assumed to operate in theory forms the major pro-argument of neoliberals (Pinson and Morel Journel, 2017, p. 7). In practice however, it is not at all possible to implement this theory, since it is founded on unrealistic premises. These include the thought after which all human beings would act in a purely rational way and have a complete knowledge of all economic dynamics existing (Berry, 2014, p. 3). The core criterion of neoliberalism as the descendant of liberalism lies in the extension of the liberal principle from economy to other societal spheres, such as politics or even self-optimization (Storper, 2016, p. 244; Wilson, 2018, pp. 2-3).

Contemporary neoliberalism can with reference to the abovementioned general definitional approach by Springer, Birch and MacLeavy (2016, p. 2) be understood as a huge and amorphous ideological complex on how to perform and deal with affairs of everyday living. Because of this amorphism, it is crucial to develop and support a **critical perspective** towards this concept. It is an omnipresent and fuzzy paradigm consisting of a myriad of items, what has unleashed a widespread academic debate on how the term should be understood (Mudge, 2008; Brenner, Peck and Theodore, 2010a, p. 183; Venugopal, 2015). Nonetheless it is being used extensively in multiple academic contexts as well as in affairs of everyday living (Peck, Brenner and Theodore, 2018, p. 5). Examples for research fields in which neoliberalism plays a role range inter alia from sociology like here, over science and technology studies to public health studies (Cahill *et al.*, 2018, p. xxv). Due to such confusing characteristics, it is questionable whether and in which way the concept of neoliberalism is useful to being used in scientific disciplines (Venugopal, 2015, p. 165). Even more critical, one can ask what the term signifies in its essence,

as it can be interpreted as a catch all-term (Venugopal, 2015, p. 167). Given such crucial deficits, it is quite unclear to what extent it is justifiable to speak about a potential neoliberalisation of societal affairs (Venugopal, 2015).

Coming back to urban studies as the scientific field dealt with in this Thesis, there exists also a branch dedicated to the study of the **neoliberalisation of urban affairs**, including housing. Neoliberal urbanism for example got empirically evident in the commodification of Manhattan taking place during the 1980s in order to make New York attractive for tourists (Harvey, 2007a, p. 9). In the nearer past, the neoliberalisation of cities is said to have predominantly taken place from the 1970s on until the appearance of the global financial crisis (GFC) in 2008. This crisis would have contributed to a discreditation of the neoliberal ethos, with the result of a rise in post-neoliberal policies differing from case to case (Brenner, Peck and Theodore, 2010b, p. 328; Kadi, Vollmer and Stein, 2021, p. 356). Due to the abovementioned debate that is being undertaken on the usefulness of the neoliberalism-concept, it is however critically to be questioned in which way neoliberalism needs to be understood when applied to urban affairs. Questionable here is also to what kind cities are or were ever to be considered as neoliberal entities (Le Galès, 2016; Storper, 2016).

Despite the high peculiarity of the neoliberalism-concept as such and the abovementioned discussions, in contemporary cities there are nevertheless certain developments noticeable that can be ascribed to neoliberalism. This thought can be interpreted as plausible given the premise that marketization and competition form fundamental components of neoliberalism according to the definitional approach by Springer, Birch and MacLeavy (2016, p. 2). One fact that is inherently connected to the issue of marketization consists in the **privatization of affairs**, like housing as the topic at stake here. The term “private” refers to individually owned properties as well as to the individual living sphere of people. In juristic terms, it includes the corresponding right of people to purchase and own properties, which they can deal with the way they want. The fact that this right is a component inherent to neoliberalism can directly be deduced from the notion of individual liberty that is constitutive in the paradigm despite its vagueness. Privatization in the political dimension is the process of transferring public properties that have previously been managed by the elected governmental body in favour of entities acting on the free market (Kallianiotis, 2016, pp. 40-41). This also includes the transfer of the responsibility for the housing market towards private companies or investors, what is still happening in cities worldwide. So nevertheless, neoliberalism in its essence as well as relations of power that emerge out of it have manifested themselves materially in the landscape of cities at least at a minimal level. This partial privatization of housing markets has impacts on peoples’ everyday living according to

the postulate by Martina Löw (2001, p. 154) introduced before. Private actors tend to prefer constructing apartments belonging to the luxury segment, as construction costs for luxury apartments are not essentially higher than such for other types of buildings. Due to the target group of wealthy people, this housing segment although allows the realization of a higher profit margin (Belina, 2017, p. 36). In a nutshell, it can hence be said that components of the neoliberal paradigm are empirically existing, but theoretical understandings need to get critically developed and applied according to the specificities of the case-examples at stake. This is because neoliberalism must not be taken as a hegemonic single trend that dictates contemporary urban development.

Based on the observation of privatization, the **neo-marxist approach** of geographer David Harvey to neoliberalism shall form a theoretical item for embedding the later-presented empirical results. Harvey understands neoliberalism as an innovative set of rules on how to manage profit gained in a capitalist way in favour of societal elites (Harvey, 2008, p. 24). Profit is being absorbed and re-invested into speculative businesses such as the financial market by those elites instead of getting transferred into the setting-up of public infrastructure (Gilles and Morel Journel, 2017, p. 7). In addition to the shortages in public services, underprivileged groups may get actively driven out of their residential areas to produce resources that can be marketed in a capitalist way, what sharpens the situation for these people even more (Harvey, 2008, pp. 34-35). Harvey therefore interprets neoliberalisation as a political project that aims at reorganizing the conditions for capital accumulation in favour of the economic respectively urban elites as well as at conserving the latter one's societal power (Harvey, 2007b, p. 19). Urban elites in the sense of Harvey are for example wealthy investors who take over parts of a city's housing market. The role of urban governments in this matter is reduced to the affair of creating a "good business climate" (Harvey, 1989, p. 11). The fundamental logic of neo-marxist neoliberalism and the role of people's well-being there becomes overwhelmingly evident in the following Harveyan quote:

"If there is a conflict between the well being of financial institutions and the well being of the population, the government will choose the well being of the financial institutions; to hell with the well being of the population." (Harvey, 2007a, p. 8).

In the neo-marxist reading, previously publicly administrated goods that satisfy basic human needs have been turned into a commodity in the sense of Karl Marx' concept of the commodification of goods (Marx, Fowkes and Fernbach, 1981).

In connection to neoliberalism and the critical outlines made, there is the phenomenon of **globalization** to add. Due to globalization as the increasing connectivity and interdependence between geographical entities and people worldwide, economic competition between cities gets intensified as well (Egedy, Kovács and Kondor, 2017, p. 16). This strong competitiveness stimulates the emergence of polarization between cities based on their role within global economy (Sassen, 2000, p. 82). Although housing is an issue usually dealt with at the national level, such intense competitiveness has impacts on housing markets at a global scale, as political ideologies and approaches affecting housing policies are dispersed on the global scale. In addition, key actors related to the housing business like real estate-agents increasingly act on the global scale, what makes another contribution towards the globalization of the housing (Aalbers, 2015, p. 46). So, certain phenomena taking place in many places worldwide simultaneously stimulate the decline in housing affordability. Hand in hand with globalization, the process of **urbanization** respectively growth of cities worldwide is going on at an historically unprecedented level (UN-Habitat, 2022, p. xv). Such growth causes some discrepancy between offer and demand in housing space (Wetzstein, 2017, p. 3162), thus raising the overall price level.

Additionally, **exogenous developments and events** taking place at the point in time of interest with general impacts on peoples' everyday living need to be born in mind. So supplementary to space there is the temporal dimension of importance, what has already been emphasized in the introduction of the Löwian postulate. Nowadays, dominant crises which affect diverse areas of everyday living and which have impacts on the global scale are the Covid-19-pandemic, the Russian-Ukrainian war and climate change. Especially the former two crises had remarkable impacts on peoples' housing affordability and quality of life, as the Covid-pandemic was responsible for an outstandingly high unemployment rate. The Russian-Ukrainian war in addition caused a corresponding energy crisis and record inflation (Bonatti and Tamborini, 2022, p. 6) that has tightened the financial situations of people with sparse resources even more.

As can be seen, there exist several societal phenomena that are likely to affect society on a global scale, with impacts on urban housing markets and affordability. Additionally and supplementary, it is important to consider contextual dimensions of case-examples at stake, of which relevant ones will be introduced in the following sub-chapter.

2.2.2 Contextual dimensions relevant for case-examples

When conducting research on specific case-examples, it is vital to bear contextual dimensions of the geographical entity dealt with in mind supplementary to the tendencies affecting society outlined above. Therefore, I will now elaborate on the relevance of important dimensions before heading towards the concept of housing affordability.

Firstly, the role of **politics and the political framework** as the system of law-making and governing is essential, as these responsibilities of the political sphere have direct impacts on the housing law. Political ideologies are globalized nowadays, wherefore concrete political frameworks in geographic entities around the globe might share a considerable set of characteristics (Matznetter and Mundt, 2012, p. 275). An example here forms the predominance of the capitalist logic, which is also acting in case of a neoliberal urbanism in the Harveyan sense. Directly deduced from the sphere of politics can be its division into structures of **multilevel governance**. This term represents an academic concept being used in multiple scientific fields which is not unitarily definable (Benz 2021, p. 6). In the words of Arthur Benz it can be grasped as a network-like pattern of interaction among various political representatives on national and supra-national level as well as non-political actors, like non-governmental organizations or companies (Benz, 2021, p. 6). Especially the latter fact of inclusion of non-political actors into governmental structures is important, as this characteristic distinguishes it from the traditional concept of intergovernmental relations (Alcantara, Broschek and Nelles, 2016, p. 39). Every political entity owns a government which is time-limited in most cases and implements a program to be located at some point on the left and right-wing scale of political orientation. The concrete constellations of political bodies have direct effects on most of the spheres of everyday living in the geographical entity at stake, what includes also the housing-affair (Kettunen and Ruonavaara, 2021, p. 1448).

One vital affair that also politics has to deal with is the provision of welfare and social security for the community at stake at least in minimal terms (Esping-Andersen, 1990, pp. 18–19). Especially in European countries there have several **types of welfare regimes** developed themselves over the course of time, which get implemented at various governmental levels (Arbaci, 2019, p. 63). The type of welfare regime of a nation is likely to have some direct impacts on the socioeconomic situations of people as well as on their achievable housing status (Arbaci, 2019). A common classification of welfare regimes has been set up by Gøsta Esping-Andersen, who differentiates into the liberal, corporatist and social democratic type (Esping-Andersen, 1990, pp. 26-28). The liberal type can best be characterized by essentially modest welfare transfers that aim at securing the basic financial survival of low-income groups. Hence, receiving welfare support in a liberal welfare regime is likely to be interpreted as a sign of stigmatization. Typical countries following this type are inter alia the USA or Canada (Esping-Andersen, 1990, pp. 26-27). Examples for a corporatist welfare regime include several central European countries like Austria or France. The ideological foundations of corporatist welfare regimes consist in a conservative way of thinking and the appreciation of traditionalist components such as the

church or the bourgeois family model. Hence social institutions ascribed to tradition shall be conserved, like for example the male breadwinner-model (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 27) or status differences between groups of society (Matznetter and Mundt, 2012, p. 275). The social democratic type as the third one offers the most generous and innovative form. This type is ideologically founded on the virtues of universalism and decommodification of social rights. Generous redistributive transfers towards a wide range of societal strata are therefore being performed in regimes pursuing this type. The social democratic type is spread around the world the least. It is predominantly implemented in the Scandinavian countries (Esping-Andersen, 1990, pp. 27-28). In addition to Esping-Andersen's model, the scientific community assumes the existence of a familialist or Mediterranean welfare regime as a fourth type. This type emphasises on the securing function of the extended family, which would have to take over a bundle of governmental responsibilities (Matznetter and Mundt, 2012, p. 276). According to its name, it can predominantly be found in countries of Southern Europe (Matznetter and Mundt, 2012, p. 279). Apart from the mechanism of rent regulation, the type of welfare regime has considerable impacts on housing affordability (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 59).

As every political community and city has evolved over time until reaching its present state, it is vital to bear the **historical dimension** in mind as well. One common historical development that caused major changes in urban life was the de-industrialization or rather tertiarization of cities during the post-fordist-era, taking place in the 1960s and 70s (Esser and Hirsch, 1994, pp. 71–72; pp. 75-78). Contemporary London for example offers jobs almost exclusively to be located in the tertiary sector, and London is especially world-leading in financial industries (Curphey, 2019).

At the end of this sub-chapter, it is essential to keep the **uniqueness** of each city in mind, what also includes the above-mentioned historical background (Robinson, 2002, pp. 545–546). This fact means that the deduction of universal statements concerning contextual frameworks is not suitable, but that focus on the specificities of the case-example(s) dealt with is essential. Hence, the usage of a **neo-institutionalist approach** in urban research forms a common strategy nowadays. The usage of this approach can be justified since each city offers a specific conglomerate of relevant institutions and arrangements between dimensions such as the ones just introduced, shaping the lives of the people at stake (Kazepov *et al.*, 2021, pp. 118–119).

After this clarification of societal phenomena relevant for the formation of urban housing prices, there is now a part chapter on housing affordability following. It further includes a section on the labour market-theme.

2.3 Housing affordability

After the outlines on relevant phenomena and dimensions that have some influence on urban housing, there shall now the notion of housing affordability be accessed. An important mark to do here is that in this Thesis there will exclusively be talked about rental housing affordability (Kettunen and Ruonavaara, 2021, p. 1448) instead of other types of financing, like homeownership. This is because the focus in the later-presented empirical case-study is laid on the private rental sector of Vienna's housing market.

To start the outlines, it is to say that the wording of **housing affordability** stands for a considerable range of understandings wherefore it is not unitary definable in practice (Galster and Lee, 2021, p. 8). Parallel to the diversity of definitions, there are various methodological approaches available. In an economic sense, housing affordability can be interpreted as the ratio between offer and demand of housing in a geographical entity, forming the overall tenure level in it (Bieri, 2012, p. 2). Nowadays, the concrete tenure level is both shaped by the contextual framework of the entity and the societal phenomena outlined in the previous chapter.

In an **individualized way**, housing affordability refers to “the challenge each household faces in balancing the cost of its actual or potential housing, on the one hand, and its nonhousing expenditures, on the other, within the constraints of its income.” (Stone, 2006, p. 151). In the latter sense, the concept denotes the relationship between people and the issue of housing in general according to the monetary sphere (Stone, 2006, p. 153). This relationship is inherently individual and differs from household to household, since each one is embedded into its unique socio-economic conditions (Stone, 2006, p. 157; 160). Hence it is not possible to develop a generalizable or normative meaning of housing affordability in the individual sense, but the focus needs to be laid on concrete cases (Stone, 2006, p. 159). This fact can be compared to the uniqueness of cities and their political circumstances described in the previous part. Crucial here is now that households with a high income are flexible in selecting their housing situation, whereas households with lesser financial resources are likely to get forced into specific unfavourable situations indirectly (Stone, 2006, p. 159). Such unfavourable situations can be realized either in terms of an unattractive location or an unfavourable state of dwelling, or even worse, both.

Building on the problem of a potentially unattractive location, a central questionable outcome of declining housing affordability is a rising tendency towards **residential segregation** in cities. Residential segregation refers to the spatial manifestation of differences between groups of so-

ciety, whose corresponding members tend to get spatially clustered according to specific criteria. Such criteria are for example the ethnicity, a migrational background or the socioeconomic status, on which the focus is being laid here. Residential segregation according to the socioeconomic status is to understand precisely as the “uneven distribution of different occupational or income groups across residential neighbourhoods of a city or an urban region.” (Tammaru *et al.*, 2020, p. 4). Getting back to the postulate of Martina Löw with this thought in mind, power-relations have got manifested spatially in the case of residential segregation. Furthermore, residentially segregated people are likely to predominantly get in contact with people having similar socioeconomic conditions living in the corresponding city-part. This phenomenon may weakens social cohesion in the city as a whole, wherefore a city’s micro-entities like neighbourhoods frequently form the target units of political interventions aiming at promoting social mixing. The question about the optimal spatial scale for such interventions is often quite unclear (van Kempen and Bolt, 2009, p. 460).

Proceeding to approach the individuality of housing affordability more intensely now, the term can on the one hand be understood in the sense of the conventional **ratio approach**. This approach refers to the individualized ratio between housing expenses and household income (Stone, 2006, p. 153). A question dedicated to this ratio is included in the interview questionnaire used for the empirical part of this Thesis, since the ratio approach is both simply to understand and reflects peoples’ experiences of everyday living (Stone, 2006, p. 179). Apart from the pure tenure level, also operational costs like for heating in winter form a remarkable cost factor tied to housing. The aspect whether the term of housing costs reflects either the pure tenure or all housing expenses per month including operational costs will be left to the interviewees, who can ask back which costs they are supposed to talk about. So, the possible answers to the question slightly reflect the socioeconomic situation of the interviewees and their attitude towards money. This ratio approach is one of the most widely used approaches to grasp housing affordability in academia, but a major weakness of it is its lack of a solid theoretical foundation (Stone, 2006, p. 162). Important to consider in the ratio approach are changes that eventually arise either in the housing costs or household income. Such fluctuations can take place both in the positively connoted case that the housing costs get reduced or stay the same, whereas the income rises and in the negatively associated other way round. The latter case is likely to appear more often in the context of tightening urban housing markets.

Housing costs belong to the largest cost factors for most households, and housing affordability becomes an individual problem as soon as nonhousing needs cannot be met adequately after

covering all the expenses for housing (Stone, 2006, pp. 163-164). So, the **residual income approach** to housing affordability is used supplementary to the ratio one in this Thesis. The residual income approach reflects a conservative measure for a nonhousing standard of living to be attained. The residual income approach forms the theoretical basis behind interview questions dedicated to whether the interviewees would subjectively say to be able to fulfil their nonhousing needs in a satisfactory way or whether they feel burdened with their housing costs. As a common conventional estimation, it is pretended that housing forms a financial burden as soon as more than 30 percent respectively one third of a household's income needs to be used to cover for it (Stone, 2006, p. 152; Furth, 2021, p. 63). The residual income approach also acknowledges the uniqueness of each household in a better way than does the simplistic ratio approach (Stone, 2006, p. 179). Lots of households are forced to pay a higher amount of money than they can afford according to either the ratio or the residual income approach (Stone, 2006, p. 157).

Concerning individual housing affordability, the **household composition** is a dimension to consider, since both the household income and costs are influenced by it. Single-living people must cover all expenses on their own. In households consisting of more people, the costs can be divided, what is for example the case in shared flats or in the constellation of an unmarried couple. In such compositions, individuals have to cover a certain amount of the housing costs on their own. The constellation of a married couple forms another special case because the co-living partners share most of their resources with each other, like the household income on a joint bank account. In addition, they must pay for their potential children. Apart from the economic aspect, potential household compositions have impacts on the immaterial quality of life especially when thinking of Covid-19, what will be dealt with in the to-come part chapter 2.4.2. I have also considered pet animals in the household composition, since they cause costs, but can also form a central interactional resource and contribute to a high quality of life. Thinking of the ratio approach, fluctuations in the household composition need to be born in mind since they can have remarkable influence on the cost-income-ratio.

Thinking of the one third-convention concerning the cost-income-ratio, potential insecurity if a housing situation can be maintained in the future frequently goes hand in hand with simultaneous precarious conditions on the labour market (Bentley, Baker and Aitken, 2019). Such a double precarity may causes a negative inter-relational dynamic with bad impacts on the mental health of the people affected as an important component of quality of life (Bentley *et al.*, 2016). Safe and well-paid jobs form one of the most important parameters for the socioeconomic sit-

uation of individual households and for potentially affordable housing situations. Another possibility for achieving finances and dwellings consists in fortune and housing inheritance. These ways shall not at all be considered in this Thesis but would form an interesting topic for further research. Due to this crucial importance of the job-situation, the factor of integration into the labour market which the first of the two sub-research questions is dedicated to will be introduced in the following part. The relevance of the biographical aspect is being borne in mind as well.

2.3.1 Relevance of labour market integration, considering biography

As the labour market forms the central entity for economic inclusion into society, labour market integration is to be considered as the most important factor for obtaining a decent housing situation and some high quality of life. Labour market integration in its biographical context I am going to introduce therefore in this part.

To start with, there is firstly the **precarity** of the contemporary labour market to be mentioned. Such precarity goes hand in hand with potentially unbalanced cost-income-ratios and corresponding insecure housing situations (Bentley, Baker and Aitken, 2019). Characterising today's labour market, it is to say that the standard working relationship with approximately 40 hours per week established during post-war-time is not at all to be taken for granted anymore nowadays (Flecker, 2017, pp. 81–82). Precarious working relationships are inter alia ones that are of an unstable character or that do not offer stable social insurance (Flecker, 2017, p. 83). The age plays an important role in this context since there is a difference whether for example someone has been in a standard working relationship for many years or whether someone's labour market biography had already been characterized by precarious conditions before. Crucial here is that especially young cohorts are affected by precarious conditions on the labour market (Flecker, 2017, pp. 88-89). The transition of young people from education to the professional sphere is a fundamental life event in this context. The problem of precarity got sharpened even more during the last two years owed to the Covid-crisis. Because of this tendency towards precarity, having a job does not necessarily form a reliable insurance against an unsatisfactory financial situation. This phenomenon is referred to with the term “working poor” in the social sciences (Verwiebe and Fritsch, 2011).

A situation even worse than precarious labour market conditions is unemployment. To refer to part 2.2.2, it is to say that governmental bodies in a limited way hold the responsibility to both prevent the emergence of and to mitigate the effects caused by unemployment. This is done by offering means targeted at supporting unemployed people the best way possible both financially and concerning fast re-integration into the labour market. The concrete form of such supportive

offers depends to a considerable extent on the type of welfare regime. Since the Austrian welfare regime belongs to the corporatist section in the classification after Esping-Andersen (1990, p. 27), the virtue of self-responsibility forms a fundamental norm. Hence the offers of Austrian institutions aim at activating unemployed peoples' sense for self-responsibility on a latent level through the offer of help to stimulate self-help. When thinking of today's high precarity, developing coping strategies in a self-responsible manner can be considered a vital ability.

The chances a person has on this contemporary labour market now are highly determined by the labour market biography as well as the educational level and education acquired throughout the person's lifetime. This is true both for the type of job in terms of activities to be done and the wage one can earn. In this context, there is now the uniqueness of each biography to be considered, with unique careers both in educational and job terms. The overall situation that one faces on the workplace daily furthermore forms a major component of individual quality of life. The workplace situation includes components such as the type of job or the kind of social contacts available at work. Additionally, the corresponding labelled societal status of a person depends majorly on the job situation and the wage earned. Connected to this issue, there are the habitus and dispositions that are likely to be developed in a specific social milieu to be mentioned. Here, it can be referred to Pierre Bourdieu's famous research on habitus and distinction. In the Bourdieuan approach, the position on the labour market plays an essential role in what kind of preferences are likely to arise in a person over the course of life (Bourdieu, 2002). Together with such preferences, a person develops individual imaginaries about the ideal housing situation and quality of life, which are by themselves influenced by experiences made in the past. This will further be outlined in the next sub-chapter dedicated to quality of life.

Apart from biographical aspects, the actual phase of life including typical life events arising have impacts on the type of labour market integration or at least on the number of working hours that can be taken. A classic example to mention here is baby care that is majorly being taken over by women. In household compositions consisting of a couple with children, part-time-labour is performed predominantly by women, what is *inter alia* caused by traditional family models like the male breadwinner model. According to Caroline Berghammer (2014), this model can be interpreted as modernized in a constellation where the man is working full-time and the woman is working part-time (Berghammer, 2014, p. 617). The problem of the gender-pay-gap is important to bear in mind here. The totality of gender-specific factors affect especially the financial situations of single-living women or, even more intensely, lone mothers.

The following sub-chapter is dedicated to the different dimensions of quality of life, considering the context of individual housing affordability. Quality of life forms the most important topic influenced by rising housing costs in cities that shall be laid the focus on in this Thesis.

2.4 Quality of life in the context of individual housing affordability

The topic of quality of life shall now be elaborated on in the context of individual housing affordability as an item of the analytical framework, into which the later presented results will be embedded.

2.4.1 Working definition of quality of life

Quality of life is a term extensively used both in everyday language and the scientific sphere. Like various terms introduced before, it is amorphous and being researched on in science using multiple methodologies (Heng Tsai Tan, 2022, pp. 4–5). The concept is underrepresented in the social sciences and it is not precisely defined in a sociological sense. This lack in representation is surprising when thinking of its high relevance in current society due to the increasing incalculability of today's world. The lack of a precise definition as well as a stable theoretical foundation has already been criticized by Abbott L. Ferriss in his 2004 review on the by-then state of the concept in sociology (Ferriss, 2004). Ferriss claims that quality of life frequently appears as a taken-for-granted concept (Ferriss, 2004, p. 42). This usage is quite irritating for sociology, in which it is essential to critically question everything that is being dealt with. Moreover, it is often reduced to social indicators within the quantitative branch of the social sciences.

A common indicator that shall form the basis for defining quality of life in the frame of this Thesis is the Human Development Index (HDI). This index aims at reflecting the overall quality of life of a political entity's population, here nation states. It is based on the following definition of human development provided by the United Nations in 1990:

“Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical of these wide-ranging choices are to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living.” (United Nations, 1990, p. 1).

The HDI is composed of the three dimensions of health, education, and well-being. These dimensions shall be reflected through the following three corresponding single indicators:

- life expectancy at birth
- expected years of schooling respectively the average number of years of schooling
- gross national income per capita (Heng Tsai Tan, 2022, p. 9).

This reduction to single indicators has been criticized from the HDI's development in 1990 on. It is further questionable to what extent the HDI as a measure for quality of life is still suitable

for today's world of high unpredictability (Heng Tsai Tan, 2022, pp. 7-10). In addition, the HDI exclusively refers to the overall well-being of a community, what includes no reflections about the quality of life of individuals or small communities. Given these deficits, the concept of human development has frequently been revised until today, in order to enrich it with parameters that have gained relevance over the course of time. For example, sustainable development is one of the main aims to pursue in today's time of climate change and energy crisis. This major aim has been structured down by the United Nations into the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be reached by 2030 (United Nations, 2022).

Despite its massive limitations, the above-quoted definition covers several aspects of quality of life that in a wider sense are relevant for living in urban environment. This fact forms the justification of its usage in this Thesis. These aspects of quality of life include inter alia a long and healthy life or a decent standard of living. The latter component I want to define here with reference to Stone (2006, p. 160) as a standard of living where at least all basic human needs are fulfilled satisfactorily, like among others the ability to afford a market basket containing essential food items (Stone, 2006, p. 160).

In order to further develop my approach to quality of life on the basis of the HDI, it is to say that I understand the term as a dimension of the wider concept of **social cohesion**. Social cohesion can be assumed to exist in a societal unit, as long as its parts all in all hang together and make their contribution towards a harmonious maintenance of the whole societal unit (Kearns and Forrest, 2000, p. 996). Analogically spoken, a social cohesive entity is one which contains low risk for its members to get socially excluded (Novy, Swiatek and Moulaert, 2012, pp. 1878–1879). Due to ongoing socioeconomic inequality and segregation, this hanging together of communities probably gets threatened. In addition, I seek to support a micro-scale understanding of quality of life for this project that is focused on the micro-entities of society. These include individuals or family structures living together in household-constellations. Hence, especially the household-unit will be central during the ongoing text.

Quality of life on a micro-scale has two fundamental dimensions that can be summarized with the material and immaterial one. These I am going to outline further now.

2.4.2 Material environment of living and infrastructural offer

A certain amount of quality concerning the material environment of living is essential for people to satisfy their basic everyday needs. The factors of the quality of dwelling as well as of the urban environment on the neighbourhood scale are inherently associated to the notion of housing affordability outlined in chapter 2.3.

To begin with, it is to say that the issue of housing affordability cannot be separated from housing standards (Stone, 2006, p. 155). Instead, housing affordability needs to be understood in connection with aspects of material quality of life tied to the quality and location of the apartment. The latter two factors are majorly dependent on the financial situation. An important study dedicated to setting up a diversified understanding of housing affordability in connection with qualities of the dwelling has been conducted by Mulliner and Maliene (2012). These authors have developed a criteria system consisting of 20 indicators that shall quantitatively measure items relevant for both individual housing affordability and quality of life according to the material dimension. This criteria system will be important for the following outlines. It includes for example components like the equipment of the dwelling, access to schools or to public transportation services.

Concerning the **quality of the dwelling**, it is important to consider at first the composition of the household and potential **special needs** that arise out of it. To ensure a high quality of life, the specific housing situation must satisfy the needs of all its household members accordingly in order to fulfil material standards of decency (Stone, 2006, p. 154; Mulliner and Maliene, 2012, p. 1837). Examples here are inter alia needs of children or elderly people (Heywood, 2004, pp. 722–723). Special needs are in many cases tied to the life phase and corresponding typical life events (Beer and Faulkner, 2011, p. 19; Heywood, 2004, p. 709). Examples for such a phase or life event are for example childbirth, a marriage or an accident which caused physical damage (Beer and Faulkner, 2011, pp. 30-32; Winke, 2021, pp. 2390-2391). Such life events also have impacts on the form of labour market integration.

Apart from special needs there are **basic items of dwelling quality** to consider, like for example the state of the building substance and the housing entity's equipment, including inter alia the furniture or sanitary items (Ilmonen, 2017, p. 47). Especially during the Covid-pandemic, the importance of a high-quality housing situation for individual well-being became overwhelmingly evident. Since living in flats forms a common type of housing in cities, it is important to consider both the quality of the flat and the building. The quality of the building substance, like the type of its insulation, forms a considerable aspect in connection with adapting oneself to issues of temperature. This aspect is named “energy efficiency of housing” in Mulliner and Maliene (2012, p. 1837).

Last but not least, it is important to consider **individual preferences concerning housing** and the extent to which they are met, as people have individual desires about their housing situation.

This forms some influential factor on the personal perception of quality of life and decent standard of living (Stone 2006, p. 160). Individual imaginaries about the ideal housing situation are also influenced by the socioeconomic situation, what has been mentioned in part 2.3.1 on the labour market-topic. Different housing situations that people have experienced throughout their lifetime until reaching their current status-quo can have a significant impact here as well. The course of housing situations experienced in life is called “**housing career**” by Beer and Faulkner (2011, pp. 20-22).

By leaving now the sphere of the private household and building, it is to say that goods, services and infrastructural offers are distributed heterogeneously throughout a city (Andreoli and Michelangeli, 2015, p. 44). The spatial unit of the **neighbourhood** therefore is an important determinant for the quality of life and for the kind of social integration one can achieve. This can be assumed because most of the people spend their daily lives majorly within their neighbourhood and in its surroundings (Russeft, 1979, p. 349; Healey, 2000, p. 61). The neighbourhood is a spatial category that has no administrative boundaries, but forms an everyday implicit socio-spatial entity in the form of the socio-physical environment of people (Healey, 2000, p. 61; Schnur, 2014a, p. 37). Hence, the neighbourhood contains much of the infrastructure relevant for daily living. Because of its inherency, neighbourhood cannot be defined clearly in academia but can best be understood as a fuzzy concept (Schnur, 2014b, pp. 43–44). Each urban neighbourhood has components that offer amenities and disamenities for its inhabitants (Andreoli and Michelangeli, 2015, p. 45).

Concerning **material infrastructure in the neighbourhood**, there needs first of all a bundle of certain facilities to be reachable that allow people to satisfy **everyday elementary needs**, like supermarkets or bakeries for food supply. Another such need is the **access to public transportation services**, what is also connected to the reachability of workplace and potential corresponding **commuting times** (Mulliner and Maliene, 2012, pp. 1835–1836). Access to high-quality public transportation facilities becomes even more important when thinking about the problem of the ever-rising expenses necessary to maintain an individual car.

With the factor of access to public transportation, also the theme-complex of **climate change** has been introduced indirectly. Like the importance of adapting oneself to its increasing impacts in the context of the housing situation, the development of strategies of adaptation gains relevance on the collective level. Communities like urban neighbourhoods as well as entities on higher scales such as entire cities or nation states need to develop sets of coping-strategies. Policies of greater entities such as nation states have impacts on small-scale communities like

urban neighbourhoods as well, to refer back to the concept of multilevel governance (Kaufmann and Sidney, 2020, p. 2). In connection with climate change, essential infrastructure to enable individual coping is green public space also included in Mulliner and Maliene (2012, p. 1837).

Apart from infrastructure for everyday living, households might have **specific material needs** or desires to be fulfilled in the neighbourhood. Examples here are childrens' facilities, veterinaries for pet animals or offers for satisfying special hobbies and interests (Mulliner and Maliene, 2012, pp. 1835–1837). In connection with such needs, neighbourhoods or greater urban entities might be oriented towards **target groups** and corresponding needs, like those of children, students or elderly people.

In addition to the material dimension, another vital sphere of quality of life is formed by immaterial components. This part of quality of life will now be elaborated.

2.4.3 Immaterial dimension

As an additional dimension to the material environment and infrastructural offer, immaterial components relevant for the quality of life are essential to consider.

Referring to the beforementioned **target groups of city parts**, there is the real composition of the corresponding city parts to consider, so to say the question to what extent reality is in accordance with the plans of the governance entity in charge. Being part of the target group might stimulate the emergence of some high sense of attachment, including an individual's or household's sense of identification with the local community and the city. This is a crucial factor, since people have the need to identify themselves with social networks they are a part of and with the territory they are living in (Novy, Swiatek and Moulaert, 2012, p. 1877). The problem of residential segregation and potential mitigation strategies implemented by governmental bodies is interwoven into this notion.

Access to **social contacts** and **social integration** forms an essential item of quality of life. This fact got overwhelmingly noticeable during the last two years of the Covid-19-pandemic with a corresponding rise of feelings of solitude (Leary and Asbury, 2022, p. 537). Apart from the household and family members, some contact with one's neighbours, other residents of the neighbourhood or at least to people who are acting within the personal sphere are vital for creating individual sense of belonging (Weijs-Perrée *et al.*, 2017, p. 134). It is common knowledge however that especially in greater cities anonymity between neighbours is increasing. It is therefore not unusual that neighbours or other house residents do not pursue establishing relationships with each other (Zito, 1974, p. 243). The same is likely to go true for contact to people living in the neighbourhood and the entire city, since the overall sense of loneliness in society

had become a serious problem even before 2020 (Weijts-Perrée *et al.*, 2017, p. 24). This is a questionable development, as it has been proven scientifically that unwanted solitude can reduce life expectancy (Pomeroy, 2019). Hence, city institutions' supportive offers can be interpreted as important means of intervention that shall bring people together and create sense of community. Despite the high importance of social integration, it needs to be thought of potential differences in the individual desires for social contacts, associated *inter alia* to sociodemographic characteristics such as the age.

According to Elif Kısar Koramaz, the neighbourhood of living forms one of the determinants of what kind of social integration one can achieve. This is to understand in the sense of which social networks one is potentially able to gain access to both in the neighbourhood and the entire city (Kısar Koramaz, 2014, p. 50). The following quotation by Kısar Koramaz summarizes all spheres of social integration:

“The level of social integration refers to the level of collectivity, coherence, and inclusivity of a society's social relations of all dimensions.” (Kısar Koramaz, 2014, p. 50).

Social integration therefore forms a vital part of one's identification with the neighbourhood and the city as well as of social cohesion. Thinking now about the phenomenon of residential segregation in the context of Kısar Koramaz' understanding of urban social integration, it potentially gets problematic if people predominantly have access to societal groups which have rather similar life situations according to the criterion of interest. In the light of the socio-economic criterion, there is also the voluntary segregation of wealthy groups to be mentioned. On the spatial scale of an entire city such tendencies can result in turmoil and thus weaken the overall cohesion of the city's population (Novy, Swiatek and Moulaert, 2012, pp. 1878-1879). Taking a look back to the material dimension, it is to say that material arrangements have impacts on the form of social exchanges as they own the potential to either stimulate or prevent the emergence of communication (Wilkerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 596).

As both a synthesis and an extension of the material and the immaterial dimension, there is the overall quality of life which I will introduce in the next part.

2.4.4 Overall quality of life

Now there is the overall quality of life to be outlined, which contains both material and immaterial dimensions combined as well as individually different factors. Such a synthesis shall lead to a holistic concept of quality of life that can be applied to individual cases.

According to Kısar Koramaz (2014), each environment of living respectively each urban neighbourhood provides its residents with a unique bundle of entities offering material as well as

immaterial opportunities for conducting one's life. Such bundles of potential opportunities he names "**life opportunities**" (Kısar Koramaz, 2014, p. 50). The importance of the concrete living location or impacts of segregation also get evident in the concise notion of "where you live affects how you live" (Gutheil-Knopp-Kirchwald and Kadi, 2017, p. 176). In the context of this thought, it is problematic when people live in unattractive, potentially segregated urban areas because of a lack in financial resources, what potentially results in the abovementioned turmoil. Apart from that, the finances available dictate to a great extent in which concrete form people can take part in and benefit from a neighbourhood's offers respectively potentially available life opportunities.

Individuals' and households' **specific circumstances of living** and therewith corresponding demands are additionally essential to think of when approaching a concept of overall quality of life. The possibility of certain sudden changes of life situations throughout the life course is existing. Such changes have the potential to make immediate adaptations both in the housing situation as well as in life necessary, whose fulfilment is again dictated by individual housing affordability. Events causing such necessities can be either positively or negatively connotated, of which positive examples consist inter alia of the establishment of a partnership or childbirth. Highly relevant here are biographical aspects that form a person's character as well as imaginations about the individual best form of one's life.

Concerning the relevance of the individual situation, the **capability-approach** developed by Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (1993) shall be briefly introduced here. The term "capability" refers to a person's actual ability to achieve various states of living that are in some way advantageous for him or her. Such advantageous states the authors call "functionings". Now, the "capability of a person reflects the alternative combinations of functionings the person can achieve, and from which he or she can choose one collection." (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993, p. 31). The capability-approach therefore bears the parameter of individuality concerning quality of life in mind, as every human being has different opportunities as well as desires to realize potential functionings. Examples for basic functionings are sufficient nutrition or an overall satisfactory state of health (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993, p. 31), wherefore the term can be understood as the adequate satisfaction of a person's needs to ensure a decent standard of living.

To proceed towards the end of this sub-chapter, it is to say that the **overall quality of life a city has to offer** is formed by a myriad of different factors. These include first of all elementary ones like an adequate offer to satisfy basic everyday needs both in the material and immaterial form. Such bundles form some urban atmosphere of living that either promotes or prevents the

emergence of high quality of life and of a strong personal sense of attachment to the neighbourhood and the city. These circumstances can thus strengthen or weaken social cohesion and lead or prevent the availability of an appropriate standard of living for the population. In addition, such conglomerates are a fundamental part of from individual-to-individual different life-circumstances that cause individually unique perceptions of one's overall quality of life.

Following the theoretical chapter, I will present a condensation in the form of an analytical framework supplemented with a scheme that shall visualize the connections between the theoretical items. This part will be followed by a chapter on Vienna as the case-example taken in this Thesis.

2.5 Analytical framework based on the theoretical foundation

Now I am going to condensate the theoretical chapter into an **analytical framework** that will be applied in the ongoing presentation of the results and the discussion. This framework will be supplemented by a **visualization** to clarify the connections between the items included.

The initial observation that stood at the beginning of this Master's Thesis project consisted in the fact that urban housing markets worldwide get tighter because of rising costs and scarcity of housing space. This development is also true for Vienna. The Viennese housing market although forms an exception owed to a political tradition dedicated to affordable housing that has been cultivated for nearly one century. The main research question that resulted out of these observations as well as two sub-questions to be approached look as follows:

What impacts do rising rental prices in the private housing sector have in Vienna, in particular on the quality of life of people who have a new housing situation in that segment?

This main research question is supplemented by two sub-questions:

- a) How is the housing situation of such people connected to their type of labour market-integration?
- b) What role do the specificities of the Viennese housing market play here and how accessible are special types of dwelling?

The point of beginning is formed by the **spatial sociological postulate** of Martina Löw (2001, p. 154), who says that space is continuously being (re-)constituted out of relations between living actors and non-living actants. Hence, also societal relations of power get manifested and reflected in urban built environments (Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 114-115; Harvey, 2008, p. 23). The temporal component is important here as well, as space is altering over time. The relevance of this component has been continuously underacknowledged in academia until recently (Frehse,

2017, pp. 513–514). This relational understanding of space shall form a background and a connection for all the other theoretical items, as is shown in the visualization of the scheme in the next section.

The point of analysis now starts by the outline of **factors that shape urban housing markets** in current times. A crucial ideology of nowadays is **neoliberalism**, which is vital to be researched on through a **critical perspective**. This importance can be justified by the amorphous character of this paradigm, wherefore it is also highly contested in the academic debate. Despite its deficits, phenomena that can be described as neoliberal are noticeable in today's cities, like inter alia the tendency towards privatization of housing markets. Therefore, David Harvey's (2007b; 2008) **Marxist approach to neoliberalism** shall form a theoretical background for the findings of the empirical part while simultaneously bearing in mind the weaknesses of the concept. In the Marxist approach, neoliberalism is defined as a political project that aims at conserving the power of societal elites.

Other important phenomena with remarkable impacts on housing markets to include are the two developments of **globalization** and **urbanization**. In addition to such factors, there are **contextual frameworks of case-examples** with influence on housing markets vital to consider. Examples here are the governance structure (Benz, 2021) as well as the type of welfare regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990, pp. 26-28) of the country or city at stake.

The general factors that shape urban housing markets by themselves influence contextual dimensions of cases, like for example the political structures and orientations. Both these components, so general factors and contextual dimensions, influence both the general and individual **housing affordability** and thus **quality of life** of people affected. General housing affordability can be understood as the ratio between supply and demand in a geographic entity (Bieri, 2012, p. 2). Concerning housing affordability, I use two possibilities to grasp it in the Thesis. These two approaches are the ratio- as well as the residual income approach (Stone, 2006), that I both have included in the interview-questionnaire. The most important determinant for a household's financial situation is formed by the job situation or rather the type of **integration into the labour market**. Additionally, labour market-integration has itself impacts on quality of life, as people spend a great amount of time on their workplace. Thus, it forms a central area of everyday living. Here it is also important to bear the biographical aspect in mind, as it is of relevance for an individual's type of job. This is even more crucial due to the precarity of contemporary labour markets (Flecker, 2017, pp. 81–82). The first sub-question of this Thesis is dedicated to

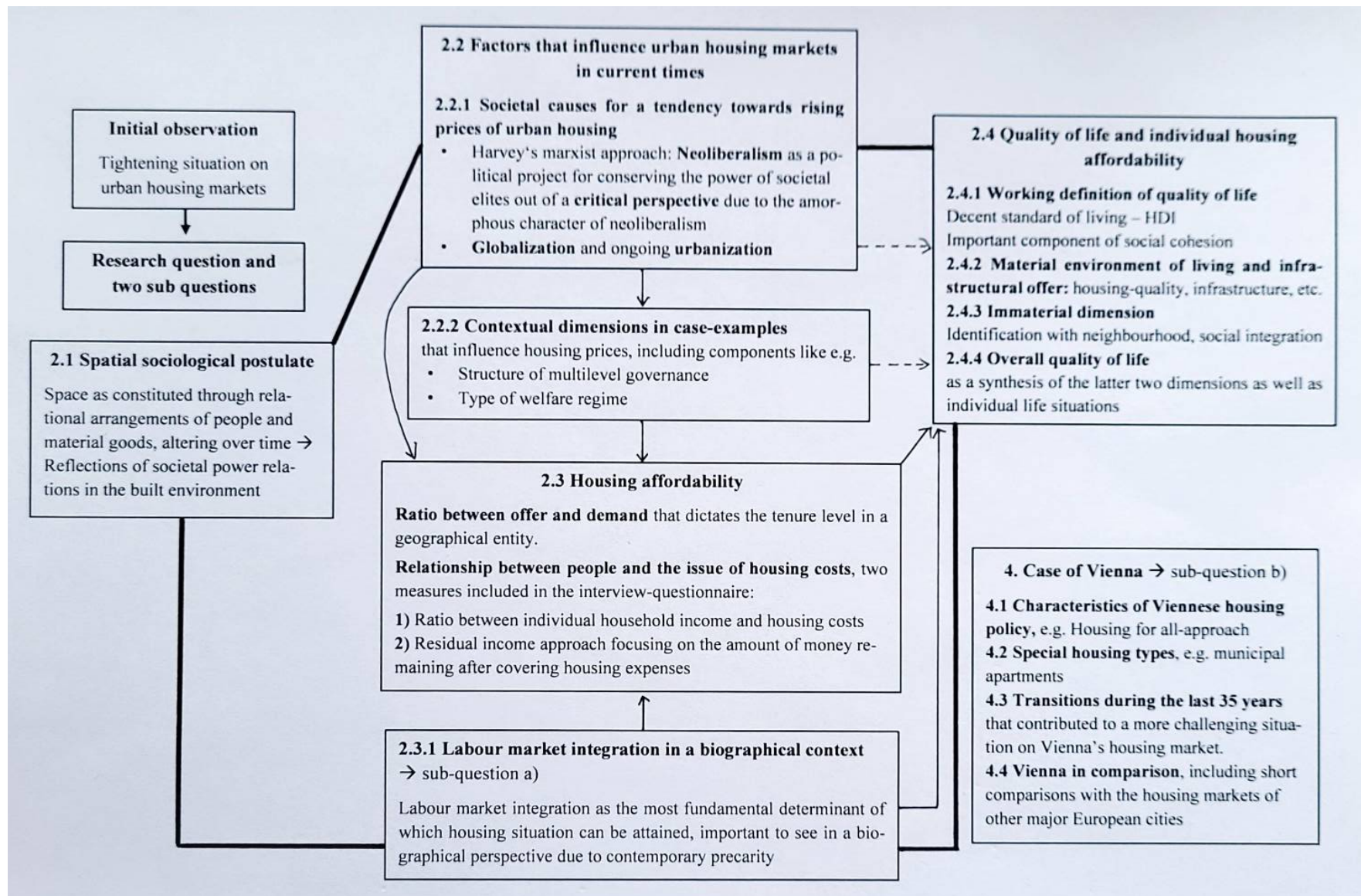
the role of labour market integration in the context of rising housing prices on Vienna's private rental sector and quality of life.

The location of residency as well as the type of dwelling which both are inherently connected to individual housing affordability have fundamental impacts on the quality of life achievable. The interest of this Thesis is now dedicated to the connections between tightening housing markets due to scarcity and rising housing costs on the **quality of life** of people, bearing the importance of labour market-integration and the specificities of Vienna as a case in mind. The reason why I have chosen to focus on people with a new housing situation on Vienna's private rental market can be justified because especially long-term residents benefit from old types of rental contracts. Quality of life is being understood in this Thesis as the existence of a decent standard of living, referring to the composition of the human development index (United Nations, 2022) as well as to an essential dimension of social cohesion. The concept is split up into the **material** and the **immaterial dimension** of basic needs. These include for example a decent housing situation (Mulliner and Maliene, 2012) for the material one and access to social contacts (Kısar Koramaz, 2014) and a personal sense of attachment (Novy, Swiatek and Moulaert, 2012, p. 1877) for the immaterial one. The **overall quality of life** is on the one hand synthesized out of the two previous dimensions and on the other hand bearing the factor of the individual life situation in mind. The latter factor leads to the introduction of the capability-approach developed by Sen and Nussbaum (1993), as each person has a unique living situation and different skillsets to navigate through life as well as an individual perception of quality of life.

The chapter to follow the theoretical framework is dedicated to Vienna as the case example taken in this project. This chapter consists of a first part on **characteristics of the Viennese housing market**, like the housing for all-approach pursued in Viennese housing policy (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 53). The two following parts are dedicated to firstly the introduction of central housing types located in Vienna that have been mentioned in the empirical part and secondly to significant developments in the nearer past that have caused certain traditions on Vienna's housing market. The role of the Viennese specificities in the relationship between rising prices on the private sector and quality of life shall be approached in the second sub-question. Comparisons to other major cities will be provided in the last part of the chapter.

The following page shows the visualization of the analytical framework announced above, before heading towards the methodological approach and the presentation as well as the discussion of the results.

2.5.1 Scheme of analytical framework



3. Housing for all-policy and tightening urban housing markets: The case of Vienna

In this chapter, the case of Vienna as the example taken in this Thesis is going to be introduced. The chapter is split into four parts, of which the first one is dealing with characteristics of Vienna's housing market. To this part-chapter, there is another part connected that is dedicated to special Viennese housing types that have played a role in the empirical study. In the third part, transitions of Vienna's housing market that have taken place during the nearer past are outlined in a short historical excursion, followed by the final section providing comparisons of the Viennese housing market with those of other major European cities.

3.1 Characteristics of Viennese housing policy

Vienna as the case-example of this Thesis forms an extraordinary exception in international comparison when it comes to the topic of social and affordable housing.

To start with, the approach pursued in Viennese housing policy can be summarized with the wording **“housing for all”** (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 53). This approach has an ideological foundation in which the essentiality of a satisfying housing situation for the maximum of people possible as well as the recognition of adequate housing as a basic human right is acknowledged (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 55). Housing therefore forms an affair of public interest in this approach, and roughly 43 % of the total Viennese housing stock belongs to the social sector (Baron *et al.*, 2021, pp. 56-57). Hand in hand with the aim of providing affordable housing space goes the stimulation of a high level of social mixing by the city government in order to avoid the emergence of residential segregation. This political motivation has materially manifested itself in the fact that the Viennese municipal housing stock is dispersed throughout the entire city (Lévy-Vroelant and Reinprecht, 2014, pp. 302–303). In addition, the public and the private sector stand in direct competition to each other as another outcome of this policy. Hence, the Viennese housing market forms an integrated housing market (Gutheil-Knopp-Kirchwald and Kadi, 2017, p. 176). Due to this integration and competition, I want to focus on the private segment of Vienna's rental housing market, as it can be assumed that competition has limited the growth of the tenure level. The ideological and political basis for the development of the housing for all-approach can be found in the social-democratic ideology, as the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) has predominantly formed the Viennese city government for nearly one century, with exceptions only during the national socialist-period (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021, p. 78; Kadi, 2015, p. 251). The current form of Austrian social housing policy has its roots in the time after the Second World War, but its foundations had already been laid before the war during the 1920s (Matznetter, 2002, p. 272). This inter-

war time formed the era of “Red Vienna”, during which a social housing stock of around 60 000 units had been constructed (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021, p. 80). This extraordinarily intense orientation of the city government towards providing high-quality housing space for the maximum of the population possible can be interpreted as an outstanding contemporary example for social urban housing (Banabak, 2022, p. 2).

In addition to the long tradition of social housing in Vienna, there exists a strict **rent control on the private sector**. Due to this fact, also this section contributes to a comparably bearable general housing affordability in Vienna (Kadi, 2015, p. 252; Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 58). The competition between municipal and private housing dampens the general tenure level even more (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 53), although the temporal dimension forms a crucial differentiative aspect here. A common marker concerning rent regulation is the year 1945, as exclusively privately tenured building substance built before this year falls under the control of the rent regulation. This is true for about 66 % of Vienna’s private rental market (Kadi, 2015, p. 254). A common distinction here is the division of the building substance into old houses respectively apartments (so-called “Altbauten”) and newly built ones (“Neubauten”). The concrete tenure to be paid additionally depends on the date when the rental contract has been set up (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021, p. 81). The forms of rental contracts can be further differentiated into unlimited and limited ones as well as locational premiums (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021, p. 84). Especially unlimited contracts which have been set up long time ago still offer benefits like remarkably low rents, wherefore the date of contract matters fundamentally. Tenants who have been housed long-term in the same dwelling hence are likely to hold preferred conditions, whereas residents with a rather new housing situation generally face more difficult ones (Kadi, 2015, p. 259; Mundt, 2018, p. 17). So, this fact forms the justification for choosing both the group of newcomers to Vienna from outside and people who have a new situation on the segment due to a relocation within the city. The group of the newly moved-in people can offer quite unbiased impressions of the contemporary state of Vienna’s private rental section, as they have no comparisons to former times. The latter group indeed is likely to notice potential rises of the tenure level, as such people have already been living in Vienna long-term and have accumulated several experiences with the housing market. These might also include different types of Viennese housing. Coming back to the contract-forms, it critically needs to be seen that the type of the unlimited contract is highly precarious. This precarity can have bad impacts on quality of life due to personal uncertainty concerning holding a high housing quality for the future. This problem can be seen analogous to the precarity of today’s labour market.

Despite the remarkable achievements the Viennese city government has made in the past, it is important to mention that political institutions on various scales influence housing governance, what means that the abovementioned thoughts on the **political framework** need to be considered. In the Austrian case, the governmental structure can be summarized with the bodies of the federal government, the provincial governments, the heads of districts and the municipalities at the lowest level, which also contain the cities. The housing market in Austria is being steered by political institutions on the federal, the federal state as well as the municipal level. For the latter two levels mentioned, Vienna forms another exception as it is both a federal state and a municipality (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, pp. 55–56). The European Union (EU) further plays a role at a supranational level. The federal government oversees the Tenancy Law and has the general responsibility for housing in Austria as well as for the legislation concerning limited-profit housing associations (LPHAs). These associations have been transferred to the competence to administer a part of the Viennese social housing stock. As has been mentioned in part 2.2.2, the welfare regime of the Austrian federal government can be characterized as a corporatist one. This means that welfare transfers are rather modest, as they aim at maintaining status differences within society (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 27; Matznetter and Mundt, 2012, p. 275). In a nutshell, it can be said that the federal government anticipates the interests of the buildings' owners, whereas the Viennese government is seeing itself as being responsible for the interests of the tenants (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 59). In order to conserve the values of social housing, there exists a variety of subsidies for the construction of new housing facilities which are fully administrated by the Viennese government (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, pp. 55-56). The advantageous fact that the city government has the full responsibility for these subsidies emerged out of an increasing decentralization of subsidies aimed at constructing housing space towards the federal states, taking place in 1989. Furthermore, this reform allowed the Viennese government to overrule the two federal laws of the Tenancy Law and the Limited-Profit-Housing Act at least temporarily (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021, p. 81).

In the next part, a selection of special Viennese housing types that played a role in the empirical study conducted in this Thesis is going to be presented next.

3.2 Special Viennese housing types

In Vienna, there exists a remarkable variety of housing-types. Especially those provided by the city government shall be suitable both for the financial possibilities as well as for the specific life situation of their target group. In order to receive access to such housing forms, there exist corresponding sets of criteria that people who want to apply need to fulfil the best way possible,

as the housing space provided is limited. In the interviews, also the issue of information available about the housing types has been a topic to be covered. This is important because it is crucial to provide well-structured stocks of information in a way that interested parties can inform themselves about criteria of access easily. Commonly known housing types either administered by the city government or other institutions as well as potential corresponding access-criteria I am going to describe now briefly.

The housing type which forms the most significant symbol for Vienna's social housing policy is the sector of **municipal housing** ("Gemeindebauten"), of which buildings are distributed throughout all Viennese districts. The entire stock of buildings dedicated to municipal housing is of about 1800, with approximately 220 000 flats that house around half a million people (Wiener Wohnen, 2022; Wohnberatung Wien, 2022a). The municipal housing stock is being administered partly by the City of Vienna and LPHAs, of which the latter need to operate cost covering (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 56). Therefore, the stock managed by the LPHAs is targeted more at households with middle-class-incomes, whereas the units administered by the municipality are aimed at serving the needs of lower-income-households (Mundt, 2018, p. 21). The Viennese Housing Ticket ("Wiener Wohn-Ticket") is the primary key to gain access to an apartment of municipal housing (Wohnberatung Wien, 2022b). In order to receive such a ticket, specific basic criteria need to be met, such as that the yearly net-household income does not reach beyond a maximum threshold. Another such criterion consists in holding Austrian citizenship respectively a citizenship with equal status, what includes EU-citizenship. Furthermore, applicants must hold a registered main residency in Vienna for at least two years (Wohnberatung Wien, 2022c). An exception is available for young Viennese inhabitants who are leaving their parental home for the first time (Wohnberatung Wien, 2022d). As municipal apartments are a common form of housing in Vienna and the required income thresholds are set rather high (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021, p. 83), living in a municipal apartment is not associated with stigmatization in the Viennese case at all. Because municipal buildings are distributed throughout the entire city, they further make a central contribution in preventing the emergence of segregation (Verwiebe *et al.*, 2021, p. 149).

Another housing type that is available also in other places in Austria is the **co-operative flat** ("Genossenschaftswohnung"). Co-operative flats are neither owned by the City of Vienna nor a private actor, but by the corresponding co-operative housing association ("Genossenschaft"). For these housing associations interested applicants need to get a membership in order to have the possibility to gain access (City of Vienna, 2022a). A co-operative flat offers some benefits like a limited tenure or the option to purchase the apartment after some time of residency there

(Stadt Wien, 2022). This type was mentioned often in the interviews, and one interview-partner has been living in such a cooperative flat.

The so-called **SMART-apartments** administered by the city government aim at providing rational and pragmatic housing opportunities for specific household constellations and life situations. They are therefore constructed in a way that bears corresponding typical needs in mind the best way possible, so they aim at offering a “smart” housing solution. Parameters relevant here are that space can be used in the most efficient way or that the structure of the apartment is in accordance with the typical needs of the corresponding household constellation. Target groups of SMART-apartments are for example single-living persons or young families. Both the cost-level and the requirements for access are comparable with those of municipal apartments, like the Viennese housing ticket as a basic criterion (Wohnservice Wien, 2022). In that kind, they can be understood as a special form of municipal housing.

The last housing type to be explained here are the **quarter-houses** (“Quartiershäuser”), which can be interpreted as an outlook on what forms urban housing potentially will have in the future. Quarter-houses form an innovative type of buildings that house a more widespread set of functions relevant for everyday living apart from pure dwelling. One such function is the provision of community rooms, like for example libraries, music rehearsal rooms or rooms for doing sports. The Sonnwendviertel in the 10th district mentioned in the introductory chapter is a city-part in which various quarter-houses have been built (Internationale Bauausstellung Wien, 2020, pp. 66-71). The multifunctional offers of these buildings can be accessed by people living in the neighbourhood as well, wherefore they contribute to ensure a high quality of life of the inhabitants. Furthermore, they may promote the emergence of the 15-minutes-city. This concept refers to a city that has been conceptualized in a way that the majority of activities of everyday living can be conducted within a mobility-distance of around 15 minutes from the place of residence (Pinto and Akhavan, 2022, p. 371). This concept is important because the Sonnwendviertel has been planned as a city part of short ways (GB Stern, 2021a). Most of the housing space in quarter-houses is owned and rented out by private actors, wherefore they fulfil one of the criteria for being included in this Thesis.

Because of the focus on people faced with a new housing situation, there is additionally the institution of Gebietsbetreuung Stadterneuerung (GB*Stadterneuerung) to mention. This is an organisation of the city government that offers a range of possibilities for newly moved-in residents aiming at integrating them in a fast way. Such offers consist inter alia in neighbourhood festivities (Grätzlfeste), informational lectures or guiding tours through the city part at stake

(GB Stern, 2022b). Through the organisation of neighbourhood festivities, people are further offered the opportunity of getting to know other residents. The Sonnwendviertel offers an example of a city-part that has been constructed in a way that shall stimulate social encounters.

The totality of these special housing types and supportive offers shall stimulate the emergence of a high level of quality of life of its residents. Important societal events and developments of the last 35 years that have caused certain transitions of Vienna's housing market will be outlined now in the following part-chapter.

3.3 Transitions during the last 35 years

As I have clarified before, Vienna forms a Europe-wide exemplary city with a housing policy dedicated at providing high-quality housing for the maximum of the population possible. Due to several developments affecting Vienna internally and because of external societal currents, also the Viennese housing market made transitions towards more social inequality though (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 53). Crucial such transitions I am going to outline now in a short historical excursion for the course of about the last 35 years, which is oriented towards the phenomena included in parts 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.

One factor that has been challenging the housing for all-approach from the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 on until today is the **continuous growth** of the Viennese population. Between 1991 and 2018, Vienna's population grew by around 380 000 residents (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021, p. 82), causing a discrepancy in the relation between offer and demand of housing. During the mid-1990s, the construction of new municipal housing-units had ceased and has not been reintroduced until 2016, what tightened the situation concerning scarcity of housing space (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 56). Apart from the decline of the USSR, more recent migration events like the 2015 migrant crisis or the already mentioned Russian-Ukrainian war have led to vast influxes of people into Vienna and to over-demand in housing. Because of simultaneous adaptations of its policy approach, the city government was able to conserve the tenure structure all in all despite the dramatic growth (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021, p. 82). Together with such critical junctures, there needs the context of worldwide urbanisation to be borne in mind, which is ongoing at enormous pace (UN-Habitat, 2022, p. xv).

Parallel with the growth of the population, there has a remarkable number of **political reforms** taken place on higher scales than the city-level. During the 1990s, the political consensus in Austria concerning housing changed towards stronger deregulation of the housing market. Hence, the federal government has implemented several reforms of the Tenancy Law, aiming at the deregulation of the housing sector. This development got sharpened at the beginning of

the 21st century, when a coalition of the conservative Austrian People's party (ÖVP) and the right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ) was in charge at the federal level (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 58). The trend towards marketization of housing got even more intensified after the global economic and financial crisis (GFC) in 2008 (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021, p. 87).

Another affair of political restructuring consisted in the beforementioned **transfer of competence to the LPHAs** to manage a part of the Viennese social housing stock. This shift was done to both re-introduce social housing construction and to adapt to regulations implemented by the EU in its 2004 Maastricht treaty. These regulations aimed at limiting public debts. While in municipal housing the height of tenures can be set autonomously by the city government, the LPHAs need to consider several price-levels of goods that are connected to the housing sphere, like prices for land or financing. This is because limited-profit organisations must at least be capable of covering their expenses (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 56). In addition, housing administered by LPHAs needs to be financed by down payments which are being requested from newly moved-in residents. These down payments are of 500 euros per square meter at average. The costs required by LPHAs on the one hand form a barrier of access for households with a low income, on the other hand the shift to the LPHAs also weakens Vienna's steering capacity because of their orchestration by the federal government. A policy reform that was beneficial for migrants was the re-design towards the opportunity of non-EU residents' inclusion after five years of residency, that has been introduced after 2006 (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 57). Migration although shall not receive a major focus in this project.

To provide now a **summary of these recent transitions** on Vienna's housing market, it is to say that the tendency towards a sharpening housing market can be noticed also in the Viennese case (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 53). However, Vienna can still be characterized as being remarkably resilient due to the continuous cultivation of its social tradition and policy (Mundt, 2018, p. 16; Norris and Byrne, 2018, pp. 235–236). Central factors that shape the concrete tenure costs for a household remain firstly the type of housing, which broadly spoken can either belong to the municipal or privately rented segment. Especially the type of contract has created a significant distinction between insiders and outsiders. Insiders are preferably long-sitting tenants, whereas newcomers to the city frequently are affected by unfavourable conditions concerning types of contract (Verwiebe *et al.*, 2021, p. 149). Another tendency consists of the fact that wealthy societal groups tend to leave the rental market towards homeownership, whereas groups of low income get confronted with the rising difficulties on the private rental segment (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 63). The totality of the developments mentioned

has inter alia led to a slight increase in the trend towards segregation between groups of low and high income over time, although it is still happening at a minimal level (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021, p. 87). Spatial manifestations of socioeconomic differences in Vienna can be summarized in the way that neighbourhoods of lower status form a circle around more central neighbourhoods of higher status, with the Gürtel as the border (Kadi, Banabak and Schneider, 2022, p. 7). Exceptions to be made here are the two upper class districts of Währing and Döbling located beyond the Gürtel (Banabak, 2022, p. 14).

The final part of this chapter is now dedicated to short comparisons of the Viennese housing regime with those of other important European cities.

3.4 Vienna in comparison

Now there shall be a comparative section to the Viennese case be added. Comparisons shall be made along the political framework and the structure of the housing markets. Table 1 on page 39 shows a comparative summary of the cities taken. The type of welfare regime gains importance here when it comes to the extent to which a housing market is being regulated (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 99). At the same time though, housing is in a peculiar position in comparison to other areas of social policy like pensions or health care due to its status as a basic human need (Kettunen and Ruonavaara, 2021, p. 1453). The mechanism of rent regulation in order to limit tenure growth and hence to protect tenants is commonly being in usage by governments of European countries (Kettunen and Ruonavaara, 2021, p. 1449). In the study of Baron *et al.* (2021), there are outlines on the housing regimes of the four major European cities Berlin, Hamburg, London and Paris presented in comparison to the Viennese one. The latter one can without any doubts be seen as the most affordable one of the cities included, as the housing for all-approach forms a unique position feature of Vienna in comparison to the housing markets of the other cities presented (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 104).

In the case of Berlin and Hamburg, it is to say firstly that Germany owns a corporatist welfare regime like Austria. The **Berlin** rental segment has undergone a major transformation towards privatization during the 1990s. In addition to the privatization, the tenure level has risen because of several policy shifts and growth at the beginning of the 2000s, what led to the foundation of tenants' associations (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 28). By 2020, there has finally a law been introduced that aims at limiting the growth of tenures. In 2018, the share of social housing in Berlin ranged from 5 % to around 10 % of the total housing stock, depending on the definition of social housing used. This forms a decline in the share of around 25 % between 1991 and 2018 (Baron *et al.*, 2021, pp. 29-30). This is a minimal amount in comparison to Vienna. In **Hamburg**, housing

construction has in the nearer past predominantly been oriented towards providing condominiums and upper class-housing via private financing (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 32). This aim had caused a decline in the social housing stock from 16 % by 2001 to 8 % in 2018 (Baron *et al.*, 2021, pp. 34-35). Due to a governmental shift in 2011, the housing law had been adjusted in a way that one third of newly constructed housing must be dedicated to subsidized apartments. Furthermore, like in Berlin and other German cities, the city government has introduced a law concerning tenure limitation for the totality of Hamburg in 2015 (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 33). So there have been juridical improvements been implemented, although the stock of social housing is small.

In the case of **Paris**, it is to say that France can also be assigned to the countries pursuing corporatist welfare policies. The French political system is traditionally organized in a centralistic way. Concerning housing policy, a stronger decentralization towards the municipal level had taken place during the 1980s (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 45). In 2020, the tenure level in Paris was the highest in all of Europe. During the 2000s and 2010s, developmental programs have been set up that request the installation of a certain amount of social housing in municipalities surrounding Paris, like 30 % until 2030 (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 47). In 2014, the city government has implemented a law declaring that housing space for sale must be offered to the state prior to private actors (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 48). Both these interventions aim at enhancing the emergence of social mixing. A striking difference to Vienna is the urban structure of Paris, as there is only about one quarter of the households directly located within the city borders, but the majority in the surrounding agglomeration. This structure of the city results in chaotic and unclear responsibilities of governance. The amount of social housing in the agglomeration is of roughly 20 % (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 50), what is considerably higher than in Berlin and Hamburg, but also lower than in Vienna.

In comparison to the former three cases, **London** forms a crucial counterexample in terms of welfare policies, as the UK (United Kingdom) belongs to the liberal type after Esping-Andersen (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 38). Additionally, housing is being steered majorly by the national government in the UK. The London city government had been transferred to more competencies to manage its housing market just by the early 2000s. Since then, the London government has been developing and adapting several strategies that shall provide affordable housing for households of low and middle income (Baron *et al.*, 2021, pp. 40-41). Nevertheless, the prices on London's housing market are of outstanding height, and the average housing costs have tripled between 1991 and 2018 (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 44). In addition, there exists a significant discrepancy between offer and demand. Homeownership is widely dispersed throughout London,

as roughly 52 % of the total housing stock are condominiums, whereas one quarter belongs to the private segment and one quarter to the social sector (Baron *et al.*, 2021, pp. 42-43). Both the local authority and housing associations oversee managing the social sector, what forms a similarity to the Viennese case. To the city government as the local authority, there have only 11 % of the social housing stock been allotted by 2018 in comparison to 24 % in 1991 (Baron *et al.*, 2021, p. 43). This forms another remarkable transition towards a precarious housing market for less well-off households.

In contrast to the cities just mentioned, examples of other European cities with a solid social housing sector are Amsterdam and Helsinki. In comparison to Vienna with a housing stock that is owned by the city as provider, the social sector in **Helsinki** consists primarily of subsidized social housing construction and apartments, of which the subsidies are loan-financed (Kadi and Lilius, 2022, pp. 6–7). Additionally, the Austrian housing system is characterized by a large rental sector, whereas in Finland there is a stronger tendency towards a homeownership-society noticeable (Kadi and Lilius, 2022, p. 6). So, the social housing sector in Helsinki consists of only 19 % of the total stock, with a decline of around 3 % since the early 2000s (Kadi and Lilius, 2022, p. 14). Finland furthermore is a country that belongs to the social-democratic type after Esping-Andersen (1990, pp. 27-28).

The housing policy in the Netherlands and of **Amsterdam** has traditionally been shaped by a high grade of de-commodification, what forms a similarity to the orientation of the Viennese city government. The Netherlands follow a hybrid welfare system composed of components belonging to both the social democratic and conservative system (Esping-Andersen, 1999). In 2009, the social housing stock in Amsterdam included around 50 % of the total stock, what is extraordinarily high. The private rental section indeed is of only 18 % of the total stock in Amsterdam (Gutheil-Knopp-Kirchwald and Kadi, 2017, pp. 183–184). Because of this dominance, social housing makes a major contribution towards stimulating social mixing. Social housing is more represented in the outer districts than in the inner ones though (Gutheil-Knopp-Kirchwald and Kadi, 2017, p. 186). Despite this strong orientation towards social housing, the housing market in Amsterdam has faced rather similar challenges like Vienna in the nearer past. Furthermore, homeownership is returning more and more to favour (Gutheil-Knopp-Kirchwald and Kadi, 2017, p. 185). While reflecting on these comparisons, it gets evident that the Viennese government follows a special form of housing regime that aims at realizing the social democratic ideology in an intense way. In the next chapter, I will describe the methodology used, before the results of the interviews get presented. The following page shows the comparative table.

	Private rental	Homeownership	Social	Welfare regime
Berlin (data for 2018)	74,5 %	15,6 %	5 – 10 % (depending on definition used)	corporatist
Hamburg (data for 2018)	67,7 %	23,9 %	8,4 %	corporatist
Paris (data for 2013)	31 %	34,7 %	20,8 %	corporatist
London (data for 2018)	25,8 %	52,3 %	21,9 %	liberal
Amsterdam (data for 2009)	22 %	29 % (of which 80 % under rent regulation)	49 %	hybrid – mixture of social-democratic and corporatist (Esping-Andersen, 1999)
Helsinki (data for 2019)	29 %	41 %	19 %	social-democratic
Vienna	33 %	19,4 %	43,4 %	corporatist

Table 1: Comparison of housing markets of different European cities for 2018 (after Baron *et al.*, 2021; Esping-Andersen, 1999; Gutheil-Knopp-Kirchwald and Kadi, 2017; Kadi and Lilius, 2022)

4. Procedure of data collection and evaluation: Methodological approach

Now I will describe the methodological approach implemented. The chapter is structured into four parts. The first part is dedicated to the method of data collection, followed by an explanation of the acquisition-strategies used. In the third part, I am going to do a description of the sample, before the method of evaluation will be outlined in the final part. All data collected and evaluated is also being used in the academic project “VieTra”¹ briefly mentioned in the introduction.

4.1 Data collection: Episodic semi-structured interviews

To approach the research question empirically, I decided to conduct episodic semi-structured interviews with people who have a new housing situation in Vienna. Such a new housing situation can be caused either through re-location within the city or because people are newcomers to Vienna from a place outside. The study follows an explorative approach and does not seek representability. This is not at all a demand of a qualitative study, since the qualitative paradigm in its fundamentals is interpretive (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). I wanted to follow a qualitative methodology here, because this approach allows to get an authentic in-depth look into the individual life-situations of the people interviewed. Furthermore, I assumed episodic semi-structured interviews as an appropriate method for data collection in this context. This method allows on the one hand to lead the interviewees’ focus towards the interest of research due to pre-developed questions (Lamnek and Krell, 2016, pp. 343–344). On the other hand, one can simultaneously collect two types of knowledge using this type of interview, namely narrative-episodic and semantic knowledge. The first knowledge type includes concrete experiences with the research-topic, whereas the latter refers to general knowledge that interview-partners have deduced from such personal sets of experience (Lamnek and Krell, 2016, pp. 343–344). The biographical aspect according to experiences on the labour market and housing careers has also been considered. Biography is relevant here because I wanted to find out how the interview-partners perceive both their job and housing situation in Vienna in their biographical context. Important to mention here however is that the biographical dimension has only formed one brief part of the semi-structured interviews, as the aim of the Thesis does not consist in doing biographical research. Instead, biography is seen as an important supplemental component for the contextualization of the results. For the collection of data, I have developed an interview questionnaire which covered all the aspects of interest. The first interview was dedicated to a pre-

¹ Vienna in Transition. (Dis-)continuities of urban change in a European city

test of the questionnaire. This pre-test went rather well and provided interesting insights, wherefore I decided to include it into the sample. In sum, there have 17 interviews of about 60 to 90 minutes been conducted.

4.1.1 Procedure of acquisition and data collection

To gain access to potential interview-partners in the field of research, I have followed three different strategies of acquisition. These strategies consisted of talking to people on the street randomly, snowballing, and the publication of announcements on the social media-platform “Facebook”. Potential interviewees had to fulfil two main criteria, consisting of firstly having a new housing situation in secondly, a privately tenured Viennese apartment. “New” was roughly defined as a maximum of ten years.

In cases three and 14 although, the interviewees lived in a co-operative flat (I3) and a municipal apartment (I14). This mismatch happened because we have misunderstood each other during the acquisition-talk on the street concerning the type of housing. These interviews include some interesting comparative sayings concerning the special type of housing, wherefore they are part of the sample. Cases six and ten I decided to exclude. The sixth interview does not provide any results that offer a surplus for this Thesis, since the answers of the person were extremely short due to some reluctance of her. In case ten, the apartment was paid completely by the company in which one of the household members is employed. This we did not clarify during the short acquisition-talk and hence it did not make sense to include this data-material.

The most effective strategy has in fact been the talks to people on the street. Through this strategy, I was able to acquire eight interview-settings. I went through different places in Vienna and talked to people randomly, telling them about my Master’s Thesis and the VieTra-project by concluding that I am searching for interview-partners. Concerning the city parts where I was on the street, I all in all sought to gain a cross-section through Vienna, with e.g. neighbourhoods that are said to have lower status according to Kadi, Banabak and Schneider (2022, p. 7). These are located in districts beyond the Gürtel (outer districts), such as for example the 15th (Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus) or the 17th (Hernals) district. For the counterpart, I was walking beside the Ringstraße, where I mainly got in touch with people living in upper class districts, like the fifth (Margarethen) or the 19th (Döbling) district. The man from Döbling was although the one who was housed in a municipal building. Other spots chosen were the Mariahilfer Straße as one of Vienna’s most frequented streets or the Sonnwendviertel as one of the target city parts of this study. I also tried to talk to different constellations of people, like inter alia young families or persons with specific characteristics, such as old ones who are likely to be retired. There have been remarkable disparities noticeable in the openness of the diverse people and constellations.

This observation I will outline further in the limitations of the sample presented in the following section.

Through snowballing, I gained seven more interview-settings. I asked most of my social network like friends, relatives, and colleagues from university. The first interview-setting was also acquired through the snowballing-system. In addition, I used snowballing at the end of each interview to get access to more potential interviewees. A disadvantage of the snowballing-strategy consisted in that it was not possible to have influence on where in Vienna these people were living.

Surprisingly, the announcement on Facebook was the least effective acquisition-method which brought two more interview-settings. I decided to use Facebook for this concern, since people can assemble themselves into virtual groups there, in which they can share certain pieces of information with other group members. Such groups frequently are set up based on shared interests or to the territory of living, like here. There exist groups for a range of Viennese districts, or a group for people living in the Sonnwendviertel as well as a one for entire Vienna. The advertisement I have posted both in German and in English, as it was possible for the people to give the interviews in one of these two languages. Like in the strategy of approaching, I bore in mind to post the advertisement in groups dedicated to different types of districts.

Concerning the mode for conducting the interviews, I was offering the interviewees either a meeting at a place chosen on site or in digital mode via the platform “zoom” according to their individual preferences. Places chosen on site have been of remarkable diversity, ranging from cafés and park-benches to the apartments of the interview-partners. Especially the latter setting was interesting, because I was able to gain some insight into the quality of the specific dwelling. Many people also preferred the digital setting, since the Covid-crisis was still quite present during the summer-term of 2022. Most often, I interviewed one person even when the household was composed of more people. In a few cases, also the co-living people have been present in the setting, like unmarried or married couples.

In order to fulfil juridical and ethical aspects, interview-partners were given a declaration of consent prior to the interview. This declaration included an assurance that the data collected will be treated anonymously throughout the entire research process as well as the piece of information that the storage of the data collected is in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the EU. Before starting, I told people briefly about the VieTra-project and the planned Master’s Thesis and offered them the option to refuse giving an answer

to interview-questions in case they started feeling uncomfortable. This opportunity was of importance since some questions touched highly personal aspects, it was never taken though.

4.1.2 Description of sample and limitations

Now, there follows a description of the sample taken, including an outline on its limitations.

An overview of the interview-settings showing basic information is provided in Table 2. As I have mentioned before, the strategies aimed at recruiting inhabitants of socioeconomically different parts of Vienna. The snowballing-system forms an exception here as this concern was only influenceable in a limited way with snowballing. Hence the sample all in all reflects a cross-section throughout the entire city, although it has crucial limitations owed to the explorative character of this study. Taking a look at Table 2, it can be seen that there is a range of different household compositions, like unmarried couples, communities living in shared flats, married couples with young children (called “young families” in the table), and single households. The latter form the predominant household structure in the sample. Pet animals I have also considered, since they both cause costs and contribute to a better quality of life. The huge disparity in gender balance is vital to mention, as there are many more women than men, especially in the single households. Apart from the district, also the range in nationalities included is remarkable, what eventually reflects the fact that Vienna is a highly diverse city according to the nationalities of its inhabitants (Urban Development Plan Vienna 2025, 2014). The different professions with corresponding various types of integration into the labour market are interesting, what will be seen in the presentation of the results.

Crucial limitations therefore consist in an underrepresentation of men as well as of specific household compositions, such as young families. Retired people who might would have offered additional insights concerning the Austrian retirement system could not be acquired at all. Reasons for such disparities may are to find in different time-budgets of the people affected, as for example single-living people have a greater time-budget than young families who need to care for their children. One woman who lives with her man and children cancelled the interview spontaneously at the same day when it should have taken place due to private problems that arose, to mention just one example. In general, interview-partners said that the time they could provide for the interview is rather limited, like 90 minutes at maximum. Hence it is to assume that the research process as well as the sample reflect general societal tendencies. These include the rising stress-level with corresponding declining budgets of time, or the increase of single-households in greater cities. Especially the latter is also overwhelmingly true for Vienna, since the amount of single-households came to 44 % in 2019 (Riederer, Fritsch and Seewann, 2021,

pp. 321–322). In addition, it was by far easier to gain women for interviews, as men refused more often. This fact is highly noticeable when thinking about differences in sexes and gender.

Nr.	Household composition	District / city part	Nationality	Professions mentioned
1	One man and one woman, both 24 –un-married couple, two cats	10 th Favoriten, Sonnwendviertel	Austria (both)	Kindergartener (woman), flight controller (man)
2	One woman, 60, one cat	3 rd Landstraße, Fasanviertel	Austria	Employee of administration
3	One man (40) and one woman (38) – married, two children (1 and 3)	10 th Favoriten, Sonnwendviertel (co-operative flat)	Bosnia (all)	Teacher in HTL (woman), employee in the IT-branch (man)
4	One woman (separated from a partnership), 32, three cats	12 th Meidling	Austria	Scientist employed in the Austrian Ministry of Health
5	One man and one woman (married couple – both 37), one small boy of six months	11 th Simmering	India (all)	Biological researcher (woman), doctoral student (man)
6	One woman living alone, 31	21 th Floridsdorf	Russia	German teacher, unemployed at interview (AMS)
7	One woman living alone, 30	15 th Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus	Austria	Graphic designer, unemployed at the time of interview
8	One woman living alone, 48	5 th Margarethen	Belgium	Software developer
9	One woman living alone, 29	12 th Meidling	Romania	Automation engineer
10	One man and one woman (married couple – both 49), two children (girl 21, boy 15), one dog	1 st Inner City	UK (all)	woman: General manager, man: detective (unemployed when interview has been made), children: at school (both)
11	One woman living alone, 31	16 th Ottakring	Germany	Sociologist (Post-Doc)
12	One man living alone, 26	18 th Währing	Italy	IT-business (full-time), barkeeper (part-time), education as a financial consultant
13	Man living in a shared flat, 26	15 th Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus	Austria	Kindergartener (part-time), student of Social Work
14	One man living alone	19 th Döbling (municipal building)	Austria, Israeli origin	IT-consultant

15	One woman, living alone, 34	12 th Meidling	Austria	Several educations / part- time-employments: art- ist/graphic designer, project worker, body therapist
16	One woman (42) and man (47), married, with a girl (11), one dog	10 th Favoriten, Sonnwendviertel	Portugal	Engineer (man), midwife (woman), at school (girl)
17	Two women, both 25	15 th Rudolfsheim- Fünfhaus	Austria (both)	Students (both), part time: one student's assistant and the other one ordination as- sistant

Table 2: Summary of the sample

As the last part of the methodological approach, I am going to explain the procedure of data evaluation now.

4.2 Data evaluation: Content analysis

The data material collected I have evaluated by using the method of content analysis. This method allows the adaptive construction of a coding-algorithm that is oriented towards the interest of research in comparison to other more open coding methods, like for example the grounded-theory-methodology (Mayring, 2015, p. 51; 2019, Foundations of the Qualitative Content Analysis, point 2). As it is required in qualitative research, I have followed a circular approach. The coding-algorithm was pragmatically oriented towards the research question and sub-questions (Mayring, 2015, p. 51; 2019, Foundations of the Qualitative Content Analysis, point 2) and aimed at developing thematic codes and categories. The factor of pragmatism is a further characteristic of this type of content analysis and forms the major distinction to the mentioned grounded-theory-methodology. In this approach, the procedure of coding is of completely open character.

During the procedure of coding, I implemented the following coding-algorithm consisting of four steps:

- 1) A first inductive coding-circle aimed at the collection of primary codes out of every transcription. These initial codes were oriented towards the interest of research and reflected topics talked about.
- 2) The parallel development and continuous adaptation of a code-scheme with consolidation of single codes into thematical categories. These categories reflect general topics included in the research question and sub-questions.

3) Another coding circle that was both inductive and deductive. The codes from the code-scheme got deductively applied to the data with parallel inductive development of new codes according to demand.

4) A final third coding-circle for the revision of the code-scheme.

With the first inductive coding circle, the specific topics of each single interview according to the interest of research and the corresponding topics in the background should be covered. Parallel to the first circle, I sought to develop a scheme of codes and categories out of which I have deduced the structure for presenting the results. A third coding-circle was made for the revision of the code-scheme.

With the provision of the methodological approach used, it is now time to get into the results.

5. Experiences with the Viennese housing market and the quality of life: Results

Now I am going to present the results gained out of the stock of interviews. The chapter is structured into the three main topics of individual experiences with the Viennese private section under consideration of labour market-integration, quality of life in connection with individual housing affordability, and specificities of Vienna. These main topics are themselves structured according to thematic categories developed out of the code-scheme, including relevant data for approaching the research question and sub-questions. Results deduced from the content analysis are getting supported both with relevant paraphrased sayings of interview-partners and direct quotations of the data that provide prototypical examples of the topic at stake, referred to in the citation-style (Ix, p. x-x, l. x-x). At the end of the major topics, I will induce from the data collected to entire Vienna. In the discussion-chapter to follow, the results will be embedded into the analytical framework to approach the research question and sub-questions in the conclusion.

5.1 Individual experiences with the private Viennese housing segment

The first part of the results is dedicated to the housing costs in Vienna in a comparative perspective, according to the interviewees' experiences. As integration into the labour market forms the most important factor for the financial situation of a household, this affair is also included here. The onward presentation is structured according to categories developed out of the coding-scheme.

5.1.1 Perception of the tenure level in Vienna in a comparative perspective

To start with, it is to say that most of the interviewees have perceived the private section of Vienna's housing market generally as well as the tenure of their current housing situation as expensive. In addition, several interviewees who have relocated themselves within the city have noticed a rise in the tenure level over time. The tendency of this self-perception all in all was true independently from the financial situation.

Crucial sayings concerning the **height of the tenure-level** were made by interview-partners four and eight. Interviewee four moved to the city from a place outside and was shocked by the prices when she started to inform herself about housing options: "also hab' einfach auf willhaben g'schaut was gibt's so, hat mich gleich mal der Schlag getroffen weil das alles so teuer is', und, hab' aber so dann eigentlich auch die erste Wohnung in Wien gefunden, das (1) war eben eine privat vermietete Wohnung" ("so I simply looked on willhaben which options there are

existing and I immediately was shocked because everything is so expensive, but with this strategy I have found my first apartment in Vienna which was a privately tenured one”) (I4, p. 2, l. 27-30).

The woman in the eighth interview has declared Vienna’s private housing section as frustrating (I8, p. 2, l. 23-30). Her maximum budget for housing consisted of approximately 1200 euros per month. She was hardly able to find offers below that level that fitted her demands (I8, p. 19, l. 11-14). She used to live in several privately tenured apartments throughout Vienna (I8, p. 1, l. 9-13) predominantly located in the first district (I8, p. 1, l. 18-19). In 2020, she has changed the district of residence by moving to Margarethen (I8, p. 1-2, l. 30-3). This she decided to do because she was not able anymore to find any affordable offer in the Inner city (I8, p. 1, l. 30-32). This piece of data therefore forms empirical evidence that housing used to be more affordable in former times, what she has confirmed in the following saying: “[...] es ist immer privat und dann ist es schon beschränkt, nein es war, also früher war es viel viel viel billiger, es ist, es ist schrecklich teuer geworden.“ (“it is always privately tenured and then there are already limited options, no it used to be a lot cheaper in former times, it has become horribly expensive.”) (I8, p. 19, l. 14-16).

In connection with the rising tenure level, interviewee seven made the pessimistic saying that the housing prices will soon not be affordable in Vienna anymore: “[...] also ich seh‘ jetzt die Vorteile nicht so ganz [von Genossenschaftswohnungen], solange die [privat vermieteten] Wohnungen noch halbwegs billig sind, wird ja auch nicht mehr lang so sein.“ ([...] so I don’t see the advantages [of co-operative flats], as long as [privately tenured] housing is all in all affordable, it won’t stay the same soon.”) (I7, p. 7, l. 27-29). This interviewee was a Viennese native who had experienced several housing situations in the city throughout her lifetime.

It further got evident that one's **experiences with other housing markets** with corresponding diverse ideological backgrounds, governmental structures and general cost and wage levels were relevant for the interviewees’ perception of the private segment of Vienna. An impressive case here is again interviewee eight who has collected widespread experience with housing markets. Apart from four times within Vienna, she had relocated herself around eight or ten times within and between a variety of European cities, like Straßburg, Berlin or Zurich (I8, p. 2, l. 11-14). For the case of Zurich, she made the comparison that housing there is much more expensive than in Vienna, but at the same time the general level of salaries is higher. In Zurich she had a cost-income-ratio of one fifth of the income, whereas in Vienna this ratio is one third (I8, p. 2, l. 19-22). She has never informed herself about special Viennese housing types and

has no knowledge at all apart from narrations of friends (I8, p. 10-11, l. 28-7). Due to this lack of knowledge and experience with the Viennese characteristics combined with her housing career in different cities and within Vienna, it can be assumed that she has the purest view on the private Viennese housing segment of the people included in the sample.

Case nine can be seen as an analogous example to the previous one with Zurich. This interviewee said that Vienna is expensive compared to Bucharest, where she grew up and had experienced several dwellings (I9, p. 2, l. 17-18). This perception is likely to arise out of the fact that housing is cheaper in Romania, but with a corresponding lower level of salaries. Her current Viennese apartment costs around 800 euros per month including operational expenses (I9, p. 2, l. 25-27). In addition, she perceives the Viennese housing market in general as expensive: “[...] personally I think the prices in Vienna are really high compared to other cities in Europe, //I1: Ok// it’s really high and really variable, when I was looking for houses, [...]” (I9, p. 2, l. 17-19).

The single woman of I7 was living in an apartment of 60 square-meters in the 15th district, for which she had to pay a monthly tenure of 660 euros. She made comparisons with the incredibly tight and expensive housing market in Berlin. There she used to live in different shared flats for several years before returning to Vienna. Hence, she characterized the private market segment still as bearable in comparison, but not cheap though: “[...] ja für das is‘ Wien, kommt mir jetzt echt immer total günstig vor, @da find‘ ich immer so voll@, Beweise wie billig alles is‘, obwohl’s jetzt auch nicht so billig is‘.” (“[...] in comparison I perceive Vienna as a real bargain, although it is not that cheap as well.”) (I7, p. 9, l. 22-24).

Apart from the high level of the tenure costs, also **operational costs** like for heating, water, internet or maintenance of the building have formed an important topic in nearly every interview. The most crucial current societal crisis to mention in this context is the Russian-Ukrainian war, which especially affects the costs for heating. This rise in the gas price is owed to the fact that Russian gas has not been delivered to Austria anymore since the outbreak of the war. Parallel because of the war there took a record inflation place, which made it even more difficult for vulnerable groups of society to afford articles of daily living. In the interviews, there has exclusively the issue of heating been mentioned in connection with the war and inflation. Here, it is to be born in mind that the interviews have been made from April to June 2022, and the situation has even worsened during autumn 2022. One interview-partner has already talked about the extraordinary high prices for energy supply at the beginning of June, when the interview was made:

“Ja schwierig, ja, ich mein’ die sind jetzt schon teuer, //I1: Mhm// ich wollte jetzt schon, ich habe jetzt schon gezweifelt ob ich, also, ich wollt’ jetzt schon kein Gas anmelden weil es so teuer is’ aber ich musst’ es machen, //I1: Mhm// ähm, ja schwierig ich zitter’ schon ein bisschen sag’ ich dir ganz ehrlich ich mein’ zum Glück wie gesagt is’ jetzt meine finanzielle Situation ganz gut aber wie gesagt für die anderen Leute die ich kenn’, die ein bissl, die halt jeden Euro umdrehen müssen, da bin ich sehr sehr gespannt wie’s da für die ausschauen wird, [...]” (“It’s difficult, I mean, it is expensive already now //I1: Mhm// I would have wanted already now, I have doubted already now if I, so I did not want to register gas even now because it’s so expensive but I needed to do it //I1: Mhm// yes difficult, I’m shivering a bit to be honest, I mean, luckily as I said my financial situation is quite good but as said for other people I know who need to save more money I am curious how the situation will develop, [...]”) (I12, p. 24, l. 22-28).

In some cases, the cost factor of heating was inherently connected to the quality of the apartment. This was true for the unmarried couple in the first interview and the young family in case three, both living in newly constructed buildings in the Sonnwendviertel. They appreciated the good insulation of their walls, what caused them almost no heating expenses in winter (I1, p. 10, l. 1-7; I3, p. 10-11, l. 31-4). In case of a bad insulation of the building, operational costs are also likely to rise due to issues of temperature that are difficult to handle both during summer and winter. The aspect of the quality of an apartment will be further discussed in part-chapter 6.2.

This first section of data provides **empirical evidence** for an increase in the price-level over time as well as evidence for the fact that people who are moving to Vienna from outside perceive it as expensive. At the same time however, there are sayings which imply that the Viennese case is still comparably affordable. In several comparisons interviewees mentioned tenure and wage ratios of other countries, like of Romania and Switzerland in comparison to Vienna and Austria. These offer interesting examples of contrast. Such individual backgrounds had some remarkable impact on the opinions the interviewees had on the Viennese segment. Two central results here are therefore the comparably affordable housing prices on Vienna’s private market and the importance of a decent financial situation for achieving an appropriate housing situation as a central component of quality of life.

5.1.2 Individual housing affordability

As can be seen so far, the interviewees have perceived the general level of tenures in the private section as high overall. To continue approaching the impacts of the housing costs on peoples’ quality of life, it is vital to consider the specific **individual situations concerning housing affordability**. The most important parameter in this relation is formed by the **financial re-**

sources available. These determine to a great extent the possibilities concerning housing situations and are themselves inherently connected to the labour market situation. The latter one will be elaborated in part 6.1.3. A factor inherently connected to the financial situation is the **household composition**. There get firstly cases of single-living people who must cover all expenses on their own presented, before providing a comparative part with households composed of more people. Based on the financial resources available, I have further categorized the cases into **well-off** and **precarious** ones. The financial resources got evident in the interviews in the ratio between the household's income and housing costs as a central measure of individual housing affordability introduced in part 2.3. Some interviewees talked about their individual ratio, while others preferred to mention concrete amounts of money they must pay.

The well-off households are characterized by the fact that they do not have any significant problems in financing their housing costs as well as the remaining expenses for their lives. The ratios between the housing costs and the household income for those cases were of approximately one fifth, one fourth or one third at maximum, as is being assumed in the one-third-convention (Stone, 2006, p. 152; Furth, 2021, p. 63). Examples for **well-off single households** are interviewees eight, nine and 12. The woman of I8 pays a tenure of around 900 euros including costs for heating, water and electricity (I8, p. 3, l. 24-25). Because of her financial situation, she does not have any problems in financing her daily expenses at all (I8, p. 12, l. 16-30). She has declared the general tenure level as horribly high though (I8, p. 19, l. 11-16). Interviewee nine has enough money left to finance her life, while also being able to save a small amount each month (I9, p. 3, l. 11-13). Her housing costs are below half of her monthly salary (I9, p. 25-26, l. 31-7). In the case of the man in interview 12, his pure tenure is of 710 euros, which sums itself to approximately 1000 euros when including all additional costs (I12, p. 14, l. 24-31). This can be considered as an extreme case in the sample. His financial situation he has estimated as an above-average one, wherefore he sees himself as an exception concerning the ability to cope with a high level of housing costs (I12, p. 27-28, l. 19-2).

Precarious single households needed either near half or above half of their income for housing expenses. The man in I13 for example made the saying that his low wage from a job in childcare provides him with few and modest housing opportunities: “also eigentlich, und die Zimmer sind auch ungefähr gleich groß, äh, muss ich sagen, also so zwischen 20 und 25 Quadratmeter, ahm, (2) ja, aber mit dem Gehalt das ich irgendwie vom Hort krieg’, also recht viel geht sich nicht aus so [...]” (“so actually, and the rooms are all in all of the same size, I need to say, so roughly between 20 and 25 square-metres, (2) but, with the salary that I get somehow from childcare I am not capable of covering much expenses, so [...]”) (I13, p. 4, l. 20-22). As soon as there arose

the necessity to earn a salary on his own, he needed around half of his income to pay for his current room in a shared flat. This is of 390 euros including operational costs (I13, p. 4, l. 20-21; p. 7, l. 30-32; p. 8, l. 2-4; p. 15, l. 26-30). Other cases were even more precarious and demanded suretyships. The woman in the seventh case had to pay roughly two thirds of her income, what is in concrete numbers 660 euros from 950 euros (I7, p. 9, l. 29-33). This ratio can be interpreted as highly precarious. She was only able to maintain her apartment because she has got suretyships: “[...] aber ohne Bürgschaften glaub‘ ich hätt‘ ich nicht viel erreichen können mit diesem kleinen Einkommen, aber, ja.” (“[...] but without suretyships I think I would not have been able to realize many opportunities, but, yes.”) (I7, p. 5, l. 25-27).

Proceeding now to the **composed households**, there is again to differentiate between married couples and other composed household constellations, such as shared flats. In the case of the **married couples**, this constellation shares its entire resources with each other. The married couple with child in I5 must pay 675 euros per month, excluding operational costs (I5, p. 8-9, l. 34-5). Including the latter expenses, their housing situation consumes about 20 to 25 percent of their monthly household income (I5, p. 17, l. 25-28; p. 18, l. 30-32) and they did not perceive themselves as being in a precarious situation. The married couple with child and dog in I16 has a household income of approximately 6000 euros. Their housing expenses are of 1500 euros including all operational costs, so around one fourth (I16, p. 18, l. 30-34). This ratio should not be more imbalanced towards the housing costs: “Ja also es, könnte nicht [1500 € Miete inkl. Zusatzkosten bei 6000 € gemeinsamen Haushaltseinkommens], weil sonst, wäre nicht möglich, genau.” (Yes, so it, could not [a tenure of 1500 euros including additional costs with a shared household income of 6000 euros], because in that case it would not be possible, that’s the way it is.”) (I16, p. 18, l. 34).

In **other composed household constellations** such as unmarried couples or shared flats, the ratio for the individuals living there apart from the costs for the entire household depended on negotiated divisions in payment. The unmarried couple from the first interview splits its monthly tenure into half. This division causes an amount of roughly 50 percent for the woman’s and of around 25 to 30 percent for the man’s income (I1, p. 10, l. 12-23). The couple additionally claims their two-room-apartment as a suitable housing situation for a couple-constellation (I1, p. 4, l. 7), since they assumed potential difficulties in case the high monthly tenure needs to be paid in a lone situation: “alleine glaub‘ ich is‘ es schwer, sich das zu leisten, eigentlich kann man nur als Paar glaub‘ ich (.) da wohnen, (1) also, es is‘ schon möglich, aber es is‘ halt schon, schwieriger auf jeden Fall, und für eine WG reicht’s halt auch nicht, also @(.)@” (“in a single situation I think it’s difficult to afford this apartment, I think actually it’s only possible

to live here in a couple-constellation, so, it is possible but it is without any doubt more difficult, and for a shared flat it is not sufficient, so”) (I1, p. 4, l. 9-11).

A striking precarious example concerning composed household constellations was formed by one young woman of the two living in a shared flat questioned in the last interview. She said that she needs all her income for covering the costs arising for her single room (I17, p. 5, l. 13-16; p. 22, l. 4-9). She would not be able to finance her life without financial support from her parents. Additionally, her parents have taken over a suretyship for her. The costs for her room as quite bearable though: “[...] also ich bin angewiesen darauf dass meine Eltern mir ein bisschen Taschengeld zahlen, das heißt es hatte jetzt nicht so, //I1: Mhm// also solange ich einen geringfügigen Job hab‘ is‘ alles in Ordnung, ja, das hat jetzt nicht viel mit der Wohnung dann im Endeffekt zu tun gehabt die ist eh vergleichsweise voll leistbar.” (“As long as I am marginally employed everything is alright, but this did not have so much to do with the apartment, as it is actually really affordable in comparison.”) (I17, p. 15, l. 26-30).

Cases three and 14 who were living in special Viennese types provided an interesting comparative parameter to the private rental sector, although they were recruited by accident as described in part 4.1.1. Both cases said that their financial situation would be significantly scarcer if they were housed on the private sector. Even the interviewee of the 14th case needs one third of his income despite living in a municipal apartment and following a modest lifestyle. When thinking of the one-third-convention, this case can also be interpreted as a critical one. Furthermore, the ratio-conventions have in general been valid both for individuals who were living in composed households but had to pay an amount on their own, and the married couples. The latter constellations cover their expenses together, but since all the married couples in the sample had children and in some cases pet animals to care for with corresponding apartments of a larger size, the estimated ratios did not reduce significantly. In case of a married couple without children or pet animals, it can be assumed that the cost-income-ratio is reduced.

Thinking further, it is important to bear the fact in mind that individual housing affordability can change at any given point in time. This played a role in several cases. Potential **fluctuations in the housing costs and the household income** have most often been mentioned in the negatively connoted case that the costs have risen, whereas the income has remained the same or has even declined. The fourth interviewee faced a continuous increase in tenure of about 60 to 70 euros per year, what has shocked her every time she had noticed it:

“Ja ähm erst einmal, also, in der ersten Wohnung is‘ noch gegangen weil die, die Erhöhung richtet sich ja immer dann auch nach die Quadratmeter also nach der Größe der Wohnung, aber jetzt, hat mich schon amal der Schlag getroffen weil es war halt dann auf

einmal 60 Euro mehr glaub‘ I im Monat oder 70 Euro mehr, //I1: Uhhh// was schon viel dann is‘ (2) und vor allem wenn das dann jedes Jahr um so viel mehr wird, [...]” (“Ok, so, to start, in the first apartment it was bearable because the rise in the tenure is oriented towards the square-meters, so the size of the apartment, but now I really was shocked because suddenly the monthly tenure rose I think with 60 or 70 euros, what is much, especially in case it grows with this amount every year, [...]”) (I4, p. 11, l. 21-26).

In the case of the two young women in I17, the tenure rose of approximately 30 euros during the three years they have been living in their apartment (I4, p. 23-24, l. 24-9). The price for gas was around 70 to 90 euros every year, but they mentioned that it will for sure be increasing for the heating period of 2022 (I4, p. 24, l. 9-17). The interviewee therefore made the following conclusion:

“Ja es wird halt jedes Jahr wird so alles ein bisschen teurer, //I1: Mhm// und ich hab‘ halt am Anfang mehr verdient, ich hab‘ halt am Anfang knappe 1000 verdient, //I1: Uh// und jetzt halt weniger als die Hälfte verdien‘ ich halt jetzt–” (“Everything gets a bit more expensive every year, and at the beginning I used to earn more money, so I have earned almost 1000 euros, now it is less than half–”) (I17, p. 24, l. 25-28).

Apart from these negatively connoted cases, rising incomes with stable housing costs have been mentioned in a few interviews. Due to promotions in her job, the wage of the single woman interviewed in the second case rises of approximately 200 euros every two years (I2, p. 9, l. 20-27). The income of the man talked to in the first interview also increases in a linear way.

A special form of changes in housing costs and household income is formed by **fluctuations in the household composition**, what played a vital role in case four. The interviewee said that she could live comfortably due to no financial difficulties, as she used to pay 900 euros from her individual income for housing, with still 1700 euros remaining (I4, p. 10, l. 24-29; p. 10-11, l. 32-2). This situation was soon to be changed when the interview was given because of the split-up from her partner. With her partner, she had a 50-50-divide (I4, p. 10, l. 24-29). So, she would have had to pay 1800 euros on her own, what she could not handle and made a relocation necessary (I4, p. 3, l. 16-20). She was already thinking about the potential higher costs she is going to face when living alone with her three cats, but declared herself confident that she will be able to cope with the situation quite well:

“zach, weil, also es, ich, ich werd‘ trotzdem nach wie vor nicht auf der Straße leben müssen, also //I1: Ja das sicher nicht// also ich werd‘ mir‘s schon leisten können, aber es san schon, es werden schon so 2, 300 Euro im Monat mehr sein die ich für die Wohnung [...]” (“difficult because, so, I still won’t have to live on the street, so, I will manage to afford it, but the tenure will be around two, three hundred euros more per month that I will have to pay for the apartment [...]”) (I4, p. 12, l. 20-23).

In case of a precarious financial situation, the tendency that interviewees affected had perceived the Viennese private sector as comparably affordable was surprising in a positive sense. By referring to the residual income approach, also the problem that nonhousing needs could not be met adequately at least in basic terms was not existing in any case. One explanation for the ability to maintain acceptable financial situations is delivered by individualized sets of **strategies of saving money** that interview-partners affected by precarity have developed. A common strategy for cases whose financial situation is difficult consists in living in shared flats. This form of living forms a prototypical household composition that aims at dividing expenses for housing. Although there were also precarious cases who had an apartment of their own, like interviewees seven and 15. The woman of I7 sometimes manages to upgrade her income via the unofficial way, what is an illegal practice: “Gott die Miete kostet 660, es geht sich halt immer so aus dass ich grade so bissl was dazuverdien“, ich weiß nicht, also ich bin ja eh anonym, [...]” (“Yes the tenure is of 660, I manage to get by decently because I am earning marginally, I don’t know, is it sure that I’m anonymous, [...]”) (I7, p. 9, l. 29-31). She further refused to heat her apartment extensively during winter 2021/22 after the gas price had increased extraordinarily. She has mentioned suretyships as a possibility to both gain and keep a housing situation (I7, p. 5, l. 19-25). Another strategy that aimed at saving money was the preference to buy second hand-things on the internet. Interviewee 13 for example frequently purchases second hand-articles like furniture for his room on the online-portal “willhaben” (I13, p. 4, l. 26-28).

In addition to self-developed strategies, there was **supplementary financial support** by either the family or governmental institutions necessary in several cases. In I7, the interviewee received Basic Benefit (“Mindestsicherung”) as a welfare benefit from the federal government due to her status of being unemployed (I7, p. 2, l. 1-2). She simply could maintain her apartment because of two suretyships (I7, p. 5, l. 16-27). One woman of the two in I17 would not be able to cover all her expenses adequately without financial support from her parents (I17, p. 15, l. 26-28; p. 22, l. 7-9). Such cases can be interpreted as highly precarious.

This part has empirically proven that individual housing affordability is being influenced by multiple factors like the financial situation or the household constellation. All these factors are likely to fluctuate over the course of time. The affair of the labour market situation which got already mentioned here several times is the main theme of the section to follow now, bearing the relevance of biography in mind.

5.1.3 Role of labour market integration in a biographical perspective

The job situation formed the most fundamental parameter for the financial resources respectively the housing situation and quality of life to achieve. Other possibilities of achieving housing situations and financial resources such as inheritance of dwellings or fortunes were not at all included in the sample but are of general relevance. The labour market- as well as the educational biography have proven to be important for the actual situation of the individuals as well.

A remarkable selection of labour market- and educational biographies with corresponding financial situations has been covered in the sample. Cases ranged from people who had stable biographies to cases which were turbulent, including phases of unemployment. It is further important to consider the ages here, as younger generations are more likely to face precarity nowadays than older employees who may hold a standard working relationship. Three cases to mention at the beginning who had **stable job biographies** and corresponding well-off financial resources are the single-living women in I8, I9 and I11. The one in the eighth case is 48 years old and has been working as a software-developer all her professional life long (I8, p. 3, l. 10-16). This type of employment provides her with a stable income, but she did not mention any fluctuations in employers she used to work for. The interviewee of I9 is of 29 years and works as an automation engineer, which is a safe and well-paid job. The woman in I11 is a post-doc-scientist. The academic branch is known to be highly precarious, but during the interview she said that she often had favourable types of labour contracts during her career (I11, p. 27, l. 21-28). She has an age of 31 years. The interviewee in the second case with 60 years was the oldest person in the sample and has had a stable labour market biography throughout her entire career. She works as an administrative employee in the medical branch (I2, p. 3, l. 19). All those interviewees had no significant problems of financing the totality of their expenses and perceived their quality of life as high, what will be further elaborated in part-chapter 6.2.

More **fragmented and precarious situations** have been outlined by cases 13 and 15. Interview-partner 13 has been living in Vienna for seven years when the interview was made (I13, p. 2, l. 14-16), of which the first five years he was financially supplied by his parents. Hence, there was no need for an individual income (I13, p. 2-3, l. 30-2). His first job he had in childcare for 15 hours with a salary of 450 euros. The amount of work he had increased to 25 hours with a wage of 850 euros, what was the state when doing the interview (I13, p. 2-3, l. 7-12). He holds a university degree in philosophy (I13, p. 4-5, l. 34-1) and faced a phase of unemployment when first searching for a job. This searching he did during the onset of the Covid-19-pandemic (I13, p. 5-6, l. 32-1). He is 26 years old.

Interviewee 15 has several occupations of a fragmented character, with which she can earn some unstable income: “dann hab‘ ich, also bin ich halt eben auch als äh, frei_ oder freischaffende Künstlerin tätig, //I1: Mhm// womit ich ein unregelmäßiges Einkommen hab‘, //I1: Mhm// und ahm, ich hab‘ eine Praxis für Körpertherapie, mit der ich auch ein unregelmäßiges Einkommen hab‘, also sind halt beides selbstständige–” (“then I have, so I am also employed as a freelanced artist, an occupation with which I have some unstable income, and I have an institution for body therapy, with which I also have some unstable income, these are both self-employed occupations–”) (I15, p. 5, l. 22-25). Despite her multiple educations she also had to deal with a phase of unemployment (I15, p. 6, l. 25), because of which she personally got modest concerning job offers: “Also ich war einfach froh dass ich @den Job gefunden hab‘@ [...]” (“Actually I simply was glad to @have found the job@ [...]”) (I15, p. 11, l. 27). Since she is used to having few financial resources, she does not perceive her situation as a deficit. This may be also true because most of the people in her social network are situated in a rather similar way (I15, p. 21, l. 18-26). Her age is of 34 years.

The man of I12 forms a significant counter example to the cases who had to struggle financially because of unemployment, although his situation is to be considered as fragmentary as well. In addition, he is quite young with 26 years. His job as a barkeeper in a nightclub provides him with a high-quality money supply (I12, p. 5, l. 15-22). When giving the interview, he had the job for one year (I12, p. 3, l. 30-31). Apart from this job he is building up an IT-business in a self-employed way (I12, p. 4, l. 29-34), attends an education as a financial consultant (I12, p. 18, l. 7-8) and on a spontaneous basis works as a model (I12, p. 18, l. 11-13). Especially because of the barkeeper-job he owns financial resources which allow him a standard of living which lies above average, apart from the mere housing situation:

“[...] ich kann ein überdurchschnittlich gutes Leben führen eigentlich, ja //I1: Mhm// ab und zu essen gehen und so, bisschen Party machen, ich kauf‘ mir jetzt auch eine Vespa und so also //I1: Ah ok// das geht sich eben sehr, also gut aus, //I1: Mhm sehr gut// sag‘ ma so da bin ich eh sehr gesegnet.” (“[...] I am actually able to follow an above-average lifestyle, eating out sometimes and going to parties, I am going to purchase a Vespa now, so I am coming along really well, so I’m really blessed.”) (I12, p. 16-17, l. 34-3).

So, it could be proven empirically that both the age and labour market biography have impacts on the type of labour market integration and housing affordability. A standard working relationship furthermore forms a stable insurance for being able to finance both housing and other costs of living. Even with types of employment which differ from the standard working relationship, it is possible to earn some high income, like in case 12.

An additional prominent topic in connection with the job- and financial situation was the **Covid-19-pandemic** as one of the most severe crises of nowadays. Its impacts have been diverse, ranging from almost no to devastating ones. In the second case, Covid had no unfavourable impacts on the financial situation at all, as the interview-partner was working in a job annotated to the health system (I2, p. 12, l. 17-25; p. 13, l. 14-15). The wage has even been upgraded due to extra hours and a bonus (I2, p. 13, l. 15-17). Similar situations were told by cases four (p. 25-26, l. 30-33) and 16 (p. 20-21, l. 26-2; p. 21, l. 9-27). In the case of I13, Corona had bad effects on the job and income situation of the man, as he urgently needed to gain employment just when the pandemic had started (I13, p. 6, l. 14-24). Finding a job was difficult for him and he was searching for nearly one year until he got employed in childcare (I13, p. 20, l. 13-16).

People who are faced by difficulties on the labour market can potentially consult a range of **supportive offers** provided by Austrian governmental bodies, aiming at the re-integration of unemployed people. The institution responsible for this issue is the AMS (labour market service), operating on the federal level. This institution offers educative programs and supports unemployed people in finding suitable job options. In addition, there exist several types of financial transfers which shall help people in financial need. Experiences with such supportive offers have predominantly been negative in the sample, as the concrete offers were not helpful in practice. For example, interview-partner seven criticized the long waiting process until she had been granted Basic Benefit: “[...] dann hab‘ ich mich bei der Mindestsicherung gemeldet und dann hat das eh alles urlang gedauert bis ich die bekommen hab‘, [...]” (“[...] then I have registered myself for Basic Benefit and it took very long until I got it, [...]”) (I7, p. 6, l. 4-5). Such extensive waiting-periods are bothering when thinking of the fact that the case of unemployment and a corresponding lack in income need to be mitigated the fastest way possible.

Concerning experiences with the labour market service (AMS), the sayings were sceptical as well. This was the case because job opportunities provided did either not fit with the skills of the applicants (I15, p. 12, l. 8-12) or were remote from their place of living, like e.g. a job-offer in Salzburg (I7, p. 6, l. 9-12). Interviewee seven could also not benefit from the Covid emergency fund for artists, as it was accessible with deterrent bureaucratic barriers including questions about highly personal matters (I7, p. 11-12, l. 26-3). The man of I13 had registered himself at the labour market service with the status of searching for a job. He did not get any support though, as he was enrolled at university. In juridical terms, this is not accepted as being unemployed (I13, p. 15, l. 2-4).

5.1.4 Summary

Inducing from the experiences people in the sample have made with Vienna's private rental segment, it got evident that the tenure level in that segment is quite expensive and has risen over time. An interesting observation consists in the fact that at the same time several interviewees claimed the Viennese private segment as still quite affordable in comparison to those of other cities. Both sayings, on the one hand the high tenure level on the private segment and on the other hand the still acceptable affordability have been mentioned by interviewees that were either well situated financially or precarious. So, the latter category of people could maintain a housing situation that fits their needs, although apart from certain strategies of saving money there was potential financial support from their families or governmental institutions required. It can therefore be assumed that Vienna's private section provides suitable housing situations for a great range of household constellations and for people in precarious situations. Among the most influential factors for the concrete individual housing affordability are the job situation as well as the household composition.

In the second part of results, the theme-complex of rising housing prices on Vienna's private section and individual housing affordability gets connected to quality of life in Vienna.

5.2 Quality of life in Vienna and individual housing affordability

In the following part, the empirical data concerning the quality of life in Vienna in connection to individual housing affordability is going to be analysed. The structure of the presentation is oriented towards theoretical part-chapter 2.4 with the sections of the material and immaterial dimension as well as the overall quality of life. The latter section shall form a synthesis of the former two in connection with the relevance of the individual situation to gain a holistic impression of the affair.

5.2.1 Material dimension

At the beginning, the **quality of the housing situations** as an important item will be analysed, including components like the type of apartments or the state of the buildings. The housing career as an influential background concerning the perception of the current apartment has been mentioned in several cases.

The **structure and size of the dwellings** talked about corresponded in nearly all cases with the household composition and respective typical needs quite independently from the concrete financial situation, be it well-off or precarious. It can hence be induced that Vienna's private section offers affordable housing space of decent quality for diverse household constellations

also in precarious financial situations, given potential support is available. Prototypical examples are the 60-year-old single woman with a cat who lives in a studio apartment of 30 square-meters with additional two square meters on a small balcony (I2, p. 4, l. 8-10), or an apartment of 110 square-meters (I3, p. 3, l. 22-23) for the married couple with two children in case three. The latter dwelling mentioned was perceived as rather small for this constellation though:

“[...] also wenn sie viel, viel kleiner dürfte sie nicht sein, also das is‘ jetzt natürlich wenn ma überlegt ah, wie wir vorher gewohnt haben is‘ schon eine große Veränderung, es is‘, die is‘ ja mehr als doppelt so groß, aber, sie ist nicht groß, in Wirklichkeit für vier Personen [...]“ (“[...] so if it was much, it shouldn’t be much smaller, so this is, if you think how we used to be housed before it’s a big change, our current apartment is more than double the size, but in reality it is not big for four people [...]”) (I3, p. 24, l. 15-19).

Interviewees living in shared flats were content both with this type of household constellation and the space they had in their individual rooms.

So, all interviewees independently of their concrete individual housing affordability were all in all content with the quality of their housing situation, as their housing provided them with a considerable number of amenities. There were also some **disamenities** mentioned. One of the main such disamenities was a lack of storage space (inter alia I7, p. 13-14, l. 34-3). Further minor disadvantages with relevance consisted in no separation of bathroom and toilet (I5, p. 19, l. 29-33) or a broken water tap (I7, p. 14, l. 6-7). In connection with such affairs, it was bothering for the inhabitants if they could not reach the persons responsible for the building’s maintenance or communicate with them accordingly:

“[...] ich hab‘ halt versucht dann ahm, der Hausverwaltung hab‘ ich geschrieben so he, Leute ganz ehrlich, wir ham nur Probleme da bei euch, in der Wohnung //I1: Oje, ja// oder mit euch, ahm, nehmt’s das zurück, ich will nicht mehr zahlen für das dass meine Heizung nicht funktioniert, dass meine Balkontür hin ist hab‘ halt ein paar so ähm, Mankos,–” (“[...] I’ve tried to contact the building administration in the sense of, hey people to be honest, we only have problems with you in the apartment, take it back, I don’t want to pay more for that my heating doesn’t work, for that my balcony door has broken down, I have several such disamenities,–”) (I4, p. 11, l. 26-31).

The factor whether the apartments were in old buildings (“Altbauten”) or newly constructed ones (“Neubauten”) is important to consider in the context of housing quality, also when it comes to climate change and heatwaves. The woman in I8 who already had been living in several apartments throughout Vienna claimed that old buildings are in general cold in winter, with what she made several negative experiences (I8, p. 5, l. 10-12). In her current flat she had thought that it will be getting unbearably hot during summer, but she was already planning her next relocation into a better insulated apartment (I8, p. 17, l. 28-31). A counter example here

forms the unmarried couple living in a new well-insulated building in the Sonnwendviertel in which there is no necessity to heat extensively during winter (I1, p. 10, l. 1-7).

Supplementary to the overall quality of the flats, there were impacts of the **Covid-19-pandemic** on the perceived housing quality mentioned. This was of relevance because Covid and the corresponding mass-quarantines (“lockdowns”) had forced the population to spend more time in their dwellings. Such impacts have been extremely diverse, ranging from minor ones to a case where the pandemic formed the main cause for a relocation within Vienna. The severity of the pandemic was influenced by factors like the type of job or the household constellation, although with no crucial role of the monetary sphere. The pandemic had no unfavourable impacts on the second interviewee’s perceived quality of the housing situation due to her work-situation in the health system, as she did not spend more time at home than she used to do before the outbreak (I2, p. 21, l. 3-10). For interviewee 13, the pandemic was exhausting as he had been quarantined twice and was not allowed to leave his room of 25 square-meters for ten days: “[...] aber so in Quarantäne hab’ ich nicht raus können das war schon heftig, //I1: Ja das—// das hat sie sehr sehr negativ beeinflusst, //I1: Mhm// diese Zeit wo ich quasi in Quarantäne war—” (“[...] but so, when I was quarantined and wasn’t allowed to go out that was an intense experience, it had a very bad influence on the housing quality, the range of time when I was quarantined—”) (I13, p. 18, l. 26-29). In the fourth interview, Covid was one of the primary reasons for a relocation to a bigger Viennese flat, because the by-then unmarried couple used to work in home-office in their first flat of 70 square-meters, what was exhausting:

“[...] in Summe dann eigentlich wahrscheinlich Corona ausschlaggebend dass ma um’zogen san //I1: Mhm// (2) indirekt halt, viel daham, die anderen alle daham, ham wir alles mitgekriegt, es war laut, es war wenig Platz, das war dann der Grund für den Umzug in die große Wohnung” (“[...] in sum I think corona was the crucial reason for relocating ourselves, so indirectly, much at home, all other people much at home, we have noticed everything from the other inhabitants, it was noisy, few space, and this was the reason for relocating ourselves to the big apartment.”) (I4, p. 15, l. 14-18).

A further factor concerning the perception of the housing quality are **personal criteria** of people for their housing situations. Most of the interview-partners were able to find apartments that all in all fitted their personal criteria and preferences, depending on their individual housing affordability. Criteria mentioned were for example an overall good state of the dwelling (I15, p. 7, l. 30-31) or demands concerning the fulfilment of specific structural desires. Another often-mentioned criterion was a balcony (inter alia I4, p. 5, l. 3-7; I7, p. 4, l. 12-13). The individual desires the interviewees had for their apartments corresponded further with their **overall atti-**

tude towards housing, which was diverse. The woman of the second interview pursued a pragmatic accommodation, as she is majorly at home for regenerative activities like sleeping and spending spare time (I2, p. 16, l. 18-23). For the fourth interview-partner, it was crucial to have a high-quality dwelling: “[...] will a Lebensqualität in der Wohnung ham weil ich bin gern daham, oder viel daham, will dass ich’s schön hab‘ daham und dass I mich wohlfühle und da geh‘ ich dann 40 Stunden arbeiten und leist‘ mir dafür die Wohnung, so is‘ ungefähr mein Zugang.” (“[...] I want to have some high quality of life in my apartment, because I like being at home and am staying at home much, I like to feel comfortable at home, and for this purpose I am working 40 hours that I can afford such an apartment, that’s the way I am thinking about the affair.”) (I4, p. 14, l. 16-21). The latter attitude was also true for the interview-partner in I12, who would have been even more demanding concerning individual criteria for his housing situation. He admitted several times although that his complaints are a luxury problem (I12, p. 7, l. 3-10). He further said that a municipal apartment would not be suitable for meeting his desires (I12, p. 7, l. 22-24). A counter example here are the two young women in I17. They had modest criteria for their housing situation due to their limited budget, like basic qualities such of that it is in an acceptable state: “[...] ich hatte nicht wirklich viele Ansprüche, zum Ausziehen, also es war halt so, ok, jetzt das und das und möglichst jetzt nicht super hässlich, //I1: Mhm// aber ich war tendenziell so ok, was //I1: Mhm// wir uns halt leisten können und was wir halt auch bekommen also ich hatte jetzt nicht so den Anspruch, das muss einen Balkon haben, //P2: Mhm// und einen Garten, [...]” (“[...] I had not that much desires for moving out, so that’s how it was, ok, so that and that it’s not super ugly as far as that’s possible, but I was of the tendency so ok, what we will be able to afford and what we can get, so I didn’t have the desire so it must have a balcony, and a garden [...]”) (I17, p. 10, l. 17-22). The **socioeconomic status** as a factor concerning attitude and individual preferences therefore comes through in an overwhelming way, as case 12 had a well-off financial situation whereas the interviewees in case 17 were perceiving their financial resources as of being highly precarious.

As a final category concerning the perception of the housing quality, there is the **housing career** to be mentioned as a relevant background. In the data, its relevance comes through concisely in two cases who had acquired widespread experiences with housing situations throughout their lifetimes. The woman questioned in the third interview made outlines on her diverse apartments she had been living in Vienna until reaching her current one. From 1989 to 1996 during her early childhood she used to live in a privately tenured apartment in Wieden (I3, p. 1, l. 18-24). Following this situation, she lived in an owner-occupied flat in Margarethen until her graduation from high school in 2003 (I3, p. 1, l. 28-31). When she wanted to leave her parental home,

she was consulting the special supportive program for young Viennese people mentioned in part 3.2 and got a municipal apartment in which she used to live for about five to six years (I3, p. 1-2, l. 32-10). Her current housing situation in a co-operative flat in the Sonnwendviertel together with her by-now husband had begun about seven years ago (I3, p. 2, l. 12-16). Now, they are a young family with two children (I3, p. 3, l. 1-3). Their co-operative flat has a size of 110 square-meters (I3, p. 3, l. 22-23). This space they do not perceive as extensive for four people (I3, p. 24, l. 15-19). In the case of the woman who was the only interview-partner representing her family, she had experienced such a lack in space also during her early childhood:

“[...] die Wohnverhältnisse damals waren ja auch anders, muss ich auch sagen also von von, ah, Luxus gab’s jetzt nicht viel, ich hab‘ mein Zimmer mit äh, drei Geschwistern geteilt, //I1: Mhm// ja, also, war eine schöne Wohnung, war eine schöne Gegend, aber äh, ähm, war schon eng, und ich, ich kann mich erinnern die, die Raumaufteilung war so unglaublich absurd [...]“ (“the housing conditions in those days were different I need to say, so, there was not much of luxury, I had to share my room with three siblings, so it was a beautiful apartment, beautiful area, but it was narrow, and as far as I can remember, the structure of rooms was quite strange [...]”) (I3, p. 12, l. 15-20).

The perception of her current housing quality therefore reflects an experience that she has already made at some point during her housing career. Interviewee 15 who sees herself in a precarious situation perceives the housing quality in her current apartment as high in comparison to other, run-down dwellings in Upper Austria she has been living in during her former life (I15, p. 3, l. 12-14; p. 19, l. 26-29).

The **quality of the buildings** needs to be born in mind in addition to the apartments. This factor has been talked about sparsely in the sample though. Statements about the buildings’ quality were sceptical. Interviewee nine had noticed a lack of smoke detectors in the staircase (I9, p. 10, l. 19-28), what is a surprising deficit when thinking that this house was built around 2010 (I9, p. 11, l. 10-14; p. 32, l. 3-8). In case 13, there is a lift missing in the house. This is not problematic for the interviewee personally, but would be for people in wheelchairs (I13, p. 22, l. 7-10). I16 complained about the dirty state of the building (p. 26-27, l. 34-1), what she blamed to the fact that some of the people living in the house behave in an unhygienic way (I16, p. 26, l. 27-29; l. 32-33).

Based on the results in the sample, it can therefore be induced that the Viennese private section offers a decent standard of living in the housing situation according to the criteria elaborated in part-chapter 2.4.1. This is also true for cases with precarious situations, as long as potential financial support is available. Individual desires concerning as well as the individual perception

of housing quality are further influenced by the housing career acquired throughout one's lifetime and the socioeconomic situation. The latter parameter is again inherently tied to labour market-integration and the monetary situation, hence potential individual housing affordability.

Coming to the **material infrastructure on the neighbourhood-scale**, it is to summarize that the sayings have in general been overwhelmingly positive. Interviewees all in all have perceived the material infrastructural offer as being of extraordinary high quality. Restrictions of access due to financial difficulties or to the location of housing were of almost no relevance. Concerning infrastructure which serves **everyday basic needs**, like supermarkets, bakeries or shops providing articles of everyday living, the statements have in almost all cases attested excellent access. Such offers include a wide range of conventional supermarkets such as inter alia Billa, Hofer or Spar, e.g.: "[...] Supermärkte find' ich sehr gut, //I1: Mhm// also es gibt voll viele verschiedene Supermärkte in der Nähe es gibt auch einen Supermarkt der am Sonntag offen hat was ich sehr praktisch find' [...]" ("The offer of supermakets is very good, so there is a great range of different supermarkets in the close area, there is also a supermarket which is opened on Sundays, what is very practical [...]") (I13, p. 21, l. 6-8). In addition, the presence of some exotic restaurants has been mentioned in a positive way (I13, p. 25, l. 24-29). In connection with everyday living, especially the Viennese system of **public transportation** was appreciated in nearly all interviews (for example I2, p. 4, l. 20-24; I9, p. 9, l. 26-30; p. 19, l. 17). People mentioned some characteristics of it like its overall quality or the availability of the one-year-ticket due to its low costs: "[...] ja man hat ja auch irgendwie dieses Jahresticket, von dem her, also das find' ich vor allem, is' eh schon recht billig [...]" ("[...] there is also this annual pass, which is actually really cheap [...]") (I7, p. 18, l. 3-4). The family in I16 is the only household in the sample that frequently goes by car, as both the woman and the man have a car (I16, p. 13, l. 33-34; p. 25, l. 16-18). They prefer to use private vehicles due to flexibility. Additionally, the woman doing house visits as a midwife has all her job equipment in her car, wherefore it is more practical than using public transportation (I16, p. 14-15, l. 27-3). Vienna's **green space** forms an essential part of quality of life for many of the interviewees, like here for I13 talking about a former Viennese housing situation:

"[...] waren halt viele Grünflächen in der Nähe, so Augarten oder Prater, oder Donaukanal war auch ziemlich in der Nähe, oder halt Donauinsel war auch ziemlich in der Nähe ähm, das hab' ich ziemlich cool gefunden, also so von Lebensqualität her [...]" ("[...] there used to be much green space in the nearby area, so Augarten or Prater or Donaukanal used to be very close, or even Donauinsel used to be very close, this I have perceived as cool, so in terms of quality of life [...]") (I13, p. 3, l. 17-20).

The issue whether the area at stake is oriented towards a specific **target group** with **special needs** has seldomly been a topic in the sample. As far as the topic was relevant, it had majorly been focused on young families with children as the target group. All the people from the Sonnwendviertel included in the sample claimed that this quarter has young families with children as the primary target group, since there are many corresponding offers like playgrounds or theme-events for children (so called “Grätzlfeste”). The unmarried couple without children from the first interview confirmed this observation (I1, p. 21, l. 12-17). They said that for them as a couple who does not have children yet, the leisure time offers in the Sonnwendviertel are rather sparse. Such offers include for example opportunities for going out in the evening. For doing such kind of activities, they need to transfer themselves to other city parts (I1, p. 21, l. 19-33). For the married couple with child in I5 living in a Simmering neighbourhood, the infrastructural offer for specific needs arising due to the child they perceive as appropriate. These needs are served by the park they mentioned, a kindergarten, library as well as different types of school (I5, p. 25-26, l. 33-2). They claimed that Simmering is in general a family-oriented district in contrast to Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus, where they have been living before and which has many offers for students and people belonging to the younger generations: “[...] so this district overall, is very family oriented, //I1: Mhm// this 11th district, but the, the previous one which we lived is very student-friendly, so here I mean aren’t many students living, but that is very student-friendly //I1: Mhm// the 15th and all, [...]” (I5, p. 26, l. 6-9).

In connection with material infrastructure, a further important factor is the **location of dwelling**. Referring to Kısar Koramaz, this factor forms a central determinant of one’s quality of life and everyday life opportunities (Kısar Koramaz, 2014, p. 50). Here, also the phenomenon of residential segregation is to be considered in the background. Since potential commuting times have been a pre-defined topic in the interview-questionnaire, the interview-partners provided interesting insights into the **reachability of the workplace** in connection with their location of living. In addition, commuting times formed a central reason for the people originated in a place outside for moving into Vienna. This was true for example in the case of the unmarried couple in the first interview. The workplace for the man is the international airport of Vienna (I1, p. 2, l. 20-27) and for the woman several kindergartens throughout the city (I2, p. 15, l. 3-7). For the single woman in the second interview, the proximity to the workplace was the central reason for moving both into Vienna and to her current location in the third district: “[...] ich kann zu Fuß zur Arbeit gehen, ja, ich bin unabhängig von allem öffentlichen, und deswegen, wie gesagt, wollt‘ ich doch, jo, möglichst, wenn’s geht, das zu Fuß erreichen können, [...]” (“[...] I have

the opportunity to walk to my workplace, so I'm independent from public transport, and therefore, as said, I wanted to reach my workplace by walking as far as this was possible [...]” (I2, p. 4, l. 26-28). In the case of the scientist in I4, it was important for her to have a commuting time of 20 minutes at maximum, as her way to her previous workplace consumed seven minutes. This short commuting time she had got used to (I4, p. 7, l. 11-21). The people who have perceived themselves in precarious situations have a special attitude towards commuting times, as they were content to be integrated into the labour market independently from corresponding potential longer commuting times. This was true for the woman in I15, who was glad to have found a job after unemployment: “[...] also ich brauch‘ schon für eine Strecke, (1) so 40 45 Minuten, //I1: Ah doch ok// genau ähm [...] Also ich war einfach froh dass ich @den Job gefunden hab‘@ //I1: Ja// und ich hätt‘ glaub‘ ich zu dem Zeitpunkt auch längere //I1: Mhm// Pendelzeiten in Anspr_ also in Kauf genommen [...]“ (“[...] so for one way I need about 40 to 45 minutes, so, yes [...] so I simply was glad to @have found the job@, and I think I would have accepted even longer commuting times by then [...]”) (I15, p. 11, l. 18-19; l. 27-29).

Apart from the distance between the location of housing and the workplace, several **further preferences concerning the location of housing** have been mentioned. An example here is an attractive area in I12 (p. 2, l. 24-26), what is existing in his current Währing neighbourhood (I12, p. 20, l. 21-24). A similar saying was made by the young mother from I3, who was sceptical about moving to Favoriten due to the dubious reputation of various spots in this district:

“[...] hab‘ mich eingelebt in die Gegend am Anfang war mir nicht wohl hierher zu ziehen muss ich ehrlich sagen weil Keplerplatz, Reumannplatz hat ja eigentlich einen gewissen Ruf da wollt‘ ich nicht unbedingt hin, ahm, hat sich aber dann herausgestellt dass das durchaus auch Vorzüge und Vorteile hat, hier zu leben, also mittlerweile will ich hier nicht weg, [...]” (“[...] I’ve got used to the area, at the beginning I didn’t feel comfortable to move there to be honest, because of Keplerplatz, Reumannplatz have a certain image therefore I didn’t want to be close there, but, it has come out that it also has advantages to live there, so by now I don’t want to move away from there, [...]”) (I3, p. 3, l. 23-28).

The access to some green space was an often-mentioned criterion concerning the location of housing, like inter alia for the young family in I5. It was essential for them to have a park close to their apartment in which they can go to with their baby (I5, p. 9, l. 14-18). In I14, the main criterion concerning the housing location was the reachability of the interviewee’s family members, who live in proximity to each other (I14, p. 6-7, l. 29-2; p. 19, l. 19-20).

In a few cases, people mentioned highly individual **disadvantages of their housing location**. I8 is slightly disappointed that she lives comparably far away from the first district (I8, p. 15, l. 29-33; p. 16, l. 22), where she used to live in several apartments before. This comparably hard

reachability is also true for the main railway station, what annoys her due to her intense travel-activity (I8, p. 16, l. 8-13). A similar saying was made by the woman in case 15 who misses cultural offers in her home-district Meidling (I15, p. 20-21, l. 33-2). She therefore prefers to spend her spare time in other districts (I15, p. 21, l. 6-13).

Referring to the phenomenon of **residential segregation** (Tammaru *et al.*, 2020, p. 4), it is noticeable here that households facing precarious situations included in the sample can be found predominantly in typical districts of lower status located beyond the Gürtel, like Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus. The wealthier households indeed are likely to be located more towards the centre, like I8 in the Inner city, or in districts that are usually associated with the upper class, like Währing. With case nine living in Meidling, there is also an exception. Problems belonging to the phenomenon of segregation although have not played a role at all in the sample.

In addition to the overall high housing quality, the material infrastructural offer of Vienna can hence be considered as excellent quite independently from the concrete neighbourhood of living. Due to the outstanding quality of the public transportation network, it is furthermore an uncomplicated affair to transfer oneself to other parts of the city to access workplaces and to consume infrastructural offers. The concrete form of possibilities for consumption as the life-opportunities in the sense of Kısar Koramaz (2014, p. 50) are again to a great extent dictated by the financial resources though. This is again crucial when remembering of the record inflation taking place nowadays (Bonatti and Tamborini, 2022, p. 6). Infrastructural offers like green space or environmental qualities although are accessible quite independently from the financial situation. The following section is now dedicated to the immaterial dimension of quality of life.

5.2.2 Immaterial dimension

Coming to the immaterial dimension, the most important items here are the sense of attachment to the area of living as well as access to social contacts. The personal sense of attachment even was tied to being part of a potential **target group** the place at stake was designed for. Important to mention is that there were no negative sayings concerning immaterial quality of life in connection with housing affordability, like because of segregation in the city part with corresponding access to people with similar socioeconomic situations without any social mixing.

Most of the interviewees have developed some **strong personal attachment** to their current home-district and entire Vienna. Due to the infrastructure aimed primarily at the needs of children and young families, it is an uncomplicated affair for households consisting of couples and their children to get in touch with each other. This frame circumstances stimulate some high sense of personal attachment, as gets evident in the following quotation:

“[...] es is‘ ein Dorf mittlerweile für mich, das heißt ich geh‘ //I2: Ja// durch die Gegend und ich kenn‘ so viele Leute, allein durch die, durch die Mamis, durch den Kindergarten, man trifft sich im Park ich kann jederzeit rausgehen, und ich treff‘ mindestens fünf Leute unterwegs mit denen ich dann plauder‘ und mich austauschen kann, //I2: Ah ja// das is‘ das gefällt mir halt sehr, [...]” (“[...] by now it’s like a village for me, so I’m walking through the area and I know so many people because of the mothers, the kindergarten, you meet each other in the park, anytime when I’m leaving home I meet at least five people on the street with whom I have a conversation, and I like that a lot [...]”) (I3, p. 4, l. 3-7).

She further claimed that the built structures are facilitating social interactions (I3, p. 27, l. 20-23), what corresponds with the topic dealt with by Wilkerson *et al.* (2012, p. 596). A high sense of belonging was also true for I16 as the other young family living in the Sonnwendviertel. The young mother from Portugal claimed that they feel like having found their forever home in the Sonnwendviertel and Vienna. Therefore, they do not pursue transferring themselves back to Portugal at some point in the future. In addition, they are integrated into the local community in a way that they do not feel as migrants anymore: “[...] sehr gut weil äh, es fehlt uns nichts, //I1: Mhm// also, wir haben nicht diese Gefühl sind wir nicht, wir sind nicht integriert oder, oder wir fühlen uns als Ausländer– [...]” (“[...] very good because, we don’t have a lack in anything so, we don’t have the sense to be not integrated or, that we feel like people from abroad– [...]”) (I16, p. 32, l. 9-11). Remarkable here is that both these cases inherently belong to the assumed target group of the Sonnwendviertel.

I8 said that Vienna offers her by far the highest quality of life of all cities she has lived in throughout her lifetime. So, she seeks to always return to Vienna (I8, p. 21, l. 4-10; l. 12-14). She also declared herself as having fallen in love with Vienna: “Ahm ich, ich hatte mich in die Stadt verliebt, einfach [...]” (“So I’ve simply fallen in love with the city [...]”) (I8, p. 3, l. 4). A rather similar example forms the woman of I9 who made the saying that Vienna is the city that is healing her from a personal trauma. So, she has developed an intense emotional relationship to the city: “Ahm (2) Vienna is the city that’s healing me, (2) if you want it in a short statement, that’s the best thing that I can say.” (I9, p. 32, l. 13-14). Another interesting impression was shared by interviewee two for whom it is no option to re-settle within Vienna (I2, p. 25, l. 7-10). She rather pursues moving back to Lower Austria as soon as she is retired (I2, p. 5, l. 12-15) and purely came to the city due to professional reasons (I2, p. 1, l. 26-27). Despite both this purely pragmatic reason for moving to Vienna and her plans, she got to feel highly attached to Vienna:

“Ah, ich, ich bin mehr angekommen, ah, als ich je gedacht hätte, ja //I1: Mhm// also dieses Fasanviertel muss ich wirklich sagen, ja ich fühl‘ mich wohl, was ich wie gesagt, was ich

wie gesagt mir nie so gedacht hätte, und es wird ma ah sicher amol in Erinnerung bleiben, ja was dann, also im Positiven, [...]” (“I’ve arrived in Vienna stronger than I thought would have been possible, so the Fasanviertel I really need to say, I feel very comfortable what I, as said, what I’ve thought would not have been possible, I will remember it in a positive way, [...]”) (I2, p. 23, l. 25-28).

Interviewee seven appreciated the open-mindedness of the people living in Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus in comparison to the inhabitants of Josefstadt as her previous residential district:

“[...] ich find‘ im Fünfzehnten is‘ die soziale, das soziale Miteinander auch auf den Straßen so viel besser, im Achten macht halt jeder sein Ding, und jeder hat so sein, seine überhobene, überhebliche Familie und alle fahren einfach heim und machen so ihr Ding [...]” (“[...] In my opinion in the fifteenth the social cohesion is better, in the eighth everybody is dealing with his own affairs, everybody has his arrogant family and all people are going at home and are dealing with their own affairs [...]”) (I7, p. 20, l. 12-16).

In connection with the sense of attachment, potential contacts with neighbours played a minor role apart from the cases in the Sonnwendviertel outlined above.

The fact of **rising anonymity** referred to in part-chapter 2.4.2 has been confirmed in most cases of the sample. Contacts with neighbours are mostly superficial and limited to greeting each other or taking parcels over for them, as far as he or she is not accessible (among others I5, p. 27, l. 25-31; I9, p. 15, l. 22-25; l. 27-30). In I9, there was complete anonymity between the interviewee and all her neighbours: “Ya, I don’t really have a relationship with the neighbours because, to be honest, I don’t see this happening anywhere, anymore, so when I was young, [...]” (I9, p. 14, l. 8-9). Since she has a widespread friendship-network in Vienna as well as contacts associated to her workplace, she is satisfied with the extent of her social access (I9, p. 16, l. 15-27). A rather similar anecdote of complete anonymity was told by the woman in I4. When she was searching for somebody co-living in her building to take care for her cats if she needs to leave Vienna for a short time, she was surprised about the complete disinterest in a negative way:

“[...] und was mich nämlich jetzt grad aktuell extrem aufgefallen is‘ und was mi ehrlicherweise auch a bissl betrifft, so, mocht mi betroffen, ahm, durch des dass I jetzt allein bin, brauch‘ I, bräuchte ich ab und zu wen, der ma an an Tag amal die Katzen versorgt, //I1: Mhm// und I hob‘ ma gedocht jo schreibst an Zettl, hängst den ins Stiegenhaus obs wen gibt der sich des vorstellen kann, dass er, ein oder zweimal im Monat an einem Tag die Katzen versorgt und hab‘ den Zettel eine Woche hängen g’habt, es hat sich kein Mensch gemeldet [...]” (“[...] and what I’ve noticed in an extreme way and what I find a bit shocking is, so because I’m in a lone situation now I sometimes need somebody to look after my cats sometimes, and I was thinking about hanging a small announcement into the staircase if there is anybody who can imagine doing this to look after my cats one or

two times in a month for one day, and the announcement was hanging in the staircase for one week and nobody has contacted me [...]”) (I4, p. 20, l. 1-7).

Here, the difference between cities and the countryside got evident, as her origins lie in the Upper Austrian countryside. There she used to experience solidarity between the people living in proximity to her (I4, p. 20, l. 9-14).

Some people mentioned **negative experiences with their neighbours**. An example here is the woman in I2 who used to have noisy neighbours (I2, p. 8, l. 12-14). She said that she is satisfied with the anonymous situation as long as her apartment is silent (I2, p. 17, l. 7-8). Her intense need to have silence at home is owed to the fact that she belongs to the older generation and is still active in the labour market, as declared by herself (I2, p. 17, l. 10-15). The factor of noise was also a problem in I4, where the interviewee used to have a conflict with one party living in her previous building:

“[...] die anderen hab‘ I nur vom Beschweren kennt, also die oberbei die so laut war, ahm, weil ich halt echt oft oben war, weil’s wirklich oag war, ahm, dementsprechend war dann schon Aggression und Wut da [...]” (“[...] the other neighbours I only knew because of complaints, so the one from upstairs who used to behave so noisy, so I really used to go upstairs often because it was that crucial, because of what there was also aggression and anger arising [...]”) (I4, p. 19, l. 20-23).

Despite the anonymity and negative experiences, also **exceptions** have been included in the sample. In I7, there was vivid social exchange with the neighbours going on soon after the interviewee has moved in (I7, p. 19, l. 1-2). Such interactions she perceives as a major contribution to a high quality of life:

“Mmmh, ja wie ich eingezogen bin hab‘ ich eigentlich recht viel dann gleich, eigentlich mit einigen geredet weil ich war halt die Neue, aber das war nicht, ich dachte mir halt, dass sich, dass sich da mehr ergibt weil ich das eigentlich schon, das macht das Leben halt viel schöner, besser und cooler wenn man die Leute in seinem Haus kennt [...]” (“Yes as soon as I’ve moved in I’ve started talking to some people rather soon because I was the new one, but this was not, I thought there will be arising more out of it because actually, life is getting so much better and cooler when you know the people co-living with you in the house [...]”) (I7, p. 19, l. 2-5).

The real estate-agent in I14 has some vivid contact with two of his neighbours (I14, p. 20, l. 16-18; l. 23-27), whereas his others are behaving in an anonymous way (I14, p. 20, l. 15-16; l. 18-20). He would appreciate to increase interactions even more (I14, p. 20, l. 27-31). For I12, his friends are living in the same building (I12, p. 22, l. 13-15), but in general he does not feel the need to befriend himself with foreign neighbours. For him, it is important to know them and to be polite with each other though (I12, p. 22-23, l. 15-4). The interview-partner in I3 living in

the Sonnwendviertel knows her communicative neighbours (I3, p. 3-4, l. 34-11) already that well to trust them in affairs dealing with her children:

“[...] und ich weiß genau, wenn ich jetzt irgendwas brauch‘, ich kann bei der Nachbarin anklopfen und kann sagen bitte schau‘ mir zehn Minuten auf die Kinder, oder, also das is‘ halt etwas das hätt‘ ich mir in der letzten ahm, Wohnung nicht vorstellen können, das wär‘ nicht möglich gewesen [...]” (“[...] and now I know for sure as soon as I need anything I can knock at my neighbour’s door and say look after my children for ten minutes please, so, this is something, I couldn’t imagine doing this in my former apartment, this would not have been possible [...]”) (I3, p. 4, l. 16-19).

To induce to entire Vienna, it can be said that personal sense of attachment and access to social contacts form a vital component of quality of life. Both items are likely to emerge in case people are part of a potential target group their city part was designed for. Anonymity has risen especially between people living in the same building, although it is still possible to get in touch with each other as long as contact is being searched in a self-responsible way, like in case seven. Referring to Kısar Koramaz, the location of living forms an important parameter for the concrete form of social integration available (Kısar Koramaz, 2014, p. 50). This fact touches again the phenomenon of residential segregation. This phenomenon has not played any significant role in the sample despite of disparities in mentality, as again in case seven. So, it can be assumed that individual housing affordability does not have crucial impacts on the sense of attachment and social contacts to achieve in Vienna. The next section is dedicated to results dealing with the overall quality of life available in the city.

5.2.3 Overall quality of life

Now, the results concerning quality of life shall be summed up with sayings of the interviewees about their perception of the overall quality of life Vienna has to offer.

The **overall quality of life** according to decent standard of living included in the definition of the HDI was perceived as extraordinarily high in almost every case. Several interviewees were using a scale from zero to ten to rate their individual quality of life. Such a scale was not included in the questionnaire but has been introduced intuitively on their own. In I4, the partner estimated her overall quality of life in Vienna on the zero-ten-scale at around eight to nine, so extraordinarily high. The only things she had been criticizing were the level of costs and the hard communication with the housing administration when it comes to difficulties like rising tenures or broken facilities in the flat:

“[...] würd‘ I sagen dass mei Lebensqualität in Wien schon sehr sehr hoch is‘, also //I1: Mhm// I wüsst‘ jetzt eigentlich nicht warum I an Abzug machen sollt‘ also I würd’s wahrscheinlich bei neun bis zehn irgendwo einidoo //I1: Mhm// weil I halt wirklich voll zufrieden bin, Wien einfach super is‘, ahm (1) dass‘ halt teuer is‘ und dass‘ Probleme gibt

mit diese Vermieter und so mach' ma da an Abzug [...]". ("[...] I would say that my quality of life in Vienna is really very very high, so, I would not know because of which reason I should reduce my perception, so maybe I would range it somewhere between nine and ten, because I am really satisfied, Vienna is simply excellent, so, because it is expensive and because of the troubles with the landlords, let's make a reduction there [...]") (I4, p. 23, l. 15-20).

Interviewee nine estimated her quality of life in Vienna at between seven or eight (I9, p. 31, l. 18-20). The woman of I15 who faces precarity perceives her quality of life at a seven (I15, p. 23, l. 10-14). The young mother from Portugal claimed that their current housing situation as well as the Sonnwendviertel and Vienna provides them with the best quality of life experienced throughout their lifetime so far. Therefore, they do not pursue going back to Portugal at some point in the future (I16, p. 20, l. 25-26; p. 33-34, l. 24-2). The aspect of a different quality of life depending on the specific Grätzl or district came through especially in case seven. This interviewee has moved from Josefstadt to Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus and by now appreciates the much higher quality of life the 15th district has to offer her. This opinion arose because she had perceived the eighth district as densely built when living there and criticized a lack in green space in that district. In addition, the inhabitants of the 15th district are more open-minded, what has already been outlined: "[...] also ich find's so qualitativ wirklich tausendmal besser als im Achten, und allein, ja, wie die Leute sind [...]" ("[...] so actually in terms of quality the fifteenth is a thousand times better than the eighth simply because, yes, the peoples' mentality [...]") (I7, p. 3, l. 7-8).

So, it can be induced that Vienna all in all offers some outstanding quality of life especially in terms of material infrastructure for a great variety of ways of life and living constellations. Hence, the equipment with amenities is excellent in nearly entire Vienna, whereas disamenities are rather sparse. The personal sense of belonging depends to a great extent on social integration, which is tied to being part of a potential target group of the surrounding area and to contacts with people in the neighbourhood. When thinking of the importance of the financial situation, it got evident so far that also people affected by precarity can maintain some high quality of life. The housing quality of the Viennese privately tenured stock is not of some extraordinarily high quality, what is especially true for the precarious cases in the sample. It can still be considered as decent in the sense of the HDI presented in part-chapter 2.4.1 though. Well-off cases instead have a higher diversity of options in choosing both their housing location and concrete form, but residential segregation still forms a minor problem in Vienna. The last part-chapter of the results outlined now below is dedicated to the specificities of the Viennese housing market.

5.3 Specificities of the Viennese housing market

This last part-chapter of the results covers the interviewees' experiences with the specificities of the Viennese housing market outlined in chapter three. A short supplemental part provides insights into the Viennese housing market and housing business as such from the former real estate-agent that is included in the sample.

5.3.1 Availability of information about Viennese housing policy

To start with, it is to say that the knowledge-stocks the people in the sample had about Viennese housing policy and special housing types were quite diverse. They differed inter alia based on the fact whether the interviewees have already been living in Vienna prior to their current housing situation or whether they have moved in from outside. A common saying about the **availability of information** has been that pieces of information desired are hardly to find on the internet due to a complicated and confusing way of presentation. The most impressive example here forms interviewee four who wanted to inform herself about her opportunities in getting access to co-operative or municipal housing. Her experiences are true both for the situation when moving to Vienna from Upper Austria and when she had already been living in the city. The affair of informing herself was nearly impossible for her to accomplish due to the widespread and chaotic information she was confronted with on websites of the city government (I4, p. 8-9, l. 9-1). Therefore, she stopped to inform herself about the specific types at some point and preferred to search for privately tenured apartments. The situation had been even more tightened since parallel to her relocation, she needed to change workplace:

“[...] ich hab‘ dann so Genossenschaft, Sozialbau, ich hab‘ das dann nicht mehr verfolgt, weil ich, mich einfach nicht aus‘kannt hab‘ ich hab’s //I1: Mhm// nicht gecheckt was dann, oder gelesen auf willhaben teilweise ja Wohnticket benötigt ab und irgendein Datum, I hab‘ keine Ahnung gehabt was des is‘ es hat mich dann irgendwann a gar nicht mehr interessiert, also, also dass I des jetzt nochmal speziell hinterfragt hätte, ähm, hab‘ ich a bissl das Interesse verloren weil es eine Fülle an Informationen war und es war nicht der Umzug es war auch die neue Arbeit, also war einfach viel auf einmal, und I hab‘ mi auf willhaben eben umgeschaut, hab‘ mir gedacht ok was könn‘ ma sich leisten zu zweit [...]” (“[...] I did not inform myself deeper on co-operative flats or social buildings because I simply didn’t have a plan and didn’t come along with it, I’ve read on willhaben that in some cases there was a housing ticket required and some datum, I didn’t have any plan what this was and at some point I’ve lost interest in it, so that I would have reflected more intensely on it, so, I’ve lost my interest due to the mass of information and it was not the relocation it was also the new workplace, so there were many affairs to manage simultaneously, and I’ve informed myself on willhaben due to, ok what can we afford as a couple [...]”) (I4, p. 4-5, l. 31-5).

She would appreciate the existence of a simple guideline for people who are planning to move to Vienna from a place outside (I4, p. 9, l. 1-8).

A chaotic situation concerning the informational offer has also been talked about in the fifth case. The man had already known about the existence of municipal housing before moving into his current dwelling, but he had no knowledge about any rules of gaining access (I5, p. 14, l. 22-29). Through his social network, he got some fragmentary pieces of information about co-operative (I5, p. 15, l. 29-32) and municipal apartments (I5, p. 16, l. 4-14). He did not blame his knowledge-deficits on the informational offer as such but on his sense for self-responsibility, so that he had missed to inform himself deeper: “[...] I would put it, it is more of my ignorance, //I1: Mhm// because I should have known it, because, I’m living in a foreign country so I should know more about home, housing and these things [...]” (I5, p. 15, l. 15-17). The woman in I7 has by chance through friends of her heard about the possibility to request financial support for housing in case one receives Basic Benefit and about the existence of subsidized apartments (I7, p. 4, l. 14-27). In addition, she shared the experience that she has registered for co-operative flats once, but never got any response (I7, p. 4, l. 25-30).

Taking the cases mentioned, it can be assumed that the factor of having connections with people is important when it comes to gaining information about the Viennese housing types. This way frequently leads to a fragmentary stock of knowledge though. As soon as somebody wants to inform him- or herself about the issue for the first time, the offer provided by the city’s institutions on the internet is highly confusing. This can be interpreted as a barrier in accessing the specificities of Vienna. An interesting supplementary observation here is the fact that the couple in I16 preferred to consult an institution of the city government to talk to people personally instead of collecting information on the internet as the major medium for informing oneself nowadays (I16, p. 16, l. 3-10). Because of this confusing way of presentation interviewees tended to prefer the private housing sector, as access to it seems much less complicated. Apart from knowledge about the Viennese housing types, it can be said that knowing people and networking have in general been declared as vital resources concerning dwelling-options for many interview-partners. In addition to the informational offer, individual experiences concerning potential access to special housing types described in part-chapter 3.2 have been included.

5.3.2 Individual experiences concerning special housing types

To start with individual experiences shared in the sample, it is to say that whether somebody had the **opportunity of getting access** to special housing types depended majorly on the potential time-range he or she has already been residing in Vienna. This factor arises out of the necessity to hold the main residency in the city for at least two years, in order to receive the

Viennese Housing Ticket, as introduced in part-chapter 3.2. Newcomers to Vienna from a place outside who have been residing for less than two years in the city hence often said that they do not yet own any right to enter the public housing section (I2, p. 5, l. 6-12; I16, p. 15, l. 4-15). The Indian citizen from I5 who missed to inform himself about co-operative apartments said that he and his family would have gotten priority due to the by-then pregnancy of his wife: “[...] Wohnungsberatung, if you call them then they will give you counselling and they will give you the best because you are in the right condition at the moment, //I1: Mhm// my wife is pregnant, and if you look then you will be in the priority, and they will search for you, and this I also get to know very late, [...]” (I5, p. 15, l. 1-5).

Since they have both grown up in Vienna, the two young women of case 17 had registered themselves for special dwellings some years ago, i.a. for SMART-apartments (I17, p. 16-17, l. 32-2; p. 19, l. 16-17). They were bothered by the frame circumstances of this registration: “Ich würd‘ sagen der Prozess dauert einfach sehr lang tendenziell kriegst du Wohnungen die nicht unbedingt in der Lag_ Lage sind die du dir halt vorstellst, //P2: Mhm// und die ganzen Privatangebote waren in der Hinsicht einfach flexibler, [...]” (“I would say that the process takes a very long time, there is a tendency that you don’t necessarily get apartments that are located as you wish, and all the offers on the private sector simply were more flexible [...]”) (I17, p. 11, l. 1-3).

The **desire to relocate into one of the special housing types** at some point in the future was dispersed throughout the sample and corresponded in most cases with the socioeconomic background. The software developer in I8 for example has never thought about moving into one of the special housing-types: “Ahm, hab‘ ich nie überlegt, weil, (2) ich weiß nicht, (1) ahm, weil ich das, ich hab‘ genug Geld, und //I1: Mhm// wieso sollte ich dann in einer Gemeindewohnung wohnen.” (“So actually I never have thought about it because, I don’t know, because I have enough money and, due to what reason I should therefore house myself in a municipal apartment”) (I8, p. 6, l. 32-34). For some interview-partners, it would be an option to consider alternatives to the private housing market as soon as they have gained enough knowledge and their overall situation is suitable. This is inter alia true for the woman of I15 who also decided to move into an apartment on the private sector because it was the option which was complicated the least (I15, p. 8, l. 8). She could still imagine moving into a municipal apartment (I15, p. 9, l. 1-7) but feels uncomfortable due to uncertainty and the frame circumstances:

“[...] ich hab‘ immer so ein bisschen das Gefühl gehabt so ok, das is‘ kompliziert, es is‘ langwierig, //I1: Mhm// ahm, (2) irgendwie wenn man eine Gemeindewohnung kriegt is‘ natürlich super, //I1: Ja sicher// aber dass die halt auch nicht so leicht verfügbar sind.”

("[...] I've always had some kind of feeling so ok, this is a complicated and lengthy affair, so, somehow, in case you get a municipal apartment it is super, of course, but also that they are not available that easily.") (I15, p. 9, l. 18-22).

A counter example of strong desire was told by interviewee 13, who perceives himself in a precarious situation. Hence, he would appreciate moving into a municipal apartment in the future (I13, p. 13, l. 16-19; l. 25-28). When asking him about experiences with the Viennese housing market, he has in the first stance forgotten that he had applied himself for the Viennese Housing Ticket some long time ago. This ticket he has been holding for three to four years (I13, p. 12, l. 19-28). The relocation to a municipal apartment did not function by then although due to either over-demand or expensive redemption fees he could not afford:

"[...] bei diesen Neubauten hab' ich irgendwie gesehen dass die, quasi dass da schon die ganzen Wartelisten voll sind, //I1: Ok//, ahm und bei den anderen quasi bei ah, wo man quasi die Gemeindebauwohnung vom Vormieter übernimmt, war immer eine riesige Ablöse zu zahlen, //I1: Ah versteh', ja// und, das war halt einfach nicht in meinem Budget drin [...]" ("[...] for these new buildings I have seen that all the waiting lists are full already, and in the other cases, so, where you take over the municipal apartment from the previous tenant there was a huge redemption to be paid every time, and this wasn't in accordance with my budget [...]") (I13, p. 13, l. 8-12).

Shortly before that narration, he claimed that he had never informed himself about other housing types than rooms in privately tenured apartments, used as shared flats (I13, p. 12, l. 5-14).

To induce from the narrations in the sample, it can be concluded that in practice there are considerable access barriers to the Viennese specificities existing. These barriers already start as soon as interested parties want to inform themselves about access to special housing types, as the relevant stock of information is presented in a chaotic way. Also when thinking about moving into a special housing type, there are crucial obstacles apart from the rule of a mandatory main residency in Vienna for at least two years. Such obstacles consist in long waiting periods, few opportunities for selection as well as high redemption fees, to refer to the ones mentioned in the sample. Frame circumstances of such character are likely to be deterrent for potential interests, what needs to be seen critically. This thought will be elaborated further in the discussion. In the last section of the results, insights from a former real estate-agent will be presented as supplementary data that form a surplus for this project.

5.3.3 Insights from a former real estate-agent

The interview-partner of I14 used to work as a real estate-agent for the company "Remax" in the past (I14, p. 2, l. 7; p. 3, l. 4-5). Therefore, he owns special professional knowledge about

the Viennese housing market and the operational mode of the housing business. As these professional insights provide surplus for the Thesis, they are going to be presented below as the last part of results.

The interviewee claimed that the **private rental segment** had been affordable all in all before 2008, until the tenure level began to rise in an extraordinary way (I14, p. 3, l. 11-12). According to him, it had also after 2008 remained quite stable in comparison though:

“[...] das Problem an Wien ist dass es halt sehr stabil is’, auch bei der Immobilien-äh-krise war’s halt eher so, dass die Leute nicht gewusst haben was passiert und der Markt war ein bisschen ruhiger, aber die Preise sind nicht wirklich gefallen wie in anderen Ländern, //I1: Ja ja, ja// und das macht den Markt ja so besonders, vielleicht [...]” (“[...] the problem in the Viennese case is that it is very stable, and also during the real estate-crisis it tended to be in the way that people didn’t know what was going on, and the market was a bit calmer, but the prices didn’t really reduce like in other countries, and this is a specificity of the market, maybe [...]”) (I14, p. 16-17, l. 33-3).

As soon as he had become a real estate-agent he had gained deep insights into the operational mode of the private housing business, on which he made several narrations. He mentioned some characteristics like its pure orientation towards profit-maximation. This orientation contains inter alia in the usage of the cheapest construction materials possible or in employing low-cost workforce. Despite such modes of production, dwelling substance produced this way is being labelled and sold as luxury (I14, p. 9, l. 16-33). He further criticized the neoliberal ideology, as he is of the opinion that crucial areas of public life dealing with basic human needs should never be liberalized but always be managed by the government, like for example food supply or the topic at stake, housing: “[...] ansonsten is’ es meiner Meinung nach dass es halt eine Regelung gibt die bestimmte Bereiche in einem, in einem Staat, einfach nur dem Staat übergibt, grade wenn es um bestimmte Sachen geht wie Wohnen, weil’s einfach jeden Menschen betrifft [...]” (“[...] apart from that in my opinion there should be a regulation that delegates certain resorts of everyday living in a state exclusively to the government, especially when it comes to certain affairs like housing, because every person is affected by it [...]”) (p. 11-12; l. 34-3). Another observation of him was that landlords treat long-sitting tenants in a bad way, since they want the former to move out in order to attract new tenants whom they can sell the apartment for a higher price (I14, p. 9, l. 21-23; l. 31-33). He claimed that the tenure level in Vienna is not rising out of a natural reason:

“Die, die Preise in Wien steigen ja und keiner weiß wieso sie steigen, //I1: Ja// Wien is’ nicht so eine Stadt, wie was weiß ich, Paris oder London, das ist sicher nicht, das is’ ja kein natürlicher Anstieg, [...]” (“It’s a fact that the prices in Vienna are rising, and nobody

knows why they are rising, Vienna isn't a city like, I don't know, Paris or London, that's not the case, that's not a natural increase, [...]") (I14, p. 16, l. 3-5).

Instead, investors from abroad would play an important role (I14, p. 16, l. 18-22). Finally, he mentioned another phenomenon that can be ascribed to neoliberalism:

"[...] ich hab' auch gehört dass Freiflächen, es sind genug Wohnungen, die frei stehen, damit die Preise nach oben gehen, ob das stimmt, ob man so was sagen kann, weiß ich nicht, aber das hab' ich auch schon gehört [...] ("[...] I've also heard that free space, there are enough apartments that are free in order to make the tenure level rise, if that's true, if that can be said, I don't know, but I also have heard about that [...]") (I14, p. 24, l. 1. 22-25).

Concerning the **specificities of the Viennese housing market**, he has confirmed the often-criticized way of how the informational stock on special housing types is being presented on the internet, by declaring it as horribly confusing:

"[...] wenn man selber sucht, find' ich, is es schon sehr kompliziert //I1: Mhm// weil es gibt einfach so viel verschiedene Variationen, und jede Variation in sich hat wieder eine eigene Variation [...]" ("[...] as soon as you search on your own it is really complicated, because there are so many variations, and every variation for itself has another variation of its own [...]") (I14, p. 10, l. 9-11).

These rather shocking insights provide empirical evidence for the presence of neoliberal components in Vienna, like privatization or the principle of profit maximization as the primary goal. Despite the critical deficits of the concept, it is therefore existing at least in a limited way. At the same time however, Vienna's private sector is still comparably affordable according to him. This has also been the opinion of many other interviewees, as was the case for the informational offer concerning special housing types. In the following chapter, the results get embedded into the analytical framework in order to develop an answer to the research question and sub-questions in the ongoing conclusion.

6. Impacts of the tightening Viennese housing market on the quality of life: Discussion

Now, the results shall get embedded into the theoretical frame in the discussion-chapter. It will be structured in accordance with the three main topics at stake, housing affordability on Vienna's private rental section, its impacts on quality of life and the specificities of the Viennese case. A part on the Löwian postulate will follow, before approaching the research question and sub-questions in the conclusion.

6.1 Housing affordability in Vienna's private rental segment and labour market-integration

The topic of housing affordability and the relevance of labour market-integration as the major influential factor on quality of life will form the first block of discussion.

6.1.1 Societal causes for a rising tenure level

To begin with the discussion, it can firstly be assumed that **neoliberalism** as the paradigm of freed markets and economic competition (Springer, Birch and MacLeavy, 2016, p. 2) is responsible for the rising tenure level on Vienna's private rental segment at least in a limited way. Neither the term "neoliberalism" nor any of its derivatives have been mentioned directly by any interviewee except the real estate-agent despite the empirical existence of phenomena which can be ascribed to it. This fact might be owed to the abstractness of the concept. Empirically noticeable components of the neoliberal ideology in Vienna are for example various construction projects aimed at providing luxury apartments in districts of a generally higher cost-level. These include districts such as the Inner city or ones located along major streets like the Ringstraße or the Mariahilfer Straße. Projects of such kind are therefore implemented for serving the interests of well-off societal groups, thus forming an item to be ascribed to the neoliberalisation of urban affairs as well as to Harvey's Marxist approach to neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007b, p. 19).

The presence of neoliberalism in the Harveyan sense has been confirmed by the explanations of the real estate-agent as an expert in housing markets. These include mechanisms operating behind the construction of luxury dwellings, like the pure orientation towards profit gaining. This orientation causes inter alia the utilization of low-priced resources, while offering the finished products as condominiums of a luxury category. As mentioned in part 2.2.1, an explanation for the preference of private actors to provide luxury dwelling is offered by the fact that construction costs for this type of apartment do not differ substantively from those of other building-types, but meanwhile they can be marketed at a considerably higher price (Belina,

2017, p. 36). Examples for such projects in Vienna are the recently finished Kayser-project on the Inner city's Franz-Josefs-Kay or luxury dwellings called "The Shore" in Döbling. As projects of this type are implemented by private actors, they contribute to the privatization of the housing business, which is inherently of public interest (Kallianiotis 2016, pp. 40-41). The privatization additionally causes an increase in the general tenure level. The profits shall be risen even more by attracting investors from abroad, who are part of the societal elites in the sense of Harvey (2007b, p. 19). Such investors can be seen as the primary reason for neoliberalisation since it is no natural process according to the real estate agent's outlines. Other members of the societal elites consist in super rich actors belonging to the upper one percent of society, who are acting on the global level and can purchase estates and properties in cities all over the world (Aalbers, 2005, p. 46). In many cases, such luxury condominiums are being hold empty as objects for financial investments, what forms on the one hand a paradox situation in times of high housing demand and on the other hand stimulates competition in housing affordability even more (Winke, 2021, p. 2390). All these phenomena ascribed to neoliberalism result in a bundle of unfavourable impacts on the housing options and quality of life especially for households with fewer financial resources. This partial neoliberalisation of the Viennese housing market which has been going on since the 1990s and is limited in comparison to other cities though has also been confirmed in the stock of academic literature (Kadi, Vollmer and Stein, 2021, p. 12). So, neoliberalism has undoubtedly its impacts on the Viennese housing market (Kadi, Vollmer and Stein, 2021, p. 15), what further got noticeable in several interviewees' observations concerning the rising tenure level over the course of time (among others cases eight and 12). Despite this trend, the Viennese private sector has been declared as being still affordable in comparison to other cities also by less well-off interviewees like inter alia cases seven and 17. Furthermore, the private segment is expensive especially for newcomers, what was the case for the fourth interviewee. In this context, also experiences with other housing markets were relevant, like in cases seven to nine. Critically to be reminded although needs the fact that neoliberalism is a highly amorphous concept and must not be misinterpreted as a single hegemonic trend (Mudge, 2008; Brenner, Peck and Theodore, 2010a, p. 183; Venugopal, 2015). For the Viennese case, this problem will be further outlined in discussion-part 7.3.

Since neoliberalism is a globalized phenomenon, also the importance of **globalization** is to mention, which is fostering economic competition between cities and regions all over the world (Egedy, Kovács and Kondor, 2017, p. 27). Globalization includes furthermore the societal development of **urbanization** (UN-Habitat, 2022, p. xv). Cities in general grow faster than the provision of housing space takes place, what tightens the market and rises the tenure level even

more due to a discrepancy in the basic economic relationship between supply and demand (Bieri, 2012, p. 2; Wetzstein, 2017, p. 3162). The general tenure level in Vienna has also risen due to an imbalance between these two parameters towards the demand-side, what was mentioned briefly by the second interviewee. This ratio offers an indicator for the overall housing affordability and tenure level in a geographic entity. Vienna's growth is spatially manifested in such impressive urban development projects like the Seestadt Aspern, to refer to the Löwian postulate introduced at the beginning (Löw, 2001, p. 151).

In connection with globalization, there has further the relevance of **exogenous developments and events** been proven, which due to increasing transnational entanglements have impacts at the societal macro-scale (Pries, 2008, p. 22). During the course of time when this Master's Thesis was carried out, both the Covid-19-pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war were going on. These two crises had the potential to influence housing situations in a significant way. The Covid-crisis had widespread impacts on peoples' labour market- respectively financial situation, since unemployment was rising at an extraordinary rate during the pandemic (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2022). The war indeed caused a record inflation as well as the mentioned increase in the gas- and energy price (Bonatti and Tamborini, 2022, p. 6). This topic was talked about in cases 12 and 17. The concrete influences of these two crises on the individuals' life situations in the sample were of high diversity. Impacts of the Covid-crisis depended on parameters such as the type of job done or the conditions of integration into the labour market. People who were either working in the health sector or held a standard working relationship faced no severe decline in their financial resources (for example cases two or four), whereas it was difficult for interviewees employed under precarious conditions (inter alia seven, 13 or 15). Several interviewees had worried about the energy prices due to the war, like cases 12 and 17. Increases have not been empirically noticeable though when the empirical part was carried out as this happened mainly during springtime.

6.1.2 Individual housing affordability

The just mentioned topic of the crises can directly get connected to the theme of the **individual housing affordability** on Vienna's private rental sector. Individual housing affordability refers to the relationship between housing costs and income each household must deal with. This relationship is inter alia influenced by the recently mentioned factors and is of great diversity (Stone, 2006, pp. 159-160). In the frame of this Thesis, individual housing affordability is operationalized on the one hand through the conventional ratio-approach and on the other hand through the residual income one (Stone, 2006). Both the concrete ratio and the interviewees' self-perception of their financial situation according to the simplified categories of well-off and

precarious cases were in accordance with the one-third-convention of the ratio-approach, saying that housing costs are likely to form a burden as soon as they consume more than one third of a household's income (Stone, 2006, p. 152; Furth, 2021, p. 63). Usages in the interviews of either the estimated ratio or concrete amounts of money have been quite balanced as well as independent from the specific socioeconomic situation. Cases who perceived their situation as well-off paid a maximum of one third of their income for housing, whereas the ratio was beyond one third for precarious cases, what was true independently from the concrete household composition. According to the residual income-approach, all interview-partners could maintain a decent standard of living after covering housing expenses even in case the housing expenses consumed more than one third. Precarious cases needed to develop strategies of saving money or were dependent on additional financial support by their families or governmental bodies though. Most interviewees have declared the Viennese private sector on the one hand as being relatively imbalanced in terms of the general housing affordability, but on the other hand still affordable. This forms a remarkable contradiction. In terms of residential segregation, nobody has made severe complaints about the area of residence. This topic will be further dealt with in part 7.2, with the impacts on the residential location on the perceived quality of life.

6.1.3 Relevance of labour market-integration

Coming to the concrete individual housing affordability, it has been confirmed based on the data that the conditions of **integration into the labour market** form the most crucial determinants for the financial- as well as the housing situation attainable. Other ways of gaining either housing situations or fortune, like inheritance, have not been mentioned at all. The above-mentioned categorization into well-off and precarious situations corresponded in all cases to the labour market-situation, with a considerable range of labour market-situations and -biographies included in the sample due to the uniqueness of this parameter. The precarity of the contemporary labour market (Flecker, 2017, pp. 81–82) played a role in nearly one third of the cases. Such labour market-conditions cause difficulties in achieving certain types of housing, like for example homeownership especially for the younger generations (Aalbers, 2005, p. 55). The labour market-conditions were in all cases in correspondence with the financial situation, categorized into well-off and precarious cases. Well-off cases were either employed in standard working relationships or faced favourable wage conditions, like case 12 who works during night-time on a frequent basis. Interviewees who faced more difficult financial situations were finding themselves in an analogous unstable work relationship or were enrolled into university programmes as their main occupation, like in cases 13 and 17. The biographical aspect is also of importance. So, according to the narrations of the well-off cases, they never had to deal with

precarious circumstances or phases of unemployment before. In this context, it is further crucial that many of the interviewees affected from precarity belong to younger generations, whereas older ones tend to have more stable employment relationships in well-paid branches (Flecker, 2017, pp. 88-89). Significant life events with impacts on the job situation have not been included in the sample. Since also the precarious cases could cover their housing expenses all in all, double precarity (Bentley, Baker and Aitken, 2019) was not of high relevance. The cases in which additional financial support was required to maintain the housing situation could be interpreted as double precarious ones though. In a wider sense, the latter interviewees can be seen as “working poor”, but it needs to be reminded that those cases all were situated in part-time working relationships consisting of a small number of hours per week (Verwiebe and Fritsch, 2011).

Concerning the labour market-theme, **gender-specific topics** came through slightly as well. These include inter alia the gender-pay-gap and different levels of wages in cases one and four. In the first case there were huge disparities in the wage of the man and the woman noticeable. Although the couple is working in highly different sectors, namely aviation and childcare, it needs to be reflected in what way such differences are to justify given the importance of both branches. The most crucial case in connection with the gender-topic was interviewee four who needed to relocate herself despite her job which she perceived as well-paid, due to the end of her partnership. Here, it can critically be questioned whether she would have been capable of financing her by-then apartment on her own if she received a man’s salary. The household constellation of a lone mother or the modernized form of the male breadwinner-model (Berghammer, 2014, p. 617) have not been included in the sample.

The **offers** that Austrian authorities have implemented for supporting unemployed people can be interpreted as offers of help for self-help, which are of a rather modest extent. This spare form of such supportive means can be explained by the fact that Austria’s welfare regime belongs to the corporatist one after Esping-Andersen (1990, p. 27), the type aiming at conserving status differences between groups of society. The application of this type also pleads towards self-responsibility of people in an indirect way. It is critical to question here to what way such offers are effective when thinking of the unhelpful experiences talked about at least in the sample, so when there is no match with individual circumstances of living at all, be it either with qualifications and skills attained, individual preferences or even with the place of residence. It can further be assumed that in the context of neoliberalism with its competitive ethics, people with few educations attained are likely to be left behind if they either do not receive adequate support or are able to cope with difficult situations arising on their own.

To **sum up**, the totality of the components outlined above both on the societal and individual level dictate the concrete individual housing affordability on Vienna's private sector and correspondingly the quality of life to be reached. Several interviewees have emphasized on the height as well as on the growth of the tenure level together with the general housing affordability on Vienna's private sector, which still would be rather appropriate (inter alia cases seven and 17). The type of integration into the labour market fundamentally determines the way a household is able to cope with the prices, apart from its constellation. Based on the results, it can be assumed that even households in a precarious financial situation have the possibility to maintain a decent standard of living after covering housing costs, what will be outlined in a more widespread way in the following part. The neoliberal ideology is partially responsible for the tightened price-level on the housing market, which is albeit limited in comparison to other European cities due to Vienna's housing policy and its position in a framework of multilevel governance. So, neoliberalism must not be seen as a single hegemonic trend (Le Galès 2016, p. 156), but needs to be interpreted as embedded into contextual dimensions of the case dealt with, like the institutional framework. Hence, different outcomes of neoliberal components are being generated. The institutional framework of Vienna together with a critical reflection on neoliberalism will be further outlined in part 7.3. In the next part, housing affordability will be connected to the discussion of quality of life Vienna has to offer.

6.2 Quality of life and individual housing affordability

In this part-chapter, I will discuss the quality of life Vienna has to offer in connection with individual housing affordability. The structure of the part-chapter is oriented along the three main dimensions of material and immaterial as well as overall quality of life, bearing in mind the individuality of both quality of life and housing affordability. Apart from the results taken from the sample, the study on Viennese quality of life conducted by Verwiebe *et al.* (2020) delivers another supplemental data-basis for the generalization of the results and for approaching conclusions on the relationship between rising housing costs and quality of life. This study is on the one hand based on the micro census and on the other hand on more than 8000 interviews with Viennese residents (Verwiebe *et al.*, 2020, p. 10). With a critical view on the quality-of-life-term, it must be mentioned shortly here that in several commonly known liveability-studies like the ones conducted by Mercer or the Economist Intelligence Unit, Vienna has been declared being the city with the highest quality of life worldwide for several years (Adams, 2019). A crack in this declaration only took place during the two pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022). Although such studies are to a great extent oriented towards economic indicators and the quality of the business climate (Nasdaq, 2019), also

Vienna's internationally comparably high housing affordability is mentioned in the Mercer-study among others. (The Culture Trip, 2019). Such studies are of limited value though, as the results do not essentially reflect any affairs of social inequality, like according to income (Verwiebe *et al.*, 2020, p. 10).

6.2.1 Material environment of living and infrastructural offer

Starting with the **housing quality** as the first item of the material dimension, it is to say that all people in the sample have all in all been satisfied with their housing standard independently from their concrete financial situation (Stone, 2006, p. 155). In addition, they were able to find dwellings that are appropriate for the specific household constellation (Heywood, 2004, pp. 722–723). Interviewees in precarious situations who were housed in shared flats were content with this housing form as well. The characteristics of the building substance of predominantly old buildings and a lack in space can be interpreted as the most severe quality-lacks dealt with in the sample. Old building substance has the potential to have unfavourable impacts both on the perceived housing-quality and on the category of energy efficiency of housing after Mulliner and Maliene (2012, p. 1837). This was true due to the potential difficult handling of issues of temperature in winter and summer, apart from increasing operating costs. This problem was for example true for interviewee eight. Affairs affecting overall housing quality in the sense of Ilmonen (2017, p. 47) at least minorly, like a broken water tap, have been mentioned in several cases. Such affairs are not at all forming a specificity of Vienna and have not been interpreted as a reduction in overall quality of life.

More bothering indeed was the hard availability of contact to the people responsible for the building's maintenance, like in case four. The lack in space for households that are composed of more people has also been declared as a central disadvantage in the study (Verwiebe *et al.*, 2020, p. 62). The availability of space in square-meters is among the most influential parameters on how people perceive their housing quality (Verwiebe *et al.*, 2020, p. 76) and forms a general indicator for housing quality as well as for a potential tendency towards risk of poverty (Verwiebe *et al.*, 2020, p. 267). These spatial deficits are not a typical phenomenon of Vienna, and apartments providing more space of course go hand in hand with a rise in the rent to be paid. So, the concrete quality and size of apartments can increase relationally to the individual housing affordability. Apart from the lack in space, the disadvantages mentioned existed independently from the concrete housing affordability. Based on the sayings in the sample, it can hence be assumed that Vienna provides adequate housing space with only minor lacks also for lower budgets, although the Viennese housing quality cannot be seen as being extraordinarily special.

These results are all in all also true for the quality of the buildings. According to Verwiebe *et al.* (2020) although, only about one fifth of the people questioned in this study assumed that finding decent housing to an acceptable price in Vienna is an easy affair (Verwiebe *et al.*, 2020, p. 35). This result partly reflects the sayings of many interviewees in the sample about the price level and forms another impressive evidence for rising tenures over time. This contradiction in the results is likely to be owed to the much greater sample the study of Verwiebe *et al.* (2020) has to offer. So, the comparably high housing affordability must not be misunderstood in the sense that the housing market and living situations are not tightening especially for less well-off groups of society.

The perception of the housing quality was also connected to **specific individual preferences** concerning this dimension (Stone, 2006, p. 160). It was interesting that individual demands corresponded in several cases with the housing career and the socioeconomic situation respectively labour market-integration in the background. So, cases with financial difficulties declared themselves as modest (for example cases 13, 15 and 17), whereas well-off cases had more demanding desires (inter alia cases four and 12). This fact is connected to general diversities in the lifestyle, where can be referred to Pierre Bourdieu's study on distinction (Bourdieu, 2002). As the aim of this Thesis does not at all consist in doing research on lifestyles, this dimension shall only briefly be mentioned here in connection with the individual housing demands. This thought may provides stimulations for a further research project on housing and lifestyles, whose theory is based on pieces of Bourdieu's oeuvre.

There are various cases included in the sample who have widespread **housing careers**. One of the most impressive cases here is interviewee three, who has transferred an experience she had made in her early childhood into her by-now housing situation. This experience consisted also in a lack of space, as she had perceived her first Viennese apartment in which she used to live during her childhood as narrow, as she needed to share her room with three siblings (I3, p. 12, l. 16-19). This sense of a lack in space she also has in her current housing situation of 110 square meters, as she perceives it as few square-meters for two adults with two children (I3, p. 3, l. 22-23). Interview-partner 15 prefers her current housing situation compared to other run-down apartments lived in throughout her lifetime (I15, p. 3, l. 12-14; p. 19, l. 26-29). The course of housing situations experienced in the sense of Beer and Faulkner (2011, pp. 20-22) therefore has the potential to have impressive impacts on the perception of a current housing situation.

Proceeding from the sphere of housing space to the quality of the **material infrastructure of the neighbourhood**, it can be concluded that in all cases the offer of facilities for fulfilling

everyday basic needs has been declared as excellent. Such needs include for example food supply (Mulliner and Maliene, 2012, pp. 1835–1836). This saying existed quite independently from the concrete location of dwelling and financial resources available. This is to be interpreted as highly positive given the variety of districts and the respective neighbourhoods included in the sample, consisting of both typical upper- and lower-class ones. Especially the system of **public transportation** has been appreciated in all cases, which has in the literature been declared of being of high reliability (Khomenko *et al.*, 2020, p. 109240). The low costs for accessing the system of public transportation have also been appreciated in case seven (I7, p. 18, l. 3-4). This outstandingly high quality of public transportation gets further indirectly confirmed by the fact that only one household in the sample prefers the usage of private cars (case 16). This preference is justified partly by professional reasons and has not been declared to be made due to an unattractive state of the public transportation network. According to the satisfaction of the population with the system of public transportation, Vienna had the peak position on the European scale in 2015, and 96 % of the people included in Verwiebe *et al.* (2020) have been highly content with public transportation (Verwiebe *et al.*, 2020, p. 35).

The affair of transportation is directly connected to the theme-complex of **climate change and environmental issues**. As soon as the topic arose in the interviews, the interview-partners have often mentioned the personal importance of access to some kind of green space or water (Mulliner and Maliene, 2012, p. 1837) as a major means to cope with heatwaves during summertime. This need could be satisfied accordingly in almost all cases, since Vienna is offering a high density of green space also in areas of lower status. Impressive here is that roughly half of the Viennese municipal area consists of green space (Khomenko *et al.*, 2020, p. 109239). This high availability of green space is said to make another major contribution to the city's outstanding quality of life. Environmental issues such as a bad air-quality or impacts of road traffic have not at all been a topic in the interviews. In Verwiebe *et al.* (2020), the high air-quality and quality of the environment in general have been appreciated (Verwiebe *et al.*, 2020, p. 28, 82). Climate change has further been talked about briefly in connection with insulation of the buildings and issues of temperature, as mentioned above. When inducing from the sample, these minimal impacts of climate change and environmental affairs on quality of life apart from the basic infrastructural offer form evidence that there are no severely unattractive city parts existing in Vienna. The fact of varieties in the statistical life expectancy on the district level (City of Vienna, 2022b) needs to be borne in mind although. These varieties might be ascribed to differences in the educational levels of a district's population and corresponding diverse lifestyles

and disparities in the health behaviour than to the quality of the Viennese environment as such. Further research here is required to elaborate deeper on this topic.

Potential **special needs** to be covered in the nearby area (Mulliner and Maliene, 2012, pp. 1835–1837) could be satisfied in all cases as well. Such needs although were on the one hand sparsely existing in the sample and not of an extraordinary type on the other hand. Examples to be mentioned were inter alia green space for the child in I5 or a veterinary for the cats in I4. In connection with this issue, it is to say that in case the city part dealt with was planned for a specific target group, all corresponding interviewees have belonged to that target group. This topic will further be outlined in the next section dedicated to the immaterial dimension.

According to the **area of residence**, based on the sample there can the assumption be made that there are no severely unfavourable neighbourhoods existing in Vienna. So, no interviewee has complained about the location of the apartment in terms of unattractiveness or a lack in social mix according to either income groups or other characteristics. Hence, Viennese households with lower incomes not necessarily get forced into unfavourable housing situations indirectly, both in terms of quality of dwelling and the city part of residence (Stone, 2006, p. 159). Apart from this observation though, the satisfaction with the image of a residential area on average is higher in the inner districts than in the outer ones (Verwiebe *et al.*, 2020, p. 46). This observation may offers a confirmation for the minimal level of segregation that is existing in Vienna. Spatial differentiations based on the socioeconomic situation can in the Viennese case roughly be made along the line between districts or neighbourhoods of either higher or lower status with the Gürtel as the border, of which the firstly mentioned ones are located within and the latter outside the Gürtel (Kadi, Banabak and Schneider, 2022, p. 7). Taking the Gini-coefficient as a measure of social inequality on the district level, the district with the highest Gini-coefficient based on income groups is surprisingly the Inner city. The most homogeneous indeed is Simmering with the lowest Gini-coefficient, which hence is segregated the most (Gutheil-Knopp-Kirchwald and Kadi, 2017, p. 181). The fact of only minor residential segregation respectively high social mixing throughout the entire city is to be seen as positive. It corresponds with the ideology behind the housing for all-approach of the city-government and the real distribution of the municipal buildings on the city-scale (Lévy-Vroelant and Reinprecht, 2014, pp. 302–303). Potential **commuting times** mentioned in the sample are short as well, with a few exceptions like in case seven whose atelier on the Weißgerberlande in the third district is comparably lengthy to reach, or for interviewee 15 who frequently needs to take commuting times of 40 to 45 minutes. The man in the first case needs to commute to the Viennese Airport located in the surrounding area of Vienna in Lower Austria. He did not mention any limitations in his personal

quality of life due to commuting. So, commuting times which also form a criterion in Mulliner and Maliene (2012, pp. 1835–1836) can be said to do not form a severe limitation in quality of life in the Viennese case according to the concrete area of residence.

To conclude on the material dimension, it can be induced that apart from the deficits in the old buildings, there are no major lacks in quality of the housing stock, given the premise that the dwelling chosen is in accordance with the individual needs of the household members. Going further to the neighbourhood level, the situation is even better. Based on the results collected, it can be assumed that in most neighbourhoods throughout Vienna there is a widespread selection of basic infrastructure available for conducting one's life. Thus, Viennese neighbourhoods make it possible to realize at least a decent standard of living also with a lower budget, given also here that people can fulfil potential special needs. So, there is an excellent selection of amenities existing in the Viennese Grätzls, whereas the disamenities are only of a minor dimension. The individual quality of life has been stimulated in an even stronger sense in case the interviewees are part of a potential target group, what will be included in the following section.

6.2.2 Immaterial dimension and social contacts

Starting with the **personal sense of attachment** the people had in connection with their place of residence, it could be found out that most interviewees have developed a strong personal connection to their Grätzl. This was especially true in cases in which the interviewees have been part of a potential target group the corresponding city part had been designed for. All the cases which are housed in such a city part have been in correspondence with the intention that had been planned, although in the sample this observation is predominantly true for the target group of young families with children. All those interviewees were telling about quite intense social connections with people living in the same Grätzl. The most impressive geographic entity concerning target groups and neighbourhood contacts in the sample is the Sonnwendviertel. The two young families in the third and 16th case have extensive contacts with both their neighbours and the people living in their area. This fact that they mainly ascribed to their current life situation consisting in parents with young children. In addition, the entire Sonnwendviertel is constructed in a way that stimulates the emergence of social interactions (Wilkerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 596), what is further supported by the community rooms in the quarter-houses. The first case as a counterexample of an unmarried couple who is childless did not feel that attached to the Sonnwendviertel. Indeed, they need to transfer themselves to other city parts to fulfil typical needs, such as going out in the evening.

The issue of **coincidence with the planned target group** was also true for case five living in Simmering, which they declared as being a district oriented towards the needs of young families

and to which they feel to belong to. Their latter home-district Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus would primarily be aimed at students or at least the generation of younger adults without children. The latter target group covers with the life-situation of interviewee seven, who has been developing a high sense of attachment since she had moved to that district. The three cases of the Sonnwendviertel belonging to the target group were all well-off financially, although case three was housed in a co-operative flat. Interviewees who were not part of a target group only had a low density of social interactions as well as sparse desires to get in touch with people. Sayings on how this fact is connected to the concrete financial situation respectively housing affordability are not available in the sample, although it can be assumed that a well-off financial situation stimulates the emergence of social contacts even more due to a rise in opportunities that can be realized. Most interview-partners who were not part of a target group have developed a strong sense of belonging to Vienna as well though.

Proceeding to the topic of contact with **neighbours and people living in the same house**, it can be said that in many cases the tendency towards anonymity (Zito, 1974, p. 243) has been confirmed in the sample. Several exceptions were available though, in which vivid exchanges with the people living in the same building are taking place on a regular basis. Examples here are interviewees seven, 14 or the man in the 12th case who has friends of him co-living in the house. The often-mentioned superficiality of neighbourly contacts did not form a severe problem for any of the interviewees affected. There was not even a difference in desire noticeable in the case of interviewees who were living alone, although the two examples (I7 and I14) mentioned above are both in a lone situation. The general low desire to communicate with people co-living in the same building can be explained by the fact that the interviewees have widespread social networks in other spheres of living. Even personal preferences concerning the desire to get in touch with the neighbours have been talked about, which were mostly in accordance with the life-situations of the corresponding interview-partners. This was inter alia the case in I2 who does not have strong desire to talk to her neighbours and is content as long as it is silent in her apartment. On the workplace, she has much contact with people. Even though the real estate-agent in the 14th case stays in contact with one of his neighbours, it is more essential for him to have spatial access to his family, as is for interviewee 13 the reachability of his friends' places. So, even though the tendency of high anonymity between the inhabitants of a building has been confirmed all in all, this component had no major impacts on the quality of life of the interviewees, as most of them both preferred and were able to satisfy social needs in other spheres of everyday living. Housing affordability and monetary issues have not been talked about in connection with this topic.

It can be induced from the sample that anonymity between people co-living in buildings as well as in urban neighbourhoods is increasing in general. The concrete form of neighbourly interactions in the individual cases depended fundamentally on the life situation and on activities aimed at getting in contact with people implemented in a self-responsible way. As far as city parts are oriented towards specific societal groups, being part of that group forms a major stimulant for the emergence of social interactions. Furthermore, it can be said that especially interviewees who are living in such a city part have developed some high sense of attachment to their territory of living due to access to a local social network (Weijs-Perrée *et al.*, 2017, p. 134). This fact has positive impacts on their identification with Vienna respectively their individual identity as well as on the social cohesion in the entire city (Novy, Swiatek and Moulaert, 2012, pp. 1877-1879). Inducing this observation to the populations of city parts targeted at serving the needs of specific groups, it is to assume that the city government has made a worthwhile contribution towards stimulating the emergence of a sense of peoples' belonging by constructing and promoting city parts in a corresponding way. An essential precondition in this context consists in affordable housing for the target group though, what was at least fulfilled for the people included in the sample. Continuing reflecting, there is the tendency noticeable that contacts to neighbours or co-living inhabitants on the building-scale in greater cities are of no high relevance for people. This tendency is likely to arise because other types of contacts like familiar ones, ones on the workplace or friendship-networks are more important to have the opportunity to be accessed. In case neighbourly contact is desired, people tend to take self-induced action, as did interview-partner 14. The results concerning interactions with neighbours therefore coincide to a remarkable extent with the sayings in Zito (1974, p. 243).

6.2.3 Overall quality of life

To start with this dimension, it needs to be reminded to the notion of Kısar Koramaz (2014, p. 50) that a **dwelling's location** is inherently connected to a household's **life opportunities**.

I have mentioned in parts 2.4.3 and 3 that the problem of **residential segregation** caused by socioeconomic criteria (Tammaru *et al.*, 2020, p. 4) is still only marginally existing in Vienna (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021, p. 87). It can therefore be assumed that it is not that crucial where to reside in Vienna to get access to life opportunities including social integration in the sense of Kısar Koramaz (2014, p. 50). The location of residence of course matters when it comes to the concrete Grätzl, special needs and the topic of target groups outlined. This form is dictated by individual housing affordability and corresponding potentials and restrictions. An impressive example here is interviewee seven who mentioned massive improvements in her quality of life as soon as she had relocated herself from the eight to the 15th district. The case

that different spheres of everyday living are performed in diverse city parts was true for several interviewees. The unmarried couple in the first case for example prefers to leave the Sonnwendviertel for other parts of Vienna in case they want to fulfil typical needs for their life-situation. Interviewee eight frequently transfers herself to the first district for the consumption of culture, and interviewee 15 spends her leisure time to a great extent outside of Meidling. So, the assumption that people spend most of their lives in their neighbourhood or at least in its surroundings (Kısar Koramaz, 2014, p. 50) cannot definitely be confirmed in the case of Vienna. This might be true because transfer to other city parts does not form a significant affair concerning the quality of life perceived. So, social integration and life opportunities distributed throughout the entire city can be accessed in an uncomplicated way at least potentially, although the concrete form of participation in the totality of opportunities again depends on the financial situation. The high reachability of all Vienna is likely to be ascribed firstly to the excellent public transportation and secondly due to Vienna's limited size in comparison to other major cities, such as inter alia Istanbul, on which Kısar Koramaz has conducted his study cited here. Due to the rising housing costs, it has become more difficult in general to afford housing in upper-class-districts, such as the first one (case 8). It is also noticeable that precarious cases are predominantly housed in lower-status-districts outside the Gürtel, like Meidling or Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus (cases 7, 13, 17). Nevertheless, they have declared having a high quality of life and do not feel disadvantaged by their residential location in terms of infrastructural offer, access to social contacts or even the image of the city part. As I have mentioned in the part on the material dimension, potential commuting times have also not been perceived as a burden at all.

Connecting to the sayings just made, there follows finally the outline of the **individuality of both households and individual persons** when it comes to personal perception of overall quality of life. Apart from the excellence in quality of life Vienna as such has to offer, there are the individual life circumstances essential. These form unique conglomerates of a myriad of components with relevance for a household's or individual's perception of its overall quality of life. Examples of such aspects are inter alia the current life phase and relationship status, individual imaginaries about the ideal living situation connected to biographical issues like here the housing career and experiences made on the labour market. Significant contrasting examples concerning individual imaginaries and desires for the housing situation are formed by cases 12 and 17. Altering life situations caused either by continuous developments throughout a lifetime or by sudden events arising can make adaptations necessary. Examples for the latter that played a

role in the sample are unemployment, the impacts of the crises mentioned or the split-up of a couple-constellation with a corresponding need to search for a new dwelling.

Given the individuality of overall quality of life, the **capability-approach** (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993) forms a valid theoretical background that acknowledges the relevance of this aspect. The term “capability” refers to a person’s actual ability to achieve a variety of material as well as immaterial states that are individually advantageous. Such states are formed of various combinations of functionings reflecting human needs and desires. The capability of a person denotes the skill to achieve such states respectively bundles of functionings (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993, p. 31). Now, individual life circumstances can be categorized according to dimensions of interest, like in this Thesis inter alia the job situation or the aspects of quality of life covered here. The components included represent functionings, which households and individuals can realize in a specific unique way due to their corresponding life circumstances, as has been shown exploratively with the interviewees talked to. Especially when doing an explorative qualitative study focusing on individual cases in an in-depth way, the capability-approach focusing on individualized functionings forms a suitable theoretical basis. In this sample, all interviewees have all in all been able to realize their functionings in order to conserve a high quality of life.

To **summarize** the part on quality of life, it can be concluded that individual overall quality of life has in all cases been attested as being at a high level. This got also reflected by the high ratings two interviewees made on a zero to ten-scale (cases four and nine). Positively to acknowledge is that this opinion has been shared by interviewees who have said that they are in a precarious financial situation. So, Vienna can definitely be attested to offer some extraordinarily high quality of life, since the sayings of the interviewees correspond to a great extent with the basic results in the liveability-study conducted by the city government (Verwiebe *et al.*, 2020). In Vienna, the possibility to achieve a decent standard of living in the sense of the HDI (UN 1990, p. 1) as a basic functioning after Nussbaum and Sen (1993, p. 30) is therefore achievable for most of the population. The possibility of accessing conglomerates of life opportunities Vienna has to offer depends fundamentally on the financial resources available though, which themselves are inherently connected to the type of labour market-integration.

6.3 Specificities of the Viennese housing market

Now, there shall the impacts be discussed that the specificities of the Viennese housing market have on the tenure level on the private sector, including reflections on the practical accessibility of the special housing types based on the sample.

6.3.1 Contextual dimensions of the Viennese case

Given the unique position feature of Vienna's housing policy outlined in part 4.1, it is important to use the **neo-institutionalist approach** after Kazepov *et al.* (2021, pp. 118–119) here. This approach bears in mind both the institutional arrangements and contextual frameworks such as the ones mentioned in part 2.2.2. The specificities of Vienna's institutions in the context of the Austrian structure of multilevel governance are the topic of the next discussion-part.

As has been elaborated in part 4.1, Vienna's housing policy in the orientation of the social democratic city government can be characterized as a “housing for all”-approach (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 53), since it is fundamentally aimed at providing affordable housing space for the maximum of the population possible. Vienna's government though is embedded into a widespread structure of **multilevel governance** consisting of political and non-political actors. This structure has impacts on the concrete form of Viennese housing policy (Benz, 2021, p. 6). Coming to the Austrian political structure, the housing-resort is being governed both by the federal regime and the governments of the federal states. Therefore, major restrictions in autonomy for the urban regime are implemented by the federal government. In general, it can be said for the federal level that at least right-wing parties such as the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the Freedom Party (FPÖ) give priority to the interests of societal elites in the Harveyan sense (Harvey, 2007b, p. 19). This fact gains relevance in case these parties are involved into a federal regime. Since the Austrian welfare orientation belongs to the corporatist type after Esping-Andersen (1990, p. 27), this line in federal housing policy is in accordance with the ideology of this type, which aims at conserving status differences in society (Matznetter and Mundt, 2012, p. 275). The contemporary federal regime is formed by a coalition between the conservative People's Party and the left-wing Green Party, which have contrary ideological orientations with corresponding different programs to implement during their legislative period. Because of the left-wing Greens who are also capitalism-critical, restrictive housing policies from the federal level can be seen as slightly mitigated despite the conservative program of the People's Party. Especially the federal level has thus contributed to the tightening situation on the Viennese housing market. This development has further been stimulated because private landlords and property owners have managed to influence the government in terms of creating favourable conditions for the implementation of their interests from the 1990s on (Kadi, 2015; Kadi, Vollmer and Stein, 2021, p. 16). This fact inherently reflects the Harveyan approach to neoliberalism, namely the government as acting for the interests of societal elites and for pursuing the goal of setting up “a good business climate” (Harvey, 1989, p. 11). The continuously by the social democrats governed Vienna indeed still represents the interests of the tenants.

At a supranational level, also the European Union (EU) has influence on Vienna's housing policy. This got empirically evident in the transfer of management competencies for the social housing stock towards the limited profit housing associations (LPHAs) in 2004 due to the Maastricht treaty. Because the LPHAs as an important nongovernmental actor need to operate at least cost covering, the EU has contributed to weaken the steering capacity of the Viennese government. This is further true since the LPHAs are orchestrated by the federal government (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 57). At the same time although, the stock managed by the LPHAs is primarily aimed at serving the needs of middle class-households, wherefore the target group for municipal housing has been broadened (Mundt, 2018, p. 21). Nevertheless, the housing policy of the Viennese city government is traditionally strongly institutionalized and characterized by a high degree of stability and consensus (Kadi, Vollmer and Stein, 2021, pp. 13-14). Therefore, it has been conserved for almost the entire last century with hardly any significant changes. A critical point to mention although is that the Viennese political system is oriented towards the top-down-principle, thus providing few opportunities for the population to participate in political decision-making (Kadi, Vollmer and Stein, 2021, p. 14).

Despite this orientation in favour of housing for all, societal phenomena taking place on higher geographical scales nevertheless have impacts on Vienna's development. To include the notion of **neoliberalism as a globalized phenomenon** here in the political framework of Vienna, it is to say that especially new housing construction is increasingly unaffordable, as a significant portion of new construction has shifted from subsidized units toward commercially yet privately financed ones in recent years, thus producing housing that is unaffordable for most households of low-income (Kadi, Vollmer and Stein, 2021, p. 14). This new housing construction often consists of the luxury projects mentioned in the first part of discussion. In addition, also people who have newly moved to the city face unfavourable conditions on the privately tenured sector, as they are confronted with the rising tenure level and cannot benefit from old contracts (Mundt, 2018, p. 17). In the sample, this fact got evident in several cases who have criticized the high level of tenures (inter alia four, seven and eight). Due to the relevance of a building's year of construction when it comes to the concrete tenure to be paid, it was surprising that almost no interviewee knew this year for his or her respective building exactly, apart from the knowledge whether it was an old or newly built one. This aspect hence was almost of complete irrelevance in the sample, but since especially long-sitting tenants are the major profiteers of these structural characteristics of the housing law, it can be assumed that this knowledge is not that relevant for people with a new housing situation.

Because of both the integrated rental sector (Gutheil-Knopp-Kirchwald and Kadi, 2017, p. 176) and the regulation of rents (Kadi, 2015, p. 252; Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 58), the nevertheless existing tenure growth due to the societal developments outlined and the political competition on the federal and city level is of limited extent in comparison to other major European cities. This fact has been appreciated by the same interviewees who have criticized the height of the tenure level. The specific form of both the housing types as such as well as of the frameworks and conditions of access can be seen as a component of the Viennese respectively the Austrian political system outlined in the third chapter. Hardly any significant changes have taken place at the level of governance. Vienna's housing policy is traditionally strongly institutionalized and characterized by a high degree of stability and consensus (Kadi, Vollmer and Stein, 2021, pp. 13-14). The housing for all-approach can therefore be characterized as a historically grown unique position feature of Vienna (Robinson, 2002, pp. 545–546) that is embedded in a societal structure that stimulates the emergence of tightening urban housing markets.

6.3.2 Accessibility of the Viennese housing market's specificities

To proceed, it can be said that the **concrete experiences** the people in the sample have made with the specificities of the Viennese housing market had been of remarkable controversy. One of the most striking and bothering obstacles mentioned by nearly all interviewees who have tried to inform themselves on the internet as the contemporary dominant medium for information-gaining was the chaotic way of how relevant information is being presented. Because of this form of presentation, it was both a confusing and time-consuming affair for the interested parties to inform themselves. This caused frustrations and reluctance to elaborate deeper on topics of interest. Hence, knowledge-stocks of the interviewees often remained of fragmentary nature due to superficial information-gaining that has often been reduced to some communicative exchanges with their social network. Apart from the pure frustration that arose in nearly all cases who talked about this issue, limited time-budgets have often been mentioned to have prevented interested parties from deeper occupation. The factor of limited time-budgets refers to the general tendency towards more stressful lifestyles out of an ongoing acceleration of social life. This vast field of research has been investigated inter alia by German sociologist Hartmut Rosa in his widespread book on social acceleration (Rosa and Trejo-Mathys, 2013). The acceleration of social life is in accordance with the logics of growth and efficiency as fundamental ideological components of capitalism respectively in the economic sphere of the neoliberal ideology. Hence such limited time-budgets offer another evidence for the existence of neoliberal

components in current everyday living (Wilson, 2018, pp. 21–23) despite the concept's weaknesses in academia. Given the overall societal development of limited time-budgets, one possible explanation for the way of how the stock of information is being presented consists in that it aims at reducing the number of applicants. Interpreted this way, it could be a strategy consciously implemented by the city government to conserve the scarce housing space for people who essentially have a need to gain access to it. Hence, such people take the time necessary to inform themselves despite potential scarce temporal resources also due to corresponding precarious financial situations that can be anticipated.

Other **bothering frame-circumstances** that have been mentioned consist in long periods of waiting, high additional costs like redemptions as well as difficulties with communication. Potential waiting periods could potentially last for years, with corresponding sparse offers of housing options. Such waiting periods can be seen as problematic, since housing space usually is needed soon after the necessity for a relocation has arisen. Concerning the confusing informational offer, interviewee 14 criticized the high variety of housing-types that are existing. This also includes the practice of re-labelling types that are practically the same, what further confuses interested parties. The variety of potential contract forms supports this development even more. Due to this overwhelming chaos in connection with limited temporal budgets, there can the assumption be made that it is a hard and lengthy affair to both search and apply oneself for a special housing type.

6.3.3 Summary

To **sum up** the impressions gained about the specificities of Viennese housing policy, it can firstly be said that Vienna's system is oriented towards high inclusion at least in the theoretical sphere. In practice although, there are major obstacles existing in gaining entry, such as the chaotic informational offer, the extensive waiting periods, or even communicative difficulties. It can be assumed that such frame circumstances contribute to weaken the maintenance and conservation of a favourable image of the Viennese public section, what may be disadvantageous for the political representatives in charge.

The obstacles get evident even more strikingly when thinking of the peculiar fact that one case has forgotten that he had applied for a municipal apartment at some point in the past. Furthermore, municipal apartments are not suitable in case additional costs such as redemptions are hardly affordable despite the bearable rent level. The erosion of some excellent image of Viennese housing in general is also likely to being stimulated by landlords and people in charge of building administration, as communicative experiences with such responsible parties were

negative in most cases. This fact may reflect characteristics of Viennese mentality. The problem of over-demand concerning municipal apartments forms an empirical example of the offer-demand discrepancy as well as Vienna's growth and urbanization in a global context. This fact might deliver a justification for the confusing way of informational presentation.

In a nutshell, there is a discrepancy between theory and practice existing on Vienna's social housing sector. On the one hand, there is the formally promoted housing for all-approach, whose frame-circumstances in practice are on the other hand rather deterrent. In addition, also the various policy shifts during the last 35 years have weakened the competencies of the city government. The private segment on the contrary can be entered in an uncomplicated and fast way. Despite all these significant deficits in practice, the ideological background that has led to the housing for all-approach is still to be considered as favourable, also because it is the primary reason for the still available high affordability on the private rental sector. The latter forms a unique position feature of Vienna, which reduces the overall increase in tenures to an all-in-all bearable level through both the competition between private and social housing and the strictly implemented mechanism of rent regulation on the private rental sector. Another material outcome of the Viennese housing for all-approach consists in the promotion of social mixing in city parts via arranging the municipal buildings throughout the entire city (Lévy-Vroelant and Reinprecht, 2014, pp. 302–303).

At the end of this discussion-part, there is to be summarized that the approach to social housing promoted by the Viennese government is still present at least on the ideological level as well as being reflected in the material conditions due to the distribution of the stock of municipal buildings. The latter fact will now be reflected on in the last part of discussion dedicated to the spatial sociological postulate by Martina Löw.

6.4 Spatial sociological postulate: Space as a relational entity

Coming back to the **Löwian postulate** saying that space is constituted relationally out of arrangements between actors and goods (Löw, 2001, p. 154), also the Vienna of nowadays is a product of human activity and constant interaction of people with their living environment. This interactional process is taking place continuously from the very historical beginnings of the city on. The distribution of the stock of municipal buildings throughout the entire city can in the sense of the Löwian postulate be interpreted as the spatial manifestation of the nearly century-long predominance of the social democratic city government as well as of social democratic thought as such. This reflection refers to the materialization of relationships of power and the question of which actors have the potential to shape urban environments, which is an inherent

part of the Löwian postulate. Hence, social democracy has manifested itself the urban morphology of Vienna (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 103). Analogically, the neoliberal counterpart is materially reflected in the projects of luxury housing implemented by private companies, which are located primarily in upper class districts like the Inner city or Döbling. Such districts therefore partly get subordinated under the logic of the exchange value (Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 67–68) and commodification of goods in the sense of Karl Marx (Marx, Fowkes and Fernbach, 1981).

Discrepancies and the political fight between diverse parties, ideologies, and different governmental scales get noticeable in the material relations as well, when reflecting on the phenomenon of multilevel governance and different political actors participating in the overall structure. This is *inter alia* true for the discrepancies in the federal as well as the city government's political orientation. The nevertheless still existing predominance of the social democrats is materially reflected in the distribution of the municipal buildings throughout the entire city, since apart from the stock being administered by the LPHAs, the city government is in full charge of the social housing stock. Spinning this piece of thought further in the context of the relational approach to space, a city can be understood as a “projection of society on the ground” (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 109), whose fundamental basis is thought and materially reflects the current state of society (Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 114–115; Harvey, 2008). This type of thinking has the potential to kick off stimulating theoretical reflections when thinking of that Austria is a democracy whose regimes in charge are rooted in the population (RIS, 2023). The Lefebvrian projection of society on the ground is generally spoken true according to the mainstream political orientation of the population who has the right to take part in the elections affecting the geographic entity at stake. This is only true in case the latter is being governed in a democratic way, what is of course the case for Vienna. In the sense of Lefebvre's quote, the material relations therefore reflect the predominant ideological thought and political orientation of the Viennese respectively partly the Austrian population. The latter gets evident when remembering again that higher scales have significant impacts on Viennese housing policy, thus influencing the concrete form of the housing market and quality of life for Vienna's population.

Proceeding to the under-acknowledged **temporal dimension** (Frehse, 2017, pp. 513–514) with the latter thought in mind, it is to say that Vienna has been shaped continuously out of power relations that emerged historically until the present day. The temporal aspect also refers to history as a basic contextual dimension introduced in section 2.2.2 (Robinson, 2002). Connecting the temporal or rather historical dimension to the governmental sphere, it is important to both gain and raise awareness for the fact that the governments can change rapidly into unfavourable states. In the case of Vienna, this got overwhelmingly evident in history when thinking of the

national socialist period. During this period, the city has been governed by the dramatic counterpart of social democracy. As a result, governmental states need to be seen as highly fragile. It is vital here to bear in mind that as soon as favourable political circumstances get taken for granted, being aware of their fragility is essential. The latter especially is important in times of a world that gets increasingly incalculable. For Vienna, it is hence important to conserve the housing for all-approach to maintain its spatial relations, which are to a great extent caused and conserved by an impressive stock of social housing distributed all over the city. The demand of conserving and further promoting the political status-quo gets even more crucial when considering the nevertheless rising prices on the private housing segment despite the comparable affordability that is still existing until today.

7. Current challenges on the Viennese housing market: Conclusion

The aim of this Master's Thesis was to conduct an explorative qualitative inquiry into the impacts of declining housing affordability on the quality of life of people with a new housing situation on Vienna's private rental segment. This primary goal was supplemented by considering the role of labour market integration as well as of the specificities of the Viennese case. In the first part of this final chapter, there shall now the research question and the two sub-questions be approached, before the Thesis will be concluded with a short outlook on further possible research and a final statement.

7.1 Approach to the research question and sub-questions

The **main research question** to be approached in this Thesis looks as follows:

What impacts do rising rental prices in the private housing sector have in Vienna, in particular on the quality of life of people who have a new housing situation in that segment?

In order to develop an answer to this question on the basis of the results gained in this project, it can be said that the developments diagnosed in the introduction concerning **general urban housing affordability** are also true for Vienna. Both the general height of the rental level and a rise during the recent past have been confirmed by the majority of the sample. Important causes for this tendency consist inter alia in societal phenomena like ongoing urbanization and globalization with corresponding increasing economic competition. Components to be ascribed to neoliberalism are affecting the Viennese housing market as well, including privatization or the construction of luxury projects in well-off districts. While criticizing the high rental level on the private sector, many interview-partners have declared the housing cost level in Vienna still as comparably bearable. The main reason for this still existing high general housing affordability can be found in the Viennese government's approach to housing. Apart from the societal

phenomena mentioned above, current crises like the Covid-pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war especially have impacts on housing affordability on the individual level. Concerning **individual housing affordability**, it is positive to mention that all interviewees could come along appropriately both with their housing and everyday expenses. This was true due to the two measures of the ratio and the residual income approach. For the well-off cases, this affair had not been a problem at all, whereas interviewees in precarious situations needed to develop bundles of strategies aiming at saving money. These strategies included inter alia living in shared flats, buying second hand-items or requesting financial support by either their family network or the government as ultima ratio.

Proceeding to the topic of **quality of life**, it can be summarized that all interviewees have perceived their quality of life according to the approach used in this project as good to excellent. Especially the material infrastructure has been appreciated as being of outstanding quality. The housing quality however is only of average standard. Furthermore, the individual perception of quality of life is likely to be influenced both by individual criteria and the housing career of the inhabitants. Coming to the immaterial dimension, it can be concluded that as far as the interviewees were part of a potential target group the city part at stake was oriented towards the sense of belonging to Vienna and the Grätzl was especially deep. Since residential segregation is taking place only to a minimal extent in Vienna, its districts and neighbourhoods can reductively be categorized into ones of higher and lower status as basic categories of segregation. Here it is important to mention however that also those of lower status do not provide severely unfavourable conditions of living. This has been proven at least in this explorative study, of which most of the precarious cases included is housed in areas of lower status located outside the Gürtel. Given these facts, it can be concluded that the concrete residential location does not matter that crucially for the individual quality of life to obtain. This might be true because of Vienna's limited size and the excellence of the public transportation system. So, the transfer to other districts to serve both material and social needs does not form a major affair. People therefore can take advantage of widespread life opportunities, whose concrete realization again depends on the individual financial situation though.

To **summarize** on the question about the impacts of the rising housing costs on the quality of life of people who have a new housing situation on the private sector, it can be assumed that Vienna's quality of life is of a high standard also in cases of lower individual housing affordability. This is true at least in case certain strategies are implemented, like for example living in shared flats. Especially this co-living in apartments is likely to form a central strategy to cope with the tightening situation on the housing market in the future. It can further be assumed that

the concrete location of living does not have a fundamental impact on what material and immaterial life opportunities are potentially to reach. This is true, because residential segregation still plays a minor role in Vienna additionally to the observation that no severely unfavourable city parts are existing in Vienna. The concrete life opportunities to be accomplished are although dictated by the financial situation, which is itself inherently connected to the type of integration into the labour market. This integration is the topic of the first sub-question.

sub-question a: How is the housing situation of such people connected to their type of labour market-integration?

The **type of labour market integration** forms the most fundamental determinant for the individual financial situation and hence housing affordability. This is true above other possibilities of achieving housing situations and financial resources, like for example inheritance of dwellings or fortunes. With the importance of labour market-integration, widely known problematic phenomena such as gender-specific disparities or the precarity of today's labour market conditions are highly relevant as well. Such unfavourable conditions are often faced by younger generations. In the sample, this fact got evident as older interviewees often were finding themselves in standard working relationships, whereas younger ones were affected by some type of unstable precarious integration. The relevance of the biographical component came through for example in terms of the type of labour, educations attained or demands for the job to be done. Experiences with supportive offers concerning labour market integration have been rather sobering, what is in accordance with the Austrian welfare regime belonging to the corporatist type. It is thus offering only modest supportive means that consist mainly of help for self-help and pleading towards the self-responsibility of people in an unfavourable situation on the labour market. Such disadvantageous offers have the potential to leave some bad image on the Austrian welfare regime in people who are facing difficulties. The political structure of Austria also has impacts on Viennese housing policy, what is the topic of the second sub-question.

sub-question b: What role do the specificities of the Viennese housing market play here and how accessible are special types of dwelling?

Examining on the role of the **Viennese specificities** in overall housing affordability in Vienna, it is first to say the rise in the tenure level on the private rental sector is limited to a comparably bearable extent. The main reason for this comparable high housing affordability lies in the nearly century-long social democratic tradition of Viennese social housing. The two main mechanisms in this context are on the one hand the strictly implemented rent regulation and on the other hand the competition taking place between private and municipal housing, so the in-

tegrated housing market. Nevertheless, Vienna has fulfilled transitions towards more social inequality on the housing market in the form of scarce housing space and a rising tenure level. These transitions were caused by certain events and shifts in policy orientation, which have taken place during the nearer past of about the last 35 years. Main such transitions consist in inter alia the vast growth of Vienna due to migration, policy shifts on higher scales as well as in the global financial crisis of 2008. As the city government is embedded into a structure of multilevel governance, policy shifts on the federal scale have played a role here, since especially conservative political parties promote privatization of housing.

Coming to the topic of **accessibility of Vienna's public housing sector**, it is to say that the tradition of the housing for all-approach at least exists theoretically as well as in the fact that the social housing stock is distributed all over the city. The latter fact leads to the prevention of the emergence of severe segregation. When it comes to accessing special housing forms in practice although, there are major barriers to be mastered, including for example extensive waiting periods or few to no opportunities to raise any personal preferences concerning the area of residence. Especially the confusing informational offer has been criticized intensively in the sample. Due to such unfavourable aspects, many interviewees preferred to search for housing on the far easier accessible private section instead of elaborating deeper on the social housing sector or to re-try getting an offer after experiencing a failure. As another major barrier to consider is the necessity to hold a main residency in Vienna for at least two years, wherefore the segments are not accessible if somebody wants to come to Vienna from a place outside. The lengthy and arduous procedure of accessing has similarities to the Austrian supportive offers concerning the labour market. These entry barriers and especially the confusing informational offer could be interpreted as a **conscious strategy implemented by the city government** to conserve the scarce housing resources for people who have essentially the need of gaining access, thus dealing with the obstacles despite their bothering aspects. Although such a strategy is understandable in the context of the time-consuming activity to construct new housing stock in a city, it is critical to be seen that such deterring conditions may stimulate the emergence of a negative image towards the Viennese social democratic party. This problem has the potential to cause a loss of votes in the elections to come.

In addition, favourable **tenure conditions** on the private rental sector are predominantly true for long-sitting tenants who still hold old contract-types. As a result, especially the target group of this study is likely to face the difficulties of the contemporary housing market. This has all in all been confirmed by the sayings dealing with the height of the tenure level despite the comparably high affordability as well as with the rise in the tenure level that has taken place

during the nearer past. It can thus be concluded that due to the transitions and political discrepancies between the federal and the city scale, the private sector on the Viennese housing market nevertheless is tightening especially for newcomers as such and for people relocating within the city on the private segment. This situation gets worse in case people face precarious financial situations. The strategies of coping mentioned as well as a high-quality labour market-integration and a sense of self-responsibility are therefore ever more important.

7.2 Outlook

It is obvious that this explorative study conducted in the frame of a Master's Thesis could only provide a minor insight into the highly complex dynamics between declining urban housing affordability and quality of life. As the topic is of high sociological relevance and needs to be grasped by using various theoretical and methodological approaches in order to gain deep understanding of the dynamics acting in the background, widespread additional research will be needed in the future. Here, this Thesis shall provide stimuli for following research projects, what is also a motivation behind the method of qualitative exploration. Possible further projects may consist in elaborating on the relevance of the socioeconomic background and lifestyles for the individual perception of housing quality based on pieces of Pierre Bourdieu's oeuvre, as I have mentioned in some places throughout the Thesis. It would further be enriching to elaborate deeper on specific components affecting urban quality of life in connection with declining housing affordability. Many such components had only been marginally touched in this project, like for example climate change. The usage of different methodological approaches further makes a contribution towards the emergence of diverse perspectives. Academic research forms an essential first step as well as a basis on which interventions that aim at mitigating questionable societal tendencies can be developed. Such unfavourable societal outcomes may consist in socioeconomic polarization and turmoil in a city because of segregation.

7.3 Final statement

In order to finally conclude the project, it can be said that the affairs of comparable affordable housing on the private rental sector as well as an outstanding quality of life for the case of Vienna can be assumed, based on the results gained here. Nevertheless, Vienna has fulfilled transitions towards more social inequality, what is also reflected in the full name of the VieTra-project, "Vienna in Transition. (Dis-)Continuities of Urban Change in a European City". Furthermore, the concrete opportunities to take part on the Viennese housing market as well as in the offers contributing to the outstanding quality of life are depending on the financial resources. These are themselves fundamentally connected to the type of integration into the labour market.

The comparable high affordability on Vienna's private rental sector is to be ascribed to the Viennese social democrats, who have for nearly one century been promoting a spirit as well as an approach to housing in which its status as a basic human right and need is being acknowledged (Litschauer and Friesenecker, 2022, p. 55). It needs now to be reminded that such advantageous political circumstances are not to be taken for granted, otherwise also Vienna's tradition of social housing is likely to get threatened. The fragility of the political status quo gets even more evident when thinking of today's high unpredictability, which provides stimulation for backlash towards conservative and right-wing orientations. Hence, it is essential to raise awareness about the worth of democracy and to critically inform oneself about political happenings. It is further crucial to make usage of the democratic right to vote by participating in elections, as far the right of participation in the respective entity is given, like here in Vienna. Apart from the conservation of the Viennese case, the promotion of similar developments in other cities around the world at least theoretically is an important demand for building back neoliberal tendencies, which contribute to sharpening social inequality. The reduction or rather the prevention of such tendencies shall ensure the emergence and conservation of some high quality of life even for people who are financially disadvantaged and thus to the development of society towards a desirable direction.

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Appendix

Interview-questionnaire and uncoded transcripts

Stored on USB-Stick

Abstract

This Master's Thesis is rooted in the observation of rising social inequality in cities, whose manifestation inter alia is noticeable in declining housing affordability. Main causes for this phenomenon consist in major societal developments like globalization or urbanization that is going on at fast pace, as well as privatization of housing. The dynamics operating behind declining urban housing affordability are of high sociological relevance, as it can be considered that the problem will further intensify in the future. Hence it is vital to gain social-scientific understanding of these dynamics to either prevent the emergence of or mitigate questionable societal developments, such as socio-spatial polarization in cities. This Master's Thesis has been carried out for the aim of making a contribution to the research field by conducting a case study in this field. The case study is dedicated to the impacts that rising housing costs on Vienna's private rental sector have on the quality of life of people who have a new housing section in that segment. Two supplemental themes included deal firstly with the role of labour market integration of the people concerned and secondly with the specificities of the Viennese housing market.

In order to approach the complex topic, I have developed a theoretical framework into which to embed the results collected. This framework consists of theoretical items playing a role in the project, including for example societal causes for the transitions on urban housing markets, housing affordability or quality of life. The latter has been split up into various dimensions of relevance, bearing in mind multiple components such as material infrastructure, access to social contacts or the individuality of quality of life. Another chapter is dedicated to the specificities of the Viennese housing market.

The methodological approach chosen is of an explorative character, with the usage of qualitative episodic semi-structured interviews. By collecting data using this method, it is possible to gain an authentic and in-depth look into the impacts that the dynamics outlined in the first paragraph have on the target group of the case study. This is true because people are questioned about affairs of their everyday lives. The sample acquired consists of 15 households fulfilling the two criteria of a new housing situation on Vienna's private rental sector. During the process of acquisition, it was of importance to bear a range of characteristics in mind, such as diverse household constellations living in multiple Viennese neighbourhoods. Furthermore, these households should be located in districts both of upper and lower status, in order to generate a

highly diversified dataset. The data-corps was evaluated via content analysis, as this method allows to set the focus towards the interest of research.

To pitch the results, it can be summarized that the decline of urban housing affordability has undoubtedly reached Vienna as well. Given the nearly century-long predominance of the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) in the Viennese city government, the extent to which the tenure level has risen is limited though. This is the case because this party pursues an approach aiming at providing affordable dwellings for the maximum of the population. Due to these circumstances, all people in the sample said that Vienna provides them with affordable housing opportunities as well as high quality of life. This was even true for interviewees who were facing precarious financial conditions, as they could finance a housing situation at least if they followed a modest lifestyle and were implementing strategies of coping. These strategies include for example living in shared flats. The appreciation of Viennese quality of life is in coincidence with the urban liveability study conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2022), declaring Vienna as the city with the highest quality of life worldwide. As the phenomenon of residential segregation is only a minimal problem in Vienna, a central result consists in the observation that the concrete residential area does not matter that fundamentally for obtaining a high individual quality of life but does the financial situation which is inherently connected to labour market integration.

Referring to the Viennese specificities, it is to add that the urban regime administers an impressive stock of dwellings dedicated to its social housing-approach. These municipal buildings are distributed all over the city. Municipal apartments are accessible according to certain criteria, such as holding a main residency in Vienna for at least two years already. The informational offer about and frame circumstances of access have been complained about rather often by the interviewees, as information is being presented in a chaotic way by the city's institutions. In addition, frame circumstances of receiving access were bothering. They consisted in long waiting periods that could last for years. It needs to be critically considered that such deterrent frame conditions may weaken the positive image of the Viennese SPÖ.

The Thesis can be concluded in the way that Vienna has fulfilled transitions towards declining housing affordability, but still has to offer a private rental housing segment that is comparably affordable due to the nearly century-long predominance of the social democrats. Furthermore, the quality of life Vienna has to offer can be interpreted as being outstandingly high. In that context, it is vital to develop some awareness that political circumstances can change rapidly into unfavourable states, wherefore it is essential to take part in democratic rights in order to conserve favourable political structures for the future.

Keywords: housing affordability, social inequality, Viennese housing market, quality of life, labour market integration, explorative research approach

Der Ausgangspunkt dieser Masterarbeit liegt in der Beobachtung von sich intensivierender sozialer Ungleichheit in Städten, welche sich u.a. in steigenden Preisen auf den Wohnungsmärkten manifestiert. Ursachen für eine solche Verschärfung bestehen u.a. in gesellschaftlichen Phänomenen wie zunehmender Urbanisierung, Globalisierung oder Privatisierung von Wohnen. Die Beforschung der Dynamiken hinter sich verschärfenden Wohnungsmärkten ist von hoher soziologischer Relevanz, da diese Problematik in der Zukunft fortbestehen bzw. sich intensivieren wird. Ein sozialwissenschaftliches Verständnis für derartige Dynamiken ist daher essentiell, um fragwürdigen gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungen wie sozio-ökonomischer Polarisierung in Städten entweder vorzubeugen oder sie zu reduzieren. Das Ziel dieser Masterarbeit besteht in der Leistung eines Beitrages zu diesem Forschungsfeld mittels der Durchführung einer auf die Stadt Wien ausgerichteten Fallstudie. Diese Fallstudie ist den Auswirkungen steigender Wohnkosten auf dem privaten Mietwohnungssektor auf die Lebensqualität von Personen, welche über eine neue Wohnsituation in diesem Wohnsegment verfügen, gewidmet. Ergänzend berücksichtigt werden sowohl die Rolle, welche der Arbeitsmarktintegration in diesem Kontext zukommt, sowie die Besonderheiten von Wien als Fallbeispiel.

Am Beginn der Annäherung an das Thema stand die Entwicklung eines theoretischen Rahmens für die Einordnung der erhobenen Ergebnisse. Diese Basis besteht aus theoretischen Konzepten, welche wichtig für das Projekt sind, wie zum Beispiel Ausführungen über gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen mit Einfluss auf die Verschärfung von Wohnungsmärkten, Leistbarkeit des Wohnens oder Lebensqualität. In Bezug auf Lebensqualität wurden diverse relevante Dimensionen und Komponenten berücksichtigt, wie infrastrukturelles Angebot, der Zugang zu sozialen Kontakten oder die Individualität in der Wahrnehmung von Lebensqualität. Ein weiteres Kapitel ist den Besonderheiten des Wiener Wohnungsmarktes gewidmet.

Für den methodologischen Zugang wurde ein explorativ-qualitatives Vorgehen gewählt. Die Datenerhebung erfolgte mittels teilstrukturierter episodischer Leitfadeninterviews. Diese Methode erlaubt einen tiefgehenden sowie authentischen Einblick in die Auswirkungen der eingangs beschriebenen Dynamiken auf die Zielgruppe. So wird diese zu Themen ihres alltäglichen Lebens befragt. Die Stichprobe besteht aus 15 Haushalten, welche die zwei Kriterien der neuen Wohnsituation in Wiens privatem Mietwohnungssegment erfüllen. Bei der Akquise wurde darauf geachtet, eine hohe Bandbreite an Merkmalen zu berücksichtigen, wie z.B. Diversität in den Haushaltskonstellationen oder in den Wohnstandorten innerhalb Wiens. So sollten die Wohnstandorte sowohl in Bezirken mit höherem und niedrigerem Status liegen, um ein umfangreiches und kontrastierendes Datenkorpus zu generieren. Das Datenmaterial wurde mit der Methode der Inhaltsanalyse ausgewertet, mit welcher pragmatisch in Bezug auf das Forschungsinteresse vorgegangen werden kann.

Um einen Überblick über die wichtigsten Ergebnisse zu geben, ist zunächst zu sagen, dass Preissteigerungen in Bezug auf Wohnen auch Wien erreicht haben. Aufgrund der Hegemonie der Wiener SPÖ, welche für beinahe ein Jahrhundert kontinuierlich die Stadtregierung gestellt hat, findet der Anstieg der Wohnpreise jedoch nur in begrenztem Ausmaß statt. Der Anstieg der Mietpreise konnte begrenzt werden, da diese Partei die Essentialität von leistbarem Wohnraum für die Bevölkerung anerkennt. Daher waren alle in der Stichprobe inkludierten Personen in der Lage, sich eine adäquate Wohnsituation zu leisten. Außerdem nahmen sie die Lebensqualität in Wien als sehr hoch wahr. Beides traf auch auf Interview-Partner*innen zu, welche

mit einer prekären finanziellen Situation konfrontiert waren, sofern sie Strategien zur Reduktion ihrer Ausgaben verfolgten. Eine derartige Strategie bestand z.B. im Wohnen in Wohngemeinschaften. Die hohe Wertschätzung der Wiener Lebensqualität spiegelt die Ergebnisse der Lebensqualitätsstudie des Economist Intelligence Unit (2022) wider, in welcher Wien der Status als Stadt mit der höchsten Lebensqualität weltweit zugesprochen wurde. Da residentielle Segregation in Wien bislang nur ein minimales Problem darstellt, besteht ein zentrales Ergebnis in der Beobachtung, nach welcher der tatsächliche Wohnstandort keine fundamentalen Auswirkungen auf die Verwirklichung hoher individueller Lebensqualität nimmt. Hier ist jedoch die finanzielle Situierung essenziell, welche inhärent von der Art der Arbeitsmarktintegration abhängt.

Um auf die Wiener Stadtregierung zurückzukommen, ist auf deren Verantwortung für einen umfangreichen Bestand an sozialem Wohnraum zu verweisen. Diese Gemeindebauten sind in der gesamten Stadt verteilt. Gemeindewohnungen können zu speziellen Kriterien angesucht werden. Ein zentrales Kriterium besteht in der Notwendigkeit, bereits für mindestens zwei Jahre einen Hauptwohnsitz in Wien zu haben. Einige Interview-Partner*innen standen den Rahmenbedingungen bezüglich der speziellen Wiener Wohnformen kritisch gegenüber, da einerseits relevante Informationen in einer chaotischen Weise dargeboten werden. Eine weitere abschreckende Rahmenbedingung bestand in jahrelangen Wartezeiten. Hier ist der Umstand anzumerken, nach welchem derartigen abschreckenden Rahmenbedingungen das Potential innewohnt, das Ansehen der Wiener SPÖ schwächen.

Zusammenfassend kann gesagt werden, dass ein steigendes Mietpreisniveau auch im Falle Wiens auszumachen ist. Aufgrund der kontinuierlichen politischen Vorherrschaft der SPÖ zeichnet sich der private Mietwohnungssektor im Vergleich zu anderen Städten jedoch durch eine nach wie vor gegebene hohe Leistbarkeit aus. Darüber hinaus kann die Wiener Lebensqualität als außergewöhnlich hoch beurteilt werden. In diesem Kontext ist es essentiell, ein Bewusstsein für die Fragilität politischer Verhältnisse zu entwickeln. Die Wahrnehmung demokratischer Rechte stellt hier einen wichtigen Aspekt dar, um wünschenswerte politische Konstellationen auch in der Zukunft zu erhalten.

Schlagwörter: Leistbarkeit des Wohnens, soziale Ungleichheit, Wiener Wohnungsmarkt, Lebensqualität, Arbeitsmarktintegration, exploratives Forschungsdesign