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Research Article

Spatial Perceptions in a Marginalized Urban Area: Understanding Place, Stigma and Everyday Belonging

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Abstract: Stereotypical spatial constructions are a socially powerful instrument of generalizing and simplifying complex socio-spatial realities while often carrying negative connotations. These constructions contribute to the stigmatization of marginalized neighborhoods. Against this background, this qualitative study uses the example of the socio-spatially disadvantaged district of Duisburg-Marxloh in western Germany to examine how spatial constructions from public discourse influence the local population. The study focuses on subjective perspectives and experiences of young girls with migrant background living in the district. Three semi-structured group interviews were conducted with a total of seven participants. Given the exploratory, in-depth design of the study and the small sample size, the findings should be interpreted with caution and are context-specific. Content analysis results show that external spatial constructions of Marxloh shape not only society's view of the district, but also the self-image of its residents, to the extent that stigmatizing narratives are internalized and reproduced. These findings highlight the urgent need to empower young people in marginalized areas, enabling them to challenge dominant narratives and express their own place-based perspectives.

Keywords: Intersectionality; Gender; Migration; Spatial Stigma; Marxloh; Interview Study

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Highlights:

- Places are socially constructed in public discourse.
- Stigmatizing spatial constructions can have a profound influence on the lives of those affected, even leading to the internalized reproduction of dominant narratives.
- Spatial intersectionality, at the intersection of class, migration and gender, shapes perception, participation and identity within society as a whole.

1. Introduction

Stereotypical representations of urban places are a powerful tool for simplifying complex socio-spatial realities. (Eagly & Koenig, 2021; Radcliffe, 2018). These attributions exert symbolic power and have a strong influence on the social dynamics and individual well-being of those affected, often leading to the stigmatization of neighborhoods that are already facing socio-economic challenges (Eagly & Koenig, 2021). In German-language urban research, these discursively generated spatial constructions in marginalized neighborhoods are the subject of an increasing amount of critical debate (Bernt, 2019; Hanhörster & Woldmann, 2021). However, empirically, this field of research has largely been neglected to date, in particular with regard to the impact of such spatial constructions on the local population (Stubbe et al., 2020). Against this backdrop, the present study investigates how young people living in a stigmatized district perceive their neighborhood and negotiate the dominant narratives surrounding it.

The case study focuses on Duisburg-Marxloh, one of Germany's most structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods (see Supplementary Material Section A). Marxloh is often portrayed in the media as a 'problem area' and has become a symbol of debates about poverty, migration and 'failed integration' (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, (2017, 09.06.); n-tv, (2016, 15.08.)). These contrasting images have produced a persistent territorial stigma that shapes not only external perceptions, but also residents' self-understanding and sense of belonging. Building upon Wacquant's (2007, 2008) work on territorial stigmatization, as well as more recent analyses of its 'stickiness' (Pinkster et al., 2020), conceptual cartographies (Larsen & Delica, 2019), and long-term consequences (Born, 2023), the paper addresses these issues by foregrounding the perspectives of young girls with a migration background. Based on three semi-structured group interviews, the study examines how the participants express a sense of belonging, how they perpetuate or challenge stigmatizing narratives, and how they navigate daily life in a neighborhood characterized by external attributions. Additionally, the analysis incorporates the perspectives of local practitioners from the Duisburger Werkkiste to enrich the interpretation and ground the findings in the broader local context.

By bringing together the concepts of spatial stigma, intersectionality, and everyday belonging, this article makes two contributions. Firstly, it adds to the literature on territorial stigma by highlighting how adolescents, particularly young women with a migration background, interpret

and negotiate stigmatized urban places. Secondly, it provides insights for geography education and urban pedagogy. The study's novelty lies beyond these contributions in its intersectional focus on young women with migrant backgrounds in a stigmatized urban neighborhood. This perspective remains underrepresented in international research on territorial stigma (Crenshaw, 1989; Skelton & Aitken, 2019). Systematically integrating the voices of adolescents with the perspectives of practitioners enriches conceptual debates on stigma and belonging (Born, 2023; Larsen & Delica, 2019; Wacquant, 2007) and demonstrates the potential of perspective triangulation as a methodological innovation (England, 1994; Finlay, 2020; Rose, 1997). This unique combination provides a foundation for future studies and ensures that the findings are relevant to scholarly debates and applied geography education (Esson & Last, 2020). Understanding how young people perceive their neighborhoods can inform strategies to strengthen their critical spatial awareness and empower them to articulate their own place-based narratives in marginalized areas.

2. Theoretical Background

To adequately analyze the subjective perceptions of place held by the surveyed girls, a theoretical framework is needed to consider the complex power relations of class, migration and gender that underpin the everyday experiences in the stigmatized urban area of Marxloh. Therefore, the following theoretical perspective draws on social science geography, spatial sociology, and critical educational research.

2.1 Place as a Social Construct

Research in human geography has established the fundamental idea that places should not be viewed as neutral containers of human action, but rather as socially produced and continuously negotiated through discourse, practice, and power relations (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005). They are not merely the backdrop for social processes, but also actively produce identity, belonging, and exclusion (Rhode-Jüchtern, 2006; Werlen, 2008). While this perspective is now widely accepted, it remains important for understanding how negative spatial representations emerge and affect residents.

This spatial theory is particularly significant in relation to stigmatized neighborhoods. An increasing amount of research has demonstrated how certain neighborhoods become subject to territorial stigma. Wacquant (2007, 2008) describes this as a core mechanism of advanced marginality, whereby entire districts are stigmatized through the media, policies, and public discourse. Subsequent contributions have elaborated on how such stigma persists despite neighborhood change (Pinkster et al., 2020), how it is produced and reproduced through institutional practices (Larsen & Delica, 2019), and how it continues to affect residents even after they leave the area (Born, 2023).

Building on these debates this paper introduces the concept of spatial Intersectionality which is about the study of how different social categories intertwine and interact with each other, and the associated power relations and forms of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989; Degele & Winker, 2010). Different dimensions of inequality affect individuals simultaneously, creating specific positions within social structures (Chebout, 2016). In geography, the intersectional approach provides new insights into the relationship between individuals, society and place (Löw, 2016). This provides a new level of analysis, understanding spatial inequalities as the result of overlapping power relations and examining social categories of difference in interaction with concrete spatial references (Löw, 2016). Against this background the study focuses on the overlaps and interactions of class, migration status, and gender as they manifest in a stigmatized urban context (Akbulut et al., 2013; Mecheril, 2004). This study focuses on how these factors shape:

- Perceptions of the neighborhood place (Lefebvre, 1991; Löw, 2016; Ludwig-Mayerhofer & Kühn, 2010; Oakes & Price, 2008; Rhode-Jüchtern, 2006; Werlen, 2008);
- Mobility within and beyond its boundaries (Akbulut et al., 2013; Kern, 2020; Parikh, 2024; Schwarze, 2019);
- Identity and practices in everyday life (Certeau, 1984; Goffman, 1963; Hall, 1997; Jensen & Christensen, 2012; Lamont & Mizrahi, 2012).

The presented literature provides a comparative framework for understanding the case of Marxloh, where external representations of poverty and migration strongly shape social imaginaries. Marxloh is characterized by urban tensions such as economic marginalization, informal economy, spatial segregation and local self-organization. Nationwide it is known for its bridal fashion mile, a concentration of over 50 wedding fashion stores along 'Weseler Straße' (Petermann, 2013). This form of small-scale migrant economy shapes the neighborhood's public image. Marxloh is also known as one of the districts in Germany with the highest proportion of people from a migrant background (Stadt Duisburg, 2024). Besides that the neighborhoods of Marxloh also have the highest poverty rates in Germany (Stadt Duisburg, 2024). Socio-spatial correlations are intertwining the migration-related diversity and the structural characteristics of socio-economic precariousness (Stadt Duisburg, 2024). This socio-spatial coincidence indicates a complex interplay of structural disadvantage, racialization, and economic marginalization (Kronauer, 2010; Trubeta, 2022). It renders intersectionality visible and tangible through limited social, civic and educational participation, stigmatized living environments and unequal educational opportunities (El-Mafaalani, 2018; Kemper & Weinbach, 2009). Socio-spatial patterns of segregation emerge and reinforce each other through various movements (Manolova et al., 2024). These intersectional dynamics of disadvantage particularly affect females with a migration background (Akbulut et al., 2013; Kern, 2020). As female subjects in poverty-stricken, publicly stigmatized and male-dominated places, they experience marginalization in various forms: economic, social, gender-based, spatial and discursive (Akbulut et al., 2013; Kern, 2020). Their situation is a focal point for structural inequalities that manifest spatially and reinforce each other (Löw, 2016).

The spatial constructions conveyed by the media reinforce existing mechanisms of exclusion. Marginalized places, such as Marxloh, are frequently portrayed in public discourse as monothematic. This creates a complex stigma with noticeable effects on the local population (Soziale Stadt NRW, 2024). These external spatial constructions influence how the residents perceive, move within, and avoid their environment (Gertner & Kotler, 2004, 2004)). The result is social exclusion, manifesting as unequal living conditions and access to labor markets and services for Marxloh residents (Gertner & Kotler, 2004). Empirical studies confirm that its' residents experience discrimination solely on the basis of their address (Ludwig-Mayerhofer & Kühn, 2010; Stubbe et al., 2020). The everyday experiences of denormalization, discrimination and problematization can lead to a restriction of freedom of action, self-doubt, insecurity and increased psychological stress among those affected (Bauer, 2010). As these negative external perceptions accumulate, they often result in external stigmatization which can lead to self-stigmatization and reinforce feelings of internalized inferiority and alienation. Bremer and Gestring (1997) demonstrate that these effects are particularly evident in females with a migration background.

In recent years, the unequal treatment and discrimination observed in Marxloh have increasingly become the focus of scientific research (Cöster, 2014, 2015). At the same time, place has also become a key focus of empirical research (Gertner & Kotler, 2004; Oakes & Price, 2008;

Rhode-Jüchtern, 2006; Weiss, 2020). While previous studies have examined the intersection of different social categories, the spatial aspect of these inequalities has largely been overlooked. There is just a little knowledge about the influence of the spatial construction of their home neighborhood on the local population, especially girls with a migration background (Bauer, 2010). The study addresses this issue.

2.2 Research Aim and Research Question (RQ)

The study examines the stigmatized district Marxloh. It aims to understand how specific spatial contexts influence the emergence, reproduction and processing of intersectional stereotypes, and the effect of these stereotypes on the urban population and their perception of place, by answering the following research question: 'How is Marxloh and its social attributes perceived by local girls with a migration background?'. This question focuses on the perception and evaluation of socially produced spatial attributions. It captures how hegemonic discourses about Marxloh are reflected, adopted or rejected by the girls (Löw, 2023; Radcliffe, 2018). Other possible research questions, such as the subjective processing of social spatial attributions by affected girls with a migration background, are addressed separately in another article. This allows the empirical perspective of this study for a focus on the everyday spatial experiences and interpretation patterns of the girls, while placing their subjective perspective at the center of the research (Bauer, 2010; Caretta & Riaño, 2016). Moreover, the qualitative research design of the study allows to focus on the perspectives of those affected and allows complex, subjective patterns of interpretation, experiences and attributions of meaning to be reconstructed within the context of socio-spatial marginalization (Flick, 2014). Against the backdrop of the spatial theory assumption that place is created through social practice, interpretation, and discourse, qualitative research provides a method for capturing the processual nature of place construction in a differentiated manner (Werlen, 2008; Löw, 2016). The study comprises the context-sensitive and deeply hermeneutic exploration of the social realities experienced and interpreted by participants.

3. Materials and Methods

This section outlines the research design, including participant recruitment, analytical approach, and evaluation strategies.

3.1 Sampling: Participants and Recruitment

Participants were recruited in cooperation with Duisburger Werkkiste, based on the following criteria: self-identified female gender, migration background¹, residence in Marxloh and attendance at a local comprehensive school. All participants provided voluntary informed consent. Because the participants were minors in grades 8–9, written parental consent and participant assent were obtained prior to data collection. To protect confidentiality, measures included anonymizing transcripts, removing direct identifiers, storing audio files and transcripts on password-protected institutional servers, and controlling access to files. The study complied with applicable data protection rules (GDPR) and institutional policies.

These criteria are justified by the research project's focus on spatial intersectionality. This approach considers social exclusion in terms of its interactions (Crenshaw, 1989; Degele & Winker, 2010). Focusing on individuals perceived as female enables an analytical examination of gender-specific perceptions of place, as well as experiences of (in)security, exclusion, and appropriation. This corresponds to one of the research interests of gender-sensitive educational research (Ahmed, 2014). Females with a migration background are often overrepresented in the media, politically instrumentalized and socially marginalized in publicly stigmatized places such as Marxloh although their perspectives are central to an analysis of attribution processes and their everyday effects.

People who live in the neighborhood and have every day experiences related to the place were chosen to talk with those affected rather than about them. This local anchoring enables subjective perceptions to be related to the structural and public attributions of the place (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005). Connecting with a local educational institution made the target group easily accessible and provided insight into young people's everyday experiences. Schools are central places of social interaction, reproduction and, in some cases, transformation. In socially disadvantaged neighborhoods, they often take on additional compensatory tasks (Deinet & Reutlinger, 2023). (Deinet & Reutlinger, 2023; Deinet & Thomas, 2025) Collaborating with a comprehensive school enabled a sample to be obtained that was consistent in terms of age but heterogeneous in terms of social background. Only female students in grades eight and nine were included, as this age group is at a significant crossroads in their lives: the transition to upper secondary school or vocational training. It is precisely during this phase that future prospects are developed and reflected upon, with perceptions of place, feelings of belonging and questions of identity playing a central role (Bauer, 2010; Gryl & Kanwischer, 2023). Their contributions therefore offer valuable insights into place-related attitudes, interpretations, and behaviors. In addition, participation in the study was voluntary. This criterion is necessary not only for ethical reasons, but also because it corresponds to the principles of participatory and emancipatory research (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). Especially in the context of vulnerable groups, it is important that participants take part of their own accord, ideally out of an interest in making their perspectives visible and participating in social discourse. Voluntary participation can lead to greater openness and willingness to reflect in the survey material (Bergold & Thomas, 2012).

3.2 Interviews

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data for the above-described research, as the focus of the study is on subjective perspectives, individual experiences and everyday interpretations — always with a specific reference to Marxloh. Three semi-structured group interviews (total N = 7) were conducted and recorded at the Werkkiste premises. The interviews were based on a thematically structured guide, which was systematically aligned with the theoretical foundations of the research and the specific research question (see Supplementary Material Table S1). The structure was also based on proven methodological standards of qualitative social research, particularly Helfferich's (2022) recommendations for designing group discussions. To make the methods more concise in the main text, only core topics and one representative question per topic are shown as examples.

¹ In this study, 'migration background' is defined in line with conventional German statistical formulation, whereby a person is considered to have a migration background if they either themselves or at least one parent was not born with German citizenship.

3.3 Transcripts

All interviews were transcribed using f4 (version 2025.3.0) and manually checked twice. The transcription applied the transcription rules of Kuckartz and Rädiker (2024). The decision to use a literal, phonetic transcription is justified in the manuscript (authenticity; multilingual respondents), but the lengthy transcription rules table was moved to Supplementary Material Section C (see Supplementary Material Table S2).

3.4 Qualitative Content Analysis

The analysis combined deductive and inductive coding, as described by Kuckartz and Rädiker (2024). The coding process is described step by step, along with an illustrative example, to show how text segments were transformed into interpreted results.

First, the authors read all transcripts repeatedly and wrote memos. Then, they developed the category system using a deductive–inductive process. Initial deductive categories (e.g., C1. Perception of place [Phenomenology]) were derived from the theoretical framework. During open coding, which includes material analysis and hypothesis development, the deductive coding system was supplemented with inductive categories (e.g., C1.1 Belonging). Before applying the category system to the entire dataset, it was tested on a subset of the data. Then, an internal group of experts discussed and revised the system to ensure the categories were suitable for the dataset and to prevent theoretical distortion. This type of validation is considered a central quality criterion in qualitative research (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2024). The final category system guided the coders throughout the coding process. Two researchers independently coded the transcripts in MAXQDA Analytics Pro (version 24.4.0). They coded iteratively in several rounds, holding regular calibration meetings to compare coding decisions, discuss discrepancies, and refine categories as needed. A third researcher was consulted in cases of persistent disagreement. Then, the categories were aggregated into higher-order themes. These themes were then interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework. The coding procedure is illustrated by providing a coding example below. Both researchers initially coded the participant quote, ‘Marxloh is actually very beautiful’ with the following codes: One researcher interpreted the quote as a ‘positive valuation of place’. The other interpreted it as ‘belonging’. During a calibration meeting, these initial codes were aggregated into the grouped category C2.3 ‘Spatial Construction by the Own Peer Group’, which belongs to the deductive category C2 ‘Construction of place (post-structuralism)’. The researchers interpreted this higher-order theme as residents' affective attachment and counter-narrative to public stigma, which is evidence of local social capital that can buffer against external attributions. The final codebook is available in the Supplementary Material Section C (see Supplementary Material Table S3).

Given the exploratory and context-sensitive nature of the study, as well as the use of in-depth group discussions, the analysis followed an information-power rationale rather than numerical saturation rules a priori. After three group interviews and iterative coding, the research team determined that major recurring themes had stabilized, and additional interviews were unlikely to substantially alter the central thematic structure. In the abstract, methods, and limitations, we acknowledge the small sample size and argue for the contextual and interpretive validity of the results rather than statistical generalizability.

3.5 Perspective-Triangulation

It should be emphasized that the analysis of spatially related attributions of meaning requires continuous reflexive engagement with the own research position (Mecheril & Melter, 2011). As a researcher who is located outside the neighborhood, the own external perspective holds both the potential for critical distance and the risk of oversimplification or misunderstanding (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). The academic context and cultural background of the researcher further shape this positionality, inevitably influencing the framing of questions and the interpretation of data (England, 1994; Rose, 1997). As an outsider entering the field, particular sensitivity to power asymmetries between university researchers and participants was required, as well as awareness of the risk of unintentionally reproducing dominant discourses (Finlay, 2020; Pillow, 2003). Recognizing these dynamics, explicit efforts were made to create spaces for dialogue and foreground the voices of participants and practitioners in the co-construction of knowledge. With this in mind, the practical perspective of the Duisburger Werkkiste was systematically integrated into the knowledge-gathering process (Ortiz Aragón & Hoetmer, 2020). The Werkkiste employees were explicitly involved in evaluating the collected data, aiming to enrich the scientific interpretation by incorporating their practical experience and knowledge gained from their work in real-life situations on site, while also critically reflecting on it (Denzin, 1970; Hesse-Biber, 2012). The cooperative evaluation of the results took place in a two-stage process. First, text passages were selected from the three group discussions and submitted to an internal expert group at Werkkiste for interpretation. This discussion took place in a protected setting, free from the presence of university researchers and without any external guiding questions or guidelines (Caretta & Riaño, 2016). This open contextualization enabled a practical interpretation based on everyday knowledge, case knowledge and biographical references. The conversation was recorded to make it available to the university for further analysis. This interview was also recorded in its entirety.

This text-based group discussion was followed by an individual qualitative expert interview with one of the employees from the Werkkiste for in-depth exploration. The aim of this methodology approach was to better understand statements that were subjectively meaningful, but difficult to classify theoretically, in their everyday context (Guest et al., 2017). It validated and contextualized any interpretations from the university that had remained open until then. At the heart of this dual incorporation of practical expertise was the desire to establish a reflexive, dialogue-based research practice instead of the traditional monopoly on interpretation held by university research (Unger et al., 2014). The joint evaluation with social workers enabled the validation of the university analysis and the systematic expansion of the interpretative framework to encompass experiential knowledge gained through everyday experience. The toolbox brought a lifeworld proximity to the interviewed girls, enabling their statements to be placed more firmly within their biographical and social context and their significance for spatial perception and construction to be reconstructed more precisely. This interweaving of scientific analysis and practice-based interpretation made the data more accessible by contextualizing existing interpretations and clarifying sensitive aspects.

At the same time, this form of perspective-triangulation contributes to anti-racist qualitative educational research. By opening up the analysis process to alternative perspectives, the risk of academically distorted or implicitly stereotypical interpretations was reduced (Mecheril, 2004). Any discrepancies between university-based and practice-based interpretations were not viewed as contradictions, but rather as valuable differences that contribute to a reflexive methodology which considers and reflects upon social positioning during the interpretation process. The practice-

oriented interpretations obtained in this way were systematically compared with the results of the scientific content analysis and integrated into the qualitative evaluation.

4. Results

The following section presents the key findings of the study answering the research question 'How is Marxloh and its social attributes perceived by local girls with a migration background?' The qualitative and empirical analysis focused on spatially mediated constructions, subjective interpretations of place and intersectional power relations. The results are supported by visual MAXMaps. The different code strings were visually represented in a structure tree (Figures 1–3).

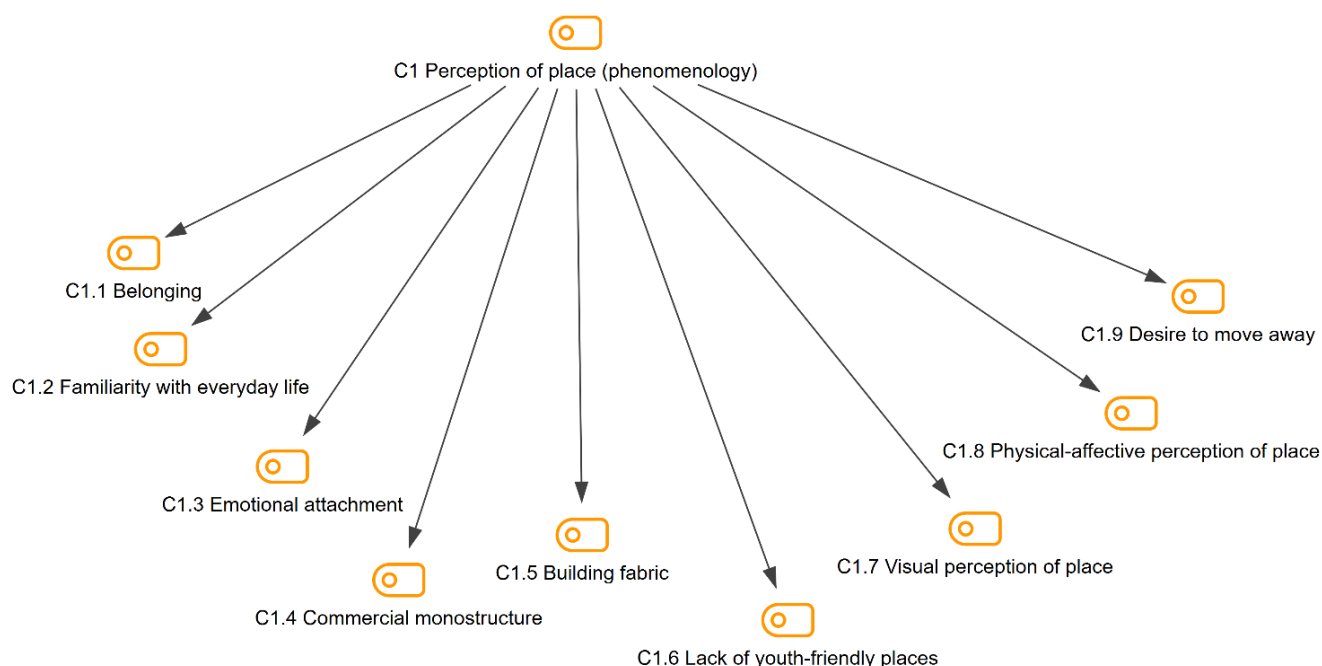


Figure 1. Structure tree of the main category 'Perception of place (phenomenology)' and its associated subcategories at different levels. The figure shows how the participants' phenomenological accounts of their neighborhoods were coded into themes of attachment, belonging, and everyday perception.

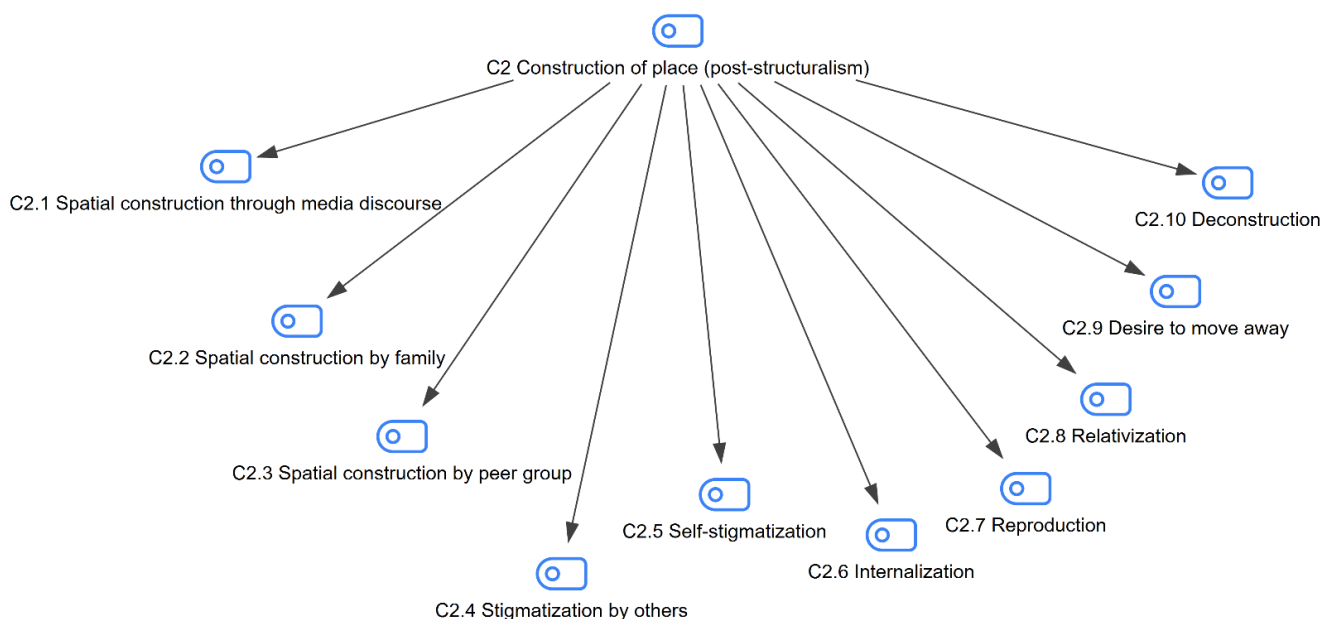


Figure 2. Structure tree of the main category 'Construction of place (post-structuralism)' and its associated subcategories at different levels. The figure illustrates how post-structuralist perspectives on discourse and representation influenced the coding process by emphasizing the impact of external narratives on local meanings.

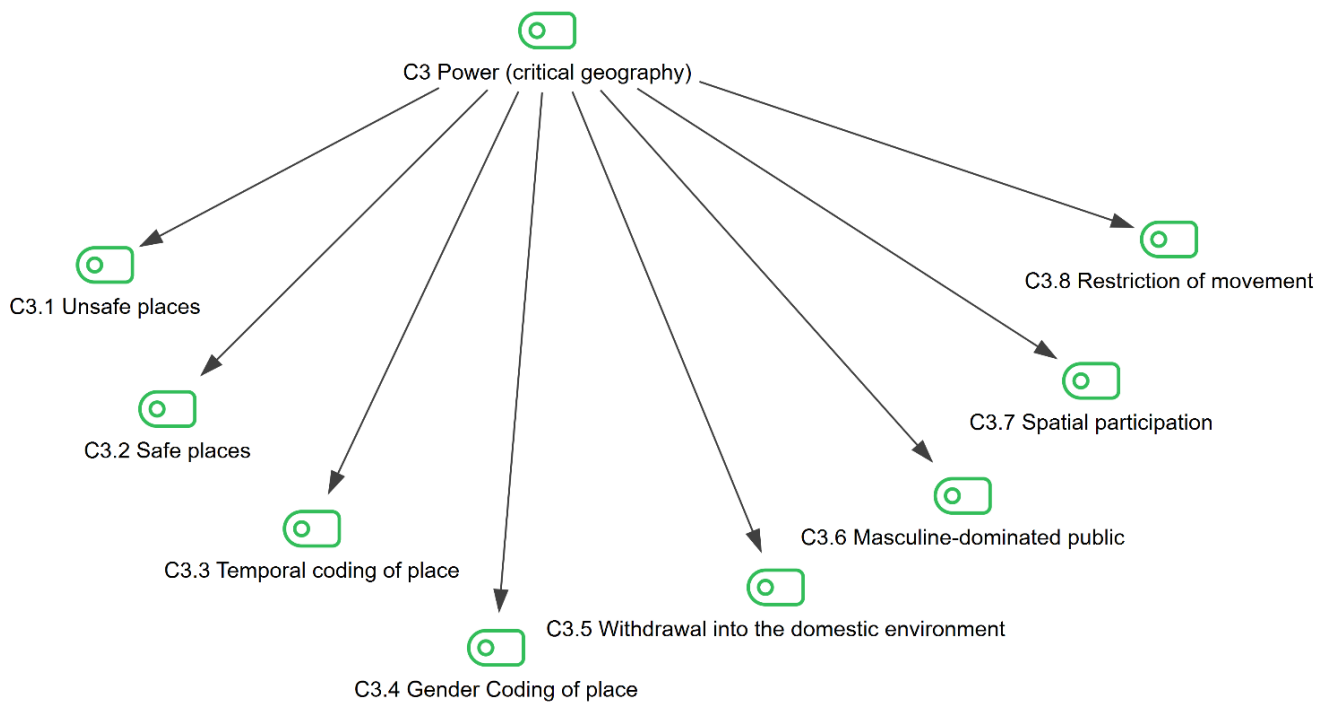


Figure 3. Structure tree of the main category 'Power (critical geography)' and its associated subcategories at different levels. The figure illustrates how critical geographical concepts of power were operationalized by tracing the links between structural inequalities and spatial stigma, as well as residents lived experiences.

The subjective perceptions of place among the participants paint a mixed picture. Their responses oscillate between a sense of belonging and everyday familiarity, and strong criticism of structural deficiencies and an awareness of external stigmatization. This differentiated perception of their home district is primarily based on emotions, relationships and everyday practices, indicating an experience-based perception of place. During the interviews, the girls talk about their own life stories as well as their experiences in the Marxloh neighborhood. The analysis shows that girls with a migration background living in Marxloh perceive and shape their spatial environment in a differentiated way. Their experiences are shaped by social belonging, structural marginalization, and gender-specific exclusions.

4.1 Subjective Perception and Appropriation of Place

Marxloh is perceived positively by the participants within their own peer group: 'Marxloh is actually very beautiful' (C2.3 Spatial construction by the own peer group). Many interviewees describe a strong sense of belonging, nourished by social networks, familiarity with the neighborhood and cultural diversity: 'No matter where you go, you know at least ten people', 'The fact that Marxloh is multicultural is great' (C1.1 Belonging). They describe Marxloh as a familiar place that evokes positive emotions, particularly in the context of family and friendships. There is a strong emotional and affective attachment to the area. Identification with the district is expressed through statements emphasizing community, solidarity, informal networks, friendliness and familiarity: 'Everyone knows everyone', 'They are really nice and always talk to us' (C1.2 Familiarity with everyday life). The strong sense of belonging and spatial community among Marxloh residents is emphasized by their continuous use of the collective pronoun 'we' to refer to an active appropriation of place: 'We also have [...]', 'So we have so' (C1.1 Belonging). Also, in the district newly arrived girls report a rapid sense of integration, which again points to the existence of stable informal networks: 'Even when I first arrived, they were all very nice right away. They were so helpful, asking how I felt here and if everything was okay. That helped me too' (C1.3 Emotional attachment). The interview excerpts show that the girls have a strong sense of belonging to their peer group and to their home district Marxloh. Marxloh is presented as a subjectively charged place of experience with a high level of social interaction and diversity. Despite this strong emotional belonging, Marxloh is also viewed critically by the interviewees. They highlight structural deficiencies in public: 'Because you also see dirt on the ground and stuff', 'In any case, many, many, many buildings are so old that you can see how old the walls are. They're not slimy, but green' (C1.7 Visual perception of place). Beside the social community Marxloh is described as spatially deficient and structurally neglected.

4.2 Public Stereotypes and their Processing

A key finding is that girls are keenly aware of the media and societal stereotypes associated with their neighborhood. They report generalized stereotypes imposed by externals. In public discourse, Marxloh is associated with crime, poverty and migration: 'When you say Marxloh, people think it's dirty and criminal' (C2.1 Spatial construction through media discourse). The interviewees name the media and social networks as sources of these stereotypes: 'I've seen on social media that people only talk about Marxloh', 'What is often written in the media, they research it, and then they think "wow, these"', 'Um, but for example, my aunt is just so sceptical' (C2.1 Spatial construction through media discourse; C2.2 Spatial construction by family). These external attributions lead to different reactions. Individual aspects of the publicly constructed Marxloh, especially the positive attributions, are confirmed and reproduced: 'Well, some things are true', 'It's really pretty here with clothes, yes' (C2.7 Reproduction). However, most of the external attributions are relativized or rejected immediately: 'It wasn't actually as bad as it was portrayed', 'When we talked

about it, for example, I also said: *It's not the same, but it's still OK. I mean, it's not as bad as people think*", "Yes, as I said, it's not actually as bad as people always say it is" (C2.8 Relativization). Various strategies of distancing, relativization, deconstruction and counter-narration can be observed. An attempt is made to distance oneself from the external judgement: *'Actually, I don't care what they say'* (C2.9 Distancing). This distinction is also made by shifting the external stigmatization to other marginalized groups in the district: *'Yes, but I don't mean us; I mean Romina, for example'* (C2.9 Distancing). Moreover, the public image of Marxloh is deconstructed through the girl's own perception of place. A counter-perspective to existing public stereotypes is adopted: *'The fact that Marxloh is very multicultural is great.'* (C2.10 Deconstruction). There is a strong awareness of public stereotypes, but the procession is very heterogeneous.

4.3 Personal Experiences of Place

In addition to their reflective examination of the spatial attributions, the girls reveal their own experiences of place. They describe their subjective impressions arising from their everyday lives in Marxloh, which shape their personal relationship with their living environment.

First, they highlight the poor quality of life in Marxloh, particularly for females with a migrant background: *'Well, I don't think a girl would ever go out there alone', 'I'd rather go out if I need to buy something or something. Otherwise, I stay at home'* (C3.4 Gender coding of place). From a gender-sensitive perspective, the interviewees describe restrictions on their freedom of movement, particularly in the evening: *'Just after 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock, then no', 'At night, uh, walking around'* (C3.3 Temporal coding of place), as well as in certain areas that are perceived as unsafe: *'So there are places where people just don't dare to go alone because there are people there, you have to be careful. No one wants to be in that area'* (C3.1 Unsafe places). The public is described as dominated by males: *'The thing is, uh, they have these men', 'there are also a lot of, so to speak, gangsters'* (C3.6 Masculine-dominated public). The resulting perception of Marxloh as a traditionally masculine place leads to subjectively perceived unsafe places and areas of fear: *'It's a bit uncomfortable'* (C3.1 Unsafe places). This gender-coded appropriation of place is reflected in the girls' limited temporal and spatial ranges of movement, pointing to a gender-specific production and perception of place.

The respondents also critically reflect on the spatial design of Marxloh in relation to its functional design. Especially, the commercial monostructure, characterized by the wedding fashion cluster, is mentioned repeatedly: *'I think these wedding dress shops take too much away from Marxloh'* (C1.4 Commercial monostructure). The existing consumer offerings are described as too expensive and highly specialized, not geared towards the realities of life for young people on low incomes: *'When it comes to weddings. But for normal things, like sweatpants, I'd rather go downtown'* (C1.4 Commercial monostructure). There is a lack of low-threshold offerings and consumption-free recreation places for young people: *'There are good places where you can hang out, for example, but not enough', 'There could be more, for example, McDonald's or something like that'* (C1.6 Lack of youth-friendly places). Overall, there is a feeling of exclusion from the spatial design of the own neighborhood. This often results in the desire to leave Marxloh in the future: *'Yes, I want to move away too'* (C1.9 Desire to move away).

5. Discussion

5.1 Local Place, Global Narratives: Spatial Perceptions of Marginalized Girls in Marxloh

The preceding analysis shows that girls from migrant backgrounds living in Marxloh perceive and shape their spatial environment differently. Their experiences are influenced by social belonging, structural marginalization and gender-specific exclusion. They experience Marxloh subjectively as a familiar place characterized by social proximity, everyday routines and cultural connectedness. This strong sense of place is indicative of a sense of home. However, they are also very aware of the public portrayal of Marxloh as a dangerous, dirty and problematic area. The girls are aware of their position and of the prejudices and stereotypes attributed to them, in particular of the prejudices and stereotypes associated with being girls with a migration background in a publicly stigmatized neighborhood. This coexistence of contradictory spatial references can be interpreted as a field of tension between lived places (*espaces vécus*) and represented places (*espaces représentés*) (Lefebvre, 1974).

In line with Wacquant's (2007, 2008) notion of territorial stigmatization, in which residents' actual experiences clash with representations of place that are demeaning in a symbolic sense the girls' spatial perceptions reveal a tension between their everyday life and their experienced sense of belonging and solidarity, and the stigmatization and attributed foreignness they experience from outside the district. The externally constructed Marxloh is in a dialectical relationship with the girls' subjectively experienced living environment. Despite their differences, these two perspectives must be considered together as they are mutually dependent: the girls' perception of place is shaped by socially dominant narratives, which in turn are shaped by the girls' behavior. The interviewees' statements point to the girls' ambivalent behavior in this field of tension and their ambivalent approach to external attributions.

The use of the collective pronoun 'we' in the girls' narratives indicates a strong sense of place and social cohesion. This indicates mechanisms of social self-assurance (Bukow & Yildiz, 2003). Such a behavior is typical for marginalized urban places (Bukow & Yildiz, 2003). The population living in such places is generally considered to have a low income and to lack systematic access to information or culturally valuable resources that could be exploited by institutions (Bourdieu, 1979). Consequently, life chances and the ability to cope with everyday life depend to a large extent on social capital within the local area (Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000). In stigmatized neighborhoods such as Marxloh, local social capital is a key resource for providing social security, mutual support and symbolic appreciation within the group. The identity of such a community is formed in part through resistance to dominant external spatial attributions, demonstrating how social places are produced through belonging. However, recent work has shown that such resistance is often accompanied by ambivalence and "sticky" forms of stigma that persist across generations and social mobility (Born, 2023; Pinkster et al., 2020).

Negative stereotypes are perceived as exaggerated and unfair. They are negated and rejected immediately because they do not correspond to the own everyday experiences. However, internal solidarity must also be viewed in a differentiated manner, as the negative spatial attributions and perceptions of place in Marxloh are partly based on mechanisms of internalized racism while distancing oneself from the negative stereotypes from the public discourse, with discriminatory consequences. In their statements, the girls adopt discriminatory narratives about other marginalized groups. Certain characteristics and mentalities are constructed by the girls themselves.

They explicitly identify subgroups within their own marginalized group and distance themselves from them by emphasizing the differences between the subgroups. These mechanisms, which manifest in reactions to collective stigmatization, can be explained by the concept of social distinction (Bourdieu, 1979) and the concept of othering (Said, 1978), which serve as a form of self-protection. Externalized stigmatization is passed

on through internalized differentiation processes as an attempt at self-stabilization within the own precarious position. An internal hierarchy emerges within migrant societies, which can be understood as an expression of structural exclusion. These mechanisms also support the Larsen and Delica's (2019) argument that territorial stigma is both externally imposed and internally reproduced and contested. These strategies of internal distancing and intra-group boundary-making serve as a form of symbolic self-protection in precarious situations. However, they also reinforce hierarchies and exclusions among migrant groups. Furthermore, the observed internalized racism can also be explained by the lack of anti-racism education in such an ethnically dense neighborhood. This assumption is substantiated by current statistics on school absenteeism in Marxloh (Soziale Stadt NRW, 2024). Although school plays an important role for the girls as a safe place, the quality of education provided is debatable in this context. This can also be attributed to the behavior typical of communities living in socially disadvantaged and marginalized urban areas (Bukow & Yildiz, 2003). These ambivalent dynamics can also be understood through the lens of social psychology. The way external stigmatization influences self-perception is like the Pygmalion effect, in which negative expectations imposed by others can shape individuals (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Additionally, the repeated experience of exclusion and the perception of limited agency are reminiscent of the concept of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1972). This framework explains why participants simultaneously resist, internalize, and reproduce external stereotypes and stigmatizing discourses. These cultural and social strategies can be interpreted as the result of cumulative psychological pressures associated with living in a stigmatized urban environment. They enrich the territorial stigma perspective by demonstrating how symbolic denigration at the macro level can translate into psychological processes of self-limitation at the micro level.

In addition, the girls' comments reveal that domestic spatial design should not be understood in a one-dimensional way, but rather through different levels of explanation. It is a place characterized by multiple forms of discrimination, resulting in limited participation in public life. This form of spatial utilization can be interpreted as the result of the intersection of structural, cultural, and gender-specific power relations. Structural poverty, restricted access to the public, and traditional cultural role patterns become effective. The domestic sphere functions as the primary place of residence and retreat for the girls, not just due to individual preference, but because the public is perceived as inaccessible and unsafe. The public is here characterized by feelings of insecurity and discomfort, or an expressed need to withdraw, which is reflected in the devaluation of certain places (Ahmed, 2006, 2014). They avoid certain places at certain times of day, move cautiously in the public, and increasingly withdraw into private, safe places. This results in a gender-coded spatial structure in which girls from migrant backgrounds in particular experience discrimination.

Gender is not only experienced in places but also created in them. Marxloh is experienced as a place in which normative ideas of order manifest themselves physically, emotionally, and spatially (Butler, 2006; Kern, 2020). This results in emotionally regulated spatial behavior that reacts to the powerful presence of hegemonic body and gender norms in the district. The limitation of spaces for action is further entrenched in everyday life through cultural role concepts. The gender-specific division of the public is the result of historically evolved patriarchal systems deeply rooted in the Western Christian culture. Such stereotypes can be traced back to Victorian England, Greco-Roman antiquity, and Western Christian traditions (Pomeroy, 1975; Vickery, 1993). Moreover, this appropriation of place is partly due to socio-economic factors: the girls belong to a low-income group with limited access to leisure activities centered around consumption (Abdelrazek-Alsiefy, 2022). The decisive factor is that this cultural practice is intertwined with structural exclusions. Thus, Marxloh is read emotionally, as a place whose use and evaluation are closely interwoven with subjective feelings and collective patterns of interpretation. These emotional associations with place directly influence the girls' behavior in their everyday lives.

The girls' lack of future prospects in Marxloh, as expressed in the interviews, can also be interpreted in an intersectional way. Statements citing mobility within the extended family network as the reason for moving in and out of Marxloh point to the reproduction of traditional family and cultural patterns. These statements serve narrative expectations and media-spread stereotypes about migrant life plans and attachment structures (Foroutan, 2019; Münchmeier, 2011). There is a tension between family ties and the individual desire for autonomy, self-realization, and social advancement. The girls have an emotionally close relationship with their community, which offers them social security, identity and belonging. However, they also experience these same structures as limiting in terms of personal development opportunities. Such tensions between collective loyalty and individual emancipation are common among young people in marginalized, post-migrant contexts, highlighting unfulfilled promises of social mobility in the neoliberal city (El-Mafaalani, 2020; Ottersbach, 2009; Ottersbach, M., et al., 2016).

The results of the content analysis show that, although many of the girls' statements offer insights into their subjective perception of place, their statements often remain at the level of personal experience. Further-reaching abstraction in the sense of structural-critical reflection only takes place to a limited extent. While the girls are clearly aware of the discrepancy between their experience of Marxloh and the way it is portrayed in the public discourse, they are only partially able to analyze or classify this difference in terms of social-spatial power relations. Their subjective perception of place is often anchored within their own everyday life and social structure, which is shaped by their peer group. They rarely adopt an external perspective on their own social situation or the mechanisms underlying the perceived marginalization. Limited social mobility and being embedded in everyday domestic structures seem to make it difficult to develop a more distant perspective and critical deconstruction. Consequently, many statements remain at the level of reconstruction. Their own place is described but not systematically scrutinized. This analytical finding is consistent with current geographical didactic research studies. Bienert (2023) concluded that students find it challenging to distinguish between place as a category of sensory perception and place as a construct. Therefore, in the analysis process, it is essential to bear in mind that deconstruction only occurs when the cause of a spatial construction is reflected upon.

Beyond these theoretical insights, the findings have practical implications for urban geography education, highlighting the importance of engaging students with lived experiences of spatial stigma and intersectionality and developing didactic approaches that encourage critical reflection on the social construction of place. Like approaches in spatial citizenship education (Sebastián López et al., 2023), this study demonstrates that integrating the qualitative perspectives of marginalized youth can benefit geography education, foster critical spatial literacy (Romero Castro, 2025) and strengthen anti-discrimination competencies (Doerfel et al., 2025; Esson & Last, 2020). This perspective will be elaborated on further at the end of the article (see 7. Implications for Further Research).

5.2 Perspective-Triangulation

The practical interpretation of the situation by the social workers from the Duisburger Werkkiste revealed significant similarities with the key empirical findings identified by the university researchers. From the Werkkiste's perspective, awareness of the negative portrayal of Marxloh in the media and society is deeply rooted among the district's population: *'And then very often something like what we know from the media comes up, right?'* (T4, pos. 7). The expert practitioners emphasize that the stigmatizations are not only affecting the externals, but they also have a

considerable influence on the local population, especially on girls with a migration history: *'I do believe that the way Marxloh is portrayed influences you when you live here'* (T4, pos. 44). These findings are consistent with those of current empirical studies on the stigmatizing effect of external spatial constructions (Stubbe et al., 2020). The experts confirmed the girls' observed reproduction of stereotypes from the public discourse at the beginning of each interview interpreted by the university analysis as a protective mechanism: *'But they do it themselves at the beginning; they do it the same way'* (T4, pos. 11), *'So they reproduce what you hear in the media, so to speak. They do that themselves, and I think almost everyone who lives here does that'* (T4, pos. 12).

The girls also repeatedly emphasized the media-focused aspects of Marxloh in their own statements. Initially, the interviews were dominated by perceptions of Marxloh as a place of dirt, garbage and bridal fashion stores. As the conversation progresses, belonging to conditions of trust, time, recognition and appreciation, more positive perceptions and experience in the context of Marxloh's social place emerge, setting a counter-accident to the media's widespread attributions of Marxloh: *'Later, someone says that it's all a cliché and that the media report far too badly about it'* (T4, pos. 11), *'When you talk about it for longer and perhaps talk about people in more depth, it becomes a bit different again'* (T4, pos. 12). The experts moreover agree with this impression based on their own experience: *'I also experience that the networks here are simply pretty good (.).'* (T4, pos. 15), *'And everyone is helpful and is actually always friendly.'* (T4, pos. 19). The practice experts thus confirm the research interpretation that the ambivalent perception of place is significantly influenced by the communicative framework as a central aspect of place-related identity construction in stigmatized neighborhoods (Kallin & Slater, 2021).

At the same time, the Werkkiste also reveals interpretations that differ from the university researchers' interpretation. While the girls interviewed criticize the lack of offers and recreational places for young people as well as the commercial monostructure in Marxloh, the practice representatives relativize this impression by pointing out the increasing diversity in the district based on their own experience: *'That has already changed. There are some really good cafés on the Wedding Mile now.'* (T4, pos. 8), *'The students told me how great restaurants or (.) restaurants there are. (.) That's not quite true.'* (T4, pos. 9). The social workers also put the girls' desire for well-known system caterings such as McDonald's and Starbucks into perspective by referencing existing local alternatives, which ultimately also make up Marxloh: *'You can always find those. But you won't find a Turkish or Kurdish restaurant on every corner. But they do exist in Marxloh'* (T4, pos. 10). This reveals a difference in values that refers to the cultural interpretation of consumption and belonging. It is also evident that there is a discrepancy between the girls' perception of safe and unsafe places and that of the employees of the Werkkiste. In particular, the girls' statements about areas they fear, such as playgrounds or places dominated by groups of men, were not understood by the practices: *'That's no reason for me to go or not go anywhere. I didn't quite understand that'* (T4, pos. 24). Here, subjective safety is interpreted as a diffuse feeling of fear, without the girls' gender-specific perception of place being fully recognized as an independent reality: *'With a subjective feeling like this, diffuse fear often plays a role too.'* (T4, pos. 25). This illustrates the importance of intersectionality sensitive research that avoids premature objectification or relativization of subjective perceptions (Bowleg, 2021).

Overall, perspective-triangulation confirms the value of multi-perspective evaluation, not only for validating empirical patterns, but also for openly discussing similarities and differences in interpretation and experience. Especially in research with marginalized groups, this kind of dialogical evaluation can help question implicit interpretations and reveal alternative meanings. In this context, the workbook perspective offers a practical approach to contextualized interpretation, helping to avoid epistemic violence resulting from academic narrowing (Mecheril, 2004; Unger et al., 2014).

5.3 Limitations

While interpreting the results of the study there are several inherent limitations that must be taken into account.

Firstly, the non-systematic selection of the participants is an important methodological limitation. The data collection was carried out with just seven voluntary participants from grades eight and nine at a local comprehensive school. This selective composition excludes other perspectives such as other age groups, socio-cultural backgrounds and school contexts. Due to the voluntary nature of the participation in the survey, self-selection bias had probably also occurred. It is likely that young people with strong communication skills or who were deeply involved in school activities were more inclined to participate in such a survey. This could lead to distorted results and limit the interpretation and transferability of the findings. Further research should therefore employ targeted sampling strategies, such as including different educational institutions and social places in the district, to ensure a more representative distribution of participants.

It should also be noted that the research topic requires very personal insights into the subjective perceptions and feelings of the interviewed girls. Added to this is the asymmetrical nature of the interview situation, especially with regard to age, institutional positioning, and language skills. Accordingly, particular sensitivity is required when interpreting the interview data. Sometimes linguistically concise, fragmented or less elaborate verbal contributions must be interpreted as an expression of complex linguistic and cultural translation processes (Dirim & Mecheril, 2010; Gogolin, 2006). To better address this issue, further studies, alternative or supplementary survey formats, such as language memos, visual narratives or low-threshold dialogical settings, should be considered. These formats could allow young people to express themselves in a way that suits them better, leading to richer, more diverse data (Bremer & Lange-Vester, 2022; Prengel, 2019).

Finally, it should be emphasized that, when analyzing intersectional subjects, there is always a risk of unintentionally reproducing stereotypical or discriminatory attributions. Exploratory, subject-centered research designs in particular require a high degree of sensitivity to structural power relations and logics of representation (Mecheril & Melter, 2011). In this context, the integration of the perspective of local establishments within the framework of perspective-triangulation is an important corrective measure and contributes to the mutual contextualization of knowledge (Caretta & Riaño, 2016; Unger et al., 2014). Nevertheless, it must be recognized that no research is free from positioning, and that even participatory approaches do not automatically lead to power-critical knowledge unless the epistemic asymmetry between the research subject and object is consciously reflected upon. Interpretations and their normative implications must therefore continually be critically reviewed, especially if the surveyed people are themselves part of marginalized groups. Further work should therefore pay greater attention to critical, decolonial and community-based research approaches that treat local knowledge as an equal source of knowledge (Mecheril & Melter, 2011; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Overall, further studies should give greater consideration to the diversity of Marxloh's residents. In this context, it is particularly relevant to include the extent to which individual identity constructions, shaped by different intersectional experiences, influence the subjective perception and evaluation of the district. This would enable theoretically defined spatial intersectionality to be further differentiated empirically.

5.4 Strengths

However, the aforementioned limitations are offset by the study's particular strengths. In this context the research design has to be mentioned. A central, unique feature of the research is its targeted focus on a specific subgroup of girls with a migration background who live in the stigmatized urban area Marxloh. This subgroup has largely been neglected in geographical didactic research to this date. This approach enables a detailed, context-sensitive analysis of the spatial, intersectional issues the girls have to deal with and that the research intends to address. The spatial perspectives of the local urban population are combined with different intersectional categories. This provides a multi-layered picture of the urban inequality that shapes the everyday lives of marginalized urban populations, going beyond classical binary readings of socio-spatial marginalization (Degele & Winker, 2010; Kern, 2020). By analyzing the Marxloh area as a contradictory social place of experience, the research succeeds in breaking through traditional binary attributions of dominant and marginal, and uncovering differentiated interpretations of place. The empirical analysis also gains depth through the research-strategic moment of perspective-triangulation.

The transdisciplinary dialog between educational research and socio-pedagogical practice enables the close interlocking of research and practice. The perspective of the locally anchored establishment Duisburger Werkkiste was systematically and continuously integrated into the research process. This ensures that the scientific interpretations are critically reflected and supplemented by local expertise. New areas of interpretation are opened up. However, the integration of different forms of knowledge creates methodological multi-perspectivity and epistemic justice. This contributes to a reflexive methodology in the sense of critical geography didactics (Caretta & Riaño, 2016; Unger et al., 2014). The contribution of the study to the further development of theory- and empirically-based spatial intersectional educational research should also be emphasized (Budke & Schäbitz, 2022; Mecheril & Melter, 2011). Systematically including the life realities of the participants on site provides access to everyday practices of spatial appropriation, breaking up normative understandings of place and supplementing them with action- and subject-oriented perspectives (Bauer, 2010; Löw, 2016). The importance of the everyday appropriation of place for the identity formation, empowerment, and social participation has been recognized (Ahmed, 2014; Kern, 2020). Thus, the research makes a substantial contribution to the empirical foundation of current research at the place-related intersection of social science geography, spatial sociology, and critical educational research in German-speaking countries (Budke & Schäbitz, 2022; El-Mafaalani, 2018; Mecheril & Melter, 2011).

6. Conclusion

This research aimed to answer the following overarching research question: 'How is Marxloh and its social attributes perceived by local girls with a migration background?'. The analysis shows that, while these girls recognize the social stigmatization of Marxloh, they subjectively overcome it by developing differentiated, emotionally charged perceptions of place that express ambivalence, as well as a sense of belonging and agency. The study proves that the perception of Marxloh by its residents and its portrayal in public discourse are in a complex, reciprocal relationship, making it impossible to consider these perspectives separately. Despite structural exclusions, the girls develop nuanced views of their living place, while also being aware of the dominant, media-driven perceptions of others. The research on which the article is based thus confirmed Stubbe et al.'s (2020) initial assumption that the negative media portrayal of Marxloh has an impact on its residents, particularly on girls with a migration background. These girls' experiences are characterized by social belonging, structural marginalization, and gender-specific exclusions. Stereotypical spatial constructions, such as the widespread media portrayal of Marxloh as a 'no-go area', remain omnipresent and powerful. These constructions influence not only public perception of the neighborhood, but also the self-image of young people living there. While the girls are aware of these discourses and reflect critically on existing problems to some extent, there is often a lack of concrete scope for action, structural resources, and effective strategies to counteract these images in the long term. It is therefore very important to counteract the negatively connoted spatial constructions reproduced in public discourse, especially through social media, in order to prevent a distortion of the spatial perception of the affected population and strengthen their spatial identity. Further research and action are needed to investigate how the identified challenges can be effectively addressed in educational processes. In this context, geographical education plays a key role. It provides learning environments in which students can recognize and challenge stereotypical representations of place while articulating their own perspectives (Kim, 2019; Lambert, 1995). Subject-oriented approaches that take individual spatial experiences seriously as a starting point for reflection and transformation are particularly successful in this regard. In this way, geography lessons can contribute to the development of more nuanced ideas about social places and their inhabitants, countering stigmatizing media images in the process. The aim is not to completely deconstruct social power relations, but rather to provide initial impulses for critical thinking, self-positioning, and the conscious examination of geographical place as a social construct. Especially in highly diverse school contexts, this inclusive, reflective and action-oriented approach to education has the potential to strengthen recognition and participation among learners.

7. Implications for Further Research

Overall, this study highlights the importance of subject-oriented geographical education in socio-spatially disadvantaged, stigmatized urban areas. It demonstrates the strong influence of intersectional power relations on the everyday spatial experience of marginalized young people, while also highlighting the transformative potential of their active appropriation and reinterpretation of place. Consistently including the perspectives of participants represents an innovative theoretical and methodological approach and provides important impulses for critical, reflective geographic didactic research and practice.

The study's findings have several practical implications for urban geography education. First, the findings emphasize the importance of incorporating the lived experiences of marginalized youth into teaching materials and classroom discussions. These perspectives make spatial processes tangible and allow students to critically examine the intersection of stigma, migration, gender, and class in everyday life. Like recent spatial citizenship education approaches (Sebastián López et al., 2023), incorporating qualitative perspectives into geography education can strengthen learners' ability to connect personal and global spatial narratives. Second, the results suggest that geography education should actively foster critical spatial literacy, which is the ability to distinguish between personal perceptions of place, socially constructed spatial representations, and the underlying power relations. This competence is increasingly recognized as central for geography teachers (Romero Castro, 2025). It is also crucial for enabling students to reflect on and challenge stigmatizing discourses about urban neighborhoods. Finally, the findings underscore the importance of addressing discrimination and social justice issues in geography education. Studies show that stereotypes persist in classrooms (Doerfel et al., 2025) and that anti-racist pedagogical approaches are necessary to create inclusive, reflective learning environments (Esson & Last, 2020). Teachers can promote empathy, counteract stereotypes, and strengthen anti-discrimination competencies by engaging with qualitative

narratives of marginalized groups. Overall, the study suggests that geography education has the potential to not only convey knowledge about urban structures but also contribute to inclusive, socially responsive learning environments.

In addition to its educational implications, the novelty of this study positions it as a reference point for future research on urban stigma and intersectionality. Few studies have combined the perspectives of marginalized youth with those of local practitioners to understand the complex dynamics of belonging, distancing, and stigma reproduction (Born, 2023; Larsen & Delica, 2019; Pinkster & Boterman, 2017). This triangulated approach advances theoretical debates on territorial stigma (Wacquant, 2007; Wacquant et al., 2014) and offers a methodological pathway for researchers connecting critical urban geography with geography education (England, 1994; Rose, 1997). By foregrounding the voices of girls in Marxloh, the study provides empirical insights that should be cited in future work on spatial stigma, intersectionality, and emancipatory pedagogies (Esson & Last, 2020; Skelton & Aitken, 2019).

Based on the dimensions of perception of the stigmatized urban district Marxloh, reconstructed in this study, the research question arises as to which action-related forms of appropriation these same girls develop in their local living environment to challenge or overwrite existing spatial attributions. Here, performative practice such as the question of how everyday practices actively produce place, redefine meanings and generate alternative spatial narratives, comes to the fore. This point should be followed by further research that focuses on the performative appropriation of place by the surveyed girls. This perspective builds on theoretical impulses from feminist geography, new cultural geography and spatial intersectionality research (Ahmed, 2006; Bauer, 2010; Skelton & Aitken, 2019).

In the long term, further research should contribute to the development of new perspectives in critically reflective geographical didactic practice. This can be achieved by linking empirical spatial research with educational justice, strengthening the voices of marginalized groups, and demonstrating how collective counter-designs to stigmatizing spatial discourse can emerge from the subjective appropriation of place. Thus, the planned project responds to current demands in interdisciplinary educational and spatial research, not only analyzing existing inequalities, but also actively contributing to the development of emancipatory spaces for action (Mecheril & Melter, 2011; Unger et al., 2014).

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