

# **Zurich's Langstrasse Quarter in the Context of Gentrification and Urban Housing Market Processes**

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## **Abstract**

The paper analyses the development of the Langstrasse quarter - a formerly rundown area next to Zurich's Central Business District - in relation to urban gentrification and displacement. The results demonstrate that there has been an upwards revaluation of the Langstrasse quarter and a distinct change in its population characteristics over the period under study from 1993 to 2007. The presence of foreign communities, which was one of the quarter's defining features, has declined and the age structure of residents has changed. However, there is no evidence of large-scale gentrification with substantial upgrading of properties or social structure. Presently, the development of the quarter shows more insular gentrification that is restricted to a number of separate areas or buildings. Although not yet widespread, the impact of renovation and of building work in particular on the type of resident and the housing stock structure is far more pronounced in this quarter than in the city as a whole. An analysis of the relationship between social structure and building activity indicates that renovation and new-build have a different role in the context of gentrification and displacement. The absence of any swift and large-scale gentrification process in the quarter indicates that the Swiss housing market and Swiss tenants' rights – as well as the local ownership structure and access to investment loans – have an important role to play.

## **Keywords**

Urban renewal, urban gentrification, zone in transition, displacement, social polarisation

## Introduction

The Langstrasse quarter, which is on the edge of Zurich's Central Business District (CBD), has long been considered as a blot on Zurich's cityscape. In recent decades, this former working-class neighbourhood has been affected by many of the typical problems that inner-city areas suffer when the CBD expands. Speculation on the expansion of the CBD has led to a drop in investment and, as a result, to a degradation of the building stock. This disinvestment in building stock has been accompanied by an increasing proportion of socially disadvantaged groups among residents and an expansion of the red-light district and drug scene. These processes have led to a degradation of the housing stock and had a negative effect on quality of life in the neighbourhood. They have finally led to the whole Langstrasse area becoming rundown.

Recent studies (Heye & Leuthold 2004; Heye 2009) have shown that although the Langstrasse quarter still faces all the typical problems of a zone in transition – e.g. a comparatively high crime rate, degradation of building stock, a high percentage of marginalized groups – there has been an improvement in the overall situation and a shift in social structure since 1990. According to Heye and Leuthold (2004), the Langstrasse had one of the lowest statuses of all Zurich's neighbourhoods at the beginning of the 1990s. In 2000, the quarter is still below average for the city, but it saw a relative social upgrading between 1990 and 2000. Migration data shows an increase in Swiss residents since the mid-1990s and an exodus of foreign nationals (Heye & Leuthold 2004, Heye 2009). The quarter is nowadays considered as a good example of a fairly socially disadvantaged neighbourhood where there is a tendency towards gentrification (Bühler et al. 2008 after Berger et al. 2002 and Craviolini et al. 2008).

Recent developments have aroused a fear of full-scale gentrification among certain segments of the quarter's population. This fear has to be seen in the context of a general renaissance in larger Swiss towns (Brühl et al. 2005) over the last 15 years. After fifty years of suburbanisation, which led to a drastic drop in the core cities' population and proven urban exodus by younger middle-class households, we can now observe that these classes are rediscovering the attraction of living in the inner city (Heye & Leuthold 2004; Heye 2009). Until the early Nineties, the term "A-Stadt" dominated the discussions (Frey 1990) – the city as a place for the old (*die Alten*), the poor (*die Armen*), the unemployed (*die Arbeitslosen*), etc. The prevailing terms in current public debate and scientific discourse are now urban renaissance and gentrification (e.g. Heye & Leuthold 2004; Heye 2009; Stienen & Blumer 2009).

Although the aforementioned studies (Heye & Leuthold 2004; Heye 2009) indicate that the Langstrasse quarter underwent social upgrading with a tendency towards gentrification between 1990 and 2000, this process is not reflected by intensified building activities as one might expect. Compared to the city of Zurich as a whole, the quarter shows sluggish real-estate market dynamics (Wüst & Partner 2003) over this period. In recent times however, various planned or completed construction and refurbishment projects (Lüthi 2007) hint at increasing building activity and hence at an upgrading of the Langstrasse quarter.

These apparently contradictory findings raise questions about the true scope of these recent building activities and their impact on the quarter's social structure. In order to be in a position to make a statement on these questions, the authors carried out an empirical study of the development of the quarter's population characteristics as well as

its housing market between 1990 and 2007 (Craviolini et al. 2008). The results presented in this paper are part of a larger research project commissioned by the Department of Urban Development of Zurich and undertaken by authors at the Department of Economic Geography of the University of Zurich.

## **Methodology**

### **Basis for data and area under investigation**

The area under investigation is the Langstrasse quarter in Zurich's *Aussersihl* district. The city of Zurich serves as the benchmark.

The analysis presented in this paper is based on registry data from the Statistics Office of the City of Zurich. These geo-referenced datasets include detailed building information such as the year of construction or the category of a particular building as well as personal details such as age, nationality or taxable income. The building records are available for the years from 1994 to 2007. The personal data are based on individual data and are available for the years from 1991 to 2006, although only data from 1993 onwards is used. The high degree of temporal and spatial resolution makes it possible to carry out detailed analysis of the processes that have occurred over the last 15 years. In addition to the data provided by the Statistics Office of the City of Zurich, we also refer to data from social services.

### **Operationalisation of gentrification and displacement**

Gentrification is defined as upper-income resettlement combined with increasing building and housing renovation activities (Fassmann 2004; Glatter 2005 after Glass 1964, Smith/Wiliams 1986, Dangschat 1988 and Alisch/ Dangschat 1996). To discuss whether the concept of gentrification applies to the Langstrasse quarter or whether the use of another concept such as incumbent upgrading might be more accurate, we have analysed the development of socio-economic and socio-demographic attributes as well as building activity and real-estate market dynamics during the period under study from 1993 to 2007. We have based our analysis of the socio-structural development on age, nationality and taxable income as well as the proportion of welfare recipients. The development of the building stock is studied by looking at building activity as the number of buildings renovated or built as a percentage of total building stock, changes of building stock structure and the structure of the housing unit stock.

Gentrification takes place in quarters close to the city centre with a high building density and therefore few gaps between buildings; it is inextricably linked to questions of the marginalisation and displacement of specific population groups (Friedrich 2000; Smith 1986). By combining the two datasets mentioned above - personal data and building data - it becomes possible to make statements about the impact of construction and renovation activities on residents' socio-economic and demographic characteristics at the level of a particular building. The datasets do not, however, allow us to make any statements about specific apartments. Unlike analysis of migration data, the study of the relationship between construction activities/housing renovation and socio-structural characteristics provides information about changes in specific population groups' access to the housing market and their likely displacement.

## **Socio-structural development**

### **Socio-demographic structure**

#### *Migration*

The Langstrasse quarter has - contrary to the citywide trend - experienced a decrease of its residential population overall during the period under examination from 1993 to 2007. The year 2000 marks a turning point in this period. Before the year 2000, the quarter had a negative migration balance and a deficit in terms of birth rate. After 2000, the ratio between those leaving the quarter and those moving in turned positive and as of 2001, the number of births exceeds the number of deaths (cf. Craviolini et al. 2008, p 48).

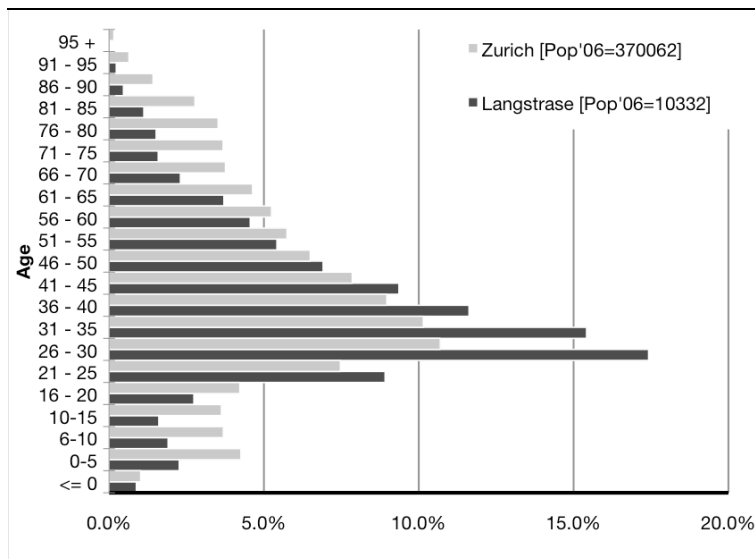
The Langstrasse quarter is a highly dynamic quarter and serves people arriving in Zurich as a step onto the city's housing market (cf. Heye 2009). This can be seen from the fact that the ratio between people entering the city and those leaving the city is positive, whereas the ratio between people moving into the quarter from other quarters of the city and those leaving the quarter for other parts of Zurich is negative. The Langstrasse quarter thus shows a net gain of people from outside the city and a net loss of residents to the rest of the city. The overall migration dynamics - representing the ratio between the total number of address changes and the number of residents in the previous year - are, at nearly 100%, well above the city average of 30% in 2006. During the period under study, the overall migration dynamics have been positive in the Langstrasse while remaining stable at city level (Craviolini et al. 2008, p 49).

#### *Age structure*

One important feature of the area's present population structure is the high percentage of residents aged between 21 and 45 (cf. fig. F\_1). This is higher than in the rest of the city. In contrast, children and young adults under the age of 20 are under-represented, as are residents aged over 50. These age groups declined considerably and suffered a net loss of residents (fig. F\_2). Over the same period, the absolute - as well as the relative - number of people between the ages of 26 and 45 has grown. One noticeable increase is in the number of people aged between 31 and 35. It should also be noted that these age groups generally show a significantly higher level of education (Statistisches Amt des Kantons Zürich 2009, p 77).

## Age structure of the population 1993 to 2006

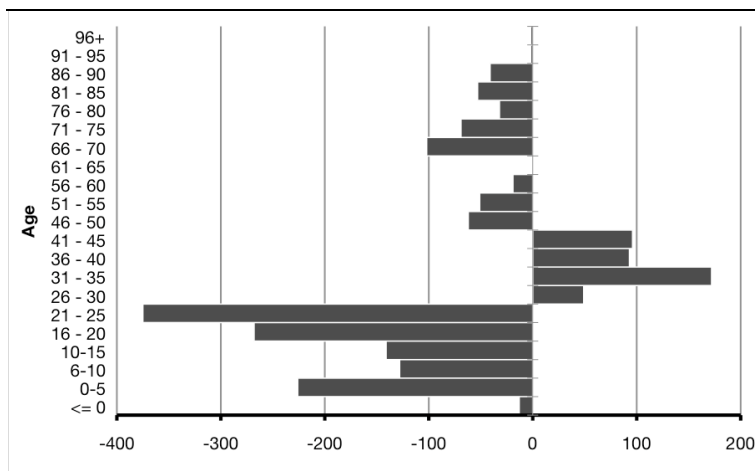
F\_1



Source: Statistik Stadt Zürich, Figure: GIUZ

## Development of different age groups Langstrasse, 1993 to 2006

F\_2



Source: Statistics Office of the City of Zurich, Figure: GIUZ

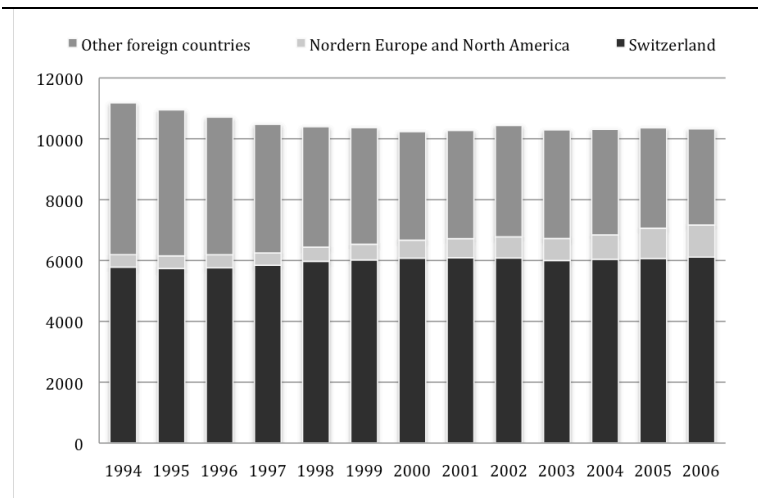
### Nationalities

Alongside the changing age pattern, the Langstrasse quarter saw a distinct change in one of its key features between 1994 and 2006. The quarter, which is known for its high proportion of foreigners and its multicultural atmosphere, now has a lower proportion of foreigners and a change in these foreigners' countries of origin (cf. fig. F\_3). Between 1994 and 2006, the number of Swiss nationals has risen, while the number of foreigners has dropped considerably. The exceptions to this are foreign nationals from Northern Europe or North America, whose population has risen significantly over this period. These residents are very different from the rest of the foreigners in terms of their social stratification and segregation patterns (Heye & Leuthold 2004, p 24ff).

## Nationalities

F\_3

Langstrasse, 1994 to 2006



Source: Statistics Office of the City of Zurich, Figure: GIUZ

The fall in number of foreigners (other than Northern Europeans or North Americans) is primarily due to a sharp decline in the number of residents originating from Southern Europe and countries of the former Yugoslavia. Assuming that there is no change to this pattern the short term, Northern Europeans will soon replace Southern Europeans as the quarter's largest foreign population (cf. Craviolini et al. 2008, p 71).

### Socio-economic Structure

Like the city as a whole, the Langstrasse has seen a change in the income pattern of its residents over the period under study. Figure F\_4 displays both the income structures of residents of the Langstrasse quarter as well as the income structure of those of the city of Zurich. These calculations are based on individual annual taxable income; residents without any declared annual income have not been taken into account. This includes for instance spouses that are not head of the household and residents who only have their economic domicile here. To allow comparisons over time, the income has been inflation-adjusted. The income of married householders has been halved to give an approximation of individual income. Furthermore, the switch to a system of current year assessment in 1999 and the related omission of certain tax deductions have been corrected as far as possible. However, care must be taken in interpreting changes in income between 1998 and 2001.

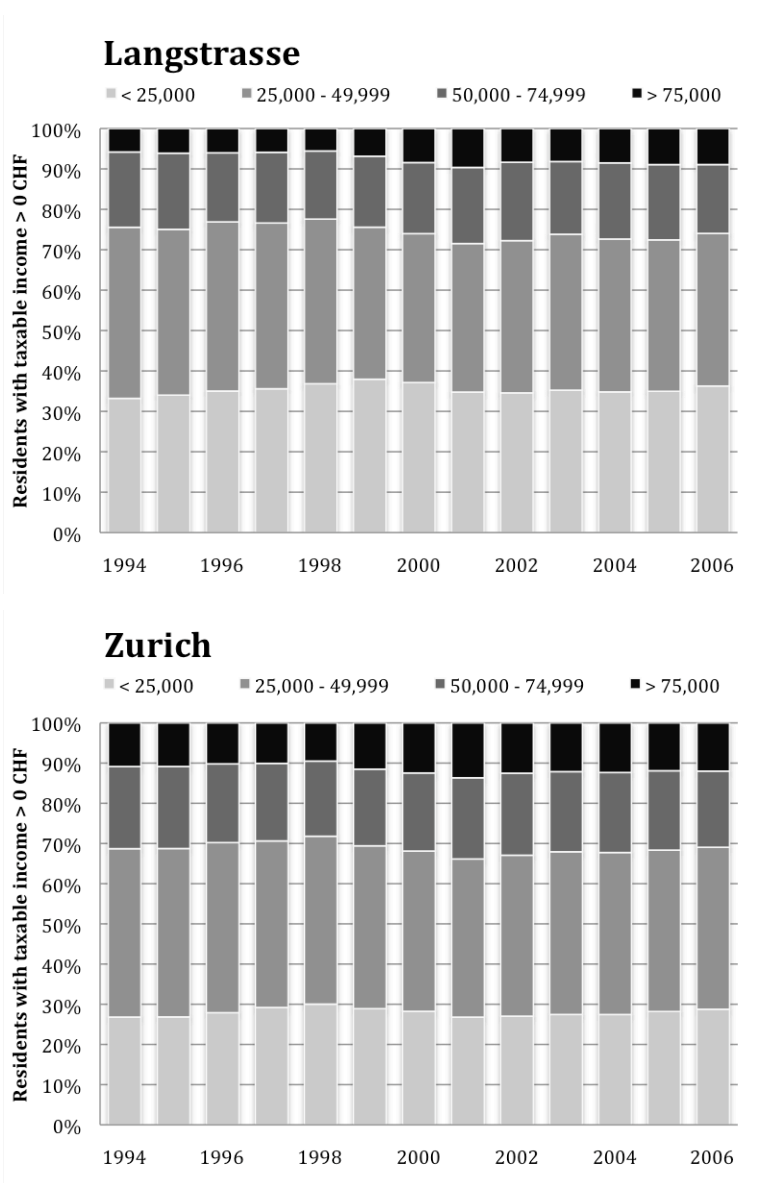
The income pattern of the Langstrasse quarter is characterised by a comparatively high proportion of residents belonging to the lowest income group with an individual annual taxable income of less than 25,000 CHF and a relatively small proportion of people with an individual taxable income of more than 75,000 CHF per annum in 2006. Both the city as a whole and the Langstrasse quarter in particular have seen an increase in the proportion of people with an income of more than 75,000 CHF in the period under study. Although the growth has been more pronounced in the Langstrasse quarter, the share of this income group is still below the city average. At the same time, however, the lowest income group has also increased slightly.

Interestingly, the income structure does not show the clear increase in income between 1993 and 1999 (2000 is not considered for the reasons mentioned above) that one might expect on the basis of findings by Heye and Leuthold (2004) and Heye (2009).

**Income structure**

**F\_4**

Individual annual taxable income, 1997 to 2006



Source: Statistics Office of the City of Zurich, Figure: GIUZ

As well as a high share in residents with a taxable income of under 25,000 CHF per year, the Langstrasse quarter also has a high proportion of people on welfare. The cumulative share of residents on welfare, which represents the proportion of welfare recipients on residents with legal residence, is twice as high as in the city of Zurich as a whole. This share was on the increase in both the city and the Langstrasse quarter between 2000 and 2006. After 2006, however, this value can be seen to have declined, particularly in the Langstrasse quarter (cf. Craviolini et al. 2008, p 56f)

Swiss demographic statistics distinguish between civil and economic domiciles. For Swiss nationals, the civil domicile is generally the municipality in which they have

registered the certificate of family origin and pay taxes. In the case of foreigners, it is usually the municipality where they applied for a residence permit. The economic domicile, however, is the municipality where a person lives most of the time. The cumulative share of residents on welfare and the income structure refer only to the population with legal domicile. The number of residents who only have their economic domicile in Zurich therefore has a significant influence on how the calculation is made. At nearly 15% of the quarter's residential population, the share of people with economic domicile only is almost twice as high in the Langstrasse quarter for inventory data than in the city of Zurich as a whole.

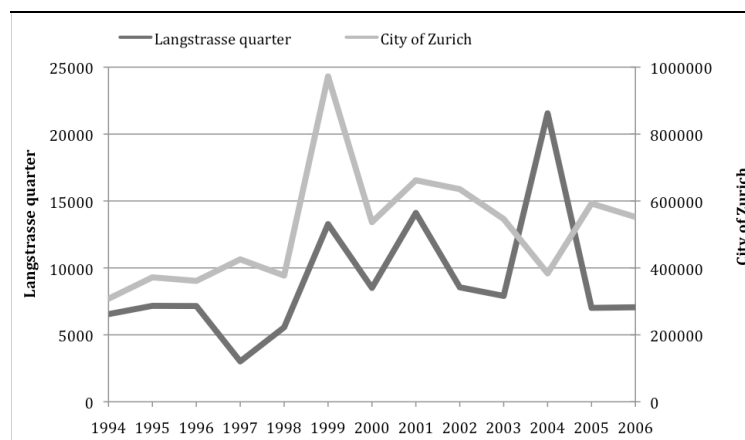
## Building development

### Real-estate market

One indicator for ongoing, intensified gentrification processes would be an increasingly dynamic real estate market (Friedrichs 2000; Smith 1986). Figure F\_5 shows the annual total area of building plots sold by private contract for the Langstrasse quarter and the city of Zurich between 1994 and 2006. During the period under study, there is no clearly observable general increase in the real-estate market, especially in the Langstrasse quarter. This is corroborated by the findings of Wüst & Partner (2003).

**Sales by private contract [m<sup>2</sup>]**  
Building plot area in m<sup>2</sup>, 1994 to 2006

**F\_5**



Source: Statistics Office of the City of Zurich, Figure: GIUZ

### Building activities

Building activities are another indicator of ongoing gentrification processes as well as a driving force of displacement (Friedrichs 2000; Smith 1986). Fig. F\_6 indicates the proportion of buildings that have undergone renovation or were built over the course of the last five years. The overall building activity in the Langstrasse quarter is – with a few exceptions – well below the city average (cf. also Wüst & Partner 2003). The time between 1997 and 2002 is characterised by a drop in building activities and their subsequent stagnation. The slump between 1997 and 2002 reflects, on the one hand, the real estate crisis in the mid-1990s. However, it is also a consequence of the repression of the open drug scene nearby “am Letten” in 1995, which led to a higher presence of

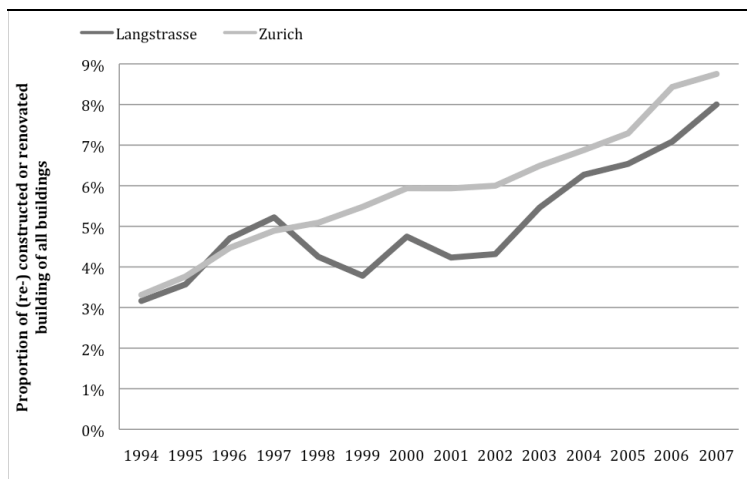


drug addicts in the Langstrasse quarter (Somm 2006, p. 27). After 2002, however, we observed increased dynamism. This fits with Lüthi's (2007) findings. For a while, the increase in building activities was more pronounced in the Langstrasse quarter than in the city as a whole.

## Building activities

F\_6

1994 to 2007



Source: Statistics Office of the City of Zurich, Figure: GIUZ

The low overall building activity in the quarter between 1994 and 2007 is reflected in the age structure of the building stock (cf. Fig F\_7). The proportion of buildings built since 1991 is relatively low compared to the city as a whole. There is, however, a remarkably high proportion of buildings dating from before 1930. This is a result of the relatively early incorporation of the former independent municipality Aussersihl into the city of Zurich in 1893 and, according to Heye (2009), this is a characteristic of quarters that have undergone social upgrading in the last two decades.

The high proportion of housing units in the Langstrasse quarter built before 1930 gives an indication of the age structure of the building stock here (fig. F\_8). The rather small proportion of recent housing units is firstly a result of how little building activity there has been since 1991, and secondly of the type of buildings that have been completed recently. As Figure F\_8 shows, the percentage of residential buildings has been constantly falling.

The quarter's housing stock is quite different from that of the city as a whole as far as the average number of rooms per apartment is concerned. The average of 2.9 rooms per apartment is well below the city average of 3.6 (cf. Craviolini et al. 2008, p 23). There are also very few apartments with four rooms or more. The proportion of one-room apartments, however, is comparatively high.

If we consider different periods of construction, there was a particularly high proportion of one-room apartments built between 1961 and 1990. This type of apartment represents more than 50% – rising to 75% when combined with the figures for two-room apartments – of all apartments built over this period. Nearly half of the apartments of this type were constructed during this period. The majority of three-room and four-room apartments date back to the period between 1893 and 1930.

The proportion of one- and two-room apartments increased between 1983 and 1990, while over the same period less and less apartments with three or more rooms were built. In recent times, there seems to have been a reversal in this trend. Residential buildings constructed between 1991 and 2007 contain a significantly higher proportion of large apartments with five and more rooms than in any previous period. The proportion of apartments with three and more rooms is well above that for the period between 1961 and 1990.

**Building stock – Age structure and building type**  
2007

**F\_7**

**Langstrasse**

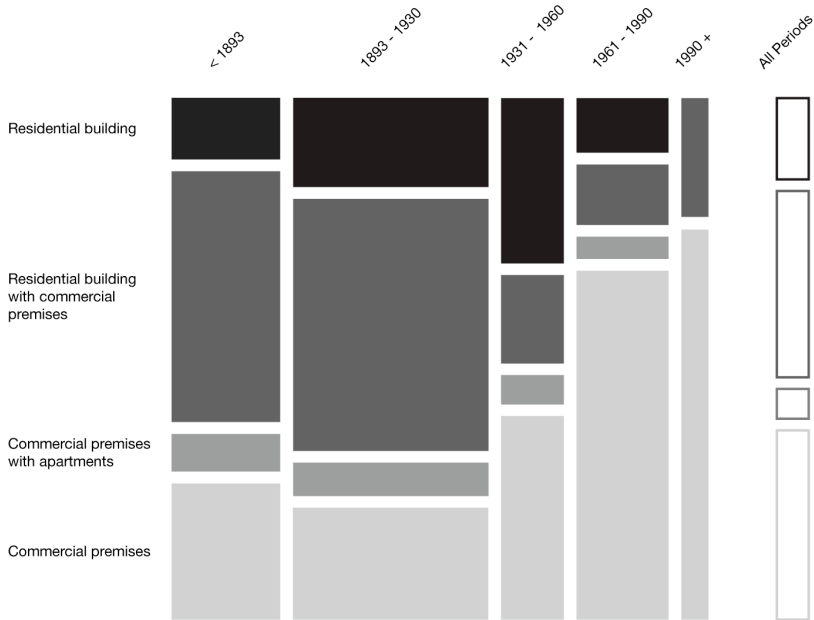
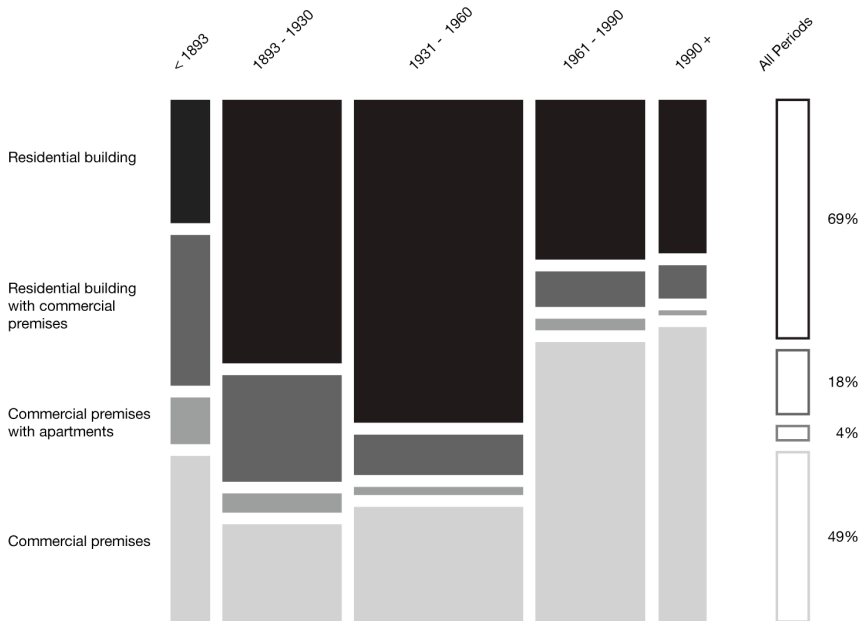


Figure F\_7 is a mosaic plot graph.

The vertical dimension illustrates the proportion of a particular building type on all buildings built in a specific period.

The horizontal dimension shows the proportion of all buildings constructed in a specific period on the quarter's total building stock.

**Zurich**



Source: Statistics Office of the City of Zurich, Figure: GIUZ

Langstrasse

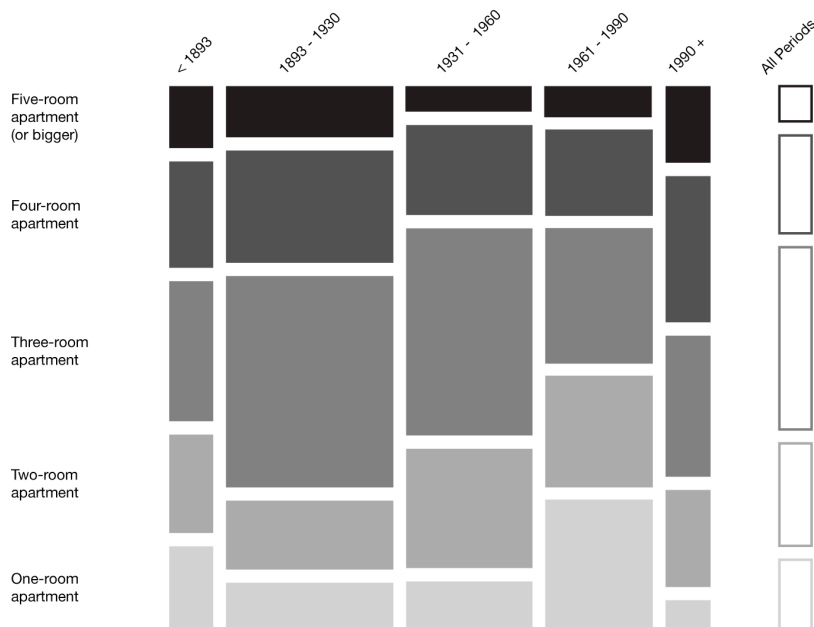


Figure F\_8 represents a mosaic plot graph.

The vertical dimension illustrates the proportion of a particular apartment type on all apartments built in a specific period.

The horizontal dimension shows the proportion of all apartments built in a specific period on the quarter's total apartment stock.

Zurich



Source: Statistics Office of the City of Zurich, Figure: GIUZ

## **Relationship between building processes and population structure**

One important question in the context of gentrification and urban renewal in the broader sense is the relation between the development of the built environment and socio-demographic and socio-economic development, and, in particular, to what extent reconstruction and renovation leads to displacement of specific population groups. To answer this question, we compared the socio-economic and socio-demographic characteristics of residents living in buildings that were soon to be renovated or demolished with those of residents living in buildings that have been recently built or renovated. Renovation work costing less than 50,000 CHF and operations that did not change the building's façade or ground plans were not taken into account.

### **Renovation**

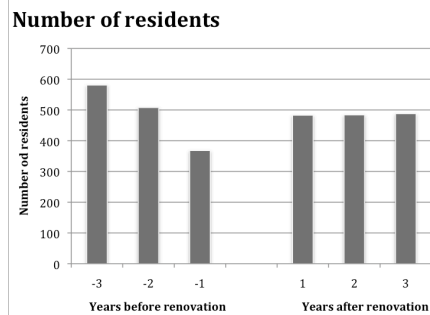
Renovation activities have an obvious impact on the number of residents in the affected buildings as well as on their structure (fig. F\_8). There is a drop in the number of residents in the last two years before rebuilding work. The same effect can be noticed at city level (Craviolini et al. 2008, p 79). However, the drop in the number of residents is much more pronounced in the Langstrasse quarter. This may be an indication that rebuilding activities in the Langstrasse quarter involve major architectural interventions and not just renovation of the roof or façade. In contrast to the city where renovation activities result in an increase of the number of residents of the buildings in question, the number of residents decreases in the Langstrasse quarter. This suggests that there has been a reduction in the number of apartments in a building and an enlargement of apartment layouts.

In both the Langstrasse quarter and the city of Zurich, renovation processes go along with a change in the resident's socio-economic and demographic profile. However, this change is far more pronounced in the Langstrasse quarter than in the city as a whole (Craviolini et al. 2008, p 79). Residents of newly renovated apartments are more likely to be Swiss nationals, to have an individual annual taxable income of more than 50,000 CHF and to be childless or aged between 20 and 64 than the residents of the same buildings before they were renovated. The increase in Swiss nationals is coupled with an increase in the percentage of Northern Europeans or North Americans. The proportion of foreigners other than Northern Europeans or North Americans, by contrast, has more than halved. This decrease reflects the overall trend of the quarter's population, but it is far more pronounced at the level of a particular building. A comparison of the income structure of residents before and after renovation shows an increase in the number of people belonging to the upper two income bands. The increase in the proportion of residents with individual annual taxable incomes of more than 75,000 CHF is remarkable and far exceeds the pattern in the quarter as a whole. In terms of income structure and the region of origin, the social structure of residents of renovated buildings in the Langstrasse quarter is more or less the same as that in the city as a whole. Renovation therefore leads to these two factors converging with the city average after renovation. However, this finding is not true of the two other factors under examination, i.e. the residents' age and the presence of children in a household.

## Relationship between social structure and renovation processes

F\_8

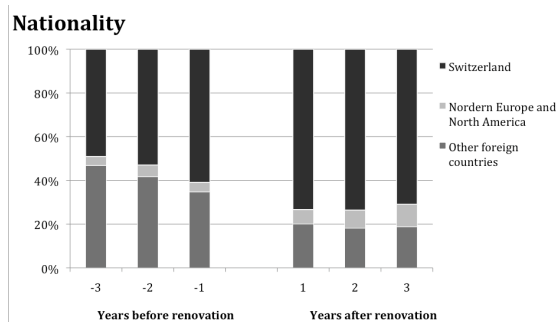
Comparative analysis of resident profiles in the years prior to and following a renovation in the Langstrasse quarter from 1996 to 2003



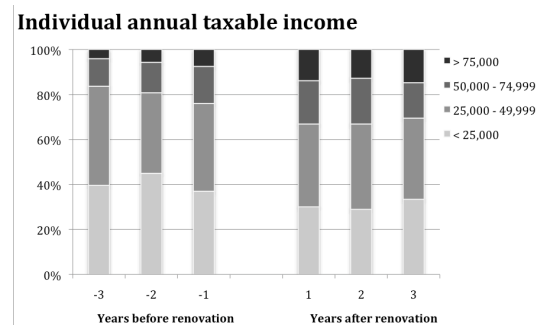
A

Figure A shows the development of the number of residents of all renovated buildings in the three years preceding and the three years following a renovation. The period of renovation itself has not been considered.

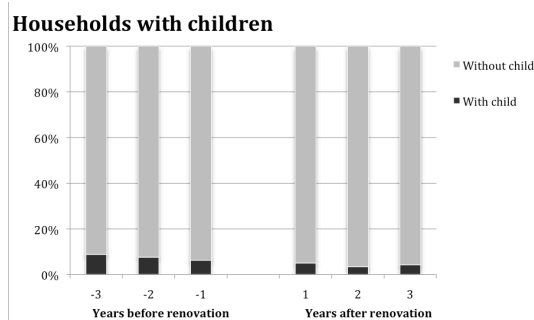
Figures B to E show the development of residents' socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics before and after renovation. The period of renovation itself has not been considered.



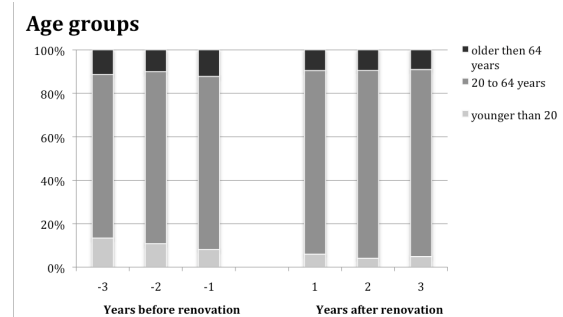
B



C



D



E

Notes: Only buildings renovated between 1996 and 2003 were taken into account. If a building was renovated more than once in this period of time, the time between the first and the last renovation is considered as the renovation period and therefore not taken into consideration.

Source: Statistics Office of the City of Zurich, Figure: GIUZ

## New-build and replacement

The relationship between new-build and replacement activities to the social structure of the residents affected by them in the Langstrasse quarter is quite similar to the one between renovation and social characteristics that we analysed in the previous section.

As with renovation, new-build or replacement activities have an obvious impact on the number of residents of the affected buildings as well as on their social structure. In the Langstrasse quarter, there are only one-third as many people living in recently built buildings as people living in buildings that are scheduled for demolition. In the city of Zurich, by contrast, new-build and replacement activities generally lead to an increase

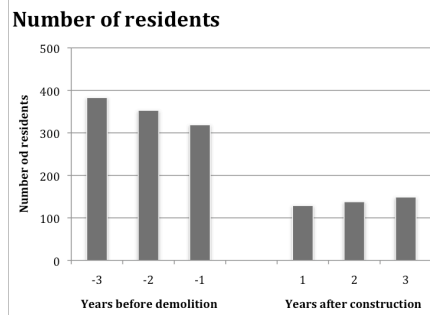
in the number of residents (cf. Craviolini et al. 2008, p 81). This might be due to the fact that the Langstrasse quarter lacks - unlike the city as a whole - empty plots between buildings. Most new-build activities can thus be linked to the replacement of existing buildings. As with renovation, residents of newly built apartments are more likely to be Swiss nationals, to have an individual annual taxable income of more than 50,000, and to be childless or aged between 20 and 64 than the residents of the buildings that are to be demolished. The proportion of Swiss nationals is significantly higher in newly constructed buildings than in those designated for demolition. This difference is much lower in the city as a whole and the relative share of foreigners living in newly built apartments higher. There is a considerable difference between the income structure of people living in new-built buildings in the quarter and the city average and especially from the one of people living in a building to be demolished. There is an over-representation of people with an annual income of over 50,000 CHF and especially of people earning more than 75,000 CHF. New-build and replacement activities seem to result in a decreasing share of people with children in the Langstrasse quarter, whereas this is not the general trend in the rest of the city of Zurich. New-build, replacement and demolition, however, have little influence on the age structure of the residents. Residents of new-built apartments are slightly more likely to be over 64 than those living in a building that is up for demolition. In this respect too, the Langstrasse quarter does not comply with citywide trends. In the city of Zurich as a whole, the proportion of people over 64 is lower in new-build apartments, while the relative share of residents under 20 is higher.

Altogether, residents of newly built buildings are fundamentally unlike people living in buildings to be demolished, particularly as regards their income and nationality. Thus they should not be presumed to be the same population groups. It can therefore be assumed that new-build and replacement activities lead to the displacement and marginalization of specific population groups.

## Relationship between social structure and new-build/replacement activities

F\_9

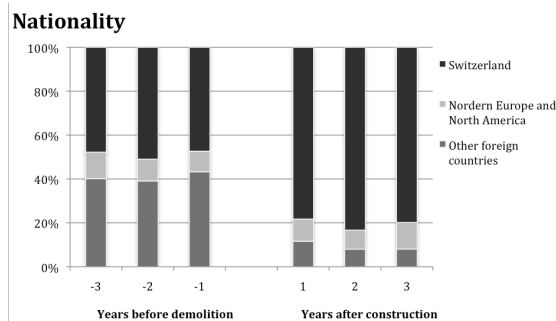
Comparative analysis of resident profiles in the years prior to replacement or demolition and following a new-build or replacement in the Langstrasse quarter from 1996 to 2003.



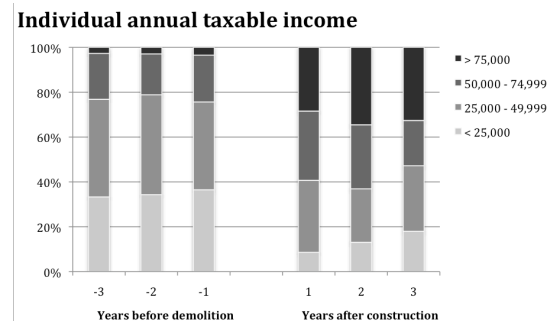
A

Figure A shows the development of the number of residents of demolished or replaced buildings in the three years preceding the demolition of a property and the three years after the new building was completed. The actual construction period has not been considered.

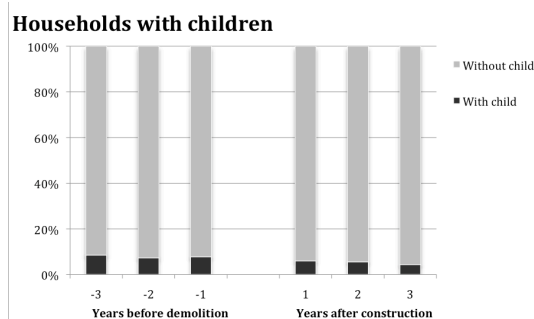
Figures B to E show the development of residents' socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics before a demolition and after the construction. The actual construction period has not been considered.



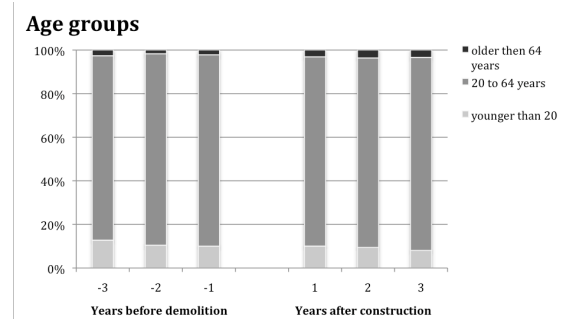
B



C



D



E

Notes: Only buildings built or demolished between 1996 and 2003 were taken into consideration.

Source: Statistics Office of the City of Zurich, Figure: GIUZ



## Discussion

The Langstrasse quarter's high migration dynamic and its function as step onto the Zurich housing market (cf. Heye 2009) are, according to Heye and Odermatt (2006), common features of gentrified inner-city quarters. However, there is no evidence of intense upgrading of physical building stock. At this point, the development in the quarter suggests more insular gentrification that is restricted to a number of separate areas or buildings. However, the impact of renovation - and especially of construction work - on residents' characteristics and housing structure is in general far more pronounced in this quarter than in the city as a whole. The evaluation of the relationship between social structure and building activity points to a different role of renovation and new-build in the context of urban renewal and gentrification. The relatively high impact of renovation activities on the population density within a building, i.e. the number of residents per building, can be attributed to a more fundamental architectural operations as a result of the relatively high proportion of outmoded and deteriorated buildings in the neighbourhood. The fall in the number of residents following rebuilding work might be explained by the generous layouts of the newly constructed buildings (cf. fig F\_8). Larger newly built apartments have attracted a new segment of the population with a higher social status and a higher percentage of Swiss nationals than in the city as a whole to the area around Langstrasse.

Reconstruction activities are thus leading to increased social upgrading accompanied by the apparent displacement of the former inhabitants. So when there is reconstruction, the changes in the type of residents clearly point towards gentrification. Interestingly, in the Langstrasse quarter, renovation and reconstruction have little effect on the age structure and the number of children but almost exclusively on the income structure and nationality. The changes in the age structure and the number of children are basically in line with the general demographic trends. This simultaneous change in the income structure and the nationality of the residents is due to the fact that segregation based on nationality basically reflects segregation based on income (Heye & Leuthold 2004, p 70).

The absence of large-scale gentrification processes and relatively low building activities despite genuine social upgrading points towards the important role of Swiss tenants' rights, the Swiss housing market, the local ownership structure and access to investment credits (Craviolini et al. 2008, p 86ff) as well as ongoing concerns about the drug scene, the red light district and related crime (Berger et al. 2002; Craviolini et al. 2008, p 91). The high proportion of tenants characteristic of the Swiss housing market along with relatively good tenants' rights and the absence of a real market rental rate (Stahel 2006) has a dampening effect on speculation. Due to the reputation of the quarter and the uncertain return on investment, the banks are quite risk-averse as far as loans go (Craviolini et al. 2008, p 87). A further obstacle to investment is the strong parcelling and fragmented ownership, which makes major investment projects difficult (cf. Wüst & Partner 2003). Furthermore, rents are high due to the red-light activity and the resulting high prices of these properties makes it unprofitable to convert these buildings into normal residential or commercial buildings (Craviolini et al. 2008, p 88).

In this context, the measures undertaken by Zurich's city council to improve the situation in public places as well as to change the image of the quarter and to support local businesses are having a considerable impact.

The absence of a clear increase in revenues between 1993 and 1999 is only at first glance in contradiction with the findings of Heye and Leuthold (2004) and Heye (2009). Heye and Leuthold use a composite index (Heye & Leuthold 2004; Hermann et al. 2005), which doesn't only use purely economic attributes such as taxable income as in this analysis but also includes information about people's level of education or professional status. The increase in social status therefore mainly reflects the sharp increase in the residents' level of education (Craviolini et al. 2008, p 105). Unfortunately, the inventory data used in this study does not include any reliable information about a person's educational qualifications or professional status. It was therefore not possible to update these two aspects for the years since 2000. However, nationality and age group can – to some extent – serve as a proxy for changing patterns of professional status and educational qualifications. The rising number of Northern Europeans and Swiss nationals - two population groups with a relatively high professional status - as well as the increase in age groups with a comparable level of education indicate that the average level of education and professional status is still rising.

From 1999 onwards, the increasing level of education and professional status is also reflected in higher incomes. This might be an indication of a transition from a phase of pioneers to a phase of gentrifiers (Dangschat 1988; Friedrich 2000; Friedrichs 2000) and a resulting pattern of intensified, continuing upgrading. The increasing renovation and construction work at the end of the period under study suggest as much.

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