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**Haushaben: Houses as Resources in Early Modern Frankfurt**

**Abstract:** This contribution analyses houses as resources in early modern Frankfurt. Examining the ways in which early modern homeowners made money of their properties, the work focuses on the house as nucleus of urban sociality and it considers how individuals created and made meaning of their homes. In so doing, the contribution reinforces recent findings regarding the importance of and complex meanings given to houses. The Frankfurt case shows that houses reflected and perpetuated early modern inequality by multiplying opportunities for economic, social, and cultural participation. Homeownership thus played a central role in early modern urban life, and homeowners expressed the importance of their houses by decorating them carefully. As bearers of names, symbols, and inscriptions, houses were conspicuous representations of the prestige, confession, and memoria of their inhabitants, and of their own significance as stable resources in early modern urban life.

In early modern Frankfurt as in many other cities, owning a house meant inclusion. Although home ownership (Haushäblichkeit) had no longer been required for obtaining civic rights since the fourteenth century, civic status remained the condition for acquiring urban real estate. Denizens – that is to say all those who lived in the town without benefitting from full civic rights – should not belong to the community of house owners. Based on a privilege that dated back to the reign of Emperor Sigismund and that was renewed and extended by Emperor Maximilian II, the imperial city of Frankfurt strictly limited home ownership to citizens, both men and women, in the city law (Erneuwerte Reformation) of 1578. In these years, Frankfurt saw an increasing immigration of Calvinist and Lutheran refugees from the Netherlands for whom the city with its two annual fairs seemed a promising location for commercial activities. The city council reacted to these dynamics in a more and more xenophobic way, especially towards the

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Calvinist exiles. Although the councillors accepted the settlement of the refugees in Lutheran Frankfurt, they restricted their admission to civic rights, the practice of religion, and the acquisition of immovable property. In 1583, the town council explicitly forbade the sale of houses to the foreigners (die Welschen) without the consent of the councillors. By exclusion, then, the city enforced the link between home ownership and citizenship.

On the other hand, the two were not as strongly linked as it might appear. Renting was a common practice among citizens. A register of the city’s houses dating from 1761 shows that only two thirds of all civic households lived in their own property. Renting, moreover, was not an indicator of poverty, since even wealthy citizens rented houses, albeit whilst owning houses of their own. A highly appreciated building like the Trierischer Hof, situated in the city’s commercial centre and owned by the archbishop of Trier, was rented by a succession of high-status families. Since 1356, the elections of the Holy Roman Empire’s head took place in Frankfurt, and the archbishop of Trier was one of the princely electors. He kept the right to lodge at the Trierischer Hof, so that the tenants were obliged to host him and his entourage during his stays in Frankfurt. The princely dignity and the economic importance of the Trierischer Hof must have been such that renting it was nonetheless worthwhile. While renting did not necessarily imply poverty, home ownership was not sufficient evidence of wealth. In 1761, the larger part of all 2917 houses consisted of smaller dwellings of moderate value. Furthermore, owning a house did not always correspond to owning ground because the city’s laws allowed houses to be built on sites that were leased by emphyteusis.

To sum up, in early modern Frankfurt relationships between dwellings and their inhabitants, between ownership, wealth and citizenship were manifold, they had

4 Ibid., 244.
9 Ibid., 128–9.
10 Der Statt Franckenfurt erneuwerte Reformation, II 15.
various economic, legal, social and cultural implications – and thus need to be considered in a differentiated way.

Not so long ago, historical research rediscovered early modern houses and housing practices as topics of social and cultural history. At the same time, economic perspectives have played a minor role, and less attention has been paid to houses as economic reservoirs, as workplaces, or to their crucial role within “household strategies”. However, not least in a Bourdieusian perspective, houses must be taken seriously as economic capital when they are discussed as social, cultural or symbolic capital. Since Bourdieu points out the convertibility of one form of capital into another (although he himself has relatively little to say regarding economic capital), it is highly relevant to know how and to what extent houses saved and generated money, or caused expenses.

In what follows, I will analyse houses as resources in early modern Frankfurt in three steps, starting with an economic perspective in the stricter sense of the term. The article first examines how early modern house owners made money

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12 Laurence Fontaine and Jürgen Schlumbohm: Household Strategies for Survival: An Introduction, in: International Review of Social History 45 (2000), 1–17. Fontaine and Schlumbohm’s concept of “household strategies for survival” originally refered to the laboring poor, but it is even useful for the analysis of wealthier people because it sheds a light on the variety of economic activities besides the male breadwinner’s earnings.
15 Bourdieu, Ökonomisches Kapital, 185–8.
17 The article is based on the findings of my Habilitation, see Julia A. Schmidt-Funke: Haben und Sein. Materielle Kultur und Konsum im frühneuzeitlichen Frankfurt am Main. Habilitationsschrift Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena 2016.
from their properties. Shedding a light on societal resources, the article then focusses on houses as nuclei of urban sociality. Contrasting the dynamics of Frankfurt’s real estate market with the ideal of stable and permanent home ownership, I will finally consider how people created their homes and how they made meanings of them and with them. In doing so, I use Bourdieu’s ideas as stimuli rather than adhering to a strictly Bourdieusian view. His assumptions about different forms of capital, their accumulation and mutual substitution are definitely inspiring, but the question to what extent they represent suitable categories for the study of societies in history remains controversial, and this article does not aim for an exegesis of Bourdieusian theory.18

Making Money with Houses

In early modern Frankfurt, houses served as economic resources when people worked in, rented, or sold them – or even used them as securities when lending and borrowing money. Early modern credit markets knew a variety of credit transactions that were based on real property. As real estate-secured loans did not fall under the Christian ban on usury, they had been very common in the Middle Ages and maintained relevance in the early modern period. Normally, interest on such loans amounted to five percent because Canon Law justified this relatively low rate – much higher ones were charged for personal loans. Three types of real estate-secured loans existed in early modern Frankfurt: the Insatz, the Gülte, and the Restkaufschilling. Only Christians could function as loaners, while Frankfurt’s Jewish inhabitants were excluded from real estate-backed credits,19 as they were de facto excluded from homeownership. In the 1460s, the city council had started to erect the Jewish ghetto, the so-called Judengasse, and that entailed the expropriation of their former houses.20 As a result, Jewish loaners concentrated on personal loans and pawnbroking.

18 Therefore, Derix, Thyssens, 14–20, pleads for the German term “Vermögen”. For a general overview of Bourdieu’s influence on early modern history, see Füssel, Die feinen Unterschiede.
**Insatz** signified hypothecary credit, while **Restkaufschilling** was a credit transaction between the buyer and the seller of real estate. The buyer only paid one part of the purchase price, owed the other part to the seller and remitted an annual interest of five percent until he could pay the complete price. For instance, in 1558, Johann von Glauburg the Elder sold the house **Braunfels** to the immigrant Augustin Le Grand with a **Restkaufschilling** of 3,000 florins, so that Le Grand had to pay 150 florins annual interest. Gültens, in turn, were a kind of bond and relied on the idea that the interest consisted in the earnings of the real estate that was burdened by the bond. Gültens therefore could be paid in natural products, but this played a minor role in inner-urban transactions. In the Middle Ages, Gütlen lasted forever; the so-called **Ewiggültens** encumbered the property forever, and the debtor could never repay them. The city of Frankfurt gave up this principle of permanency in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, favouring repayable **Wiederkaufsgütlen**. The city council forbade contracting new **Ewiggültens** in 1439 and enabled the repayment of already existing **Ewiggültens** in the Reformation era.

Frankfurt’s house owners often assembled a greater number of real estate-secured loans. In the early seventeenth century, for instance, the tailor Conrad Gerngroß and his wife mortgaged their three houses (two on the Zeil in the northern city centre and one in Sachsenhausen, on the other side of the Main River) with **Insätzen** of 150, 200, and twice 300 florins. They had also taken out two loans in the form of Gütlen, one of about 120 florins in favour of Magister Jost Authaeus, a city official, and another Gütte of about 400 florins in favour of the patrician Johann Hector von Holzhausen. Altogether, they borrowed 1,470 florins and thus presumably paid an annual interest of 73 ½ florins.

While poorer house owners like the Gerngroßes accumulated debts, wealthier people like the patrician Johann Hector von Holzhausen amassed

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21 See Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt a. M. (IfSG), Hausurkunden, 1016; Jung and Hülsen, **Baudenkmäler**, 62.
23 Schnapper-Arndt, **Lebenshaltung**, vol. 1, 33–4.
24 For the long-lasting conflict about the repayment of the **Ewiggültens**, see Lühe, Ablösung, and Hermann Dechent: **Kirchengeschichte von Frankfurt am Main seit der Reformation**, vol. 1. Leipzig 1913, 38–9, 100–1, 131, 173.
25 Schnapper-Arndt, **Lebenshaltung**, vol. 1, 147–8, lists the real-estate loans for 18 houses sold in 1643.
26 Bothe, **Frankfurts wirtschaftlich-soziale Entwicklung**, 323.
27 Ibid.
interest. Patrician families based their wealth and their identity substantially on property income. They formed an exclusive circle of those who could live from their unearned income (“irer gült en und renthen zu leben han”), as a 1488 sumptuary law put it. Patrician families held great numbers of Gülten and owned several houses, having considerable income from renting them as tenements or during the fairs. In the early sixteenth century, Claus Stalburg the Rich earned 935 florins a year from his Gülten. He owned five great houses in the city’s commercial centre and eight tenement houses; he also held shares in two further houses. When the fair business went well, the larger houses yielded between 80 and 90 florins, and the Handelshöfe up to 300 florins.

In her study of Strasbourg’s late-medieval real estate market, Gabriela Signori suggests that such a patrician accumulation of bonds and property was rather a result of an Aristotelian, security-seeking household strategy than the consequence of profit maximisation. Security, however, did not mean modesty, but ensuring social status and distinction. Corresponding to patrician concerns, the wealth- and identity-giving properties had a particular status in the city’s law. Houses and grounds, stocks and bonds belonged to the legal category of immovable goods, which privileged their owners in taxation, inheritance, and law of obligation. Given that patrician families were able to preserve their wealth across centuries, their property-based economy seems to have been an effective way to maintain well-being and social precedence, although (or even because) it did not generate immense riches.

Houses, however, were equally important for the economic strategies of the middling sort, particularly during the fairs. Everybody who lived in the area where the fairs’ business took place tried to benefit from it. Renting accommodation

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30 Ibid., 116.

31 Ibid., 116, 130, 132.


34 See Bothe, Patriziervermögen, 1–2, 50.
or storage space guaranteed significant and regular income, especially when foreign merchants signed rental agreements for numerous years. For instance, in 1567, the publisher’s widow Margarethe Gülfferich rented several rooms of her house in the Mainzergasse to the Cologne bookkeepers Arnold Johann and Gottfried Birkmann for a period of twelve years. Owning a house in the highly-frequented areas also enabled various commercial operations in or in front of the building, and Frankfurt’s house owners apparently claimed a right to put up stalls in adjacent spaces. At the forefront of the Fettmilchaufstand, an anti-patrician and anti-Jewish uprising in the early seventeenth century under the leadership of Vincenz Fettmilch, Frankfurt’s burghers protested against the city council’s plan to demand fees for the stands in front of the houses. As a result, the places covered by the houses’ eaves remained free from taxes, in contrast to the lanes between the houses that belonged to the city’s common land (Allmende).

An eighteenth-century supplication of three Frankfurt neighbours sheds light on the business that went on in front of the houses. The supplicants’ houses backed onto the town wall nearby the riverside. Behind the town wall there was located the quay, and the three neighbours used the space at the back of their houses in different ways: A timber merchant’s widow stored her goods there; a spice trader installed a quayside entrance to his warehouse, and an innkeeper sold beer to the people on the quay from his windows. All this came to the ears of the councillors because a Nuremberg retailer impeded the neighbours’ activities with his vast stand on the quay.

The profitability of houses during the fairs was the principal cause of their high prices. A late eighteenth-century traveller remarked: “If houses are offered for sale, especially those that are located in the frequented streets, they are sold for enormously high prices, which is almost astonishing”. The same observer

38 See Bothe, Frankfurts wirtschaftlich-soziale Entwicklung, 567–8.
39 IfSG, Rechnieh vor 1816, Nr. 430, fol. 123–4.
was convinced that rents and sale prices were as high as in Hamburg, Vienna, and Berlin, and that even a “miserable, narrow” house, destined for immediate demolition and bought for 8,000 to 10,000 florins, promised large profits due to the building site’s value.

Although prices and rents increased during the eighteenth century, Frankfurt already had a dynamic real estate market in the sixteenth century. Ownership changed often, as can be seen in the case of the Deublingers, a wealthy family of merchants and jewellers originating from the imperial city of Ulm. In the sixteenth century, the Deublingers were engaged in the cloth trade. Around 1530, Barthel Deublinger owned three houses in the cloth traders’ quarter in the midst of the city: the Würzgarten, the Gadeneck, and the New Red House (Neues Rotes Haus) in the Tuchgaden. The latter bore a corbel with the Deublingers’ coat of arms and the date 1545 – a reference to building activities in that year. In the same year, Barthel and his wife Margaretha sold three cellars on the Weckmarkt for 180 florins; maybe this transaction helped to finance the building costs of the New Red House. In 1556, the couple belonged to the wealthiest inhabitants of Frankfurt, paying the town’s highest tax rate for a capital of 8,000 florins.

Barthel and Margaretha Deublinger had four children who reached adulthood: Clara, Thomas, Margaretha, and Seifried. Thomas and his wife Ursula sold the Würzgarten in 1608 for 6,000 florins. Seifried married Anna, daughter of the Steinmetz family, and was therefore involved in the construction of the houses of the Great Angel (Großer Engel) and the Little Angel (Kleiner Engel), which were situated at the northeastern corner of the Römerberg, Frankfurt’s central city square. On behalf of his mother-in-law, he and his sister-in-law’s husband were concerned with building the Great Angel. Finished in 1562, the splendid, newly built timbered house remained in the hands of the family for less than four

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
46 IfSG, Hausurkunden, 1591.
47 Bothe, Entwicklung der direkten Besteuerung, 159.
48 IfSG, Hausurkunden, 1437.
49 Jung and Hülsen, Baudenkmäler, 98.
50 IfSG, Hausurkunden, 875; Jung and Hülsen, Baudenkmäler, 98–9.
decades and was sold by Seifried and Anna’s heirs in 1597.\footnote{Jung and Hülsen, \textit{Baudenkmäler}, 98.} The same happened in 1609 with the \textit{Prince’s Corner (Fürsteneck)} that Seifried and Anna Deublinger had acquired in 1582.\footnote{Ibid., 26; IfSG, Hausurkunden, 1716.} The \textit{Prince’s Corner} belonged to a small number of stone houses with turrets, which Frankfurt’s wealthiest families had erected in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.\footnote{Christian Freigang: Madern Gerthener und der Aufstieg Frankfurts zum Architekturzentrum im Spätmittelalter, in: id. (ed.): \textit{Das neue Frankfurt. Innovationen in der Frankfurter Kunst vom Mittelalter bis heute}. Wiesbaden 2010, 11–21, esp. 19; Lippert: Haus in der Stadt, 130–2.} The Deublingers bought the \textit{Prince’s Corner} together with two adjacent tenement houses and a small courtyard; they refurbished it and chose it as their residence. According to the tax roll of 1587, Seifried and Anna Deublinger had a capital of 10,500 florins at their disposal.\footnote{Bothe, \textit{Entwicklung der direkten Besteuerung}, 65.} Nevertheless, their heirs had to sell the dwelling and apportion the revenue among themselves.\footnote{IfSG, Hausurkunden, 1486; IfSG, Hausurkunden, 1490; IfSG, Hausurkunden, 1720.} Over a period of nearly a hundred years, the Deublingers thus owned buildings situated in the best locations of the old city centre, but they did not maintain these properties for longer than two generations. The Deublingers may have followed a commercial and somewhat speculative strategy by using real estate as short-term or middle-term investments.\footnote{Kaspar claims this for Lübeck. Cf. Fred Kaspar: Bau- und Raumstrukturen städtischer Bauten als sozialgeschichtliche Quelle, in: Peter-Johannes Schuler (ed.): \textit{Die Familie als sozialer und historischer Verband. Untersuchungen zum Spätmittelalter und zur frühen Neuzeit}. Sigmaringen 1987, 165–200 esp. 172.} However, it seems to be more likely that they aspired to long-term possessions, which they could not realise because for lack of resources or due to spatial mobility.

\section*{Partitions and Associations}

The Deublingers’ case shows that the dynamics of Frankfurt’s real estate market not only resulted from the high values of the houses. They were also a consequence of Frankfurt’s inheritance law, which was – as in many other German cities – a partible inheritance system. Male and female heirs had to apportion real estate among themselves. Therefore, if heirs were not able or willing to share ownership of the property, they had to sell it. From an economic viewpoint, however,
apportionment was not an attractive prospect for the heirs because it endangered
the functionality of the house. That is why Frankfurt’s families – particularly
patrician families – practised a special form of inheritance and property man-
agement, the so-called *Ganerbschaft*. *Ganerbschaft* guaranteed and organised the
collective possession of real estate; it was also practised in the lower nobility of
Hesse and Franconia.\(^{57}\)

In Frankfurt, some of the most important houses and *Handelshöfe* belonged
to a *Ganerbschaft* for centuries: the *Steinernes Haus* (from 1654 to 1898),\(^{58}\) the
*Saalhof* (from 1390 to 1696),\(^{59}\) the *Rebstock* (from 1627 to the early eighteenth
century)\(^{60}\) or the *Nürnberger Hof* (from 1522 to the twentieth century).\(^{61}\) As a
*Ganerbe*, owners could only sell their shares to other *Ganerben* or to the *Gan-
erbschaft* as a whole.\(^{62}\) Although it enabled continuity in property holding, *Gan-
erbschaften* nonetheless posed problems, for they consisted of wider personal
networks that were not necessarily congruent with kinship. They formed no legal
entity (*Rechtsperson*),\(^{63}\) and were based solely on collective administration and
funding. This could hinder the maintenance of the building when some of the
*Ganerben* refused to invest. Therefore, Frankfurt’s city law of 1578 stipulated how
to cope with such kinds of conflict.\(^{64}\)

*Ganerbschaften* combined economical with social purposes – in Bourdieus-
ian terms, they intertwined economic, social and even cultural capital. The *Gan-
erbschaft* of the *Kaufhaus unter den Neuen Krämen*\(^{65}\) apparently had been suited to
economic interests. It owned and managed a *Kaufhaus* that served as commercial
centre during the fairs and probably also as a venue for wedding celebrations.\(^{66}\)
The *Ganerbschaft* of the *Kaufhaus* was connected to the wool weavers’ guild,

\(^{57}\) Vgl. Georg Beseler: *Die Lehre von den Erbverträgen*, vol. 1: *Die Vergabungen von Todes wegen
\(^{58}\) See Jung and Hülsen, *Baudenkmäler*, 42.
\(^{59}\) Ibid., 4–5.
\(^{60}\) Ibid., 384.
\(^{61}\) Ibid., 366. When the *Baudenkmäler* were published in 1914, the *Ganerbschaft* still existed.
\(^{62}\) Der Statt Franckenfurter erneuerte Reformation II 5.
\(^{63}\) See Beseler, *Die Lehre von den Erbverträgen*, 82.
\(^{64}\) Der Statt Franckenfurter erneuerte Reformation VIII 10 § 1.
\(^{65}\) IfSG, Handel Ugb 381; IfSG, Handel Ugb 384.
\(^{66}\) It is not clear if there existed simultaneously two *Kaufhäuser* in Frankfurt. Battonn, *Oertliche
Beschreibung*, vol. 3, 170–3, and Dechent, *Kirchengeschichte*, 226, refer to an “altes Kaufhaus” that
was situated in the street between Römerberg and St. Bartholomew. The *Ganerbschaft*, in contrast,
was located in the street between Römerberg and Liebfrauenberg. However, “das Kaufhaus” was
the place where weddings took place in the seventeenth century. See IfSG, Ratssupplikationen,
which had been one of the most important guilds before loosing its significance in the last decades of the sixteenth century. When the Ganerben of the Kaufhaus gave themselves a new constitution in 1580, they declared that wool weavers should preferably function as shareholders. The Ganerbschaft consisted in 40 shares, called Stämme or Städte, of which one person could own several. Among the Ganerben were persons like Heinrich Kellner, lawyer and the city’s syndic, or the jurymen (Schöffen) Konrad Humbracht und Anton Eller. Whereas these men belonged to the patriciate, most Ganerben did not.

In the case of the Ganerbschaft Alten-Limpurg, economic purposes stood back behind social and cultural concerns, since it represented the exclusive community of a patrician association, a so-called Stubengesellschaft. Hence, Alten-Limpurg relied on two congruent forms of corporation that centred on houses. When the Stubengesellschaft arose in the Late Middle Ages, it first had its location in the house Limpurg on the western Römerberg. In 1495, it acquired the southern of the city hall’s, i.e. the Römer’s, neighbouring stone houses and moved into it, transferring the name of its old domicile to the new property. For the next four hundred years, this house remained in the hands of the association. The spatial proximity to Frankfurt’s political centre corresponded with Alten-Limpurg’s political influence, since its (male) fellows dominated the city council until the early eighteenth century. In the late sixteenth century, the Stubengesellschaft adopted the name of Ganerbschaft, thus seemingly expressing a changing self-concept of its fellows. During the sixteenth century, Alten-Limpurg had successively conceived a noble identity, and implementing the name of Ganerbschaft probably underlined its claim that patricianship was as noble as knighthood. Furthermore, the name of Ganerbschaft distinguished Alten-Limpurg from the city’s other associations, above all from its rival, the Gesellschaft Frauenstein.

Frauenstein was the second, less influential Stubengesellschaft of early modern Frankfurt. Like Alten-Limpurg, Frauenstein obtained its name from its

68 IfSG, Amts­buch der Ganerbschaft zum Kauf­haus, fol. 1v.
69 Ibid., fol. 1v.
70 Ibid., fol. 49r.
72 See Hansert, Aus auffrichtiger Lieb, 38–9; id., Geburts­aristokratie, 501–2.
73 Hansert, Geburts­aristokratie, 222.
domicile, house Frauenstein, located on the northern side of the city hall. Like the male Alten-Limpurg fellows, the Frauenstein members could become councillors, though they held fewer chairs. Early modern prospects of the Römerberg like Caspar Merian’s 1652 copperplate (Figure 1) clearly show the congruence between spatial position and societal hierarchy. Depicting the Römerberg as the place of the emperor’s election, Merian listed the Römer (1), the “noble house” of Alten-Limpurg (2) and the “honourable association” of Frauenstein (3).

Figure 1: Caspar Merian: Römer oder Rathhaß zu Frankfurt am Mayn, copperplate, Frankfurt a. M. 1658, 58,5 x 38 cm © Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg

74 Hansert, Aus auffrichtiger Lieb, 38–9; id., Geburtaristokratie, 501–2.
The Frauensteiner association resided at Frauenstein until the end of the seventeenth century, when it acquired the Braunfels that had previously been sold to Augustin Le Grand. Braunfels stood not in the neighbourhood of the town hall, but it was the most important building on the Liebfrauenberg, a place at the northern end of the city’s commercial centre. It was a stone house in the style of the Prince’s Corner, and had several times served as the emperor’s lodgings. Already one of the most prestigious houses of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Frankfurt, Braunfels grew even further in standing when Frauenstein bought it in 1694 for 15,000 florins and it became the site of the Frankfurt stock exchange.\footnote{See Jung and Hülsen, Baudenkmäler, 61–1.}

The examples of Alten-Limpurg and Frauenstein show clearly how houses structured social and political arrangements. This was especially true at the time of the Fettmilch Uprising (1612–1615). Since the Late Middle Ages, not only patrician associations, but also retailers and craftsmen had had their own houses or even Stuben.\footnote{See IfSG, Handwerker Akten 454.} Whereas the retailers’ Stube (Krämerstube) did not develop into a guild-like corporation, limiting its political influence,\footnote{See Schmidt-Funke, Haben und Sein, 74–5.} the guilds paralleled the house-centred associations of Alten-Limpurg and Frauenstein. Some of them even held chairs in the city council.\footnote{See Konrad Bund: Frankfurt am Main im Spätmittelalter 1311–1519, in: Frankfurter Historische Kommission (ed.): Frankfurt am Main. Die Geschichte der Stadt in neun Beiträgen. Sigmaringen 1991, 53–149, esp. 91.} During the Fettmilch Uprising, artisans and retailers temporarily ruled the town and stipulated that every burgher had to be the member of a corporation. By doing so, they forced all those to establish new associations who were not part of an already existing Stubengesellschaft or guild.\footnote{See Robert Brandt: Autonomie und Schutz der “Nahrung”, Bürgerecht und Judenfeindschaft: Das Frankfurter Innungshandwerk während des Verfassungskonflikts 1705–1732, in: Mark Häberlein and Christof Jeggle (eds.): Vorindustrielles Gewerbe. Handwerkliche Produktion und Arbeitsbeziehungen in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit. Konstanz 2004, 229–248, esp. 239.} One of the newly founded associations was the Crane’s Society (Kranichgesellschaft). Its fellows were mainly Calvinist merchants. As its domicile, it chose the house Crane, which was located in immediate proximity to the town hall and to the houses of Alten-Limpurg and Frauenstein, thus expressing its claim for political participation and its rivalry to the established patrician associations.\footnote{See Dietz, Handelsgeschichte, vol. 2, 83; Bothe, Frankfurts wirtschaftlich-soziale Entwicklung, 657.}

Although the uprising was put down and patrician authority was restored, Frankfurt’s political landscape underwent significant changes: Except for patrician Stubengesellschaften, all guilds and associations were dissolved and their
movable and immovable properties confiscated. Losing political influence went hand in hand with losing houses. The most striking act of this physical rearrangement was the ritual demolition of Vincenz Fettmilch’s house and the erection of a pillar of shame (Schandsäule).

Figure 2: Conrad Corthoys: Eigentliche Abcontrafactur der auffgerichteten Columnen und Säulen, broadsheet, Frankfurt a. M. 1617, 40 x 29 cm (detail) © HAB Wolfenbüttel

The house’s symbolism thus was inverted from civic inclusion into a sign of exclusion or even damnation (Figure 2). Furthermore, it reflected the physical erasure of Fettmilch himself. He was dismembered, beheaded and quartered, and

83 Conrad Corthoys: Eigentliche Abcontrafactur/ der auffgerichteten Columnen vnd Säulen/ so auff dem Platz Vincents Fettmilchs Kuchen Beckers geschleifften Behausung/ zu ewiger
his head was impaled on the bridge over the Main. Against this background, it seems all the more convincing to think of houses as a “second skin”, as the “physical body of the household” or as “living stones”. Houses doubtlessly represented persons or groups of persons – and early modern house owners made this visible with names and words, figures and symbols.

Names and Meanings

When the Frankfurt retailer Jacob de Marsegni drew up his last will in 1621, he requested that the dwelling he had purchased with his “housewife” during their marriage would never fall into other hands, but should be given to one of his children and remain in the hands of his heirs in perpetuity. De Marsegni, son of an immigrant from the Southern Netherlands, had a close relationship to his Frankfurt house. His desire to preserve it might have had economic or rather emotional reasons. Perhaps, the housefather de Marsegni cared paternally for the well-being of his successors, or he wished for a somewhat dynastic connection between the house and the family, and maybe his experience of migration made this even more desirable. As Gerhard Fouquet pointed out, early modern people were less tied to their homes and hometowns than nineteenth-century historians imagined. The Cologne housefather Hermann von Weinsberg, for

84 See the inscription of the Schandsäule (Figure 2): „Daß dieser platz bleib tod vnd wust Dran Vincentz Fettmilch schuldig ist, Welher die Statt dreij gantzer Iahr/ Gebracht hat in manch groß gefahr. Deßen er erstelich hat daruon, Getragen diesem boesen Lohn: Daß er endlich an der Richtstatt Sein zween Finger verloren hat, Hernach den Kopff gurtheilt bald Vn die Viertel gehencke auff drauff An die vier Straßen dieser Statt, Den Kopff man auffgestecket hat An Brucken thrurn, Auch weib vn kint Ewig des Lands verwiesen seind Das Hauß geschleyfft daß ich alhier Zu trewer warnung stehe dir Den 28 Febr: 1616.“
87 Jütte, Living Stones.
88 IfSG, Testamente, Kasten 4, fol. 3v.
89 See Dietz, Handelsgeschichte, vol. 2, 12, 310.
instance, moved ten times during his lifetime.\(^{90}\) On the other hand, he is one of the best examples for the ideal of a housing tradition since his personal testimony, the *Book Weinsberg*, centres on his home, the house *Weinsberg*. Leaving and selling one’s house was certainly an everyday experience, but staying in place and holding on to one’s property appears to have been thought preferable.

Jacob de Marsegni and his wife Johanneta de la Ward lived in a timbered house, located in a narrow street nearby the *Römerberg*. Its name was *Güldenes Hähnchen*, meaning little golden rooster, whereas in the late sixteenth century the building on this site had been called *Black Hat* (*Schwarzer Hut*).\(^{91}\) The change of names presumably marks a rebuilding in the years around 1600. House names were a usual form of denoting addresses in medieval and early modern Europe,\(^{92}\) but they were not stable, and changes in name normally hint at architectural changes.\(^{93}\) Since naming houses after their builder was a common practice,\(^{94}\) and the previous owner of the *Goldenes Hähnchen* had been Jakob de Haan,\(^{95}\) a wealthy merchant from Lille and business partner of Jacob de Marsegni, it is almost certain that De Haan had left his mark in the name of the house. Jacob de Marsegni and Johanneta de la Ward took over their previous owner’s house name, but perhaps they found another way to link their own family with their home. They could have put up a coat of arms, an inscription, a carving or a wall painting on the façade.\(^{96}\) This was by no means a solely noble or patrician custom.\(^{97}\)

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\(^{94}\) See Garrioch, House Names, 32–3.


\(^{97}\) This claims, on contrast, Kaspar, and Lippert supposes a “passepartout”-style. Cf. Kaspar, Bau- und Raumstrukturen, 174; Lippert, *Haus in der Stadt*, 191.
Some Frankfurt families made extensive use of heraldic decoration. For instance, the status-conscious Philipp Eisenberger, author of an illustrated family chronicle, and his patrician wife Catharina Bromm utilised the exterior of their Frankfurt house in order to display their noble ancestry and patrician kinship. Through matrimony Eisenberger, who originated from Ginsheim near Mainz, became a fellow of Alten-Limpurg in 1578. After his wife had inherited the house Ehrenfels in Frankfurt’s Schnurgasse, the couple adorned the façade with the coats of arms of its ancestors, thus mirroring the family trees inside Eisenberger’s family chronicle. Likewise, the interior of patrician houses could be studded with coats of arms on furnishings, textiles and dinnerware, thus making visible the inhabitants’ networks and lineage.

The Great Angel, built in 1562 by Anna Steinmetz and her sons-in-law, also bore heraldic elements on its façade, namely the coats of arms of Anna and her husband Peter Steinmetz. Whereas such Allianzwappen were a common feature of early modern houses, the Great Angel’s coats of arms even showed more than matrimonial relationship. Anna’s husband, who had died in 1541, had been deacon of the collegiate church of St. Bartholomew. He then converted to Protestantism and married Anna in 1536. His brother Hans in contrast remained Catholic, and after Peter Steinmetz’s death, Hans contested the widow’s inheritance. Hans died in 1561; in the same year, his elder son Johannes, a Catholic clergyman, became Peter’s successor as deacon of St. Bartholomew. Under these circumstances, the Great Angel’s heraldic decoration, conspicuously located in the middle of the façade, became a confession. The house may already have been finished when, in November 1562, Emperor Maximilian II’s election and coronation took place in Frankfurt. On his way from the Römer (the place of election) to St. Bartholomew (the site of coronation), the emperor not only passed the Great Angel, but also a neighbouring house with a Lutheran iconographic programme. An early eighteenth-century copperplate of Emperor Charles’ VI

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100 See Fried Lübbecke: Das Haus zum Engel in Frankfurt am Main. Berlin 1929, Taf. 30, 4; Jung and Hülsen, Baudenkmäler, 102.
101 See Lübbecke, Haus zum Engel, 11–3.
104 IfSG, Hausurkunden, 875.
105 See Dechent, Kirchengeschichte, 226.
coronation festivities (Figure 3) illustrates the Great Angel’s prominent place at the Römerberg’s corner – and demonstrates the eye-catching effect of its façade.106

Frankfurt houses thus referred to denominational conflict and displayed confessional identity, reacting to the fact that the officially Lutheran town had become quasi-multidenominational in the Reformation era due to Catholic persistence and Calvinist migration.107

A close relationship between house and owner also existed in the case of the *Golden Scales* (*Goldene Waage*). The Calvinist spice merchant and confectioner Abraham de Hamel and his wife Anna de Litt erected the building in the early seventeenth century.\(^{108}\) Outside and inside the house, the couple devised an elaborate iconographic programme. Beside the couple’s *Allianzwappen* above the door to the spice shop, Abraham de Hamel and Anne de Litt decorated their newly built home with biblical scenes depicting the life of Abraham and the apocryphal Book of Tobit. They placed a carving of the sacrifice of Isaac on one of the house’s pillars, showing Abraham sacrificing the ram (*Hammel* in German). The couple also chose Abraham’s life for a splendid stuccoed ceiling in their *Stube* and added scenes showing Tobit’s wife Anna.\(^{109}\) Since the Reformation, the Old Testament had gained in importance in Protestantism and especially in Calvinism,\(^{110}\) influencing Calvinist naming.\(^{111}\) Furthermore, Old Testament or Apocryphal subjects inspired early seventeenth-century Dutch artists including Rembrandt, who painted a scene from the Book of Tobit in 1626.\(^{112}\) Therefore, seventeenth-century observers probably read the *Golden Scales’* decoration not only as references to its builders, but also as a profession of Calvinism. Although Catholics homeowners also decorated their houses in reference to their patrons,\(^{113}\) Abraham de Hamel and Anna de Litt went further. Did they do so in a specifically Protestant or Calvinist way? In pre-reformation Frankfurt, wealthy couples would have invested in endowments and ecclesiastical art in order to present themselves and to preserve *memoria*,\(^{114}\) and Catholics of the early seventeenth century continued to do so.\(^{115}\) Calvinists generally rejected such practices, but in addition, Frankfurt’s Calvinists had no opportunity to express or represent themselves in ecclesiastical art inside

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\(^{112}\) Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, Tobit and Anna with the Kid, 1626, oil on panel, 39.5 x 30 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-A-4717.

\(^{113}\) See Garrioch, House Names, 28–9, 33.

\(^{114}\) For example Jakob Heller and his wife Katharina von Melem. See Bothe, Das Testament des Frankfurter Großkaufmanns, 362–7.

\(^{115}\) For example the family of the Frankfurt merchant Pithan. See Ursula Opitz: *Philipp Uffenbach. Ein Frankfurter Maler um 1600*. Berlin 2015, 204–8.
a church, for there was no Calvinist church in Frankfurt. As the city had forbidden the free practice of religion, the home became the tableau of denominational self-expression.

A somewhat inverted relationship between houses and their inhabitants existed in Frankfurt’s Jewish ghetto. Whereas Christian homeowners marked their houses, in the Judengasse the houses marked their inhabitants. In the later Middle Ages, a house’s name was frequently transferred to the people who lived in it. This custom fell out of use among Christians, but in Frankfurt, Christians who generally ignored proper Jewish surnames still named Jews after their houses. Frankfurt Jews, meanwhile, came to identify themselves with their houses’ names and signs. From the late sixteenth century, they used house names as surnames on gravestones, and from the middle of the seventeenth century, they decorated gravestones, religious objects and even earrings with the houses’ signs. This quasi-heraldic use of house signs, which seems to have been practised only by Frankfurt Jews, is a fascinating example of reinterpretation and appropriation. The Ghetto and its houses had been erected by the city council and stood for the repression and marginalisation of the Jewish population. But early modern Frankfurt Jews apparently appreciated the houses as signs of protection and inclusion, for they represented their membership of the privileged group of Jews who owned the legal status of Judenstättigkeit.

Conclusion

Analysing housing capital in early modern Frankfurt reinforces the importance and complexity of houses that recent research has pointed out. Whereas it is neither questionable nor surprising that houses served as resources for numerous purposes, it is still illuminating to examine how they did so under early modern urban circumstances. First and foremost, houses reflected and perpetuated early modern inequality. Owning a house multiplied the possibilities of economic, social and cultural participation or – as Bourdieu would have put it – the chances

of capital accumulation and transformation. However, in early modern Frankfurt real property was limited on citizens and Christians. Only owners profited from lower interest rates on real estate-secured loans, and only owners benefitted from lodging visitors to the fairs. Even if house ownership was far from a guarantee of wealth, it certainly helped. It does not seem that early modern Frankfurt citizens tried to conceal this economic importance of their houses. Whereas Bourdieu emphasises the dissimulation of economic purposes by the display of social and cultural capital,¹¹⁹ Frankfurt’s patricians or house-centred associations visibly dedicated themselves to both economic and social or cultural purposes. What made more of a difference was what business they were engaged in, because patrician identity was based on unearned income. Thus, not economic capital as a whole, but manual labour was rendered invisible. Houses conspicuously mirrored the crucial role they played on the economic and social level. As bearers of names, symbols, and inscriptions, they represented not only their inhabitants’ prestige, confession, or memoria, but also their own importance as essential and stable resources for early modern urban life.

¹¹⁹ See Bourdieu, Ökonomisches Kapital, 184.