

Squatting and Urban Renewal: The Interaction of Squatter Movements and Strategies of Urban Restructuring in Berlin

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Abstract

Squatting as a housing strategy and as a tool of urban social movements accompanies the development of capitalist cities worldwide. We argue that the dynamics of squatter movements are directly connected to strategies of urban renewal in that movement conjunctures occur when urban regimes are in crisis. An analysis of the history of Berlin squatter movements, their political context and their effects on urban policies since the 1970s, clearly shows how massive mobilizations at the beginning of the 1980s and in the early 1990s developed in a context of transition in regimes of urban renewal. The crisis of Fordist city planning at the end of the 1970s provoked a movement of 'rehab squatting' (Instandbesetzung), which contributed to the institutionalization of 'cautious urban renewal' (behutsame Stadterneuerung) in an important way. The second rupture in Berlin's urban renewal became apparent in 1989 and 1990, when the necessity of restoring whole inner-city districts constituted a new, budget-straining challenge for urban policymaking. Whilst in the 1980s the squatter movement became a central condition for and a political factor of the transition to 'cautious urban renewal', in the 1990s large-scale squatting — mainly in the eastern parts of the city — is better understood as an alien element in times of neoliberal urban restructuring.

Introduction

Squats have been a feature of the development of many cities in developed capitalist societies. Existing studies mostly concentrate on investigating the political and legal conditions for squats (Bodenschatz *et al.*, 1983), probing the motives and forms of squatter movements (Pruijt, 2004) or reassessing their character as a new social movement (Grottian and Nelles, 1983; Koopmans, 1995). These approaches trace cycles of squatter movements back to changed legal conditions and social inequalities, especially in housing provision, as well as to socio-political and subcultural turning points. They therefore reveal important factors that determine the development of squatter movements, but we believe that it was first and foremost the broader urban political context that determined if and how squatter movements arose. We take Berlin as an example to show that the dynamics of squatter movements are closely connected to changing strategies associated with urban renewal, and that in each case they emerge from the crisis of the previous urban-renewal regime. We begin by looking at Pruijt's typology of squats (Pruijt, 2004) and research that shows how aspects of movements were integrated into neoliberal urban policies (Rucht, 1997; Schmid, 1998; Mayer, 2002) to analyse the specific relationship between squatter movements and urban-renewal

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policies in Berlin. In the following section, after contextualizing the Berlin squats within the campaigns that were waged by the social movements of the time, we discuss the background of Berlin's urban politics, and in the next two sections consider the two high points in housing conflict that took place at the beginning of the 1980s and around 1990, respectively. We focus on the influence of squats on urban restructuring policies. In addition, we provide a typology of the urban-renewal regimes operating in Berlin in the penultimate section. Against this background, we argue in the concluding section that in each case the Berlin squatter movements developed at moments of transition between various models of urban renewal, and that they contributed in greatly varying degrees to these processes of transformation. While the squats at the beginning of the 1980s contributed decisively to the implementation of a policy of 'cautious urban renewal', the squats of the 1990s constituted an alien element in neoliberal redevelopment policy in East Berlin.

Urban policy and the social movement context of the first Berlin squats

The TUNIX Conference, organized in Berlin in 1978, brought to an end a cycle of social movements in the Federal Republic that had begun with the student riots of 1967–68. The 'red decade', as historian Gerd Koenen termed the years from 1967 to 1977, had not only laid the foundations for new social movements against atomic power, war and militarization, but also for the sexual-equality movement. It paved the way for sectarian experiments involving the setting up of new revolutionary parties and for the increasing radicalization that led up to the armed resistance of the Red Army Faction and the Movement 2 June. A turning point came when sections of the movement reacted to the 'German Autumn' of 1977 and the level of government repression at the time by withdrawing from mainstream society and setting up specific alternative projects. Berlin came to be the centre of this rapidly growing alternative movement. In 1979 the alternative scene that grew around pub collectives, bicycle workshops, district newspapers and printing houses reached an estimated membership of 100,000 people (Scheer and Espert, 1982: 19) and provided many of those active in the movement with a form of economic security beyond that provided by capitalist wage labour.¹ The issue of suitable living space quickly became of central importance for these projects, and squats seemed to be a way of appropriating such space. In addition, squatting fitted the political approach of the alternative movement: its intervention in urban restructuring, preoccupation with the problems posed by apartments standing empty, the housing shortage, property speculation and displacement — all these issues constituted an opportunity for the movement to go beyond its own needs and personal concerns, and thereby escape the potential pitfalls of a politics of representation.

While the alternative movement was growing rapidly, Berlin's urban politics slipped into a veritable crisis. The housing shortage — in 1980 alone some 80,000 people were registered as seeking apartments — was not simply the result of established territorial boundaries preventing the 'frontier town' from expanding in size. It was more a case of the public programme of redevelopment favouring the speculative strategy of keeping apartments vacant. According to Senate statistics, 27,000 apartments were uninhabited in 1978 (Bodenschatz *et al.*, 1983: 301). House owners and housing associations deliberately allowed houses to become derelict with the expectation that they would be able to demolish and re-build or fundamentally modernize them using government funding, and eventually charge correspondingly higher rents.

1 However, it should not be forgotten that many alternative economic organizations lived from the social welfare of their 'staff'. The significance of social security for wide-ranging and long-lasting mobilizations, and the radicalism of the new social movements in the Federal Republic of Germany, cannot be overestimated (Mayer, 1986).

The ruling Social Democratic Party in Berlin pursued an uncompromising policy of 'redevelopment by eviction' in the inner-city districts. Described as a 'feudal, bureaucratic way of disposing of people' (Eichstädt-Bohlig, cited in Nitsche, 1981: 210), this policy, and the associated displacement of the low-income population along with a large number of commercial operations, provoked widespread resistance in the 1970s. In Kreuzberg, in particular, tenants' committees, citizens' action groups and other urban political groups protested for many years against the restructuring of the area around the Kottbusser Gate. Their influence was, however, extremely limited, and their participation in town-planning decisions was at best symbolic (Laurisch, 1981: 26). For the most part, resistance and squatting campaigns continued to produce no results.

A crisis of legitimation in urban housing policy was finally reached in December 1980, when a corruption scandal involving building contractor Dietrich Garski cast doubt upon the Senate's policies and exposed the murky amalgamation of the Senate's policies with building contractors, redevelopment agencies and housing associations. The resignation of the Senate a few weeks later heralded the 'miry end of an era' (Matthies, 2006). The relative power vacuum that lasted right up to the victory of CDU (Christian Democratic Union) candidates in the elections of May 1981 paved the way for the explosive expansion of squatter movements in the months that followed.

Rehab squatting and 'Revolt 81'

The fall of the Senate in January 1981 was preceded by a sweeping 'radicalization' of the movement (Koopmans, 1995:171). The housing wars to which this led can be divided into three phases: emergence, expansion/differentiation and downfall. The *first phase* had already begun as early as February 1979, when the citizens' initiative 'SO 36' considered 'everything produced by the constitutional state' as exhausted, and organized the first 'rehab squats' (Aust and Rosenblatt, 1981: 36). The squatters' practice of occupying houses and immediately starting to renovate them was meant, on the one hand, to point out the longstanding deterioration and emptiness of the apartments, and on the other hand, to create acceptance of this method of civil disobedience. The public and political success of these first squats had further repercussions: until December 1980, 21 houses had been occupied by squatters in Berlin. As early as March 1980 a 'squatters' council' was set up to act as the point of contact and negotiation in dealings with state authorities. The district and the Senate's initial response was a willingness to negotiate with these first rehab squatters, although the authorities were inconsistent in their political strategy.

The actual starting point of 'Revolt 81', the beginning of the *second phase* of the squatting movement, was 12 December 1980 (Michel and Spengler, 1981). On this date, an illegal eviction carried out by police in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg provoked a street riot that lasted until the morning of the following day. In the months that followed, new houses were occupied by squatters on an almost daily basis, peaking in the summer of 1981 at around 165 houses (Koopmans, 1995: 174). The overwhelming majority of these apartment buildings were situated in the districts of Kreuzberg (approx. 80) and Schöneberg. Massive demonstrations, street riots and direct action, combined with the associated erratic expansion of Berlin's squatter movement, was part of a Europe-wide revolution that began in Zurich in May 1980. The Zurich opera house riots were the prelude to a two-year phase of severe disputes surrounding an Autonomous Youth Centre owing to a shortage of spaces for alternative youth cultures. Within the context of a Europe-wide crisis in the Fordist model of economic growth and rising unemployment, the slogan 'Zurich is burning' served as inspiration for an entire generation of mostly disaffected youth.² A widespread lack of perspective and conservative roll-back against

2 The revolt was broader, both thematically and in terms of people, which is why the term 'youth movement' that was used at the time is misleading.

the authoritarian break-up of 1968 constituted the foundation on which the revolt spread like wildfire, initially in the Federal Republic of Germany (Freiburg im Breisgau, Hamburg, Berlin, Bremen and Hannover), then on to Amsterdam and later to Britain (Katsiaficas, 1997: 107ff; Schultze and Gross, 1997: 35).

The 1980 revolt enabled a new political generation to enter the stage, something which was not attributable to the alternative movement. Very little reliable data concerning the social composition of Berlin's squatter movement are available. An article published in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* on 12 August 1983 states that 65% were men, 35% under the age of 21, 40% between the ages of 21 and 25, 36% school children or students, 26% in employment, and 38% unemployed or without a recognized job (Pökatzky, 1983: 9). These figures coincide with analyses that identified two large groups within the squatter movement from the outset (AG Grauwacke, 2008: 45): on the one hand, the 'alternatives', most of them middle-class students or academics; and on the other hand, a group of people who were 'marginalized', either willingly or unwillingly, most of them under the age of 21 and with a proletarian background. This heterogeneity in social structure is also reflected in the diversity of political beliefs and squat-related goals. The movement developed within a few months and was arguably aware of its heterogeneity but never quite wanted to refer to itself in such terms. For a different view of the movement, it is helpful to consult the typology developed by Hans Pruijt (2004), which categorized different types of squats according to their respective motives and goals. Pruijt differentiates between deprivation-based squatting, squatting as an alternative housing strategy, entrepreneurial, conservational and political squatting (*ibid.*: 37).³

At first, the diverse interests did not conflict with each other. On the contrary: the dynamic of the rehab squatter movement was based first and foremost on the 'radical' forces that made use of the political power vacuum to occupy a substantial number of houses in the shortest possible time, thereby ensuring a level of conflict potential that largely prevented immediate evictions. Such strategies were focused on confrontation, and benefited at the same time from public acceptance and support, which resulted from the long 'work of fermentation' by citizens' action groups and tenants' representative offices and their strategy, which was largely aimed at negotiation and mediation. Soon, however, the conflict between a political course of confrontation, on the one hand, and the strategic pursuit of alternative urban political goals on the other, came to the fore. By the time the issue of legalization of houses arose, conflicts between 'negotiators' and 'non-negotiators' could no longer be covered up: the faction that could be attributed to the alternative movement wanted to hold on to the houses and was increasingly prepared to put this interest before an earlier consensus — no negotiation until 'political' prisoners were released, and an 'overall solution' for all squatted houses. The contingent of 'non-negotiators' began to differentiate themselves from the alternative movement by referring to themselves as 'autonomists' (*cf.* Schwarzmeier, 2001: 50ff), and accused negotiators of giving up the political struggle and of resorting to the mere preservation of their own spaces.

The strategies that the government pursued were aimed at dealing with this conflict, focusing on the squats and the 'crisis' they triggered. The SPD (Social Democratic Party)-led transitional Senate under the leadership of Hans-Jochen Vogel, which came into office in February 1981, wanted to convert the squats 'into legally ordered conditions that were also in complete harmony with civil law'.⁴ Evictions would only be possible if specific criminal charges were made — trespassing alone was not

3 This last term is, of course, infelicitous: in spite of the polemic at the time, there was undeniably a political aspect to other approaches too. But since any alternative term is equally ambiguous and one-sided, in this article we shall use the term 'political' squats specifically to mean this last type.

4 Government declaration of Berlin's governing mayor, Hans-Jochen Vogel, on 12 February 1981 (quoted in Sonnewald and Raabe-Zimmermann, 1983: 67).

enough — and if prerequisites for immediate renovation were in place (*cf.* Bodenschatz *et al.*, 1983: 322).

After the elections in May 1981, the CDU-led Senate under Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker reversed the relationship between selective integration and suppression. Any efforts made towards integrating the ‘peaceful’ squatters were repeatedly thwarted by the Minister for the Interior, Heinrich Lummer, a committed advocate of the hardline faction in the department of public prosecution and the police authorities, who had already counteracted the moderate course pursued by the SPD-led Senate. Lummer divided the squatters into ‘those ready to negotiate’ and ‘criminals’. He proclaimed a ‘zero-tolerance’ approach to new squats, and launched a large-scale offensive against demonstrations and similar protest actions. House searches conducted on the pretext of tolerating no ‘lawless spaces for criminals’, were often used either to damage the houses in such a way that they became uninhabitable, or simply to evict their occupants with immediate effect. The wave of repression (*cf.* Brand, 1988: 204ff) that began with the CDU-led Senate’s entry into office reached its sad climax on 22 September 1981, when Klaus-Jürgen Rattay, an 18-year-old squatter, fleeing from baton-wielding police, was knocked down and killed by a Berlin Transport Authority bus as he crossed the street.⁵

This was the turning point that led into the *third phase* and to the downfall of the squatter movement. After the summer of 1981, the movement’s ‘vanguard in Berlin rapidly crumbled away’ (Bacia *et al.*, 1981: 127). It was a sign of their ‘aggressive helplessness’ that TUWAT, an ‘extravaganza’ staged in August 1981, brought together up to 3,000 people from the whole of Germany (Mulhak, 1983: 242). Even the ‘alternative’ squatters ‘believed that the chance of houses being legalized had been diminished by the new CDU-led government’ (*ibid.*). In the following ‘psycho winter’ there was a temporary absence of repression and consequently no unity, and the squats that housed autonomist ‘non-negotiators’ were ground down by deferred internal conflicts (AG Grauwacke, 2008: 65ff). The urban policy initiative in the squatter environment felt that the work they had been doing over many years was now in jeopardy. At the same time other conflicts came to the fore, such as mobilization against the NATO Double Track Decision, the West Runway at Frankfurt Airport and the Brokdorf nuclear power plant.

While the squatters ‘had lost the initiative’, urban political groups began to ‘incorporate the squatter movement into their ideas and policies for housing’ (Bodenschatz *et al.*, 1983: 324). Prominent patrons from churches, colleges, the arts and culture scene and the unions who had moved into squatters’ houses for their own protection, declared shortly after Rattay’s death that they intended to ‘prevent the rehab squatters’ just cause from disappearing in a fog of violence conjured up by the Senate’ (EA, 1981: 86). In negotiations with the Kreuzbeug district authority and the Senate they instigated a moratorium on evictions that lasted until Easter 1982 (Bodenschatz *et al.*, 1983: 322). At the same time, squatters from across the spectrum of the alternative movement, in collaboration with urban political campaigners, began to establish supporter associations that would act as models for legalization beyond the scope of individual houses. Attempts to legalize houses more extensively were, however, repeatedly thwarted by the strategy of escalation pursued by the Minister for the Interior, who ordered evictions on the slightest pretext, often in the middle of negotiations (*ibid.*: 325). This ‘type of pre-concerted’ interplay (Pökatzky, 1983) between the negotiating table and evictions characterized the entire ‘legalization’ process right up to the final evictions in the autumn of 1984. Koopmans (1995: 178) totals up the figures: of 165 squatted houses, 105 were finally ‘contractually pacified’ by rental or purchase agreements, and the occupants of 60 were evicted.

5 If we take stock of repression in the first year of the squatter movement (December 1980 to December 1981), figures reveal: 2,000 people injured by police units, one of them fatally, and 4,972 court proceedings, of which only 3% actually resulted in prosecutions (Brand, 1988: 216, 228).

The legalizations were only a partial success: by the end of 1984 the squatter movement was finally crushed, or rather, 'pacified'. Only a few legalized houses enjoyed financial support under the 'self-help housing' programme launched in 1982. In spite of everything, spaces for collective and alternative lifestyles remained a marginal phenomenon. At the same time, the legalization of houses established the division of the movement, making it easier to criminalize the autonomist 'non-negotiators'. The latter were all the easier to criminalize because 'sections of the squatter movement', by virtue of their militant actionism and subjectivist misconception of autonomy, gave up 'every right to turn their own ideas into the reality of other social spheres', and isolated themselves in the process (Geronimo, 1990: 96). The legalization of houses ultimately signified the end of any political dimension to the squats beyond the scope of housing policy.

The housing policy incentives that remained had a particular influence on the International Building Exhibition set up in 1979, and undoubtedly constituted a success for the squatter movements. As a publicly financed and commercially organized institution in the 1980s, the exhibition became a new centre of power for urban building (Bernt, 2003: 46). Its old-building section was a 'reservoir for departmental policies opposed to the demolition policy' and became the driving force behind the 'twelve principles of cautious urban renewal' that assimilated the core demands of tenants' groups, urban political groups and rehab squatters. Although these principles were never laid down by law, they had a significant impact, even beyond Berlin (*ibid.*: 52). But not even these successes remained untarnished. One effect of decentralization and the expansion of opportunities to participate in local decision-making processes was that even the conflicts had to be dealt with locally. 'While the legal parameters were preserved, decision making was moved down a level, to the centres of conflict, and activists were integrated into a consensus-seeking process with the aim of gaining more acceptance and identification with decisions in the neighbourhood' (*ibid.*: 56). Even the survival of hard-won achievements in housing policy, rooted above all in the work of the International Building Exhibition, seemed to depend on the successful outcome of these attempts to find a compromise. As Karl Homuth (1984: 37ff) put it in an early study, 'cautious urban renewal replaced the violent character, bureaucratic paternalism and inscrutability of these plans with careful, step-by-step processes that were easier to comprehend and more socially adjusted', yet this would not come into full effect for several years.

Squats in East Berlin at the beginning of the 1990s

The squats in East Berlin at the beginning of the 1990s can only be viewed within the context of the explosive social changes that took place during the turnaround (*Wende*) and reunification. The political power vacuum of the *Wende* period, and the massive loss of authority on the part of the police and municipality facilitated the large-scale occupation of vacant old buildings in the inner city. In addition, the GDR's housing policy, oriented towards new buildings, was creating the main basis of urban buildings for the squats. After years of reconstruction in Berlin, a city scarred by the destruction of war, the housing problem was to be solved by erecting industrially manufactured apartment buildings that were for the most part developed in large estates at the outer city limits in the form of new towns or districts. As a result of this one-sided orientation, the inner-city areas, consisting of old housing that had been ideologically devalued as the legacy of capitalist urban development, were neglected in town planning and were showing signs of structural decay (Hoscislowski, 1991; Hannemann, 2000). The outcome of this real-socialist practice of disinvestment was not only poor refurbishment of apartments in the old housing areas but also a vacancy rate of up to 20% in particular districts. A total of 25,000 old apartments were vacant, most of them in the inner-city

districts (SenBauWohn, 1990). Accordingly, squats during the *Wende* period concentrated on housing stock in the inner-city districts of East Berlin that dated back to the *Gründerzeit* (a time of rapid industrial expansion in Germany around 1900).

In total, around 120 houses were occupied by squatters in the inner-city districts of Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg and Friedrichshain, and sporadically around the district of Lichtenberg. Based on an analysis of the usually fortnightly (but weekly at times of intensive mobilization) *Squatters' News*, issues of the video magazine *AK Kraak*, as well as interviews with those who were active at the time and personal recollections of the period, the dynamics of squatting in East Berlin can be divided into three distinct phases. These can be distinguished according to both the character of the squats and their main geographical focal points.

The *first phase* of squats encompassed the period from December 1989 to April 1990. The majority of the 70 or so houses occupied by squatters during these months were in Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg. In comparison to earlier squatted apartments — 'schwarz wohnen' ('residing illicitly') had a long tradition in the GDR — the character of squatted houses clearly changed in the winter of 1989 to 1990. Houses were occupied openly and assertively. Banners, secured windows and barricade-like doorways soon made these houses sites for an anarchistic, libertarian experiment against everything that was petit-bourgeois, against Nazis (who had already begun to organize themselves in very large numbers in the final years of the GDR) and against every form of rule. The squatters during this first phase were mostly East German youth, who were largely already acquainted with one another from various subcultures and political scenes. They were then joined by the first West German and international 'fanatics' and artists, who by and large were integrated in a friendly way into the new squat. In particular, the squat called the 'art department store' in the Oranienburger Strasse (Tacheles) and the squat at 5 Schönhauser Allee, which served as the headquarters of the art and culture project called WYDOX, focused on creating spaces that would primarily help squatters achieve self-realization. Their function as a place of residence was merely secondary (see Galenza and Havemeister, 2005). They were, in turn, joined by individual squats made up of citizens' action groups, who focused on preventing the planned demolitions of entire old housing blocks in the districts of Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte. Most of these houses were legalized relatively quickly into cooperatives and 'cautiously' renovated by means of financial incentives.

In his typology of squats, Pruijt (2004) identifies a heterogeneous mix of different strategies during this first phase of squatting at the beginning of the 1990s. In addition to squats that focused on *squatting as an alternative housing strategy*, some squats quickly became established as centres for exhibitions and other events (*entrepreneurial squatting*), while other squats had the goal of actively preventing existing demolition plans (*conservational squatting*).

A *second phase* of squats, lasting from May to July 1990, centred geographically on the urban district of Friedrichshain. During this period the squats underwent a qualitative and quantitative expansion, growing by a further 50. In their search for places to live as well as new adventure, an increasing number of 'unpolitical' groups also experimented with squatting. In addition to the mainly East German squatters, there were now squats that for the first time were being organized by West Germans or West Berliners. These squatters had been affected by the housing shortage in West Berlin and had partly been brought together through political protests. They were predominantly students who collectively moved into vacant houses in the East. The main focal points were still Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte. In Friedrichshain only a handful of houses were occupied by squatters at this time. In the April 1990 issue of *Interim*, the newsletter for West Berlin's 'alternative' scene, members from the oppositional 'church from below' drew attention to houses in Mainzer Strasse that had been left vacant since 1987, and put out a call to the squatter movement (see Arndt, 1991). In their announcement they said: 'If there are really enough squatting opportunities for everyone, if it's more a case of a lack of people willing to take them up, and if it will maybe help avert or impede a further destruction of houses along western lines, then why not?' (*ibid.*: 32).

At the beginning of May the 11 vacant houses in Mainzer Strasse were occupied by squatters. With over 250 occupants, the 'Mainzer', as it was called, swiftly became the centre of the Friedrichshain squatter scene. Alongside many facilities (bookshop, second-hand bookseller, public kitchen) the first Tunten (gay) house project in East Berlin and a women's/lesbian house were set up. Those who lived in these houses on Mainzer Strasse were mainly West Berliners and members of the West German autonomous movement (Benjamin, no date). The coordinating committee that operated between the occupied houses, the 'squatters' council', pursued a strategy of confrontation, in particular through initial negotiations for contractual legalization of squatted houses.

In Puijijt's typology this *second* phase of squats in East Berlin may be more clearly characterized as 'political' squatting. Houses that were occupied by squatters were no longer considered mere free spaces for self-realization, but more markedly as sites of confrontation with the state authorities and as symbols of political self-positioning.

A *third phase* of the East Berlin squatter movement began at the end of July 1990. The number of new squats was reduced when the municipal authorities in East Berlin started implementing the 'Berlin Line' ordinance, in terms of which, from 24 July 1990 onwards, no new squats would be tolerated, and independently of any criminal charges or eviction notices, squats would be evacuated by police within 24 hours of occupation. In early November evictions of squatters from 2 houses in Prenzlauer Berg and Lichtenberg gave rise to violent conflict. After evictions on the morning of 12 November 1990, around 50 squatters from the houses on Mainzer Strasse spontaneously demonstrated their solidarity with the evicted squatters. According to police reports, squatters reacted to the introduction of police reinforcements and the use of water cannons and armoured personnel carriers in Mainzer Strasse by bombarding the police with flares, throwing roof tiles, cobblestones, paving slabs, sacks of cement, slingshots and Molotov cocktails (Arndt, 1991: 13). During the night, a violent street riot ensued that lasted for hours. Attempts by around 1,500 police officers, all from the West, to force their way into the street were unsuccessful, despite the use of water cannons, armoured personnel carriers and stun grenades (*ibid.*: 21). This escalation of violence made a negotiated solution less and less likely, in particular because the West Berlin police ignored the district's political protagonists and focused instead on eviction by force. In the early hours of 14 November, Mainzer Strasse was cleared by a total of 3,000 police officers from all over Germany, several helicopters and ten water cannons. With over 400 arrests made and many casualties on both sides, this was the violent turning point in the East Berlin squatter movement.

The evictions in Mainzer Strasse clearly demonstrated that the option of militantly defending squatters' houses had failed. This realization prompted the majority of groups in squatted houses to come to the negotiating table. During district-specific negotiations, usage agreements on the majority of houses were drawn up with the respective housing associations. However, when East Berlin properties were being reassigned to their previous owners or their respective heirs, these contractual agreements were no longer considered reliable. In the case of a number of squatted houses, reassignment led to conflict with the private owners and to more evacuations well into the 1990s.

In contrast to the wave of squatting of the early 1980s, internal debates between 'negotiators' and 'non-negotiators' in the East Berlin squats remained confined to specific time periods. After the dramatic evictions of squatters from the houses in Mainzer Strasse in particular, only a few squatters refused to accept a negotiated solution. This change in attitude is evident from the ratio of around 30 evicted squats to 90 legalized ones during this time. While around three-quarters of all the houses in East Berlin were contractually safeguarded in the early 1980s, in West Berlin the figure was scarcely more than 60%. After legalization, many former squatters began to make structural improvements and, following their own initial renovations and repair work, undertook more comprehensive restructuring, often in the context of public development programmes. In the course of the 1990s the Berlin Senate spent over 250 million euros

on what was known as the ‘self-help housing policy’ development programme. In total, over 3,000 units were renewed in this way, many of them former squats (Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin, 2002). On the basis of lease agreements that were concluded over many years and as a result of people having a substantial personal stake in the modernization of the buildings, modern housing conditions were created in the context of these programmes. In some districts, the renovation of former squats was the first clear sign of urban renewal in the making.

Squatting and urban restructuring

The squatter movements of the 1980s and 1990s were similar not only in terms of their solidity; we can also identify numerous parallels between the processes involved. First, in each case a political power vacuum was the condition for the explosive proliferation of both movements: in the 1980s the death throes of the SPD-led Senate of January 1981, and the transitional government’s restricted capacity to act; and in the 1990s the fall of the Berlin Wall and the institutional chaos that followed. Secondly, in both cases a violent demonstration of restored sovereignty in urban policy constituted a turning point that ended in the defeat of the movements: on the one hand, the evacuation of 8 squats on 22 September 1981, during which Klaus-Jürgen Rattay came to a violent end; and on the other hand, the evacuation of Mainzer Strasse on 14 November 1990. In both cases this restoration of sovereignty was preceded by widespread shifts in political power at the broad urban level: the election of the CDU-led Senate in 1981, the formal reunification of Berlin and the annexation of the former GDR into the Federal Republic on 3 October 1990. Thirdly, a further similarity was the fact that extensive legalization models could in each case only be applied to houses in public or not-for-profit ownership, whereas for houses that were in private ownership only individual rental, leasehold or purchase agreements were drawn up. And fourthly, the conflicts within both squatter movements ran along similar lines: while in 1990 the conflict between ‘negotiators’ and ‘non-negotiators’ was not as acute as it had been in the early 1980s, the conflict of interest between, on the one hand, ‘conservative’ squatting and ‘squatting to try out collective forms of living’, and on the other hand, the ‘political’ or autonomous squats, was the same. It was symptomatic that in both movements the squats organized by citizens’ action groups were the first to draw up agreements and legalize their houses.

Despite all these similarities, however, we must also take proper account of the differences. The squats of the 1980s were part of an extended and differentiated alternative subculture that centred on the inner-city districts of Kreuzberg and Schöneberg, which made up not only the ideological background for the squats, but also the environment of their social and political supporters. The squats in the 1990s, by contrast, consisted more of alien elements in a situation of sweeping, radical change. While there were continuities with the GDR practice of ‘residing illegally’ (*‘schwarz wohnen’*), and many houses were rooted in their respective neighbourhoods, they could nevertheless not be considered part of the more extensive movement in the eastern inner-city districts. However, the most marked difference between the squats of the 1980s and 1990s may be found in the role each played in urban restructuring. We shall now explore this difference in more detail.

The role of squats in urban restructuring

The policy of urban renewal pursued in Berlin can be divided into three clearly distinguishable phases and models: first, what is known as ‘areal redevelopment’, carried out between 1963 and 1981; secondly, the policy of cautious urban renewal, which was pursued between 1981 and 1989; and thirdly, post-Fordist urban renewal in East Berlin, pursued from the early 1990s. The Berlin squatter movements in each case accompanied the transition to a new model of urban renewal. For this reason we shall examine in more

detail the specific network of relations between squatters and the implementation of new types of urban renewal.

'Areal redevelopment' describes an approach that focused on the widespread demolition of housing stock that is in need of renewal, as well as the building of new, modern housing developments. The 'First Berlin Urban Renewal Programme', approved by the Berlin Senate in 1963, provided for the demolition of 10,000 housing units. The renewal model was based on developers (mostly housing associations) buying up mostly private property in the redevelopment areas and extensive financial support for demolition and new house-building work from public funds for the Social Housing Development Programme (Dahlhaus, 1968; Zapf, 1969). Aspects of this authoritarian form of urban renewal that were particularly criticized were the failure to involve residents, the concerted destruction of existing neighbourhood structures, and the demolition of low-cost housing stock that would not be replaced. In spite of comprehensive funding, rents in the new buildings were markedly higher than those in the old building areas (Becker and Schulz zur Wiesch, 1982).

The policy of *cautious urban renewal* was born out of this criticism of the redevelopment of spaces. In implementing urban renewal it focused on three types of 'caution': caution in *construction*, which involved preserving the building stock and modernizing one step at a time; *social* caution, which involved preserving the composition of the social structure wherever possible and allowing tenants in the redevelopment areas to stay in their houses; and finally, the principle of caution in *planning policy*, comprising widespread involvement and participation by residents in renewal activities. A participatory model of urban renewal was tried out. Nevertheless, there was no change in the material basis for urban renewal. Even cautious urban renewal rested on extensive public funds and a transfer of the plots of land to (often urban) redevelopers, so that in spite of other goals, urban renewal was from then on organized by the state and distanced from the market (Konter, 1994; Bernt, 2003).

The squats of the early 1980s were of major importance for the implementation of cautious urban renewal. The squat houses and the squatters occupying them provided the trigger, as well as objects and partners, for a new model of urban renewal. First, the concentration of the squatters' houses in future or pre-designated redevelopment areas was a consequence of the legitimization crisis in the redevelopment of spaces. Squatters, citizens' action groups and a critical section of the public attacked in equal measure, if not always as one voice, the planned demolition of whole streets. The self-presentation of the squatter movement as 'rehab squatters' essentially suggested a criticism of the (by then usual) demolition-approach to development. Secondly, the squatted houses not only triggered a new policy of urban renewal; they were at the same time a kind of experimental laboratory in which new instruments of urban renewal were trialled.

The eviction of squatters was not the only way in which the city reacted to the regulatory requirement to end the existence of 'lawless spaces'. For the first time, some of those living in squatted houses were granted a say in the renovation and design of their houses. Collective usage agreements, gradual modernization and the deflationary integration of self-help interests represented completely new forms of urban renewal and the end of the authoritarian urban-renewal regime of redeveloping spaces. The apparent coherence of the participatory principles behind cautious urban renewal, along with the squatters' notion of 'self-empowerment', can be viewed as a third level of successful integration of squats into cautious urban renewal. Apart from some basic criticisms of the de-politicization of housing (Homuth, 1984) and of the eviction of squatted houses, described as 'preventative counter-insurgency', an independently minded political alliance consisting of alternative groups, squatters, the Alternative List (the later Green Party) and professional town planners and architects agreed to reject the bureaucratic and authoritarian urban renewal of the past, and to work together to create alternative models.

Post-Fordist urban renewal in East Berlin in the 1990s was clearly distinguishable from the cautious urban renewal in the western part of the city by criteria relating to real

estate, urban planning and finance. The enormous renewal requirements of around 180,000 apartments in old buildings, the crisis in public finance and the privatization of property brought about by restitution in redevelopment areas led to a form of urban renewal 'financed first and foremost by property owners' (Berlin Senate, 1993). Instead of using funds and transferring ownership to redevelopment agencies, the authorities attempted to implement the social and building objectives of urban renewal in East Berlin using town planning legislation. The mode of control deployed for urban renewal could be characterized as an increasingly negotiation-oriented administrative action (Holm, 2006: 90). Rather than imposing direct control through 'money', the redevelopment objectives of the 1990s were to be strengthened using 'laws and commandments' as means of control. In the process, multifaceted systems of negotiation between tenants, property owners and urban authorities were created. The redevelopment regime, in particular contractors and tenants' committees, used moderation and consultation to provide, wherever possible, conflict-free implementation of urban renewal. Now the decisive factors were not merely economic criteria, but also cultural and social resources. Educated tenants in particular, and those closely involved with social networks, were better able to make their interests count in the individualized negotiation of modernization plans (Häußermann *et al.*, 2002).

Unlike the West Berlin squatter movement in the early 1980s, squatters in East Berlin did not play a central role in implementing a new redevelopment regime. Squatted houses were, in fact, an alien element in the new regime of urban renewal. As in West Berlin, the regulatory strategy the city's government was pursuing gave squatters huge scope for structurally renovating their houses. In East Berlin the authorities for the most part had recourse to solutions already tried out in the West. The routine unwinding of self-help programmes and collective tenancy contracts had absolutely no innovatory potential for implementing the new redevelopment model in East Berlin, focused as it was on individual negotiation and private investments. These programmes, on the contrary, brought about only cautious renewal of small niches. The special role of squatted houses not only created discord between East and West, but also explained the squatters' far-reaching avoidance of district conflicts. Their special status made cooperation with tenants and district initiatives difficult. For example, widely held fears regarding the restitution process and changing property ownership played only a minor role in former squats that had long-standing leasehold agreements. Contact between district initiatives and squatters' houses existed primarily in cases where private property owners tried to evict the squatters themselves. For example, a fire on the roof of the squats in Dunckerstrasse 14/15 in Prenzlauer Berg's Helmholtz Square led to a massive show of solidarity between neighbours and can be regarded as the birth of many neighbourhood initiatives that still remain active in the area today. In view of otherwise divergent interests of residents, such shows of solidarity were, however, isolated cases.

Research carried out on movements such as the Kreuzberg squatters in the 1980s shows that urban social movements cannot really be understood when considered in isolation, and that they must instead be viewed against the background of general social change. In the context of the Fordist redevelopment of spaces in particular, squats can be seen as catalysts for areal development. The orientation towards housing preservation in the founding period, the demand for a detailed process of renewal, and even the implementation of an extended environment for urban renewal, can be seen as crystallization points for post-Fordist urban renewal (Jahn, 1994). In this way, the Kreuzberg squatter movement illustrates the modernizing function ascribed to urban social movements (Rucht, 1997). The institutionalization of social movements that Margit Mayer (2009: 15) termed 'from protest to programme' was reflected in the practice of 'self-help in building', but also in the categorical acceptance of cautious urban renewal. In his studies of Zurich, Christian Schmid (1998) refers to a dialectic of urban social movements and Zurich's 'global city formation', and in particular identifies the impulse of urban protest movements and subcultural activities to bring about a cultural openness and the formation of a cosmopolitan image of the city (*ibid.*: 221). In Berlin, too, there were

attempts to incorporate the squatter movement's multifaceted and often self-organized cultural forms of expression into the image of a vital and creative city. Urban protests and squatter movements should not be analysed as something in opposition to the neoliberal urban development, but must always be considered in terms of their restructuring impulse.

If we divide neoliberal urban policies into 'roll-back' and 'roll-out' phases of neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell, 2002), the history of Berlin's urban renewal shows that in Kreuzberg in the 1980s new forms of control and *governance* were being implemented while Fordist funding instruments were maintained. It was only when the model was applied to East Berlin's redevelopment areas in the 1990s that a clear *roll-back* of the earlier welfare-state foundations of urban renewal became noticeable. The economy of urban renewal, no longer based on public funding and public redevelopment agencies, now drew on private investments of professional property developers. However, the communicative incorporation of modernization projects, the involvement of non-governmental agencies and the rhetoric of 'cautious urban renewal' all survived. The squatter movement's demands for a cautious treatment of building structures and for more participation were absorbed into the 'software' of neoliberal urban renewal, while changes in 'hardware' did not occur until urban renewal was extended into East Berlin. The squatters were not so much the engine of this second transformation in urban renewal as they were alien elements in its development. Its abstention from a personal urban political agenda isolated the squatter movement of the 1990s from other urban protest movements.

A new urban political movement?

Leftist movements today are again taking up urban restructuring as a theme, and a 'movement of free spaces' seems to be picking up the loose ends left by the squatter movements in the 1990s. In Berlin, these themes were first revived in the campaign for a social centre between 2001 and 2005. Mobilization against the eviction of a longstanding housing project at 59 Yorckstrasse, as well as the occupation of the former Bethanien Hospital and its use as a social centre a few days after the evictions of June 2005, revived the debate on urban restructuring and free spaces. And discussions around this subject in the Berlin movements in 2008 seemed for the time being to have reached a peak: the 'squatter action days' held all across Europe in April, the successful prevention of a possible eviction of the social centre Köpi, the 'emancipatory space' action days at the end of May, and finally a referendum that was called by the alliance 'Sink the Mediaspree', with 87% of participants voting against a large-scale urban restructuring programme.

After 15 years' delay, how did urban movements assume such political significance within the current model of post-Fordist urban renewal? The first decisive factor was the emergence of a 'new' political movement in the 1990s, for which the Zapatista uprising in 1995 in Chiapas, Mexico, and the protests in Seattle in 1999 and Genoa in 2001 can be considered the most important reference points. Thus, for instance, the campaign for a social centre initiated a short time after Genoa was less an expression of a lack of space for leftist movements than a culmination of the convergence of groups and trends in the context of a movement critical of globalization (*cf.* Lebuhn, 2008: 30ff). A second reason is the accelerated urban renewal in Berlin's inner-city districts. Luxury modernization, rising rent costs and social displacement are no longer confined to the districts of Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte, but can be seen increasingly in other inner-city districts such as Friedrichshain, Kreuzberg or Neukölln. Furthermore, former squatter houses are now no longer excluded from these trends. Changes in ownership or a revived interest in profit on the part of existing owners have affected the leftist 'free spaces' at 59 Yorckstrasse and currently also at 54 Rigaer, the Köpi and 183 Brunnenstrasse. This has led to broader alliances such as the 'Wir Bleiben Alle!' ('United We Stay') campaign, brought into being to organize squatters' action days, or through participation in the 'Sink the Mediaspree'

initiative, which was started in 2006. It remains uncertain how far this new political interest will have noticeable repercussions for current urban renewal policy, or whether, in fact, we can expect a break with the current redevelopment model. The increasingly strained housing-policy situation, the large number of new and old groups and initiatives, and initial institutional successes such as the victorious referendum against the Mediaspree development are at least signs of a new wave of urban policy disputes.

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Résumé

Le squattage comme stratégie de logement et levier de mouvements sociaux urbains accompagne l'évolution des villes capitalistes dans le monde entier. Les dynamiques des mouvements de squatters sont directement liées aux stratégies de rénovation urbaine dans la mesure où ceux-ci cadrent avec des régimes urbains en crise. L'analyse des mouvements de squatters à Berlin, avec leur histoire, leur contexte politique et leurs effets sur les politiques urbaines depuis les années 1970, montre comment les mobilisations massives du début des années 1980 puis 1990 se sont créées pendant une phase de transition des régimes de rénovation urbaine. La crise de la ville fordiste de la fin des années 1970 a suscité un mouvement d'occupation avec remise en état' (Instandbesetzung) qui a fortement contribué à l'instauration d'une 'rénovation urbaine douce' (behutsame Stadterneuerung). La seconde rupture dans la rénovation urbaine berlinoise est apparue en 1989–1990, lorsque la nécessité de restaurer l'ensemble des quartiers du centre-ville s'est traduit par un défi budgétaire nouveau pour les décideurs des politiques urbaines. Alors que dans les années 1980, le mouvement des squatters devenait une condition essentielle et une composante politique de la transition vers une 'rénovation urbaine douce', dans les années 1990, le squattage à grande échelle (surtout dans les quartiers Est de la ville) se comprend mieux comme un élément extérieur à une époque de restructuration urbaine néolibérale.