



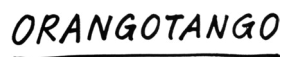
Critical Mapping for Municipalist Mobilization CMMM

Belgrage . Berlin . Barcelona

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CM
MM

the five Ws + H

Section 1

WHAT, WHERE, WHY?

CMMM is a practice-oriented research project that was designed to support civil society actors in their struggles for just societies and cities in the pursuit of profound political transformation. In their quest to change power relations, mobilisers in *municipalist movements* are continuously re-thinking and re-shaping instruments and mediums. In this project we focused on *critical mapping* as it constitutes an “act of power,” one that transcends theorization to establish different perspectives on realities, an action aimed at changing narratives and discourses.

The evolving democratization of mapping through new technologies is deconstructing it as an elitist instrument for the few and making it available to the many as a medium for (self-)empowerment. Maps are helping to give shape and size to issues that are hard to grasp, particularly complex issues at urban scales. Theoretically, we based our work on an exploration that K LAB conducted in parallel to this project, which is captured in the *mapping change logbook*,¹ regarding what constitutes critical mapping and what are its transformative potentials. In this practice-based CMMM project, we investigated the emancipatory claims of critical mapping through collaborative activities and comparative research on specific spatio-political issues in three cities: Barcelona, Belgrade, and Berlin.

1 The mapping change logbook was the result of the postdoctoral project “Mapping for change? Critical cartography approaches to drive socio-environmental urban transformations,” which was conducted by K LAB between October 2018 and April 2022. It was financed through a grant from the Volkswagen Foundation under its program: “Original – isn’t it? New Options for the Humanities and Cultural Studies” (now OpenUp). It contains a selection of key findings from the project, including primary, secondary, and tertiary materials on concepts and experiments that engage critical mapping. For more information, please see Section 16: mapping change logbook.

These cities were chosen because of several factors, one being the variance in their levels of political organization and the achievements of the respective local municipalist movements. Whereas in Barcelona the contemporary municipalist movement managed to oust traditional parties from the mayor's seat in 2015, in Belgrade they are just starting to make it to municipal councils (as of [April 2022](#)). Meanwhile in Berlin, in spite of the very rich scene of initiatives and activists, there is still no framework that contests the established political structures with an alternative. Other factors include points of divergence and convergence offered by these west, east, and northern European cities in terms of political and economic histories and contexts. In the second half of the twentieth century, all three cities were sites of complex socio-political contestation. Before neoliberalization swept through the globe, their spatio-politics were largely socialist and their traces still greatly impact the realities in these cities today, as shown in the [timelines](#) that were mapped in this project.

We understand critical maps within the broader definition of the term, to be encompassing of various kinds of visualizations and communication tools and, above all, the processes that give rise to them (i.e., not just the "output"). From this perspective and as outlined in the [CMMM process](#), which spanned over 3.5 years from 2019 to 2023, our [team](#) of scholar-activists worked on developing methodologies and creating critical maps of multiple formats that support the agenda setting, claim-making, and communication of our collaborating collectives, initiatives, and civil organizations on the issue of the *Right to Housing*. This includes creating timelines of events and changes in legislations and using maps, posters illustrating relevant actors and processes, and custom-programmed interactive online maps that translate the findings and needs defined in the analysis presented in the various sections of this work.

While we started off with a general vision and a set of targets that were outlined in the funding proposal we submitted to the Robert Bosch Stiftung, we allowed the process, the events around us, and the needs of our team members to influence the discourse and dictate the specific foci and shapes of our collaboratively produced outputs. Guided by feminist data visualization principles,² we were careful to not let the comparative scope of the project overshadow the differences between the teams. Therefore, the many sections of this work present varying rather than standardized inputs about the same topics. On another level, we took advantage of digital formats to allow readers to further explore the mentioned actors, events, or references via hyperlinks whenever possible.

2 The six principles of feminist data visualization outlined by Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein are: 1. Rethink Binaries, 2. Embrace Pluralism, 3. Examine Power and Aspire to Empowerment, 4. Consider Context, 5. Legitimize Embodiment and Affect, 6. Make Labor Visible (Klein, Lauren F, and Catherine D'Ignazio. 2020. *Data Feminism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press).

Why housing?

At the outset of the project, our newly formed CMMM team chose housing as the thematic and comparative entry point. First, this was because it represents a common arena of suffering in the three cities. Second, it is a domain in which the members of our team were strongly invested. And third, back in 2019, it was clear that this basic need for dignified life would mobilize people to support endeavors for political change.

We understand housing as a broad term that transcends “having a shelter” and encompasses people’s concerns for daily sustenance. It includes aspects of adequate infrastructure and health care, access to education and non-monetized non-commercialized spaces of socialization (which is as central to mental health as water and clean air), and therefore, the systems of spaces that allow for just and secure social production and reproduction. By extension, the term should ideally also include spaces of labor and production, which have been dislocated from realms of housing by functional principles of city management. However, under current sectorial political paradigms, this extended meaning is hard to translate into policies of spatial governance.

Under this central theme, some of the comparative lines we saw at the beginning of the project were the issues of housing burdens (how much of a person’s income is spent on housing), evictions (active and passive models), touristification, and the financialization of housing (real estate having become a prime object of speculation by international corporations). In addition, across the three cities, we saw how the growing challenges related to access to affordable housing have triggered the formation of collectives and initiatives that work on alternatives. As the outputs of the project displayed here demonstrate, these topics were addressed to varying degrees in the respective activities of each city team in accordance with the characteristics of the locations and events that took place during the process. CMMM was an accompanying research project that operated in tandem with the activities of their collectives and organizations, as described in the following section. So who are the CMMM team members and collaborators?

Context: housing, municipalism, and CMMM

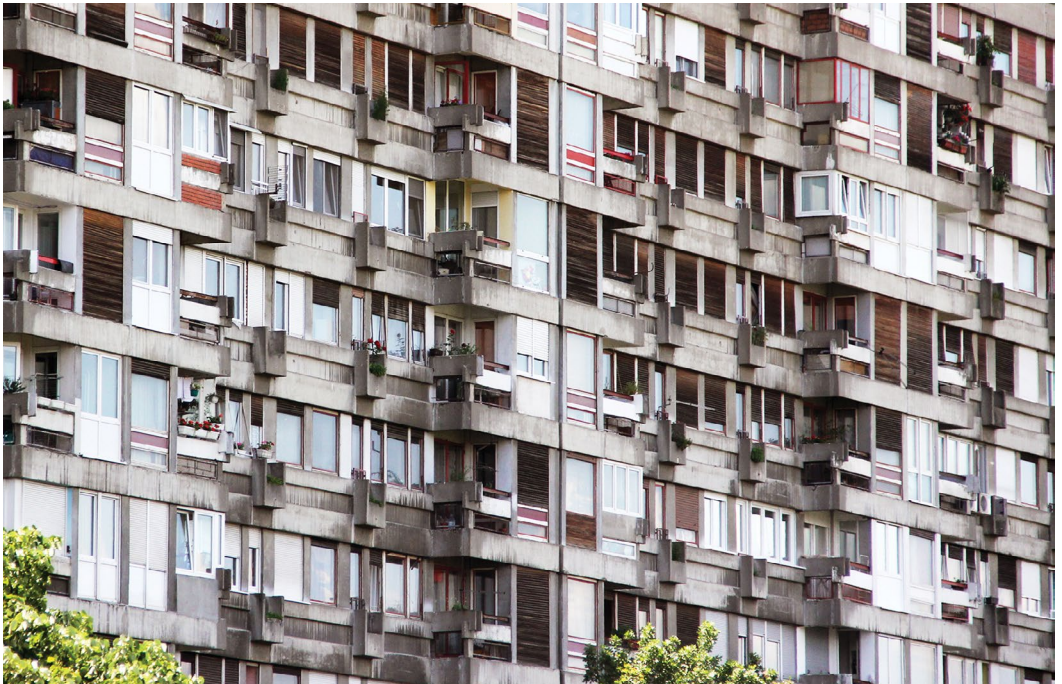


Figure 1.1 A residential block in the New Belgrade district, the construction of which dates back to the socialist period. Image by Iva Čukić.

Belgrade

Belgrade resembles other European cities when it comes to the manifestations of neoliberal urban development policies, including urban renewal, endorsement of private investment construction, financialization of housing, etc. However, the contemporary historical circumstances of transition from a socialist to a capitalist socio-economic system as of the 1990s after an **ethnic war** that dismantled the federal republic into six countries—along with its location at the periphery of the European Union on one side and Russia on the other—have made Serbia, and thus Belgrade as its capital, somewhat particular in terms of the scale and characteristics of such manifestations.

Belgrade is among the cities that have the highest percentage of privately owned housing units (over 95%). At the same time, it is estimated that around 80% of its people are struggling to access decent and affordable housing. While private investment in housing is growing and allowing for the wealthy to accumulate capital in real estate, inadequate housing conditions and evictions due to tenant indebtedness are becoming increasingly frequent, where many households are left without any housing solution or resources to provide an alternative. The predominant method to resolve one's housing needs is through the market. Yet, the rising rents are quickly outpacing average incomes, which has resulted in a lack of affordable housing options for the vast majority of the population. As in many other large cities today, this situation has been exacerbated by Belgrade's fast-growing numbers of short-lease rental units (due to platforms such as AirBnB), while long-term renters are finding themselves in precarious positions, forced to accept unregulated relations with their landlords.

In the past three decades, the state (under the control of the political parties, changed from center and to center-right) did not dedicate sufficient efforts to address this reality or collect comprehensive relevant data to obtain an overview and an understanding of the issue, nor did it articulate sustainable long-term measures to improve housing conditions. Housing is consistently treated as a mechanism for economic growth, rather than as a basic human right that should be safeguarded and made accessible to all. We explain these and other factors behind the housing injustices in Belgrade in [Section 7 / BGD](#). Under these circumstances, it is necessary to first map the hierarchies and actors to fully grasp the scale of the housing crisis in Belgrade and in Serbia and then to reflect upon and advocate for systemic solutions—which are issues we sought to tackle through this CMMM project.

As the context in Belgrade is that of persistent crisis of democratic institutions and a lack of civic participation in processes of urban planning and development, municipalism has served as an adequate framework for urban activists. The only anti-establishment political movement is [Don't Let Belgrade D\(r\)own](#) (Ne davimo Beograd, NDB), which emerged from the mobilizations against the large predatory investment project Belgrade Waterfront around 2015, which were largely initiated by the Ministry of Space collective. NDB positioned their program within the municipalist paradigm to promote more participation and the redistribution of power in the development and governance of cities, and their political program draws from and builds on the work of MoS. As a result of this success in the politicization of spatial governance, including housing, these realms are starting to attract more attention from traditional political actors as well.

We, the CMMM Belgrade city team, are members of the **Ministry of Space** (MoS) collective. Since its establishment, MoS has been concerned with the political and socio-economic dynamics of urban development and spatial injustices. As such, housing has been one of the focal points in our work. Together with other housing activists and relevant organizations, we have been fighting for a radical transformation in the city- and state-level approaches to housing. These include **Who Builds the City** (Ko gradi grad, which also initiated the regional network MOBA), **A11 – Initiative for Economic and Social Rights** (inicijativa za ekonomska i socijalna prava), the **“Roof Over Our Head” joint action** (Krov nad glavom), the European Action Coalition for the right to housing and to the city, and the International Network for Urban Research and Action (INURA).

The activities of MoS include conducting studies on alternative forms of affordable housing, disseminating knowledge on progressive housing solutions, developing policy proposals and strategic housing documents, participating in activist initiatives against forced evictions, and developing alternative housing practices. In this line of action, developing critical perspectives, research, and tools to re-think the realities on the ground have been deeply immersed in our methodologies and programs. Critical mapping, which has become a common tool in urban research, activism, and communication around the world, has been added to our agenda as well in recent years (e.g., the **“Map of Action,”** which we created and published in 2013, our contribution to the New Metropolitan Mainstream project from 2014–2016, our “Map of untransparent urbanism” project from 2017, etc.).

Soon after we started the CMMM project, the **Housing Equality Movement** (HEM) was established in summer 2020 to join forces and combine efforts to achieve structural change in Belgrade’s housing sector, which strengthened our position as MoS. We believe that the HEM has the potential to mobilize a wider public to exert tangible pressure on the local and national governments to shift the housing paradigms. Given the dominant political discourses, it is also quintessential to continue investigating and testing modalities for strengthening the collaboration between public institutions, activists, and professionals. Given the fact that the governmental units dealing with housing are understaffed and have very limited resources, the HEM sees itself as a knowledge mobilizer that compounds the existing knowledge in the civil sector, in academia, and in institutions and that ensures the involvement of various sectors of society. The AKS-Gemeinwohl model presented through the CMMM BLN team serves as a best-practice example in this regard.

CMMM was started as the COVID-19 pandemic was unfolding and restricting our possibilities. At MoS we braced ourselves for eventful years, the course of which could become a marker for Serbia if we could manage to influence the

direction of the Master Plan for Belgrade 2041. Within HEM, we continued our work to influence the housing strategies that were being finalized and passed through legislative bodies. In addition, we continued our efforts to realize a pilot cooperative housing project with the help of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) and to achieve a victory by winning the city halls back from the centrists and right-wingers in the upcoming general elections in 2022, as well as in those that followed.

Within the framework of the CMMM project, MoS sought to consolidate and connect research on housing in Serbia to support local struggles and political movements on the left. Therefore, we worked to map legislations, policies, events, and hierarchies related to housing in the city of Belgrade and their local and global roots and extensions to better understand how these are engendering urban segregation and housing deprivation—which can be found in [Section 5](#): How did we get here? 3 x timelines; [Section 7](#): Who decides on what? governmental structures, participation tools, and political movements; and [Section 8](#): What are we up against? main factors behind housing injustice. Additionally, in [Section 6](#), we share examples how to apply critical mapping in the field, and [Section 15](#) contains an index of the major actors as part of an advocacy poster for the proposal of a rent control law, which is being led by NDM in 2023. In parallel to developing these materials, we conducted the workshops described in [Section 10](#) and [Section 11](#), which formed the basis of our interactive map “[How \(un\)affordable is housing in Belgrade?](#)” ([Section 15](#)). This map is designed to engage personal scenarios in an easy-to-share format through social media.

Through the various materials and formats of this work, we provide information to support existing and future struggles that collectively push to create policy solutions and alternatives to integrate the “housing as a right” principle in political programs, long-term strategies, and legislation. We are dedicated to bringing back the legacy of collective responsibility for housing for all and thus to shifting paradigms and moving housing from its current positioning on the fringe of the economic sphere back into the social and political arenas. We are hopeful!



Figure 1.2 “Cutout” by prokura, an installation during the Reclaim Your City exhibition at Dragoner Areal, 2014. It says: “The city is not a cutout that you can sell. She is made of a 1000 layers that we made.” (CC 3.0)

Berlin

In contrast to Belgrade, the vast majority of Berlin’s households, about 85%, are tenants. Their livelihoods thus depend strongly on the availability and affordability of housing units. The socio-economic and spatial conditions of Berlin as a **divided city until 1989** created strong grounds for self-realization thanks to the abundant spaces and cheap rents on the one hand and the strong communities of socio-cultural alliances and initiatives on the other. This made the city attractive, a magnet for neoliberal investments after the **reunification in 1990**. The **Reunification Treaty** and related political arrangements saw to it that neoliberalism reigned freely in the city, providing the starting capital by selling off what used to be the assets of the former (east) German Democratic Republic and the perverse conception of the so-called **Old Debts** (Alt-Verpflichtungen).

As the current average rents remain somewhat lower in Berlin than in other European cities, investors claim that they should be much higher to achieve adequate return on investment in real estate. This narrative seeks to distract

from the morbid living conditions for most residents in cities like Paris, London, and Barcelona. It overshadows housing policies and management discourses, and in effect it continues to reduce the supply of affordable rental units that are comparable to the levels of income of the majority of the population in Berlin.

Since the 1990s, the number of housing units held by state-owned companies has dwindled to about a third, although the population of the city has grown. As a result of the great mobilization of many civic initiatives around the issue of the right to affordable housing over the past two decades, as demonstrated in the [Berlin timeline](#), the city is now trying to buy back some of this lost stock. However, large real-estate companies and the financialization of the housing market continue to set purchase prices beyond reach and raise rents disproportionately to incomes throughout Berlin. The result is the continued displacement of many tenants as gentrification takes over entire neighborhoods. We see this process as sacrificing housing as a human right, which should be countered by the *Gemeinwohl*-oriented governance of urban land and spaces. ***Gemeinwohl*** is a German term that is difficult to translate. It is a combination of public interest, common well-being, public welfare, and greater good. It is a central principle among the housing activists in Berlin, and thus it appears frequently throughout this work.

As mentioned above, Berlin is characterized by a very rich and diverse scene of neighborhood initiatives and civic action networks that have been working relentlessly to exert pressure on the political discourse, demanding that *Gemeinwohl*-oriented urban development be implemented on a larger scale rather than the current niche-scale. Some of the initiatives are testing and modeling new forms of cooperation between the city administration and civil society in an attempt to provide a new action base that is capable of countering the neo-liberalization of housing and urban spaces as well. In this context, between 2015 and 2021, the city administration regained its former role by applying legal instruments centered around the municipal right of preemption (RPE, also referred to as “right of first refusal,” in German: *Vorkaufsrecht*). However, a [court ruling in 2021](#) repealed this instrument and has had grave consequences ever since, as explained in this work.

As the CMMM Berlin city team, we believe that whether Berlin remains livable and its urban spaces accessible for the many depends essentially on how successful both the civil initiatives and administration are in their cooperation to establish, institutionalize, and scale up principles and effective frameworks of *Gemeinwohl*-oriented urban development. This transformation must be planned and organized in different arenas and is subject to the course of negotiation processes. We are working on this using different methods and mediums, as organizers, artists, consultants, and activists in various groups in different

parts of Berlin and beyond. Particularly, we are working with and through the **AKS Gemeinwohl** project, which conducts studies on, connects, and mediates between civic initiatives and the administration of the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district; with the **Raumstation collective**, which is a group of activists focused on experimental spatial exploration, artistic and activist interventions, and critically reflective practices; and with the **Häuser Bewegen cooperative**, a newly established framework that brings together landlords and tenants with housing associations, companies, or the Tenement Housing Syndicate and seeks to facilitate the purchase of real estate for the *Gemeinwohl*.

As the Belgrade team noted, CMMM was started as the COVID-19 pandemic was unfolding and restricting our possibilities. This granted the authorities a reprieve after years of significant activist campaigns to claim space (e.g., **Dragonar Areal** in 2014 and **Haus der Statistik** in 2015) and large protests (e.g., the Mietwahnsinn demonstration in 2019), which culminated in the Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co. initiative and **campaign in 2019** for a **referendum** on nationalizing the housing stock of large companies. Additionally, the general elections for the State of Berlin and the federal elections were on the horizon in 2021.

Through the CMMM project, our aim was to contribute to the broader scene of housing activism in the city by focusing on the need to establish and give a voice to narratives of dissent in dominant discourses and to consolidate and increase the pressure at political levels. We mapped the current legislation, policies, events, and hierarchies that shape the housing realities in Berlin in **Section 5**: How did we get here? 3 x timelines, **Section 7**: Who decides on what? governmental structures, participation tools, and political movements, and **Section 8**: What are we up against? main factors behind housing injustice. **Section 6** demonstrates how mapping and visualization are common tools used by housing activists in Berlin. In **Section 15**, we share an index of the major actors relevant to housing as part of an advocacy poster for reviving and re-framing the RPE instrument, which goes hand-in-hand with our “**Commoning Berlin**” map. This map is the result of two workshops (described in **Section 10** and **Section 11**), as well as a great deal of work in between.

During the process, we engaged with a variety of existing initiatives to negotiate an interface that maps and gives visibility to the multiplicity of (social) knowledge production bodies that are connected to Berlin’s *Gemeinwohl*. We focused in particular on the RPE as a pillar for a *Gemeinwohl*-oriented land policy (Bodenpolitik) both directly in connection with the issue of housing and beyond. We sought to connect small-scale initiatives and find ways to better relate their respective work. We realized that the concept of *municipalism* can be translated so as to give rise to new forms of political practice that open-up

public administrations. However, unlike the scenes in Belgrade and Barcelona, the majority of anti-establishment activities have been channeled through actors situated within established political parties in Berlin, particularly the Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), the Left (Die Linke), and the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

As evident in different parts of this work and in contrast to Belgrade, yet similar to Barcelona, the issue of the right to the city and the right to housing has been politicized for many years, and many members of society are actively working to shift political discourses. For a decade now, the successive governments of Berlin have been taking some steps to reverse the laissez-faire neoliberal discourses that followed the reunification of the city and the country. However, their actions have just been a drop in the ocean, and the few steps forward are being reverted through narrow interpretations of the constitution by courts, as seen in the case of the **rent cap law** (Mietendeckel) and the application of the RPE. The subsidiarity of the Berlin government to the federal government is shackling, and the attitude of the recently elected government—which swept the demands articulated in the September 2021 referendum on nationalizing large stocks of housing under the carpet of committees that lack representation from the initiatives that set the referendum in motion—does not indicate that any radical change is to be expected in the foreseeable future. The road to achieving justice in how urban land and wealth are managed remains long and full of obstacles, yet we hope that our comrades and peers will be able to use the various materials and formats we made available in this work in our continued collective struggle.



Figure 1.3 Remains of internal walls of a demolished building in the Gràcia district, Barcelona, 2012, to make way for a new development. Image by Andreas Brück.

Barcelona

Barcelona has always been a dynamic, political city, a place where different movements and organizations merge or are born. Since the fall of the Franco dictatorship, urban struggles have become an important part of the city's life, with the first peek around the 1992 Olympics and the developments that ensued. Similar to Belgrade and Berlin, the 1990s saw a massive liberalization and deregulation of the economy and the shrinking role of the government in favor of making more space for capitalist investors. After years of buildup and triggered by the financial (mortgage) crisis that trickled over from the United States, the housing crisis in Barcelona has dominated and shaped social interventions since 2008 and is regularly mentioned by citizens as their most serious problem.

With the reforms forced by the European Financial Stabilization Mechanism (which later became the European Stability Mechanism) as a precondition for the loans issued to the Spanish government, between 2013 and 2015 the housing emergency shifted away from massive foreclosures linked to mortgage

defaults to a rental crisis. Today, about 40% of the inhabitants in Barcelona are renters, whereas the average in Spain is 25%, and the problem of unaffordability is writ large on every corner. Housing policies in Spain are far behind the rest of Europe in many regards. Buildings are often deteriorated (especially in the old part of the city where there has been an intentional lack of renovation). Prices are extremely high in comparison to income and are constantly inflating. Social housing accounts for only 1.6% of the total stock. Furthermore, laws provide for little protection for tenants, and the government has refused to regulate rent prices. A major cause of the acute housing conditions is the fact that Barcelona is one of the most popular touristic destinations in Europe, which leads to high demand for lodging and represents one of the greatest threats to locals when it comes to access to housing and the right to a non-commercialized neighborhood life.

With the anti-austerity [15-M Movement](#) (Movimiento 15-M) that mobilized the streets throughout the country around the regional and local elections in Spain in 2011–2012, the political scene and power dynamics of the governing system changed. The established political parties were challenged, and protests gave rise to a diverse range of collectives organized in varying manners that pushed for alternatives. It was a crucial moment for rising grassroots initiatives like the [Platform for People Affected by Mortgages](#) (La PAH, Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca), which was established in 2009 as they gained many supporters and members.

In the run-up to the general elections in 2015, a new municipalist movement brought together groups, activists, and ordinary people in many cities across Spain, and the newly formed Podemos party won 20.7% of the votes, making it the third largest party in the national parliament, just 1% behind the long-established Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE, left) and 8% behind the People's Party (PP, right). They won in dozens of localities and governed with the aim of implementing urgent progressive policies and changing the way politics is practiced. In relation to housing, they implemented regulations to restrict tourist accommodations, re-build the meager public housing stock, and create a mediation service to tackle and reduce eviction processes.

In Barcelona, the new government led by the [Barcelona and Comú](#) citizen platform, which was established in 2014, increased investments in public housing and implemented new social policies. However, evictions continued to be a daily phenomenon, and thus social movements for the right to housing have grown and multiplied. The different groups are coordinated and regularly call for people to stop evictions by staging protests at eviction sites. They organize actions against landlords and advocate for new laws and tangible social housing programs.

We, the CMMM Barcelona city team, are members of the [Observatori DESC](#) (ESCR Observatory) and are active in several other frames as well. Observatori DESC is a human rights organization with a hybrid character that aims to build bridges between urban social movements, the city administration, and academia, where our work is focused on pushing for more progressive laws and policies. Therefore, we support civil society campaigns, while at the same time disseminating information and data by conducting and publishing research, networking, and incorporating local, European, and international perspectives. Within the working track of the right to the city, a general objective of Observatori DESC is to prioritize and guarantee the social use of housing, which is a condition for dignified life. In our advocacy work, we push to provide more public and affordable housing, as well as innovative, human rights-based social policies to stop evictions. At the legislative and judicial levels, our main focus is on putting an end to abuses by big landlords (e.g., expulsions, harassment), reducing the high costs of housing (e.g., advocating for rent control measures), and illegalizing companies such as Desokupa, which carry out evictions by means of intimidation.

As noted by our colleagues in BGD and BLN earlier in this section, CMMM was started as the COVID-19 was unfolding and restricting our possibilities, which brought about a new wave of evictions in the city and Spain in general. This prompted the federal government to issue Royal Decree Law 11/2020 (which is set to expire in June 2023) and the Catalan government to issue Decree Law 37/2020 by (which expired in September 2022) to protect families economically affected by the pandemic against getting evicted, as explained at several points in this work. Nonetheless, in 2021, a total of 41,359 evictions were executed in Spain (of which 9,398 in Catalonia and 1,755 cases in Barcelona), which constituted a 30% increase compared to 2020. On average, there are seven evictions per day in Barcelona.

In light of what was mentioned above, within the framework of the CMMM project, Observatori DESC sought to examine with our network of housing organizations and movements how critical mapping has been used to document, mobilize, and advocate for a change in discourses on housing. In particular, we explored how to illustrate and record where and how evictions took and are taking place in the city and how to help organize the struggle against them. Along the same lines, we investigated ways to unpack the ownership structure of the housing stock (Who are the main landlords? Are they big companies or funds or individual owners?) as there is little information about this dimension and we need to identify who the “big evictors” are. Therefore, we started by mapping the current legislation, policies, events, and hierarchies that shape the housing realities in Barcelona in [Section 5](#): How did we get here? 3 x timelines, [Section 7](#): Who decides on what? governmental structures, participation tools, and political movements,

and [Section 8](#): What are we up against? main factors behind housing injustice. In [Section 6](#), we share several examples of how mapping and visualization have been used in relation to housing in Barcelona. In [Section 15](#), we share an index of the major actors relevant to housing as part of an informative and advocacy poster on the issue of evictions, which goes hand-in-hand with our “[MapHab. Mapatge de la lluita per l’habitatge \(Stop Evictions!\)](#)” map. This map is the result of two workshops conducted within the framework of this CMMM project (described in [Section 10](#) and [Section 11](#)), as well as a great deal of work in between.

Initially, our goal was to offer the necessary resources for partner social movements to carry out their mapping tasks in response to the question of “who owns Barcelona?” and to reveal the assets of big landlords, which are camouflaged behind smaller sub-companies. As several participants in the first workshop outlined, we sought to create paths for civic human rights organizations and those vested in matters of public interest to access the cadaster data. However, the hurdles preventing this access forced us to reconsider, and thus we switched our approach to answering “who evicts in Barcelona?” From this perspective, we sought to (a) provide easier access to the information needed by activists and movements; (b) depict the evictions in Barcelona, which is a big concern in the city yet largely abstracted in numbers; (c) figure out who the landlords are who are ordering the highest number of evictions and clarify the variations across locations (neighborhoods); and (d) create socio-economic profiles of the evicted households. This information would allow for further steps, such as investigating the portfolios of the landlords and whether they have international connections or cross-comparing the evictions with the ownership structure in the city to determine whether big landlords are indeed causing the most evictions?

Establishing new perspectives and providing the type of information mentioned above would allow for a campaign to raise awareness about evictions in affected neighborhoods and to advocate for political regulations to tame owners with “bad practices,” such as frequent evictions. Indeed, the information presented on the two maps featured on the Stop Evictions! website can answer many of the questions of the activists and social movements working for the right to housing and to stop evictions. Although the current state of affairs at the legislative level and the conditions of the EU loans remain key challenges in ensuring that housing policies support human dignity, seeing the change in political programs inspires us to keep going. A decade ago, evictions and affordable housing were the exclusive domains of new municipalist platforms and activist groupings. Today, in one way or the other, they have been acknowledged by and are on the agendas of most political parties. We look forward to seeing how our Stop Evictions! map will grow and change over the coming months and years and how it and other materials provided in this work will serve the community of Barcelona.

Section 2

HOW, WHEN?

the cmmm process

The CMMM project was conceived at the **Robert Bosch Stiftung**³ (RBS) event “24 Stunden SPIELRAUM II - Urbane Transformationen gestalten” (24 hours Game Room II - Designing Urban Transformations) in December 2017 by a team of five: Julia Förster, Julita Skodra, Katleen De Flander, Natasha Aruri, and Andreas Brück. With the help of an RBS seed grant, our SPIELRAUM team developed and submitted an elaborate proposal in May 2018. Following review and a presentation at the RBS headquarters in Stuttgart, the commissioned evaluation committee endorsed the proposal and K LAB (TU Berlin) was awarded the grant. In summer 2019, the CMMM project started with Katleen and Natasha as postdoctoral researchers and coordinators (both in part-time positions), Andreas as project manager, and Julia as support and sounding board.

During the first few months, the focus lay on expanding the team to include mobilizers from the three cities. For Berlin (BLN), we were joined by Nija Maria Linke, Edouard Barthen, and Julian Zwicker; for Belgrade (BGD) by Iva Čukić, Jovana Timotijević, and Marko Aksentijević; and for Barcelona (BCN) by Irene Escorihuela Blasco, Laura Roth, and Carla Rivera. They brought the local collectives and organizations in which they are involved with them as collaborators for the project: AKS-Gemeinwohl and Raumstation for BLN, Ministarstvo Prostora (Ministry of Space) for BGD, and Observatori DESC for BCN.

3 bosch-stiftung.de/de

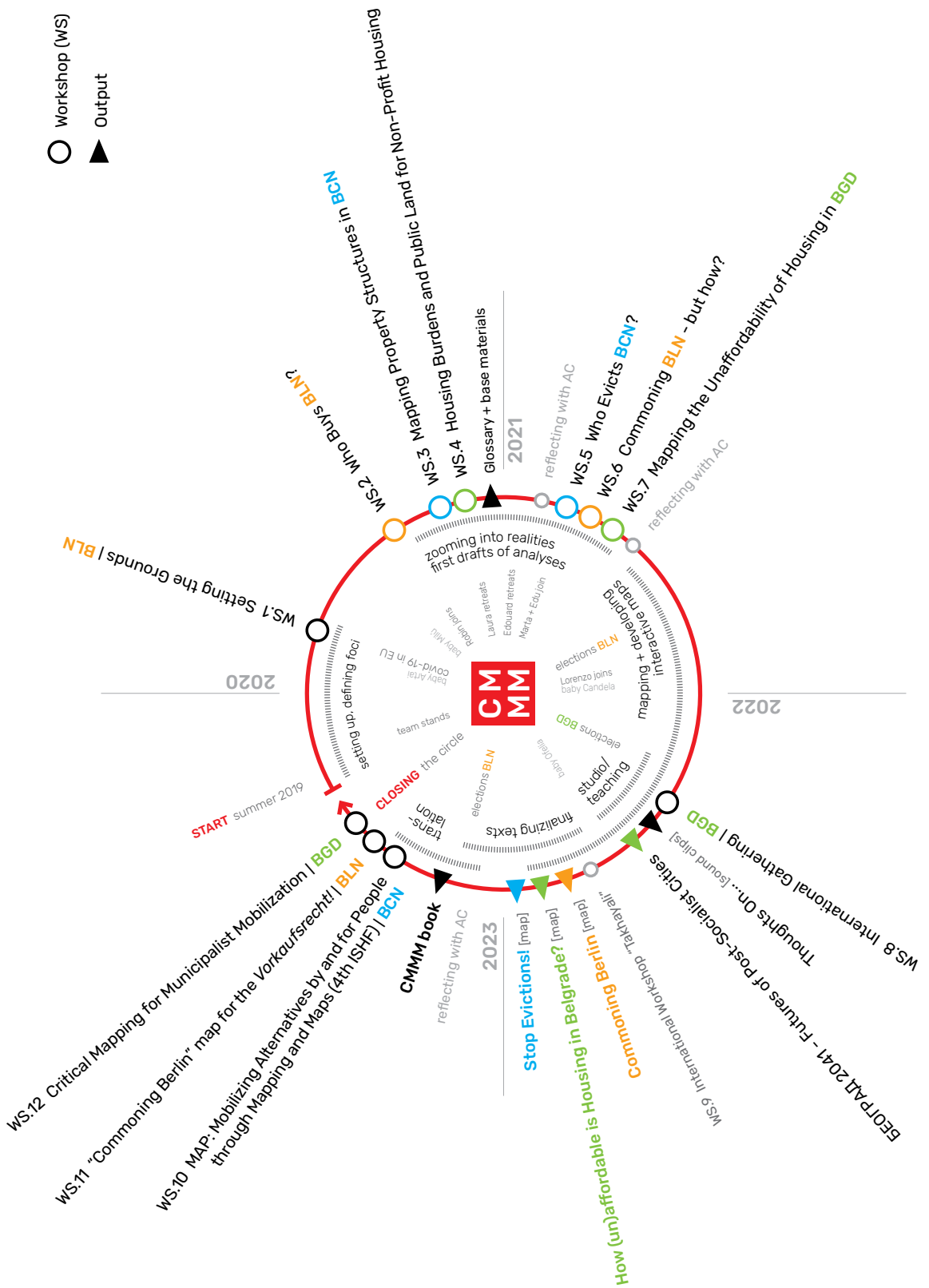
After our CMMM team was formed, we jointly defined the thematic foci of the project within the broader context of municipalist movements. Given the nature of the activities of the members of the three city teams, we decided to focus on housing, with an open angle to be defined along the journey by each of the city teams in relation to the working agendas of their collectives. We held monthly meetings in which we discussed issues related to the project and beyond. Based on relevant events, changing conditions, and new information, we made consensus decisions on next steps and amended our agenda accordingly. As a practice-oriented project, the CMMM framework pivoted on collaborative formats that sought to combine and build on broader efforts within the various local movements.

In March 2020, we organized the international “**Setting the Grounds**” workshop with select guests, who later became our Advisory Committee members. We discussed various experiences and deliberated on key questions, many of which accompanied us throughout the lifespan of the project. The workshop helped each team start defining their concrete political target, on which they would focus in the following phases. A week after this workshop, Europe went on lockdown in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In August, October, and November 2020, the BLN, BCN, and BGD teams respectively held their *conceptualization workshops* (what kinds of maps are needed?), which were attended by mixed groups of activists, professionals, and public servants. The teams presented initial ideas and discussed their validity, implementation potential, and next steps, as outlined in the workshop reports: **Who buys Berlin?**, **Mapping property structures** in Barcelona, and **Housing burdens of social housing tenants and publicly owned land for the purpose of non-profit housing** in Belgrade.

Between fall 2020 and summer 2021, with the feedback collected in the conceptualization workshops, the teams drafted initial analyses of the housing conditions in their cities. What were initially intended as short reports became extensive pieces that were created in a collaborative writing and production process between the city teams and K LAB, with feedback from some of the Advisory Committee members. These now include a **timeline** (Section 5) of key political events and legislations; relevant critical **maps and visualizations** (Section 6); a brief outline of the **hierarchies of decision-making** (Section 7) and **main factors behind housing injustice** (Section 8); and an index of major players (actors) in the three cities (Section 15). The latter is part of a poster illustration that explains the particular legislative procedure or instrument of focus for each

Figure 1.4 (on the right) The CMMM Process diagram, illustrating the various activities and components of the project.



city. As the CMMM project drew to an end in fall 2022, all texts were revised, updated, and finalized.

In spring 2021, the city teams organized *design workshops*, where they worked with participants to define the features and characteristics of the interactive maps they were creating. The purpose of the maps is to both inform and engage communities in the broader mobilizations toward tangible political change. As the workshop reports explain, in Barcelona they decided to focus on the continuing problem of *Who evicts Barcelona?*, in Berlin on the question of *Commoning Berlin – but how?* (with a focus on the vital yet weak instrument of *Vorkaufsrecht*, the right of preemption), and in Belgrade on *Mapping the unaffordability of housing*.

Between summer 2021 and fall 2022, in partnership with the *visual intelligence* team and with feedback from various collaborators, three interactive maps were developed: “*Commoning Berlin*,” “*How (Un)affordable Is Housing in Belgrade?*,” and “*Stop Evictions!*” in BCN. The maps vary in their structure and programming in accordance with their purpose. They were released online in Spring 2023.

In May 2022, after postponing twice due to COVID-19 surges in 2021, we were finally able to hold an *International Gathering* in BGD. As the CMMM team had changed slightly since the start of the project (see inner circle of the diagram above), this was the first face-to-face meeting for several of the team members. Next to the long over-due personal interaction, the meeting served to reflect on our joint journey so far and to decide on the final steps of the project. In addition, Irene and Julian contributed to the public discussion “Global housing struggles – experiences from Berlin, Barcelona, and Belgrade” organized by the Ministry of Space at the margins of the international gathering.

In summer 2022, a set of 28 “*Thoughts on...*” sound clips were extracted and curated from interviews (of about 1 hour each) that K LAB held with members of the city teams during the gathering in BGD. These are meant to introduce the voices of the people behind this CMMM project, provide glimpses of how they started, their experiences, their opinions regarding relevant issues, and explain how they keep going despite the many challenges. This introduction chapter ends with those clips.

As a spinoff of the CMMM project, in the week before the international gathering, the BGD team—together with K LAB—directed an excursion for students from three universities: TU Berlin, TU Darmstadt, and the University of Michigan. This BGD excursion was part of the TU Berlin master-level design studio “Београд (Belgrade) 2041 – Futures of Post-Socialist Cities, which was taught by Iva, Jovana, and Andreas between April and July 2022. The course was designed to

discuss current struggles and initiatives for city spaces in Belgrade, but also as an imaginative exercise regarding future scenarios for the “Belgrade Waterfront” site until 2041, which involved understanding the roles and interests of different stakeholders, creating a cost-benefit analysis, discussing further implications, and producing four alternatives (masterplans and scenarios) for Belgrade 2041.

Furthermore, some of the CMMM team members participated in the international Takhayali Ramallah workshop in September 2022, which brought together academics, practitioners, animation experts, and activists. The workshop focused on exploring alternative ways of seeing and sensing the city and worked toward defining new principles for a spatial management approach that accounts for social reproduction and climate change adaptation. One of the discussions revolved around whether and how a municipalist movement can be formed in Ramallah and was inspired by a presentation on the experience of the Ministry of Space (BGD team).

Between fall 2022 and winter 2023, we finalized the various project outputs featured on the cmmm.eu website. In addition to a printed book, the project’s website includes an array of interactive formats that allow visitors to explore, compare, and engage with the three cities. Ideally, individuals, initiatives, and movements will be able to make use of these materials long after they have been released.

To facilitate comparison and reach a broader audience, we have worked mainly in English, except for the BCN interactive map. However, in order for the work to be used broadly in the different contextual settings, key materials were translated into German, Serbian, Spanish and Catalan after the project was completed.

In 2023, we closed the project through three events. First was the podium discussion “MAP: Mobilizing Alternatives by and for People through Mapping and Maps,” which was held within the framework of the 4th International Festival of Social Housing⁴ (ISHF), 7 to 9 June, in Barcelona. Then, in August 2023, Belgrade closed with the workshop “TBC,” which took place within the “Terrestrial Forum / Horizons of Change” summer school, 22 to 27 August 2023. Finally, in October 2023, the podium discussion “TBC” was held in Berlin.

4 socialhousingfestival.eu

Section 3

WHO
WAS
INVOLVED?





Carla



Edu



Marta



Nija



Julia



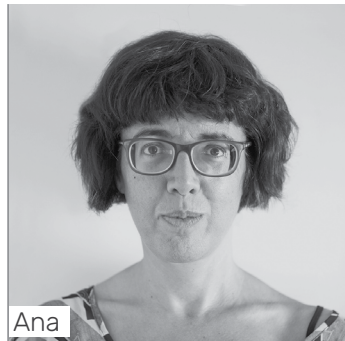
Lorenzo



Severin



Bertie



Ana



Angela



Clancy



Ilana

COORDINATION

Katleen De Flander

K LAB

Urbanist and project curator. Her work focusses on tackling the urban polycrisis and advancing socio-ecological transformations within contemporary complexities. More specifically, her work strives to contest and re-shape urban resource flows and the unjust distribution of services, access, and opportunities. She works as a postdoctoral researcher and coordinator at **K LAB**, TU-Berlin, at the intersection of critical mapping, socio-environmental transformation, and new municipalist movements. She is also the Scientific Coordinator for **SMUS** – the Global Center of Spatial Methods for Urban Sustainability, which connects close to 50 partners from eight world regions and focuses on some of the most pressing urban challenges of today. Former projects include *Mapping Change* and *Critical Urban Agenda: Rethinking the Urban*.

Natasha Aruri

K LAB

Urbanist and researcher. Her work focuses on cities of exasperated insecurities, spacio-politics of and resistance to (neo)colonialism, and facing uncertainties through dynamic people-based strategies for spatial design. She is a postdoctoral researcher and coordinator at **K LAB**, TU-Berlin, working at the

intersection of critical mapping, socio-environmental transformation, and new municipalist movements. A recent co-authored publication is the *mapping change logbook*. She is co-founder and -director of “حاكورة” / UR°BANA, an interdisciplinary research and design studio in which she is City Research Team Lead for Ramallah in the multisite comparative research project “Urbanization, Gender and the Global South: A transformative knowledge network” (**GenUrb**). She has served as a consultant for actors in development fields, was a visiting lecturer at several universities, and served as a professor of urban planning (Acting Chair) at Dessau Institute of Architecture (DIA).

Andreas Brück

K LAB

Urbanist and urbanite living and working in Berlin. He is the managing director of **LABOR K** /// **K LAB** and a senior researcher and lecturer at TU-Berlin’s Institute for Urban & Regional Planning (ISR). The focus of his inter- and transdisciplinary research lies on the communication of the urban—its visualizations, representations, and mediations—including methods, tools, and strategies to analyze and navigate urban complexities and cultivate critical design practice. He is the co-founder and co-director of “حاكورة” / UR°BANA, an interdisciplinary research and design studio, operating trans-locally between the Middle East and Europe.

Previously, he worked as a senior researcher in the Regeneration of Cities and Towns Department at Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS) and he served as a professor of urban planning (Acting Chair) at Dessau Institute of Architecture (DIA).

Andrea Bluhm

K LAB

Andrea is the office manager of K LAB and of the Chair of Urban Design & Urban Development, under the direction of Prof. Dr. Angela Million. In both secretariats, she handles all administrative matters related to personnel and financial management, teaching activities and everyday department affairs, and all affiliated research projects. In addition, she is responsible for student examination services and committee work. She has lived and worked in several German cities and has been active in university and examination offices since 2002.

CITY TEAMS

Iva Čukić

Ministry of Space

Iva graduated from the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade, where she earned her doctoral degree in urban planning. The areas of her research include urban commons, new models of governance,

urban transformation, and self-organization, which she pursues by combining an academic and activist perspective. Currently, she is leading the Ministry of Space (Ministarstvo prostora) collective, which was established in 2011 in an effort to intensify the production and dissemination of knowledge and to create policies within different areas relevant for genuine democratization, focusing on the lower levels of governance. In addition, she aims to nurture local groups in their pursuit of spatial justice, exerting more bottom-up pressure for systematic change.

Jovana Timotijević

Ministry of Space

Jovana is a researcher and activist with a background in architecture, gender studies, and political theory. Her work combines these areas, focusing on both the democratization of spatial policies and the spatialization of democracy and social justice. She is currently completing her PhD dissertation at the Faculty of Political Science on reading contemporary urban planning and development from the perspective of radical democratic theory. She acts as a program coordinator at the Ministry of Space collective, including research, education, and advocacy work in areas of affordable housing, land privatization, and deliberative tools in urban planning.

Marko Aksentijević

Ministry of Space

Marko graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences and has been active in various civil society organizations for over 15 years. He is a skilled campaign manager with over ten years of experience in campaigning and public outreach. Since 2011, when he co-founded the **Ministry of Space** collective, his work and activist engagement has been focused on the spatial dimension of social justice, with an emphasis on citizen participation in urban development, public space management, and affordable housing. He is currently the program coordinator of Ministry of Space, where he offers his expertise in fostering citizen engagement in urban planning and spatial policies, as well as in enhancing the effectiveness of participatory management of public resources.

Julian Zwicker

AKS / Häuser Bewegen

Julian holds a bachelor's degree in Law from Technische Universität Dresden, and he is a political activist and consultant for projects on urban democracy, the co-production of urban space, and *Gemeinwohl* housing policies and economy. He is a co-founder and currently the CEO of the real-estate mediation cooperative **Häuser Bewegen GIMA eG**. For over a decade, he has been working within collaborative structures

organizing non-commercial cultural and political events such as the **urbanize!** Festival in Berlin and **Monis Rache Festival**. Previously, he worked with **Diese eG** housing cooperative and with **AKS Gemeinwohl**, which focuses on helping tenants, landlords, and politicians in finding alternatives to the neoliberal real-estate transactions. In addition, he contributed to research in the field of participatory processes in environmental law at the Independent Institute for Environmental Issues in Berlin.

Nija-Maria Linke

Kollektiv Raumstation

Nija has an academic background in urban studies and urban design, as well as in planning, with degrees from Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, TU Vienna, and TU Berlin. After a brief period in the Berlin municipal administration, she is now part of the **K LAB** team. She is interested in practices of solidary self-empowerment that are emerging in both urban development and urban space. Through her engagement in the "**Raumstation Weimar | Berlin | Wien**" collective, she is pursuing various approaches and methods of artistic-activist (spatial) exploration and intervention with a focus on collaborative learning, experimentation, and the organization of moments of friction. In addition, Nija traces the emancipatory potential of digitality from a critical cartography and activist perspective.

Irene Escorihuela Blasco

Observatori DESC

Irene holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Pompeu Fabra University (and studies at Sciences Po Paris), and a bachelor's and master's degree in law from Barcelona University. She is specialized in human rights with a focus on the right to housing and the right to the city, and has several publications in this field. She has academic and practical work experience in Latin America, especially in Peru and Ecuador. In Spain, she has worked as a lawyer and consultant on housing issues. She is currently the director of **Observatori DESC** (Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Observatory), a human rights organization in Barcelona, where she coordinates research, advocacy campaigns, and strategic litigation. She is one of the founders of the Barcelona Tenant Union, established in 2017. She participates in local movements and is a member of the ESCRnet board.

Carla Rivera

Observatori DESC

Carla has a bachelor's degree in philosophy, politics, and economics (PPE) from Pompeu Fabra University (UPF) and a master's in sociology and social anthropology from the Central European University (CEU). She is a member of the Anthropology of Urban Conflict Observatory (OACU) and the Research Group on Exclusion

and Social Control (GRECS) at the University of Barcelona (UB). She is also a member of the Quaderns editorial board, the scientific journal of the Catalan Institute of Anthropology (ICA), and she currently works at **Observatori DESC** (Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Observatory). In Barcelona, she belongs to the Housing Union of Sant Andreu. Her research interest lies in how people experience the loss of "domestic references" in increasingly globalized urban settings.

Eduard Sala Barceló

La PAH

Eduard holds a bachelor's degree in geography from the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB), a master's degree in territorial and population studies, and a PhD in geography from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). His dissertation was titled "The housing crisis: territorial implications and empowerment strategies." In recent years, Eduard has been focused on studies relating to social movements and the right to housing. He has published analyses on the mortgage crisis in Spain, strategies of empowerment in social movements, and cartographies of evictions in Barcelona. Furthermore, as an activist of the **Platform of People Affected by Mortgages (PAH)**, he has collaborated in studies on the social impact of housing precariousness. Currently, he is an administrative technician and a professor of geography at the UAB.

Lorenzo Vidal**Institute for Housing & Urban Research**

Lorenzo is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Housing and Urban Research of Uppsala University in Sweden, working on the Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action and “From ownership to access: digital and policy tools” O2A project for building post-homeownership futures. He is also a collaborator of the Institute of Government and Public Policy at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and an associate researcher at CIDOB-Barcelona Centre for International Affairs. He holds a PhD in political science, public policies, and international relations from the Autonomous University of Barcelona and a master’s degree in international economics and development from the Complutense University of Madrid. His main research interests center around urban political economy, with a focus on housing, property, and digital transformations.

Marta Ribera Carbó**Observatori DESC**

Marta holds two bachelor’s degrees in economics and law from Pompeu Fabra University (UPF) and is currently pursuing her master’s degree in sociology and demography at UPF. Her research interests lie in contributing to establishing a better understanding of the mechanisms that give rise to social inequalities,

particularly in the housing and labor markets, as well as in investigating social groups that are experiencing growing inequalities. Marta has gained experience in research on inequalities and social and economic rights by working with a number of international organizations. Currently, she is a consultant for **Observatori DESC**.

DATA VISUALIZATION AND INFORMATION DESIGN**Robin Coenen****Visual Intelligence**

Robin received his bachelor’s degree from FH Aachen and Zurich University of the Arts and then his master’s degree from Parsons School of Design. Between 2015 and 2018, he was responsible for the digital media department at the international Integral Ruedi Baur Atelier in Paris. Since 2018, he has been based in Berlin, working as a visual expert at the interface between design and technology in the Innovation Center for Mobility and Social Change and K LAB, TU Berlin, among other places. He held various teaching positions at FH Aachen (2017–2021), and since 2021 he has been a research and teaching associate in the Information Design program at the University of Arts, Berlin. He is a founding partner of Visual Intelligence, a design studio with a focus on visualization strategies and related services.

FORMER TEAM MEMBERS

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following persons who joined the CMMM team when the project started, but left it due to changing life conditions around the end of Phase 1 (early 2021) :

Edouard Barthen (Berlin City Team)

Laura Roth (Barcelona City Team)

Lýdia Grešáková (K LAB)

Tim Nebert (K LAB)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Ana Méndez de Andés

Ana is an architect and urban planner. Over the last fifteen years, her research and practice have focused on public space, tactical cartographies, urban commons, institutional change, and municipalism. She is a founding member of the militant research collective Observatorio Metropolitano de Madrid and other collective projects, such as Car-Tac, areaciega, and urbanaccion. Ana was actively engaged in the organization of the citizen-led municipalist platform Ahora Madrid. After it won the government in 2015, she worked as a strategic planning advisor for the Culture Department at Madrid City Council. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Sheffield with a research project on urban commons in public spaces.

Angela Million

Angela is an urban designer, urban planner, and professor. She is chair of Urban Design, director of the Institute of City and Regional Planning, and the executive director of K LAB, TU Berlin. She is the director of the new DAAD-funded Global Center on Spatial Methods for Urban Sustainability, SMUS. Her research focuses on participatory urban design, social infrastructure, and Baukultur, with a special interest in cities as educational settings, children, and youth. Her most recent research explores educational landscapes, multifunctional infrastructure design, and the relevance of spatial knowledge in planning processes, including within the Collaborative Research Centre SFB 1265 "Re-Figuration of Space." Building on her work in the classroom, Angela's expertise includes studies on teaching urban design and visual communication of planning.

Bertie Russell

Bertie is an urban and municipalist researcher and activist. He joined the Wales Institute for Social and Economic Research and Data as a Research Associate in 2020. His research interests focus on new municipalism, hybrid models of ownership, the politics of scale, decentralised forms of participation, and new models of the commons and economic democracy. Among his works are the paper "Beyond the Local

Trap: New Municipalism and the Rise of the Fearless Cities” in *Antipode*, and the co-authored policy report “Public-Common Partnerships: Building New Circuits of Collective Ownership” published by Common Wealth. His current research is an international comparative study of stakeholder and civil society organizational involvement in local economic developments based on the concept of the ‘Foundational Economy’. He is also an editor at *Red Pepper* magazine and a member of the MINIM municipalist observatory.

Clancy Wilmott

Clancy is a critical cartographer and researcher. She is an assistant professor in critical cartography, geovisualization, and design with the Berkeley Center for New Media and the Department of Geography at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research interests follow the intersections of possibility and resistance between critical cartography, lived spaces and digital worlds—with an emphasis on postcolonial urban spaces, mobile media, and everyday life. She is the author of *Mobile Mapping: Space, Cartography and the Digital* (2020) with Amsterdam University Press.

Ilana Boltvinik

Ilana is a visual artist and researcher currently based at the Instituto de Artes Plásticas of the Universidad Veracruzana in Mexico. She is also part of the pedagogic team at SOMA and co-founder of the independent art collective TRES (2009). Her research-based art practice concentrates on the implications of urban space and waste, and the inquiry on garbage as a physical and conceptual residue that entails political and material implications of particular interest. Ilana earned her PhD in social sciences and humanities at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM-C) in Mexico City, her postgraduate degree from the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in the Netherlands, and an undergraduate degree in art from ENPEG, Mexico City. Her work has been exhibited worldwide and has won several awards. Ilana considers herself a multi-level scavenger who enjoys long walks observing the ground.

Iva Marčetić

Iva holds a Master degree in Architecture from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb, Croatia. Her primary field of interest is the interconnection between architecture, planning and housing policies in an effort to improve the material conditions of urban life. She has actively worked on democratization of urban planning

mechanisms and improving housing rights in Croatia and the region. In 2021 she was appointed by the mayor of Zagreb as head of the *Commission for improving the management of city owned property*. She is one of the founding members of *European Cooperative Society MOBA* that works on establishing funding for cooperative housing projects in the region of South east and central Europe and a longtime member and coordinator of Right to the city organization from Zagreb. As part of the architectural collective *Pulska grupa* she represented Croatia in the 13th Biennial of Architecture in Venice with their work “Unmediated democracy needs unmediated space.” She is the author of the book “Housing policy in service of social and spatial (in)equalities.”

Julia Förster

Julia is a Berlin-based social scientist and trained mediator. She is an advocate for social equality and diversity, and she engages in projects that aim to enable underrepresented groups to participate in urban-related projects. She has been part of the development and coordination of public interest projects, just urban development, political education, and democracy. These include interventions in local communities, surveys, a storytelling café with neighbors in the Berlin district of Hohenschönhausen, citywide networking, membership in committees, and participation in

transnational research and exchange programs. She was a member of the team that conceptualized and prepared the application for the RBS grant for this CMMM project.

Severin Halder

Severin’s endeavors in activism and geography are driven by experiences with everyday resistance in the peripheries of places like Rio de Janeiro, Bogotá, and Maputo. Those inspirations have guided him through the last decade while working within *kollektiv orangotango*, community gardens, small-holders, and academia in and beyond Berlin. As one of the editors of *This Is Not an Atlas*, he is currently working on the various evolutions of the project, focusing on the creation of a counter-mapping network, further editions, and translations of the book, as well as a video series.

COLLABORATING BODIES



MINISTARSTVO PROSTORA

Ministry of Space

Belgrade

Ministry of Space (MoS) was formed in 2011 as a non-institutionalized activist collective striving to activate different kinds of unused urban spaces through direct action and/or municipal negotiations. Several initiatives evolved into a national campaign that advocated for the more transparent regulation of public property management, one that is consistent with the common interest of citizens. In parallel, MoS developed other programs and expanded its organizational mission to encourage and foster citizen participation and mobilization in defining public interest in urban and spatial planning and urban resource management.

MoS has supported numerous groups in opposing and reversing officially proposed urban planning modifications in their neighborhoods that were against their interests. The collective also initiated, organized, and led multiple bottom-up actions that addressed the specific urban development or common management of public goods. In addition, MoS carries

out transdisciplinary research and educational programs in cooperation with domestic and international institutions and organizations.

In this context, the collective:

(1) produces relevant and applicable research in the sphere of urban development and commons-based research; **(2)** participates in international and national scientific, expert, and civil society projects; **(3)** develops educational modules in the sphere of urban politics, housing, and urban commons; **(4)** regularly publishes academic and scholarly articles that explore the potential of different social, economic, and urban practices; **(5)** organizes international and national seminars and conferences on urban theory, urban commons, and urban politics, among other relevant topics.



AKS Gemeinwohl **Berlin**

Die Arbeit- und Koordinierungsstruktur für gemeinwohlorientierte Stadtentwicklung in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg [AKS Gemeinwohl]

The work and coordination structure for Gemeinwohl-oriented urban development in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg [AKS Gemeinwohl]

Commissioned by the Berlin district municipality of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg (Department for Building, Planning and Facility Management) in October 2018, a network of urban activists and experts initiated and tested a support structure intended to encourage and coordinate long-term cooperation between the public administration, NGOs, and political spheres of urban development.

AKS Gemeinwohl is continuously testing and establishing new forms of cooperation and acts as a conductor for co-produced urban development, where the structure

can be seen as a “third space” for those involved. The team see themselves and the space of AKS as an innovative instrument for the promotion of a diverse urban society and sustainable land policy, as well as for safeguarding *Gemeinwohl*-oriented projects and spaces.

The team includes five permanent positions, two of which are at the District Councilors Office Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg working from within the public administration in the area of citizen participation. The other three positions are outside the public administration office, at the association Gemeinwohlorientierte Stadtentwicklung e.V. (funded by the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg District Office). This association is the initiative platform and civil society basis of AKS Gemeinwohl. A steering committee made up of stakeholders from district politics, public administration, and organized civil society monitors and controls the work and orientation of AKS Gemeinwohl.



Häuser Bewegen GIMA eG.

Berlin

In November 2021, a group of housing cooperatives, associations, the Tenement Housing Syndicate (Mietshäusersyndikat), and individuals registered the Häuser Bewegen GIMA Berlin-Brandenburg eG cooperative real-estate agency based on the principle of Gemeinwohl, the first such establishment of its kind in the region. It follows the model of a cooperative in Munich called GIMA München, which also served as a reference for establishing GIMA Frankfurt a.M.

Based on the principle of social responsibility, the Häuser Bewegen GIMA mediates real-estate purchases by its members from prospective sellers and title holders. It focuses on integrating tenants' interests and engaging them in the process, as well as uncoupling purchases from market prices and connecting them to Gemeinwohl principles. The cooperative charges a mediation fee of 1% of the selling price in comparison to the common 7% rate of real-estate agencies. By

early 2023, the cooperative had 15 member organizations with a housing stock of approximately 4,000 units.

Between 2018 and 2021, a tenant initiative set the stage for the establishment of the cooperative with a project called "Häuser Bewegen" (Moving Houses), where they experimented with and piloted the founding of a Gemeinwohl real-estate agency. It was partially funded by the City District Council of Berlin Mitte.



Kollektiv Raumstation Berlin

Kollektiv Raumstation (Space Station Collective) wants you to question, reinterpret, reimagine, and be playful with urban spaces as places of communication, exchange, and shared experiences. Urban spaces are inherently political, and urban processes can be moments of political empowerment, or the opposite. The collective seeks to emphasize and strengthen concealed places, ignored topics, and unheard voices that underlie and define our urban world. Its work is based on methods of experimental spatial exploration, artistic and activist interventions, and critically reflective practices. Its projects focus on the physical, social, cultural, and political production of space and are guided by open group processes that allow for mutual, multidirectional learning.

Founded in Weimar in 2013, Kollektiv Raumstation now consists of around 40 members, with more recent chapters in Berlin and Vienna. Each of these “stations” is an interdisciplinary platform where

people come together to design and shape new urban spaces, intervene politically for the right to the city, test new ideas, and share strategies and techniques. The stations in Weimar, Berlin, and Vienna work to generate urban movement in independently determined, grassroots, and democratic ways. They use creative and reflective methods to develop and act on new ideas, to implement and reflect on projects, and to share responsibility for self-organization and empowerment. Each station has evolved its own foci, networks, and projects, and the collective is active on the ground and online, hosting regular virtual gatherings as well as “galaxy meetings” in one of the three cities.



Observatori DESC

Barcelona

The Observatory of Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (Observatori dels Drets Econòmics, Socials, Culturals i Ambientals – Observatori DESC) is a human rights center that, for more than two decades, has focused on dismantling the devalued perception of social rights—the right to housing, to work, to education, to health, to food—in relation to other fundamental rights such as patrimonial, civil, and political rights.

The center combines advocacy with research, offers consultancies, practices strategic litigation, and organizes courses and conferences. In this context it is also involved in the dissemination of research, accompanies popular demands and struggles, and plays a role in networking and supporting participatory social campaigns.

Observatori DESC has successfully led housing proposals at both the legislative and public policy level, together with social movements such as the Platform of People

Affected by Mortgages (Plataforma de Afectadas por la Hipoteca – PAH, an anti-evictions movement). For example, a new Catalan housing law to stop evictions and power cuts was approved in 2015 after collecting over 150,000 signatures. Last year, a local policy requiring every new private building to designate 30% of the space for social housing was implemented in Barcelona after being proposed by a coalition of 5 social organizations, Observatori DESC being one of them.

CMMM IS COORDINATED BY:

ORANGOTANGO

Kollektiv Orangotango
Berlin

kollektiv orangotango was founded in 2008. Since then, it has been constantly developing through a network of critical geographers, friends, and activists who deal with questions regarding space, power, and resistance. With its geographical activism, the collective seeks to support processes and oppositional actors who instigate social change by prefiguring social alternatives. It conducts emancipatory educational work and organizes concrete political and artistic interventions intended to encourage reflections on and changes to social conditions. Through workshops, publications, mapping, excursions, and creative interventions within public space, its members collectively learn how to read space and how to initiate emancipatory processes from below. By sticking to the traditions of activist research, they connect theoretical reflections and concrete actions.

LABOR  LAB

LABOR K //// K LAB
TU Berlin

K LAB is a laboratory for communication at the Institute for Urban and Regional Planning (ISR) at TU Berlin. Founded in 2018, it serves as the coordination hub for internal and external communication of the institute, including the organization of events, exhibitions, and other formats that create space for multidisciplinary debates. At the same time, it acquires funding for and conducts research on communication and ways of re-thinking urban design and planning processes, methods, tools, skills, strategies and tactics necessary to improve our understandings of and abilities to navigate the complexities and messiness of urban realities.

In K LAB's work, *communication* is practiced as a multidirectional dialogue to expand understandings of the urban. It is a two-footed practice, pivoting on collaborative *production* and *presentation* of knowledge, and on *interaction* and *exchange* among stakeholders.



Section 4

THOUGHTS ON...

recorded conversations

In May 2022, our CMMM team met face-to-face for the first time since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, after two failed attempts in 2021. At the margins of this gathering in Belgrade, on 22, 23 and 24 May, K LAB recorded conversations of about one hour with members of the city teams: **Julian Zwicker** from **BERLIN**, **Irene Escorihuela Blasco** and **Eduard Sala Barceló** from **BARCELONA**, and our hosts **Iva Čukić** and **Jovana Timotijević** from **BELGRADE**. The aim was to create three podcasts of about 20 minutes each as a medium to hear the voices of the people behind the CMMM project and to provide an overview of key issues related to their work, discourses, obstacles, how they became and continue to be involved in housing justice movements, and the role of collaboration, solidarity, and humor in spite of things going wrong.

While editing the recordings, we decided it would be better to have the option of hearing the thoughts on particular issues together rather than separated into a city-specific podcast format, especially considering that the three conversations touched on similar topics in varying orders. Therefore, we shifted our strategy to that of cutting the recordings into short, themed clips as this allows for both options: listening to the thoughts of one team on the ten domains we discussed (columns) or listening to the thoughts about the individual topics across the three cities (rows). Each sound clip is captioned with a couple of sentences that highlight two to three of the key ideas, which you find in this section. Several of the issues mentioned in these clips are expounded in the collaboratively produced maps, illustrations of actors and processes, and analyses. We hope you enjoy listening to these clips on the project's website cmmm.eu.

1

... how it all started



The non-political positioning of the architecture faculty drove us to explore other perspectives on how to think about space and city-making. Hanging out with some friends and talking about how the city can be developed made the concept of the “Right to the City” somehow understandable.

Seeing the importance of social infrastructures in other European cities inspired us to start the Ministry of Space Collective in Belgrade to initially show that property can be activated for the needs of the community. We later expanded to address the multilayered topics related to city development.



It all started when our building was being sold and we, the tenants, wanted to challenge the sale. We didn’t succeed.

Probably a signature aspect of Berlin is the abundance and openness of its political activist scene involved in issues regarding space, among other things.



[Irene] For me, it started when I did an internship at Observatori DESC a decade ago. Housing was one of the most important issues in the city and La PAH was at its very beginning. I was studying law and thought the law should be a tool for social movements to change the world.

[Edu] I got involved in the housing movement when I was doing my PhD on the mortgage crisis and evictions in Barcelona and the strategies of La PAH to empower the people affected. I stayed.

2

... engagements



Under the umbrella of “urban commons,” and to counter the state- and market-driven development discourses, the Ministry of Space is currently working on promoting public participation in decisions over urban development, as well as in developing models for affordable housing and public property management.

The controversy and scale of the Belgrade Waterfront project helped us to politicize urban development and put it on the agendas of a wider public.



We are focused on developing a knowledge pool on community organization and urban democracy in relation to real estate and land in order to empower people.

Since 2010, the extreme pressure of the profit-oriented market has created a situation of fear and suffering. At the same time, it activated a lot of energy and resistance. Our work at AKS concentrates on mediating between people who want to change the housing situation and the city district administration.



Our main demand is: “no evictions without relocation.” The problem, however, is not only the law but also the resources since there is no alternative public housing in Barcelona.

The rent control law helps a lot as we have proven in Catalunya in the last months. In addition, more stable leases would make renting a lot different for people.

3

... discourses



How we do things is very important to us. Our main work principles are interdisciplinarity and insisting on and appreciating collective work. This goes hand-in-hand with network and initiative building, blurring the sectoral borders between civil society organizations, academia, and other actors by working in the in-between spaces.



Berlin has a culture of gatherings and big events to connect and intersect initiatives and struggles. In the initiatives I am involved in, we support people and spread knowledge through individual visits and consultations.

The housing activist scene is strong in using Berlin's streetscapes to display visual icons, posters, and wordplays: e.g., "Allesandersplatz" instead of "Alexanderplatz."



We started at a moment when the main discourse was one of evicted people being guilty of their own situation because they lived beyond their possibilities. The movement changed the discourse to: "you are not guilty; it is a collective and systemic problem." This was the first step in empowering people.

La PAH, the oldest housing movement in Barcelona, has a lot of turnover of people, not necessarily of young people, who tend to join their own neighborhood's anti-eviction movement.

4

... humor



We are addressing difficult topics in a very hostile political environment. We use humor as a key tool to show how and why things matter, to mobilize people, but also to keep our own energy levels up. In addition, collectiveness and mutual care keep us healthy and sane during processes that extend over several years.

The yellow rubber duck, that every family has, has become the symbol of resistance. We didn't expect this.



La PAH continuously reinvents its nonviolent actions and performances in terms of how to stage the protest to explain the situation to the world: from stickers, to dancing, to setting a beach in a bank branch to damage its image.

The changing property structure requires that we reinvent our actions to make investment funds such as Blackstone more visible in the city, even when their headquarters are elsewhere. The role of media is essential.

5

... obstacles



One obstacle is the risk of apathy. This country has been in crisis for 30 years and things don't change that fast. To keep the fire going is energy-, time- and emotionally consuming and requires "Tom Sawyer" tactics!

Global processes can also be an obstacle as they influence and limit the scopes of national-level actions. The fact that Serbia is on the European periphery in many ways shapes the way its economy and politics work, and therefore also the conditions in which we work.



The German system of subsidiarity causes decisions at the municipal or district level to be blocked by laws and decision-making at higher levels. This has caused, for instance, the decapacitation of the preemptive buying right, as well as the upward spiraling of land and property valuations in big cities.



After the mortgage crisis (2008), 40% of households in Barcelona are renters. Many cannot afford their rents anymore and turn to squatting out of necessity.

The financialization of housing has changed the ownership structure from individuals and banks to international investment funds, largely due to EU-imposed reforms. This has made our struggle more difficult, and we need new strategies and legal mechanisms.

6

... things going wrong



Education (in architecture for instance) is often detached from reality and pressing issues of the real world. Instead of using existing data of civil society and tackling real issues, students are invited to design on Mars, where real life and real problems do not exist as a narrative. It hurts to see that.

Internships of two weeks might fulfill the curricular assignment but do not contribute to shifting understandings and are more exhausting for us than helpful.

Interdisciplinarity is not at all encouraged at many universities, even though there are easy mechanisms to break boundaries and improve education.



Mapping can be superficial and overwhelming, but it can also be very inclusive and bring people together in a process as one can only connect with others by sharing emotions and working together. Such cross-sectoral joint spaces and processes are largely missing in Berlin.

The **Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Enteignen** post-referendum top-down process is falling short of the expectations of the participating civic actors, who thought they would have an influence.

7

... academia and dis/connection



In faculties of architecture, the male architect is still seen as the sole mastermind of spatial design, while urban planning (where we think all the fun is) is considered a woman's (less-paid) job. Students do not get in touch with real people or real situations like evictions and stay in a kind of parallel reality.

Universities are a mirror of the dominant logic in society. The market logic that exists as the main generator of directions in housing policies also gives directions in universities, how students see the purpose of their education, how research works, and how alternative practices in universities are resisted.



There is a general gap between the ways civil society works versus how politics and science work.

We need to slow down the aggressive mechanisms of politics, and maybe also science.

Problems in society need their time and space to be unpacked, and we need scientists and politicians to react to this very emotional environment with less hastiness.



The fact that we own the data gives us negotiation power when collaborating with academia or media. We constantly claim more engagement, empathy, and respect for the movements and the persons behind the data.

Partnerships with academia that are based on what the movement needs are very helpful. The process is relevant, and we demand respect for our time and systems of (self) organization.

8

... (non-)collaboration and democracy



Instead of being open, institutions have a tendency to dismiss the civil society sector and activists, even though they produce so much grounded knowledge and could contribute to a different understanding of the city.

One concrete mechanism is something we had in the socialist period called “mesna zajednica,” which is the lowest level of territorial administration in the city, where the community is actively involved and can influence decision-making from the bottom up.



Because of the practice of coalition contracts, political parties often break their promises to partners in civil society organizations in order to be part of the government.

Cross-sectoral partnerships require compromise and this raises conflicts, especially in a very experienced radical left environment that is coming from the squatting scene and has a strong protest culture. We have not managed to make the political scenes accountable, nor tackled the challenge of continuity. We still need to establish our own financial resources to be independent of (public) funding.



During elections, political parties are the most vulnerable, and we make use of this moment to negotiate our demands.

The housing movements in Barcelona have high social power, and this is being employed to push for better laws: for example, the two most important laws, “anti-eviction law” and “rent control law,” were passed just before elections.



International solidarity and networking are very important, but it is important to know that we work in different contexts. It is not about replicating, but rather listening to what the other person needs.

Our “Safe Harbor” program is an atypical means of solidarity. We invite different activists to come to Belgrade and escape from their everyday life in a friendly environment and without expectations.



It helps to see other people in other places empowering similar struggles and to understand where there are differences and where there are intersections.

It is important to not give up and to continue repeating things over and over again until they change.

Information is key, and thus communication and explanations. Our map, for instance, aims to give people hope by visualizing solidarity and connection.



Connecting to international experiences helps us improve perspectives and understand the historic dimensions of today’s realities.

Some examples we saw show what could be possible here in Belgrade, while others showed how important it is that we share our experiences from Barcelona to co-learn.

10

... how we keep going



[Iva] I am very hopeful. I get motivation and energy from this collective and alliances. I always try to take the positive aspects and learn from even bad experiences. In the last twelve years, we achieved beyond our expectations. We created a political alternative that we can vote and stand for, and this came from a group of people who were hanging out in the park.

[Jovana] I am a bit more cynical because of some disappointments, but there is no space for quitting. We all keep a reserve of naive optimism to push when it gets very hard.



Hope is a motor for me to imagine how things could be and how they could change.

Even if it feels like people are still suffering from the same problems as three years ago, at the same time I recognize a will and development of people to influence decision-making and change the situation.



In spite of several setbacks caused by constitutional court rulings and federal decisions, fighting at the local level is useful. The housing situation in Barcelona is much better than eight years ago.

Seeing people who were without any hope now working in the movement, being motivated, and fighting for changing laws is a victory, and so is the passing of the eviction and rental laws.



STATUS QUO

how did we get
here and what are
we up against?

Section 5

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

3 x timelines on housing

“A. Obligations in relation to the right to adequate housing:

4. The right to adequate housing, enshrined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, is well established under international law. What constitutes “adequate” housing is determined in part by social, economic, cultural, climatic, ecological and other factors. Regardless of any particular context, however, it includes the following minimum criteria: security of tenure, availability of services, affordability, habitability, accessibility, appropriate location and cultural adequacy. These elements remain ever-so relevant in the light of the novel challenges that the climate crisis poses to achieving the right to housing, as well as the mitigation and adaptation efforts being undertaken in response to the crisis.”¹

Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context (2022:3)

Although the right to adequate housing is enshrined in International Law and agreements that governments of the world have signed on to, over the past decades, governmental agendas and legislative protections have been systematically eroded in favor of neoliberal market dynamics, thereby facilitating

¹ Rajagopal, Balakrishnan. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context (A/HRC/52/28)*. Geneva: United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2022. Accessed on May 5, 2023. documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/612/32/PDF/G2261232.pdf?OpenElement

the financialization of housing and increasing housing burdens as described in **Section 8: What are we up against?** main factors behind housing injustice. To understand how we arrived at the current situation, this section provides an overview of a selection of relevant political events and changes in legislation that directly or implicitly influenced the housing sectors in Belgrade, Berlin, and Barcelona and marks when some of the main initiatives and groups combating housing injustices in the three cities were formed. The timelines are not all encompassing, rather, they include events and issues that our team considers relevant for understanding the domains on which the practical work is focused: the issue of housing unaffordability and inaccessibility to land for non-profit housing in Belgrade, the issue of the right of preemption (preemptive buying right, in German: Vorkaufsrecht) in Berlin, and the issue of evictions in Barcelona. In addition to the print version in this section, we designed an interactive web-based version that enables scrolling through the three timelines and exploring entries in parallel. It is available on the project's website: cmmm.eu/timeline (Figure 5.1, p. 58).

After noting two key aspects from the socialist period, the timeline of Belgrade expounds on the events during the period after the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into seven states, Serbia being one of them. Up until the 1980s, the political and economic systems had produced housing policies that starkly contrast with the ones dominating the scene today, ones that emphasized and protected societal ownership and self-management. Similarly, the period when Berlin was a divided city saw both East and West governments competing to demonstrate that they could create “better” welfare for the respective population, with affordable adequate housing being a main component in this. The reunification of Germany in 1990, and thus of East and West Berlin, brought about massive privatization and the wholesale of assets of the city-state, the implementation of increasingly investor-friendly policies, and reduced investment in social housing. Following the same pattern, the Barcelona timeline starts by noting the main housing-related aspects during the Francoist period before turning to the 1980s and onward, when the country abandoned the politics of autarky and internationalized rapidly, transforming Barcelona into a city that many of its inhabitants cannot afford. These transformations cannot be decoupled from the neoliberal development and economic restructuring paradigms that were (and continue to be) pushed through institutions such as

the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the European Union with its various operational arms.

The timelines in this section demonstrate how the political organization of the governments and their relation to the issue of housing radically transformed in just a few decades, shifting focus from the provision of housing as a state policy to laissez-faire policies that rendered this basic good an “exchange value” to be traded on global markets, and how housing has in turn become a significant burden for most households. The rapid financialization of the housing markets in the three cities did not unfold without resistance. Quite the contrary, the struggles against it have intensified and housing equality has become a main item on agendas of municipalist movements in Belgrade, Berlin, and Barcelona. Although civil resistance to governmental agendas has existed for a long time, the timelines clearly demonstrate that the financial (mortgage) crisis of 2008 represents a turning point for highlighting the housing crisis and people mobilizing around the issue. Due to the variations in geopolitical and socio-economic contexts, activists in Berlin and Barcelona have managed to gain more ground over the past 15 years and achieve higher resonance in political programs than in Belgrade. However, the latter has managed to articulate a political alternative to established parties as demonstrated in the results of the **2022 elections**. That said, sadly, the road toward radically shifting political paradigms on the issue of housing and achieving justice for everyday inhabitants of Belgrade, Berlin, and Barcelona remains long. While the scenes of mobilization and resistance give us reason to hope, the global shift toward right-wing politics and the accentuation of capitalism are daunting.

Figure 5.1 (on the right) A screenshot of the subpage of the CMMM website that displays the timelines on housing of the three cities—Belgrade, Berlin, and Barcelona—in an interactive format. Visitors can scroll left and right through the top row to choose which entries he/she/they wish to have demonstrated in parallel to each other, as well as change the column width to focus on one or two cities while blending out others. The interface was programmed by the Visual Intelligence team.

Section 5 / BGD

BELGRADE: TIMELINE ON HOUSING



During the socialist period (1945–1991), Yugoslavia developed two distinguished and intertwined political and economic concepts: “self-management” and “societal property,” which materialized in worker ownership of means of production and a surplus of societal value. In a sense, in today’s concepts, societal property can be understood as “common” rather than “public” property. Both self-management and societal property were introduced after the split from the Soviet Union in 1948 and during the 1950s and were consolidated through the Law on Handover of Enterprise Management to Workers.¹

Self-management socialism, which was introduced in top-down fashion, reflected the attempt of the state to systemically decentralize and disperse power.² Yet naturally, dialectic relations between the state and the units of self-management were inevitable. Despite the inconsistencies and contradictions in operationalization, the legacy of this paradigm has been an invaluable reference for numerous contemporary commons-based initiatives and practices.

1 In Serbian: Osnovni zakon o upravljanju državnim privrednim poduzećima i većim privrednim udruženjima od strane radnih kolektiva.

2 Sekulić, Dubravka. 2012. *Glottz Nicht So Romantisch! On Extralegal Space in Belgrade*. Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Academie, p. 19.

1953

Regulation on the Management of Residential Buildings: official proclamation of the right to housing

This regulation prescribed the right to “permanently use an apartment, following the rules of order in residential buildings.” Together with other laws and regulations that followed, such as the 1957 Resolution on the Basic Principles of Housing Legislation,³ the 1958 Law on Housing Relations⁴ and the 1986 Law on the Financing of Housing Construction,⁵ it established the operationalization framework for the principle that the entire society was responsible for the provision of housing to all citizens.

Namely, Article 1 of the Law on the Financing of Housing Construction stipulated that “[b]ased on solidarity and reciprocity, organizations of Associated Labor and other self-managed organizations and communities, as well as *society at large*, must take action and create opportunities *for every man to realize his needs for housing, as well as the fundamental requirements for social security*”⁶ [emphasis added]. Further, the Law on Housing Relations allowed for housing funds to be established, collected from portions of workers’ income, as well as the collectively produced surplus value from enterprises.⁷

The housing needs of the workers were defined as a priority and were addressed with various legal mechanisms: including settlement of the privately owned housing units of the pre-war period (sharing a large apartment with the owner), partial nationalization of the existing pre-war privately owned housing stock and lands in Yugoslav cities in 1958 (which guaranteed the new tenants’ right of occupancy), and new constructions that expanded the housing stock. The latter was possible through state credits, solidarity contributions from workers’ salaries, and the surplus value of enterprises. This brought about the construction of new large-scale housing settlements in urban areas (e.g., New Belgrade, which was the biggest such project in the country). While the allocated apartments remained societal property (that of the enterprises or local self-governments), tenants had a secure life-long “right of occupancy.”

3 In Serbian: Odluka o osnovnim principima stambenog zakonodavstva.

4 In Serbian: Zakon o stambenim odnosima.

5 In Serbian: Zakon o finansiranju stambene izgradnje (Official Gazette of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, no. 4).

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 22–25.

7 Marčetić, Iva. 2020. *Stambene politike u službi društvenih i prostornih (ne)jednakosti* [Housing Policies in Service of Social and Spatial (In)Equalities]. Zagreb: Pravo na grad, p. 24.

The value of rents depended on a negotiated agreement between the grantor (enterprises, local self-governments, etc.) and the tenants of a residential building, and was defined in relation to the construction value of the building and its depreciation. A part of the income from collected rents was returned to the housing fund of the right holder, while another went to the maintenance of the building.⁸ During that period and until the IMF interventions in the 1980s, this system served three of the major challenges that the housing sector in Serbia faces today: ensuring affordable and balanced rents, ensuring availability of capital for future investments, and ensuring that the building conditions remained dignified.

Although decisions on the allocation of housing units among workers were made within the workers' councils and based on pre-defined sets of criteria that considered the socio-economic characteristics of potential tenants, it is evident that there were cases of corruption in the process of distribution.⁹ In addition, the system was unable to provide a sufficient quantity of housing units for the growing numbers of Yugoslavs moving to the cities during the rapid industrialization of the country. As a result, there were newly built modernist apartment buildings in some parts of Belgrade, while in other parts, entire neighborhoods were built informally composed of individual family houses from low-income workers who were left out of the allocation of socially owned units.

The self-building of homes was also partially supported through favorable loans from enterprises to qualified and nonqualified workers. Yet, the planning regimes did not regulate these settlements, as was the case with large state-built housing estates. Hence, although the settlements were informal according to the official planning documents and registry, they cannot be considered entirely illegal according to the normative use of the term. Despite the shortcomings, the officially implemented model of production and distribution of housing constitutes an attempt to operationalize the paradigm of "housing as a universal right."

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁹ A study by Duško Sekulić indicated that while 80% of persons in positions of political leadership were housed in socially owned flats, less than 22% of skilled and unskilled workers were (see: Archer, Rory. 2013. "Imaš kuću—vrati stan: Housing Inequalities, Socialist Morality and Discontent in 1980s Yugoslavia." *Godisnjak za društvenu istoriju: Annual for Social History* 20 (3): 119–139.). This fact was also confirmed by Iva Marčetić, who added that workers with higher levels of education not only received more units in total, but also enjoyed larger ones (Tadić, Đuro. 1991. *Pretvarba vlasništva nad društvenim stanovima "Željezare Sisak"* [Transformation of property over social housing stock of the "Iron factory Sisak"]. Sisak. as quoted in Marčetić, Iva. 2020. *Stambene politike u službi društvenih i prostornih (ne)jednakosti* [Housing Policies in Service of Social and Spatial (In)Equalities]. Zagreb: Pravo na grad.

1980s | IMF shock therapy

Due to the 1974–1975 global recession, the Yugoslavian government committed several mistakes while attempting to protect its economic growth. One of these mistakes was public lending from international creditors, which opened the door for the imposition of economic restructuring programs by the IMF starting in the 1980s. The debt repayment caused declining living standards and “corroded the social fabric and the rights and securities that individuals and families had come to rely on.”¹⁰ Among other aspects, the IMF programs led to the disintegration of the industrial sector and the piecemeal dismantling of the welfare state. By the turn of the decade, more than a thousand factories had closed and hundreds of thousands of families had lost their income. On one hand, this had direct impacts on the societal ownership system of housing as explained in the following points. On the other, it lies at the core of the rise in ethnic tensions that erupted in the wars that caused the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into six states.

1990 | Law on Housing Relations: trigger of the large-scale privatization of socially owned housing

Against the backdrop of a dwindling economy and the sweeping neoliberalism through the **economic restructuring imposed by the IMF**, Yugoslavia attempted to balance socialist and market-oriented elements, but the latter dominated. The decline of the economy was mirrored in the investments in housing and the number of newly built societal housing units, and the changes that were made to the Law on Housing Relations¹¹ in December 1990 marked a shift from treating housing as a collective responsibility and right to an individual burden.

Namely, Article 2 of the above-named law states that “Working people and citizens shall meet their personal and family housing needs *with their own resources* with regard to the construction, purchase, or leasing of their apartments”¹² [emphasis added]. The article also explains that the state is no longer responsible for providing housing to

10 Woodward, Susan L. 1995. *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, p. 15.

11 In Serbian: Zakon o stambenim odnosima (Official Gazette of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, br. 12/90, 47/90 – ispr., i 55/90, and Official Gazette RS, br. 3/90 – ispr; 7/90 – ispr.).

12 *Ibid.*

all citizens, but rather only to the socially vulnerable. Additionally, Article 6 provisioned the possibility of privatization of the societal housing units by the tenants who held the occupancy rights. This allowed many citizens to purchase their leased apartments at an affordable price (which permanently secured their tenancy under the new system), making them the winners of this distribution of housing wealth. Among them, there was a higher percentage of highly skilled workers than those with lower levels of education and income. Furthermore, this shift in official policy and regulations left many of those who had regularly contributed to housing funds with neither secure housing nor subsidized loans to build themselves, as was the case with the informal settlements in earlier periods.

Since the passing of this law, there has been a substantial transition as manifested in the massive privatization and in the disassembling of the entire system of financial support for housing that used to be based on solidarity funds and enterprises' surplus value.¹³

1990–
1996

**From socialist Yugoslavia to
“democratic” Serbia: ethnic wars
dissolve the Federal Republic**

Following the classic scenario, economic hardships and the piecemeal dismantling of welfare systems in socialist Yugoslavia fed into nationalistic narratives in the republics that constituted it. The 1990s were marked by ethnic wars that killed an estimated 150,000 people,¹⁴ caused the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands, and led to massive destruction and the breakup of the federation into six autonomous states.

Although Serbia was actively involved in the war, almost no battles took place on its territory.¹⁵ Therefore, it suffered no physical destruction and its housing stock remained intact. However, most of the privatization that took place as a result of the Law on Housing Relations happened

¹³ Marčetić, Iva. 2020. *Stambene politike u službi društvenih i prostornih (ne)jednakosti* [Housing Policies in Service of Social and Spatial (In)Equalities]. Zagreb: Pravo na grad, p. 48.

¹⁴ There is not one conclusive number of casualties from the ethnic wars: it varies considerably according to the sources. Thorough and conclusive investigations were never carried out.

¹⁵ This is valid for the territory of Serbia, excluding Kosovo. The only destruction that Serbian infrastructure and built structures suffered was during the NATO bombing in 1999. The targets of the bombing were mostly public infrastructures and not residential buildings. Notwithstanding, some of the latter were damaged due to their proximity to the targets.

during the 1990s. The destruction that this process brought about was radical and has had long-term consequences.

According to *The Analysis of the Conditions for the Sustainable Development of Housing in the Republic of Serbia. Starting Point for the National Strategy*,¹⁶ which was published in 2019 and serves as a basis for the National Housing Strategy 2020–2030 (currently being drafted), around 250,000 socially owned housing units (over 55% of the total stock of housing units in Belgrade) were built between 1945 and the 1990s. In comparison, since the introduction of the **Law on Housing Relations in 1990**, all but 4,500 units have been privatized (98,2%). The 1,8% of the total units that were not privatized account for more than 50% of the total public housing stock today.

2000

The Bulldozer Revolution: divorce with housing as social policy

The 5 October Overthrow, also known as the Bulldozer Revolution, in the year 2000 marked the explicit break with the socialist past and confirmed the direction of entrenchment in capitalist paradigms and neoliberal politics. It should be noted that the process of EU accession¹⁷ significantly supported this trajectory and influenced the scale and timeline of the overall economic transformation, as well as the change in the structural logic of what constitutes the public sector and its mandated services, where one of the most important fields was housing.

During this transition, housing was almost entirely moved from the realm of social policies to economic ones. The concept of public housing for all (at least that was the goal) was replaced with a new approach that placed it under the social protection framework and reduced its scope to targeted projects (e.g., refugees, internally displaced, Roma communities, public security forces). At the same time, the state pushed for developing the housing market by transforming the ownership regime for units and land and by introducing home loans. Since then, home ownership has been heavily promoted as the ultimate lifegoal, resulting in financial products

16 Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure. 2019. "Analiza uslova za održivi razvoj stanovništva u republici srbiji: Polazište za nacionalnu stambenu strategiju [Analysis of Conditions for the Sustainable Development of Housing in the Republic of Serbia: Basis for the National Housing Strategy]." Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure. mgsi.gov.rs/sites/default/files/Nacionalna%20stambena%20strategija_Analitika.pdf

17 The negotiations on the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the EU Member States and the Republic of Serbia started in November 2005 and was signed eight years later on 1 September 2013.

related to housing. Meanwhile, other models of non-ownership-based housing (social housing or rent) were deregulated and defunded, which in turn contributed to the growth of housing-related debt (whether due to loans or increases in housing costs).

since
2000s

Indebting the nation: how foreign banks exacerbated the structural problem

For those who did not manage to buy the societal housing units they were leasing before the 1990s, as well as for new housing seekers, the options are limited. As public housing is scarce and occasional, they either continue living in the same apartment with their parents and grandparents or take out a housing loan. The latter became a widely used option as foreign banks entered the former Yugoslav region and advertised new financial products, making use of the state promotion of homeownership and the needs of the population for securing housing. Yet, the deregulation and flexibilization of working conditions that were introduced with the economic restructuring of the country had increased the precariousness of workers, which in turn increased the inability of people to access loans and thus housing, as well as the risk of defaulting on credit payments.

One of the most toxic credits was the one indexed in Swiss francs, which was promoted by government officials as the most favorable. While the CHF has been growing in value against the Serbian Dinar over the years,¹⁸ the average Serbian incomes have not and therefore the loan rates have more than doubled. While many have struggled and others are still struggling to pay off their debts, countless others have either been threatened with or were served eviction orders.

After comparing data from consumers' associations in different countries, it was concluded that there were 125,000 such credits in Croatia, 20,000 in Serbia, 11,400 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 700 in Montenegro.¹⁹ This large-scale indebtedness mobilized large numbers of people: Franak in Croatia, CHF Srbija in Serbia, and Švicarac in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While the continuous protests and public pressure managed to make the authorities in Croatia and Montenegro adopt laws

¹⁸ According to the National Bank of Serbia, on 28 March 2007, one CHF was worth 50 Serbian Dinars. By the same date in 2019, it had more than doubled in value to 105 Serbian Dinars. The highest value was recorded on 25 January 2015 when it stood at approximately 125 Serbian Dinars.

¹⁹ Anđelković, Nataša. 2019. "Krediti u švajcarskim francima ujedinili Balkan – svi kao El Dorado." BBC News Na Srpskom, March 29. [bbc.com/serbian/lat/balkan-47659600](https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/balkan-47659600)

that converted the CHF debts to euro (because the exchange value has been comparatively stable since 2015), in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina the governments took no action, and the only option was for some capable citizens to individually carry their struggles through courts. In Serbia, only a few court decisions have ruled in favor of the plaintiffs so far, ordering the respective banks to convert the debts to euro. In 2020, the consumer association **Efektiva**²⁰ announced the first successful collective lawsuit, in which three of the eleven represented loan contracts were terminated by the court's first instance verdict (the others had accepted the offer of the Piraeus Bank—now Direct—to convert their loans to euro and discontinued the lawsuit).²¹

2004 | **Housing Center (Hausing Centar)**

Housing Center²² is an organization that was established in 2004 with the objective of improving the living conditions of socially vulnerable groups and supporting their social integration and independence. With most of their team being trained architects, they have vast experience in building social housing in different parts of Serbia. They also have ample experience in cooperating with institutions for social protection, especially through "Social Housing in a Supportive Environment," a program they co-created and that acts as a model for provisioning housing and social support to some of the most vulnerable citizens.

With their track record, Housing Center was able to acquire a license from the Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure to be considered a "non-profit housing organization," which meant that, according to the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance, it is authorized to provide (i.e., acquire, manage, and lease) apartments intended for social housing and to manage the construction of apartments for social housing. The fact that they are an officially recognized actor increased their potential to pursue their agendas and build new infrastructures for just housing conditions.

20 efektiva.rs

21 Dejang. 2020. "Prva grupna presuda za raskid CHF!" Efektiva, December 13. efektiva.rs/aktuelnosti-efektiva/aktuelnosti-krediti/prva-grupna-presuda-za-raskid-chf/

22 facebook.com/HausingCentar/

2007

Magacin Cultural Center: the first commons-based alternative established in Belgrade and governed by the civil sector

As a result of the transition and the process of privatization of previously societal enterprises, numerous publicly owned properties stood abandoned, and spaces were left unused. At the same time, many cultural and other civic organizations were in dire need of space for their activities. When following the formal procedures of renting space, most of the non-profit civil society organizations were forced to accept market prices under the same conditions as commercial entities.

Magacin²³ emerged as the first alternative cultural center in Belgrade through the coming-together of different organizations and initiatives (including the Ministry of Space), which later established the Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia. After many years of negotiation with Belgrade's authorities, it was finally agreed that the organizations could temporarily use the space of the former publishing house Nolit—about 2,000 m²—for free.

However, in 2008 a new city government took office, which did not support the initiative. Tensions escalated in 2014, when the organizations around Magacin were ordered to evacuate the space. The organizations refused to leave and instead proposed a new governance model based on the concept of the *commons*.²⁴ The model is still being developed further (including the governing bodies of the Magacin Users' Assembly and the Magacin Coordinating Body, the Open Calendar, the ethical rules of use, the maintenance framework, etc.) and has provided inspiration for creating and maintaining other similar community-led spaces around the world. Over the years, the number of users of Magacin has increased significantly. Its legal status remains unregulated.²⁵

2008

Global financial (mortgage) crisis trickles

²³ kcmagacin.org/en/mkm-naslovna-english/

²⁴ Čukić, Iva and Milica Pekić. 2019. "Magacin as a Common Good." in *Magacin: A Model for a Self-Organized Center*, edited by Čukić, Iva and Milica Pekić, 10–15. Belgrade: Association Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia.

²⁵ For further details, see: Čukić, Iva. 2020. "Kulturni centar Magacin / Cultural Centre Magacin" in *Spaces of Commoning: Urban Commons in the Ex-YU Region*, 108–123. Belgrade: Ministry of Space / Institute for Urban Politics.

2009

Law on Planning and Construction: opening the possibility for lands to be privatized

Until the passing of the Law on Planning and Construction,²⁶ public lands were considered valuable assets that were only leased to private entities (to use or develop). The passing of this new law now opened the possibility for publicly owned lands to be sold and privatized as well. Article 83 of this law explicitly states that the “public land is on the market.” Article 96 further elaborates and confirms that an ownership regime for a parcel of land is possible “in accordance with the market conditions.” The only lands excluded from this law are those occupied by existing public buildings or reserved for future ones. Other exceptional cases where market regulations and purchases can be suspended have to be approved by the government. The law therefore reinforces the legislative transformation that allows for easier privatization and thus the commodification of the country’s lands.

The passing of this law further limited the space for affordable and public housing projects, which are considered only a “last resort” since the [Law on Housing Relations of 1990](#). The consequence of turning public lands into assets that can be sold on the market is that the parcels that are officially dedicated to public housing projects are insufficient, sporadic, and usually located at the margins of urban areas.

2009

Right to the City (Pravo na grad), Croatia: inspiration for municipal struggles in Belgrade

Almost all former Yugoslav states are facing similar challenges regarding systems of urban development in general and housing in particular (privatization, speculation, corruption in planning systems, etc.), where neoliberal logics dominate the various spheres of social reproduction in our societies.

Three years after the beginning of struggles against the enclosure of Cvjetni Square and Varšavska street in 2006 (through the construction of a shopping mall and parking garage), located in the center of Zagreb, a group of activists created the association [Right to the City](#)²⁷ (Pravo na grad). They are dedicated to promoting the right of citizens

26 In Serbian: Zakon o planiranju i izgradnji (Official Gazette no. 72/2009, 81/2009 – ispr.).

27 pravonagrad.org/

to participate in decision-making processes on issues related to their city and advocate against encroachments on public spaces and the commodification of public resources. They have produced numerous campaigns and studies on spatial policies and housing, which have been feeding into the programs of progressive political forces in Croatia (e.g., **Zagreb is Ours**²⁸ (Zagreb je NAŠ), a municipal platform which in 2021 became the largest party in the Zagreb Assembly with a landslide victory, and **We Can**²⁹ (Možemo) at the national level). As Right to the City's struggle echoed across the region, activists in Belgrade and Serbia (including the **Ministry of Space**) have come to see this association as an inspiration for their own journeys, pushing for just and inclusive spatial policies.

2010

Who Builds the City (Ko gradi grad)

Who Builds the City³⁰ was initially established as a platform in 2010 in response to the urban developments in Belgrade that were (and still are) characterized by corruption, mismanagement, and the privatization of public resources, as well as the clientelist government behavior that paved the way for monopolistic private sector actors. Among other activities, Who Builds the City has pioneered public discussions on current housing-related issues, such as the "**So-Called Housing Issue**" gathering, which have fostered partnerships and initiatives.

One of their most prominent projects, "**Smarter Building**,"³¹ aims to create the first contemporary non-speculative housing cooperative in Belgrade. They also initiated the regional network **MOBA**,³² which unites housing cooperatives and initiatives from Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic under the goal of establishing support mechanisms and frameworks that further develop the sector of housing cooperatives in Central and South-East Europe. The network created the MOBA housing model to provide affordable housing by executing sustainable projects based on the following principles: **(a)** collective ownership—the bought or constructed real estate is owned by the cooperative; **(b)** credit liability—the cooperative bears the responsibility for the credit, thus managing the risks in a more robust way; **(c)** secure tenancy—members are guaranteed long-term use of

28 zagrebjenas.hr/

29 mozemo.hr/

30 kogradigrad.org/

31 kogradigrad.org/pametnija-zgrada/

32 moba.coop/

a unit; and **(d)** scaled financing—values of monthly installments and initial investments are calculated and scaled to the levels of income of the members in order to ensure affordability and sustainability.

2010

Ministry of Space (Ministarstvo Prostora)

The **Ministry of Space**³³ (MoS, officially registered as the Institute for Urban Politics) was formed in December 2010 with the aim of reviving unused spaces through direct action and municipal negotiations. Over time, its aims and mission expanded. Yet from the onset, the collective has been dedicated to spatial politics to ensure the public interest is placed back onto the agendas of city development and thus guarantee a just distribution of spatial (and related monetary) resources. Today MoS's activities target promoting communal use of public spaces, the development of urban commoning practices, participatory urban planning mechanisms, and housing justice. The collective addresses housing mostly through critical analyses of official housing policies and advocates for alternative approaches that treat it as a right rather than a commodity. In the long run, it aims to improve the regulations that govern spatial programs and steer priorities toward dignified living conditions, be it in relation to housing stock, publicly owned communal spaces, infrastructures, etc.

MoS has initiated, organized, and led multiple participatory processes and studies on topics such as urban commons, housing, and urban planning. It has played a leading role in the organization of events that aim to shift paradigms of local politics (e.g., running a public campaign against the privatization of public spaces, particularly Belgrade cinemas in 2011, or establishing the **Street Gallery**³⁴ in 2012 at Belgrade's central street passage, which raised the issue potential common uses of public spatial resources).

A central focus of MoS has been fostering cooperation with and between other collectives and individuals from diverse sectors and professional backgrounds that share the same values and goals, serving as an adhesive force in the ecosystem involved in transforming modes of urban development in Belgrade specifically and in the region generally. Members of the MoS collective are also active in other housing initiatives and organizations. This has often led to the creation

³³ ministarstvoprostora.org/

³⁴ [instagram.com/ulicna_galerija/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/ulicna_galerija/?hl=en)

of multi-actor initiatives that feed from these collaborations and expand the base of people pushing for alternative, democratic models of spatial production and distribution (e.g., [Don't Let Belgrade D\(r\)own](#)³⁵ [Ne da(vi)mo Beograd] in 2015, [Platform for Theory and Practice of Commons](#)³⁶ [Zajedničko] in 2017).

In addition, MoS enjoys a wide international network and has participated in and contributed to the organization of a number of international gatherings (e.g., INURA conference "[Between Big Ideas and Life's Realities](#)"³⁷ in 2014 and "[New Ideas for Old Buildings](#)"³⁸ in 2016).

2011

Law on Enforcement and Security: privatizing enforcement of evictions

The Law on Enforcement and Security, adopted in 2011, introduced what are known as "private bailiffs"³⁹ into the Serbian system. Using the usual "effectiveness" rationale, it transferred the jurisdiction and power for the enforcement of eviction orders from public executive bodies to private entrepreneurs. This established a systemic bias toward the interests of profit-driven private entrepreneurs, while withdrawing from protecting public interests (nominally the domain of public institutions). The following years proved to be especially violent, with most incidents pushing those who were evicted into homelessness. In the context of an increasing demand for land and homes alongside widespread corruption on the one hand and an increasing number of indebted citizens under precarious living conditions and employment on the other, this law and the ensuing transfer of power opened the space for various forms of misuse and unjust activities motivated by profits for the private bailiffs.⁴⁰

It is worth noting that the passing of the Law on Enforcement and Security in 2011 and the amendments in 2015 were a result of untransparent and non-participatory processes, which have become

35 nedavimobeograd.rs

36 zajednicko.org

37 issuu.com/ministarstvoprostora/docs/inura_reader_1_

38 newideasforoldbuildings.eu/3-beograd/

39 Private bailiffs can be employed by anyone to collect a debt. They are usually self-employed and work on a commission basis, receiving a percentage of the collected debts.

40 In 2019, a son of the Deputy of the President of the Chamber of Bailiffs purchased an auctioned apartment that was forcefully taken from the Aksentijević family (Nova Ekonomija. 2019. "Ko kupuje stanove koje oduzimaju izvršitelji?" *Nova Ekonomika*, March 28. novaekonomija.rs/vesti-iz-zemlje/ko-kupuje-stanove-koje-oduzimaju-izvr%C5%A1itelji).

typical as the discussions on the law proposals in parliament are *pro forma* rather than genuine deliberations, and the public is not informed of the intended laws until after they are passed. In 2019, amendments to the law introduced fines for those who stand in solidarity with the evicted or try to resist forced evictions. Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice ruled that in any case of debt that lies below EUR 5,000 (around ten times more than the average monthly net salary in 2020), the apartment cannot be a subject of settlement. Yet, this ceiling disregards the realities of indebted citizens where debts accumulate and often exceed EUR 5,000 due to their inability to meet living costs with their levels of income (e.g., people living on social benefits or with irregular wages). It is evident that the legislators chose to ignore the fact that the enforcement of this law leaves many in a state of homelessness, which in turn has had grave social consequences.

2015

Belgrade Waterfront Mega Project: top-down urban renewal

Serbia's capital Belgrade has experienced explicit and intense neoliberal urban development policies over the last decades. Rapid land development and new construction have been carried out to accumulate capital, and as a quick boost to the state's economy via temporary employment and taxations. As is typical for this type of development globally, projects are decided upon in untransparent and often corrupt procedures, where benefits are individual rather than collective.

The Belgrade Waterfront project was first presented in 2012 during an election campaign by then First Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić (from 2014 to 2017, he was Prime Minister, and since then he has been the President). After two years of relative silence, the project made headlines in 2014 with the emergence of investor Mohamed Alabbar. In April 2015, the contract was signed with his Abu Dhabi-based development firm Eagle Hills.⁴¹ While initially he had promised USD 4 billion in loans and investment to develop the Belgrade Waterfront project, by the time the contract was signed, this sum had shrunk to USD 160 million in investment and USD 300 million in loans, in return for 68% of the profits.

The plot of land in question lies at the heart of the city, next to the central train station and along the Sava River. The project takes over

41 Mohamed Alabbar is best known for founding Emaar, the company responsible for building the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, and the Dubai Mall, the world's largest shopping mall.

the northern section of the historic Savamala neighborhood, an area that had become a vibrant and attractive center for entertainment. While most of this high-potential land was not developed, it was home to 88 families of railway workers and Roma squatters, who have been evicted⁴² to make room for the 2-million-square-meter commercial complex consisting of hotels, office buildings, luxury apartments, the largest shopping mall in the Balkans, and a Dubai-style 200-meter-high tower.

The project was promoted as a ticket-out-of-crisis in a country where thousands of people's basic housing needs are not met, and where the number of people living below the poverty line is increasing every day. To realize this mega project, both state and city authorities abused their power on multiple levels. The Master Plan of Belgrade was modified to legalize the project, bypassing regulations on design and procurement processes, evicting hundreds of families living on the site, and leaving many of them without an alternative. An interesting fact: the legal code was bypassed and the illegal clearance of the existing buildings on the designated site was ordered on the night of the 2016 elections.

Belgrade Waterfront has since been under construction. As of today, the traffic infrastructure and seven residential buildings have been completed, one large shopping mall has opened, and three office buildings are currently being erected. As with any other project of the current government, information about the purchase of apartments,⁴³ the prices of units or office spaces, as well as the real value of the investments put into the project by the state of Serbia are completely untransparent.

42 Shepard, Wade. 2016. "A Look At Abu Dhabi's 'Bad Joke': The Belgrade Waterfront Project" Forbes. December 8. forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/2016/12/08/inside-abu-dhabis-bad-joke-the-belgrade-waterfront-project/?sh=2e74d7096c12

43 The catch phrases flashing from the brochures and billboards that promote Belgrade Waterfront reflect the neoliberal housing paradigm that treats the right to housing as the right to purchase (Marčetić, Iva. 2020. *Stambene politike u službi društvenih i prostornih (ne)jednakosti* [Housing Policies in Service of Social and Spatial (In)Equalities]. Zagreb: Pravo na grad) or the right to "living the high life," "living your fairy tale," living at the "perfect location." Also see: Sekulić, Dubravka and Jovana Timotijević. "Let the Magic Begin! Seven Theses on the Waterfront." In *One Day You Will Miss Me*, edited by Julia Gaisbacher, 42–69. Graz: Camera Austria, 2021.

2015

Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own (Ne da(vi)mo Beograd): the bottom-up response

The Belgrade Waterfront project and the corruption affairs that ushered it into existence triggered a great number of activists (including the **Ministry of Space** collective) to mobilize resistance. In 2014, this brought about the **Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own**⁴⁴ (Ne da(vi)mo Beograd, NDM BGD) initiative, which employed various strategies and tactics depending on their projected effectiveness, risks, and resources. The initiative captured public attention through the mass protests it organized on 26 April 2015 around the iconic Belgrade Cooperative Building, where the signing of the Belgrade Waterfront contract between the government and Eagle Hills was taking place (and which today serves as the latter's headquarters). During the protests, giant yellow inflated rubber ducks were held up, playing with the fact that the word "duck" in Serbian slang also means "fraud." Soon after, this became the symbol of NDM BGD.

Since then, NDM BGD has organized a series of street actions and protests, as well as institutionalized forms of resistance and intervention (e.g., submitting objections against the implementation of the General Plan of Belgrade during the process of public inquiry or sabotaging the public hearing during the process of adopting the Plan for the Area of Specific Use for the Belgrade Waterfront project. This plan was meant to legalize the designs and procedures that in effect do not adhere to regulations). NDM BGD has managed to raise public awareness for issues related to the right to the city, and its protests have been gathering between 10,000 and 30,000 people. The initiative continues by demanding accountability for the violations committed to realize the Belgrade Waterfront mega project as the paradigmatic example of corrupt governance.

Although the government continues to ignore the public pressure stemming from the massive mobilizations, this materialization and visibility of resistance has significantly raised the level of awareness among citizens on their right to participate in the planning and construction of their immediate surroundings. Furthermore, in the past few years NDM BGD has inspired and empowered several local initiatives that fight against neoliberal developments in their respective neighborhoods. It was a force to reckon with in the **2018 local elections** and contributed to the paradigm shift that took place during the 2022 general elections.

44 nedavimobeograd.rs

2015

From the “So-Called Housing Issue” gathering to the “Welcome to Housing Hell” campaign

In October 2015, the two initiatives **Who Builds the City**⁴⁵ (Ko gradi grad) and Ignorant Schoolmaster and His Committees (Učitelj neznalica i njegovi komiteti) organized a gathering called “**So-Called Housing Issue**”⁴⁶ (Tzv. Stambeno pitanje) in the independent REX cultural center. Fifteen groups and initiatives from all over Serbia discussed for the first time a wide range of problems, as well as the possibilities for alternative housing policies that respond to citizens’ needs rather than market logics.

In the same period, the Ministry of Construction convened a working group to draft a new **Law on Housing and Building Maintenance** to further establish the neoliberal reform of the housing sector in legal texts and thus further relieve the state of its responsibility to attend to citizens’ housing needs and problems. Until the adoption of the law in the following year in 2016, participants from the “So-Called Housing Issue” gathering continued to work together to prevent its adoption in the proposed form through official procedures, as well as through elaborate campaigns that illustrated its consequences, such as the “**Welcome to Housing Hell**”⁴⁷ campaign—holding public debates, releasing media pieces, and connecting interested groups.

Although it failed to prevent the passing of the law, the REX gathering and the follow-up events networked and gave shape to many activists and initiatives that are involved in the housing struggle in Serbia. In the following months and years, many articulated their specific foci and strategies (e.g., the **The Roof** was formed), and housing became a central programmatic area of the **Ministry of Space** collective. In addition, the ideas, principles, and proposals that were generated at and resulted from the REX gathering were added to the agenda of the **Don’t Let Belgrade D(r)own** political initiative in the **2018 local elections**.

45 kogradigrad.org/

46 Kogradigrad. 2016. “Izveštaj: Tzv. Stambeno Pitanje” [Report: The So-Called Housing Issue]. Kogradigrad. Accessed May 5, 2023. kogradigrad.org/2016/02/22/izvestaj-tzv-stambeno-pitanje/

47 Kogradigrad. 2016. “Kampanja: Dobrodošli u stambeni pakao!” [Campaign: Welcome to Housing Hell!]. Kogradigrad. Accessed May 5, 2023. kogradigrad.org/2016/12/06/dobrodosli-u-stambeni-pakao/

2015

Joint Movement of Free Tenants from Nis (Udruženi pokret slobodnih stanara Niša): housing struggles outside of Belgrade

Against the backdrop of the large difference in population size⁴⁸ and drastic inequalities in resource allocations between Serbia's capital Belgrade and other cities, one of the earliest housing struggles was initiated in the southern city of Nis (third in terms of size in Serbia) in May 2015. Faced with untransparent regulations in terms of housing-related costs in general and a rapid increase in heating costs in particular, many tenants in Nis united under the **Joint Movement of Free Tenants**.⁴⁹ The central demand was participation in decision-making in local energy production enterprises (and thus exercising control over pricing) and exposing the corruption that exists in the provision of services for which the tenants were being charged.

The movement has since transformed into a local political initiative and broadened its foci. Together with other local initiatives, it has formed the Civic Front (Građanski Front).

2016

Law on Housing and Building Maintenance: the present-day regulatory framework for housing policy

The December 2016 Law on Housing and Building Maintenance⁵⁰ is the present-day regulatory framework governing housing policies, which came into effect a quarter of a century after the **1990 Law on Housing Relations** that had revoked the **Law on Handover of Enterprise Management to Workers**. The latter governed relations between the state and citizens on the issue of housing from 1950 to 1989.

The 2016 law declares the maintenance of buildings a public interest, regulates the area of management and maintenance of buildings in great detail, and includes an exhaustive list of penalties for various violations. It was introduced as a solution to stop the deterioration

48 The total population of Serbia is close to 7 million. Belgrade has a population of approximately 1.4 million, while the second biggest city, Novi Sad, has a population of approximately 350,000 within its larger administrative area, and Nis is the third largest city with roughly 260,000 inhabitants within its larger administrative area.

49 facebook.com/upss.nis/

50 In Serbian: Zakon o stanovanju i održavanju zgrada (Official Gazette RS no. 104/2016 i 9/2020 - dr. zakon).

of the existing housing stock, and indeed it would be difficult to find someone who would dispute that the residential buildings were and still are in alarming conditions and in need of intervention. However, this law does not serve this purpose as it does not tackle the core of the problem, instead bringing about more problems. The poor conditions of the housing stock are a result of the high living costs and low levels of income, which leave no room for citizens to invest in the maintenance of their buildings. Additionally, the law transfers the responsibility of maintenance to the tenants while completely relieving the state and state-owned enterprises of theirs, even though they have collected maintenance fees for years.⁵¹

Aside from its focus on maintenance, the law erased the concept of social housing and introduced a wider concept of housing support, which includes diverse mechanisms, from providing assistance to improve existing homes to the provision of shelters for the homeless. Yet, the law is not supported by sufficient funds to implement these mechanisms.

This law defines public interest as “sustainable housing development, fulfilment of the housing needs of present and future generations, and improvement of their quality of life.” Yet, it does not fully explain what “sustainable” implies (whether it relates to environmental and quality assurance standards or other possible interpretations), nor does it acknowledge the need to structurally intervene in the (for many citizens non-sustainable) market logic dominating the housing sector (e.g., regulate and sink prices, which are detrimental to fulfilling basic needs and improving quality of life, create a looped system in which funds are generated to carry out maintenance work, or create investment opportunities for future housing).⁵² Consequently, as the definition of public interest here does not explicitly include *all* citizens, the operationalization of the law in reality is also selective and exclusive of those who are already overburdened with housing-related costs or debts.

In early 2021, the Ministry of Construction, Transportation, and Infrastructure established a Working Group tasked with formulating necessary amendments to this law. According to a Ministry representative, the planned amendments will “allow for more efficient

51 For example, in Belgrade most residential buildings had contracts by which tenants paid maintenance fees into the fund of the City Housing Company. The question then arises as to how the citizens themselves are responsible for the poor state of their buildings and the lack of maintenance, as well as to what happened to the money that accumulated on the account of that public company over the years.

52 See how this issue was resolved earlier in the former entry in this timeline “1953: Regulation of the Management of Residential Buildings: Official Proclamation of the Right to Housing.”

maintenance and governance of residential buildings”⁵³ and will include matters relating to the inspection and leasing of apartments that are owned by endowments and foundations. From our perspective, the focus on maintenance once again demonstrates the state’s disregard for major issues and urgencies, such as operationalizing programs for housing support, securing resources for such programs, providing sustainable housing solutions for those living in inadequate, insecure, and unaffordable housing, and tackling homelessness.

2017

The Roof (Združena akcija Krov nad glavom): mainstreaming the right to housing

Following the “**So-Called Housing Issue**” gathering in 2015, through various meetings and continuous communication triggered by the conditions in Serbia and inspired by several international housing movements (such as **La PAH**⁵⁴), the wide front of housing activists converged on a particular dimension of the housing issue that would soon become an urgency: the issue of evictions.

As the official policy toward housing is depoliticization and while housing is regarded as a matter of investment and market-led economic development rather than a matter of public interest or a basic right, activists and civic initiatives decided to focus on evictions as a vigorous field to catch public attention and attract the media. The strategy was to mobilize a larger base around housing urgencies and thus re-politicize the issue of housing. In spring 2017, as evictions escalated, **The Roof**⁵⁵ (Združena akcija Krov nad glavom) was formally established as an organization seeking housing justice. Some of its members already had

53 Stanojković M., and G. Novaković. 2021. “Dom kulture biće po starom nacrtu? Posle višedecenijskog čekanja kompletiran projekat naselja Cerak” *Večernje novosti*, December 17. novosti.rs/vesti/ekonomija/942637/jasnija-pravila-upravnike-pripremaju-izmene-zakona-stanovanju-ocekuje-efikasnije-odrzavanje-zgrada

54 La PAH, Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (Platform of People Affected by Mortgages), is one of the partners of the CMMM Barcelona team. afectadosporlahipoteca.com/

55 zakrovnadglavom.org/

experience in defending the workers of the Trudbenik enterprise⁵⁶ since 2012 (which was one of the notorious privatization processes after 2000), among other cases, and that know-how remains an asset.

Over the past few years, The Roof has garnered significant media attention and public support. Through protests, campaigns, and direct actions to prevent forced evictions, it has successfully contributed to the re-politicization of the housing issue. It also addresses the inadequate conditions of housing for increasing numbers of people without sufficient income.⁵⁷

2018

A11—Initiative for Economic and Social Rights (A11—Inicijativa za ekonomska i socijalna prava)

A11⁵⁸ was established in 2018 as a non-governmental organization that promotes and protects the rights of individuals from vulnerable, marginalized, and discriminated groups, with a particular focus on economic and social rights. Lately, they have also worked with housing issues, namely on the conditions in Roma settlements and social housing estates.

The legal expertise of its members has directed the work of A11 toward the international framework of human rights. Their approach to housing as a right has on numerous occasions complemented other efforts in drawing attention to the miserable housing conditions of vulnerable citizens. They have legally represented many social housing tenants or shelter users in legal struggles for decent housing solutions, both in domestic courts and in front of international justice institutions.

56 Trudbenik was one of the largest social enterprises involved in the construction of significant parts of the public infrastructure in Yugoslavia. After the murky privatization process in 2008, the new parent company Monterra laid off multiple workers. For the remaining ones, the working conditions worsened, and the payments of the salaries were postponed for several months. From 2009 on, the workers' union fought in court and through institutional pressure to save Trudbenik and break up the privatization agreement with the harmful owner. After a long and complicated legal fight, in 2014 the court did not rule in favor of the workers, while the bankruptcy process meant that they were to be evicted from the apartments they have used for housing as Trudbenik workers. Ever since, the tenants have been living in continuous fear of the enforcement of the eviction ruling, and on several occasions their eviction has been resisted with support from housing activists.

57 For more details, see: Timotijević, Jovana. "Združena akcija Krov nad glavom / Joint Action Roof Over Head." In *Spaces of Commoning: Urban Commons in the Ex-YU Region*, edited by Iva Čukić and Jovana Timotijević, 96–107. Belgrade: Ministry of Space / Institute for Urban Politics, 2020.

58 a11initiative.org/en/home/

2018

Local elections and the participation of the municipalist platform Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own

After a few years of leading civic initiatives in their resistance to the Belgrade Waterfront urban renewal project, **Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own** (NDM BGD) grew into a political platform that ran for the March 2018 local elections. Its aim was to build a new form of politics founded on principles of wide participation, inclusiveness, openness, transparency, and accountability. Following the examples of other recent municipalist movements in Europe (e.g., **Barcelona en Comú**,⁵⁹ **Cambiamo Messina dal Basso**, **Zagreb je naš**,⁶⁰ a.o.), NDM BGD's electoral agenda included the following points: promoting participatory democracy and returning decision-making powers to citizens; democratizing public institutions; safeguarding quality public services and stopping the privatization of public utilities, resources, and infrastructures; and the feminization of politics.

As the initiative united many of the housing activists at the time (including members of **Who Builds the City**, **Ministry of Space**, **Joint Action Roof Over Head**, a.o.), the right to housing was integral to its electoral program.⁶¹ The objectives that were laid out in that program capture the main principles that these housing activists and civic initiatives had been centered around: adequate housing for all, transparent and inclusive management of Belgrade's housing stock, inclusion of public housing in the commercial housing stock to counter the growing housing segregation, adoption of tax for the unused housing units, and assistance for the maintenance of residential buildings.

NDM BGD's bid for the elections was supported by several local movements from municipalities across Serbia, as well as by Barcelona's Mayor Ada Colau from **Barcelona en Comú**, by Yanis Varoufakis with his movement **DiEM25**, and by the Croatian movement **Zagreb is Ours** (**Zagreb je naš**). Despite the scarce resources and structural constraints, NDM BGD received 28,017 votes, amounting to about 3.5% of the total, which was below the threshold of 5% for entering the city's assembly. It is important to mention that in some of Belgrade's districts, the score was a bit more promising: Stari Grad (8%), Vračar (7.5%), and Savski venac (6.5%).

59 barcelonaencomu.cat

60 zagrebjenas.hr

61 The electoral program can be viewed online under: nedavimobeograd.rs/program/

2019

The (missing) Housing Strategy for Belgrade until 2030

The current **Law on Housing and Building Maintenance**, which regulates the housing sector, envisions the creation of a strategic document on housing (Article 112), both at the national and local levels. The National Housing Strategy for all of Serbia and the one specifically for Belgrade should have been completed in 2019 for a period of ten years.

There is no lack of legislation or strategic documents in relation to housing in Serbia. Rather, the problem is a matter of which segments of society are favored and whose interests are being protected and served through existing and suggested regulatory frameworks. In addition, even though laws and regulations often recognize the problems that need to be addressed and name principal directions for policies that could contribute to solutions, they rarely translate into concrete activities due to a lack of political will. This is reflected in the absence of complementary regulations that ensure the institutional infrastructures for the operationalization of such policies are available, as well as in the lack of allocation of (sufficient) resources for their execution.

That being said, the Secretariat for Property and Legal Affairs at the City of Belgrade was charged with drafting a ten-year Housing Strategy for the city in 2019. In the process, the Secretariat invited representatives of civil society organizations and initiatives that are focused on the issue of housing to a round-table discussion to present their views on what the main directions of the future strategy should be.

On the issue of non-profit and affordable housing, five organizations were invited to contribute: **Who Builds the City**, **Joint Action Roof Over Head**, **Housing Center**, **A11—Initiative for Economic and Social Rights**, and the **Ministry of Space**. Even though one meeting was naturally insufficient for the substantial involvement of the civil sector, it was a positive change to have city officials invite activists to the table. The five organizations decided to take the opportunity to make a greater impact on the drafting of the strategy and articulated a set of goals and measures they believed should be at the core of the strategy. These addressed a range of urgent issues: from the lack of relevant statistics and targeted studies that should inform future housing policies to the increase in homelessness, forced evictions, and unaffordable housing

and the need for legislative and institutional changes toward a more just housing policy, among others.

The proposal was well-received by the Secretariat and other experts involved in drafting the Belgrade Housing Strategy, yet it has not been communicated to what extent our propositions will be integrated in the official text, if at all. There has been no information on its final content nor on whether it has already been completed or is still being drafted.

2020 | Sars-Covid-19 Pandemic spreads in Europe

2020 | Housing Equality Movement (Pokret za stambenu jednakost)

Stemming from the experience with the Belgrade Housing Strategy, the five organizations that were invited to contribute with views and ideas ([Who Builds the City](#), [Joint Action Roof Over Head](#), [Housing Center](#), [A11—Initiative for Economic and Social Rights](#), and the [Ministry of Space](#)) agreed that the housing conditions in Belgrade and Serbia require joint actions in parallel to the activities each organization conducts independently, and that those independent activities should be better coordinated.

In summer 2020, these organizations drafted a manifesto and defined their central demands, objectives, and directions for the joint path of struggle, based on the policy proposal they articulated in 2019. The new [Housing Equality Movement](#)⁶² set the following five primary political guidelines (targets) for activities and campaigns in the coming years:

- Adequate, safe, and affordable housing for all
- Various housing support programs should be installed to cater for different needs
- The shape of the housing sector should be a reflection of the needs of people and not the needs of the market
- Public policies and public budgets should be based on the housing needs of the beneficiaries and not the interests of investors in residential spaces
- Strong institutions and infrastructures should be created to ensure the implementation of housing policies

62 stambenipokret.rs/en/stambeni-pokret/

In accordance with these goals, the movement has agreed to: work toward expanding its base and reach to include all interested and relevant actors in the housing struggle; monitor and share collected information related to harmful or good practices of institutions, changes in housing regulations, and housing problems faced by citizens; share know-how on implemented solutions and mechanisms in other countries that have the potential to be applied in our context; and advocate for systemic measures that contribute to ensuring the right to adequate, safe, and affordable housing for all.

2020 **Opposition parties boycott parliamentary elections**

In June 2020, a few months into the Sars-Covid-19 pandemic, parliamentary elections were held in Serbia. These elections were boycotted by most of the opposition parties, including NDM BGD, to protest the unfair conditions in which the elections were being held: including extremely unequal media treatment of the opposition parties, publicly known mechanisms of blackmailing workers in the public sector and in numerous enterprises to vote for the ruling party, public safety concerns, etc. As expected, the elections resulted in an even larger representation of the ruling party, yet this motion by the opposition brought about small but still valuable new rules for media representation and mechanisms of overlooking elections.

2022 **The National Housing Strategy: unambitious and vague draft finally open to public responses and pending adoption**

The National Housing Strategy, which was published only as a draft⁶³ in 2019, was not mentioned by any of the state officials until the Ministry for Construction, Transformation, and Infrastructure announced on 20 December 2021 the so-called *public discussion* during the winter holidays (which is normally held after the Christmas of the Orthodox majority on 10 January) to deliberate on the proposal for the National Housing Strategy (2022–2032) and the three-year Action Plan (2022–2024). This strategy of releasing public policy documents for *public*

⁶³ Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure. n.d. "Nacionalna stambena strategija: Od 2020. do 2030. godine [National Housing Strategy: From 2020 to 2030]." Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure. Accessed May 5, 2023. mgsi.gov.rs/sites/default/files/Nacionalna%20stambena%20strategija_NACRT_1.pdf

insight during summer or winter holidays has become a regular practice, gradually derogating the right to public participation in the creation and adoption of public policies.

Even though the preceding analysis, on which the National Housing Strategy's goals and measures are founded, clearly recognizes the shortcomings and risks of the current housing policies and paradigms (e.g., insufficient institutional capacities, lack of political interest, continued loss of the already insufficient public housing stock, marketization of regulations of housing provision, etc.), the strategy does not debate general assumptions or propose sufficient measures. It does not tackle homelessness, nor the unregulated leasing sector, and it lacks any long-term strategic direction for housing policy development. Therefore, unsurprisingly, the targets defined in the Action Plan, which is meant to operationalize the strategy, are narrow and unambitious, promising no significant changes in the housing situation.

The Housing Equality Movement has reacted publicly, formally objecting the strategic document and attracting significant media attention.⁶⁴ However, most of these objections were rejected with no proper argumentation. Until today, there is no information on the adoption process and we have no reason to believe the final text will be transformative or promising for the housing situation in Serbia.

2022

Municipalist platform Don't Let Belgrade Drown wins seats in both Belgrade City Assembly and National Assembly in 2022 elections

On 3 April 2022, elections were held at three levels: presidential, parliamentary, and local elections for Belgrade. Two years after the 2020 parliamentary elections were boycotted by most of the opposition parties, this time they decided to run. **NDM BGD** ran at the same time at all three levels within the coalition We Must (Moramo), along with the Ecological Uprising movement and Open Citizens Platform Action. Since these different levels of elections were organized at the same time, the coalition addressed a wide range of topics, from local Belgrade-related issues to economic and foreign policy ones. The Ministry of

64 Housing Equality Movement. 2022. "Obrazac za komentare u okviru javne rasprave o predlogu nacionalne stambene strategije [The form for comments within the public inquiry process on the Proposal for the national housing strategy]." Housing Equality Movement. Accessed May 5, 2023. docs.google.com/document/d/1jX3IheQDpg_u-xKVVmncPkiYrRnCc5ukqxabztEI0X2I/edit

Space assisted in drafting both local and national programs related to housing, land management, and urban planning.

After a quite murky post-elections period of negotiations and even a repetition of elections in some of Belgrade's districts and other municipalities in Serbia, the final results show that the opposition in general will be significantly more present in the assemblies at both levels, albeit as a minority. The coalition We Must won 13 seats in the Belgrade Assembly (out of 110) and 13 seats in the National Assembly (out of 250).

Although the city authorities in Belgrade continue to be governed by the ruling party members (and one can expect similar results in the national government soon), winning the seats in both assemblies significantly changes the position of NDM BGD, granting it more insight into the institutions and their work, more media attention, and the means to tap into resources to grow as a national movement.

2022

Belgrade 2041 Master Plan concept proposal made public: confirming intensive commodification of urban development

Three years after the Assembly of the City of Belgrade adopted the decision on the creation of a new Master Plan (Generalni Urbanistički Plan) for Belgrade until 2041, this strategic document determining the direction(s) of the city's development was released to the public for *early public insight* during the period of 13–30 June 2022.

The concept of the plan represents a typical narrative of neoliberal urban development, where the "fulfillment of the city's economic potential" is given priority and can be achieved by developing tourism (cultural, but also medical), privatizing more land, transferring (dislocation of) public services for a "more efficient use of high-priced locations in the city center," and emphasizing cultural and "intellectual" industries, among other mainstream proposals. As is often the case with strategic documents in Serbia (e.g., [National Housing Strategy 2019](#)), although the analyses that are published along with the proposed goals often recognize the problems, this fails to be reflected in the conclusions on paths of action. Instead, the goals neglect issues of inequality, the spatial conflicts of interests, and they fail to treat public assets and services as invaluable resources for more just city development.

Considering the importance of this planning document, 31 expert organizations, civil and informal initiatives, including the Ministry of Space, sent a request to the institutions in charge—the Secretariat for Urban Planning and Construction Affairs of the City Administration of the City of Belgrade and the Planning Commission of the City of Belgrade Assembly—to organize public presentations of the draft plan that provide for dialogue between citizens and the team members who drafted the plan. However, there was no response to this request.

Additionally, the Ministry of Space has drafted objections on several topics: participation, green areas, housing, land management, and public spaces and services. We have shared the objections publicly and asked citizens to also use the opportunity and send their reflections and requests on the plan. As the city authorities are not obliged to respond to these objections before the early public inquiry, we will not know if any of them were or will be accepted.

NOVI SAD: On Thursday, 21 July 2022, people took to the streets to protest the plans of the city's assembly to adopt the General Plan of Novi Sad 2030 without any modifications to the original proposal, in spite of more than 12,000 objections that they confirmed receiving from citizens, and to which they did not respond. Unfortunately, the plan was adopted that day in the city assembly with 62 councilors voting for the plan, while only 4 voted against it.



Section 5 / BLN

BERLIN: TIMELINE ON HOUSING

1945-
1990

East and West: Berlin as a divided city

In the aftermath of World War II, Berlin was divided into East (under the rule of the German Democratic Republic, the GDR, provisioned by the Soviet Union) and West (under the rule of the Federal Republic of Germany, FRG, provisioned by the Allies with American, British, and French zones). There is ample literature and records about Berlin in the period between 1945 and 1989, starting from the reconstruction after the tremendous destruction brought about by the war, the tensions that arose with the establishment of socialist socio-economic systems on one side of the city and capitalist ones on the other, widespread emigration and the construction of the Berlin Wall starting in 1961 (which ran not only through streets but also through many buildings and homes, and which limited but did not stop people's escape), the varying housing conditions and policies that were implemented on both sides, and much more. This timeline cannot do justice to capturing this era, which lies beyond the framework of this project.

It should be noted that in both East and West Berlin, "[e]ach political system sought to express its power and ideology through the (partial) reshaping of the built environment and through the staging of this transformation to external visitors, via tours of newly built flagship projects (e.g., "Stalinallee" in the East and "Hansaviertel" in the West), planning exhibitions or advertisements."¹ Housing was a major focus in

¹ Colomb, Claire. 2012. *Staging the New Berlin: Place marketing and the politics of urban reinvention post-1989*. Oxfordshire: Routledge, p. 52.

both systems, which competed to demonstrate that they could create “better” welfare for the respective population, albeit with different approaches and articulations.

The island status of West Berlin kept it relatively immune from the economic restructuring that largely impacted urban policies in the FRG. Both East and West Berlin’s local governments were able to implement “generous policies in the fields of public housing construction, education, [and] the provision of social and cultural facilities.”² While East Berlin followed the “right of every worker to an apartment” principle, in West Berlin, the policies were enshrined by laws such as the second housing act: the Housing and Family Home Protection Act (Wohnungsbau- und Familienheimgesetz, II. WoBauG, 1956), which was amended several times until it was replaced by the Federal Social Housing Act (Wohnraumförderungsgesetz, WoFG) in 2002. In preunification Germany, the provision of state-supported housing was a marker of housing politics, and by the 1990s, Berlin had 1.7 million housing units that were built through the various housing programs.³

1981

The *Berliner Linie* policy: outlawing squatting

By power of this decree, the police of West Berlin were implored to evict squatted houses within 24 hours. The *Berliner Linie* policy, which was argued as a measure to protect owners, was also a measure to end the communal squatting subculture. Those communities had their own understanding of housing and urban life, which was centered around principles of social and political work, anti-authoritarian state and society, self-help, anti-racism, and later anti-capitalism. In West Berlin, the majority of these communities were established in the late 1970s and 1980s.

As the squatting subculture gave an impression of freedom and was a driver for tourism into the island-city, there was a political desire to maintain it in some form. Therefore, two years later on 28 June 1983, the Senate of West Berlin declared that the *Berliner Linie* policy should only be enforced if the owner of the squatted property submits an eviction request together with a criminal complaint for trespassing. At

² *Ibid.* p. 53.

³ Calbet i Elias, Laura. 2017. “Bedingungen der Wohnraumversorgung und Stadtentwicklung.” Chap. 6 in *Spekulative Stadtproduktion: Finanzialisierung des Wohnungsneubaus im innerstädtischen Berlin* [Speculative Urban Production: Financialization of New Housing Construction in Inner-City Berlin]. PhD diss., Technische Universität Berlin, p. 95

the same time, he/she/they should submit a complete utilization and financing concept for the property and guarantee that renovation and/or construction would be started promptly after the eviction.

Notwithstanding, this decree made the dismantling of these forms of living and space-claiming a standard policy of Berlin's administration and politics, regardless of which party was holding office (initially only in West Berlin and after 1990 in the whole city). In the early years after **German Reunification in 1990**, both the eastern and western parts of the city experienced another phase in which a great deal of squatting took place, but this receded in the 2000s as more and more investors started buying the city.

1988

Annulment of the Federal Non-Profit Housing Act: de-funding social housing

With the Federal Non-Profit Housing Act (Wohnungsgemeinnützigkeitsgesetz, WGG), local authorities were able to provide tax deductions to private housing companies whose statutes and commercial operations benefited the public benefit: for example, constructing public housing. Numerous companies signed contracts with the government to construct and maintain properties for periods up to 30 years. However, with the annulment of the act, companies were no longer able to provide housing at lower prices as they did before. The policy on housing changed from considering it a basic good and an element of the welfare state to a market commodity. As was the case with the **Berliner Linie** policy, the annulment was passed by the parliament of the BDR. Two years later, after the reunification of Germany, it was extended into the territories of the former GDR.

Up until then, Germany had a good standing in terms of providing public housing and promoting private initiatives for this purpose. In 1987, with a German population of about 61 million, there were 3.9 million social housing apartments, which meant that roughly 1 out of 5 households was subsidized. With the annulment of the Federal Non-Profit Housing Act, the government no longer encouraged companies to build social housing. In addition, it opened the door for privatization of the existing social housing stock and its conversion into for-profit housing. By 2001, when the population had grown by a third to 82 million, the social housing stock had been halved to 1.8 million apartments. Since then, with the expiration of more contracts each year, it is estimated that more than 100,000 apartments have lost their status as social

housing.⁴ In Berlin, the number of social housing units dropped from around 360,000 units in the 1990s to almost a quarter with 95,723 units by the end of 2019.⁵

1990

German Reunification: the fall of the wall and the end of Berlin as a divided city

In 1989 the iron fist of the German Democratic Republic started to falter, and after many events and mass demonstrations, it collapsed on 9 November 1989. On that night, tens of thousands flocked across the Berlin Wall from East to West and vice-versa, and many were reunited with their families and friends. To this day, the Berlin Wall remains a visible scar on the morphology of the city.

In the following months, negotiations took place between the GDR and the FRG, and 3 October 1990 was declared Reunification Day. Berlin was declared the capital and seat of the unified German government on 20 June 1991.⁶ Although the purpose of the negotiations was allegedly to determine the shape of the reunification so as to ensure equality for both sides, in reality it was more a “handing-over” of the East to the West. With the global collapse of socialist systems and the domination of neoliberal doctrines, many of the protections that existed under the socialist GDR ceased to exist, including housing-related protections and subsidies.

1990

The German Reunification Treaty and the Trust Agency

On 31 August 1990, the German Reunification Treaty (Einigungsvertrag) was signed between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. It defined the framework for integrating the GDR into the FRG and resolved the issue of ownership of the state

4 Kuhnert, Jan, and Olof Leps. 2017. *Neue Wohnungsgemeinnützigkeit: Wege zu langfristig preiswertem und zukunftsgerechtem Wohnraum* [New Non-Profit living: Paths to long-Term affordable and future-oriented housing]. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.

5 Deutscher Bundestag. 2020. „Schriftliche Fragen: mit den in der Woche vom 24. August 2020 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung [Written inquiries: with the answers received from the federal government during the week of August 28, 2020].“ Deutscher Bundestag 19. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 19/21928. ds.bundestag.de/btd/19/219/1921928.pdf

6 During the division, East Berlin was the capital of the GDR and Bonn was the capital of the FRG.

assets of the GDR. Laura Calbet i Elias explains in her dissertation,⁷ which focused on the financialization of new housing in Berlin, that immediately upon the GDR's integration into the FRG, public property (including that which had previously been converted into private property) was transferred into the free-market system. Properties were divided into the following categories:

- a. Facilities for public administrations or social services
- b. State-owned housing companies
- c. Apartments in old buildings
- d. Other properties of the GDR state apparatus that had no direct function in social services (such as the "death strip" around the Wall or areas for large-scale projects)

Depending on the category, the transformation of the ownership structure was regulated differently. The assets that directly served administrative, social, or state functions (category "a") were transferred to the respective municipal, state, federal, or other public entities in accordance with the Property Allocation Act (VZOG). The state-owned housing companies (category "b"), which usually consisted of housing estates with complex development models, were converted into municipal housing companies.

Properties (and also companies) that did not fall into the first two categories were transferred under the administration of the Trust Agency (Treuhandanstalt, THA). A large number of the properties that had been expropriated after 1949 (category "c") were to be transferred back to their former owners in accordance with the principle of "restitution before compensation." The remaining state assets (category "d") were released for sale. These procedures had a significant influence on subsequent urban and residential development.⁸

7 Calbet i Elias, Laura. 2017. *Spekulative Stadtproduktion: Finanzialisierung des Wohnungsneubaus im innerstädtischen Berlin* [Speculative Urban Production: Financialization of New Housing Construction in Inner-City Berlin]. PhD diss., Technische Universität Berlin.

8 This entry to the timeline is a shortened translation from German, from the dissertation of Calbet i Elias, *Ibid.*, p. 100.

1990

Old debts: day-light robbery

In the GDR, the state invested heavily in housing. Large-scale housing projects were financed through political programs, executed by state banks, and managed by state-owned companies. After the reunification, the ownership of these properties was transferred to municipalities and West German housing companies. At the same time, the financing packages of this large housing stock was counted as “old loans” (Alt-Verpflichtungen) that had to be paid to the new owners of the GDR banks, the successor credit institutions Deutsche Kreditbank AG and Berliner Bank AG.

As Calbet I Elias writes,⁹ municipalities and municipal enterprises thus had to “pay back” loans they had not taken out to (West German) banks that had not granted the loans. These old debts amounted to about DM 36 billion¹⁰ at the time of monetary union in 1990. With the Old Debt Assistance Act of 1993, the Federal Republic settled part of these debts. In return, the housing companies had to recognize the remaining liabilities and sell 15 percent of their housing stock. According to calculations by the Left Party parliamentary group in the German Parliament, 25 years after the fall of the Wall, the old debts of housing companies in the new federal states (the six states of the former GDR) still amounted to around EUR 7 billion.

Between 2002 and 2013, the state of Berlin used the compensation funds, which were provided by the federal government to promote housing, to reduce old debts and paid EUR 32 million per year to commercial banks. Thus, the transfer of the formerly publicly owned housing stock was associated with the demand for their partial privatization and with the (perversely conceived) significant indebtedness of the public treasury. This had substantial consequences both for the volume of the social housing stock and for housing policies in general.¹¹

In 1991, Berlin had 482,000 publicly owned housing units, which represented 28% of the total housing stock. By 2006, this amount was roughly cut in half, leaving 270,000 housing units in public hands, which made up only 15% of Berlin’s total housing stock (see: [Section 8 / BLN](#)).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.101.

¹⁰ Deutsche Mark, abbreviated DM, was the official currency of West Germany from 1948 until 1990 and later the unified Germany from 1990 until the adoption of the euro in 2002.

¹¹ See footnote 8, p. 92.

1990 The Act Regulating Open Property Matters

The Act Regulating Open Property Matters (Gesetz zur Regelung offener Vermögensfragen, VermG) was passed on 23 September 1990 to compensate victims of National Socialism for their property losses in GDR territory, thus bringing them in line with the FRG's regulations. In addition, the act clarified the issue of unsettled properties that had been expropriated between 1949 and 1989 and where compensation had been denied under GDR legislation. In the housing sector, this particularly affected refugees from the GDR, political dissidents, and owners who had resided outside the GDR.

However, the former owners were ultimately not the biggest beneficiaries of the act and restitution measures. With the Investment Priority Act (InvorG) and the increasingly investor-friendly versions of the property acts (e.g., the Second Property Rights Amendment Act, 2nd VermRändG), the restitution principle was increasingly thwarted. The Trust Agency (see [1990 German Reunification Treaty](#)) was set on privatization through the sale of land and buildings to the highest bidder via the commercial real-estate company TLG Immobilien AG (formerly Treuhandliegenschaftsgesellschaft, founded in 1991).

Thus, the task of restitution and that of attracting investors represented a conflict of interests, especially in areas eyed by investors. Ultimately, in only 30% of the cases, restitution to the former owners took place. In the other 70%, investors paid a compensation to the Trust Agency to accelerate their projects. TLG and the Coordination Committee for Inner-City Investments (Koordinierungsausschuss für innerstädtische Investitionen, KOAI) were responsible for handling these cases, seeing through the passing of increasingly investor-friendly policies and pro-market-investment property laws in the following years.¹²

1990s
onwards

City valorization and marketization programs

As grounds to introduce economic restructuring and infrastructural upgrading programs that were aimed at enhancing the city's attractiveness to private investors, politicians used a variety of justifications. These included the poor federal budget because of the

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 101-102.

comparatively low incomes of Berlin's residents and thus collected taxes, considerable migration out of the city, and the miserable conditions of buildings requiring renovation.

They used marketing tactics to divert attention to Berlin's art, music, and urban (sub)culture scenes, while at the same time flagging its affordability in comparison to other European capitals: for example, Klaus Wowereit's¹³ slogan "arm, aber sexy" (poor, but sexy). The cheap apartments were sold in bulk, and gentrification, which goes hand in hand with displacements, intensified rapidly: a trend that continues up to this date. Some of the first mega-scale re-development projects in the inner city took place around Potsdamer Platz and Friedrichstraße and were highly contested. These set the stage for projects that followed in the first decade after reunification, such as the "Mediaspree," and onwards.

2001

Berlin's banking scandal ends the government

In 1994, as part of the restructuring of the city's government and administration, the stock corporation Bankgesellschaft Berlin was created with the state of Berlin as its majority stakeholder. It served as a holding company for the banks Landesbank Berlin (only partially integrated, included the independent Investitionsbank), Berliner Hypotheken- und Pfandbriefbank (Berlin Hyp), and Berliner Bank. The company and its banks used the extensive equity capital (special-purpose reserve) for loss-making lending and real-estate services, where the state was the guarantor. From the outset, the composition of the Bankgesellschaft was highly controversial as the Landesbank was a public institution while the other two banks were private. In 1995, Berlin's State Labor Court ruled Bankgesellschaft Berlin to be an illegal entity, yet the verdict was not enforceable.

After several years of questionable operations and repeated headlines on corruption scandals, in February 2001, the public prosecution office initiated investigations and, as a result, there were several resignations and terminations, topped by a vote of no confidence against sitting Governing Mayor of Berlin Eberhard Diepgen (CDU). At the end of that year, a new head of Bankgesellschaft Berlin was appointed with the plan to save the group and find buyers. In 2006, the state pressed charges against several individuals. Lawsuits lasted

13 Klaus Wowereit ("Wowi"), member of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), was the governing mayor of Berlin from 21 October 2001 to 11 December 2014.

close to a decade, the majority of which closing with light sentences, settlements, and acquittals.

In the aftermath of the affairs, the sitting government deliberated on covering the losses from the holding company with more than EUR 200 billion, which triggered civic protests and an attempt at a referendum against the proposal (ultimately ruled not admissible). In November 2002, the Senate declared an “extreme budget emergency” and requested support from the federal government, which was turned down. Seventeen years after this scandal, in 2018, the senate presented its closing remarks on the affair.¹⁴

**2002-
2009**

Annulment of the II. WoBauG Act and the wholesale of publicly owned properties

In 2002, the second housing act: the Housing and Family Home Protection Act (II. WoBauG) was replaced by the Federal Social Housing Act (Wohnraumförderungsgesetz, WoFG). This can be seen as the formalization of new housing politics: from the provision of housing as a key pillar of the state’s programs until German reunification to the neoliberal governance discourses that changed the state’s role of being a main actor in ensuring housing to that of a negotiator and good salesman to attract international capital. The processes of privatization and commercialization of Berlin started promptly after reunification based on the specifications of the **German Reunification Treaty** and how it dealt with issues of ownership in the early 1990s. Yet, the first decade of the 2000s was particularly destructive, with politics getting away with what in effect was the wholesale of publicly owned properties, despite repeated scandals.¹⁵

With Thilo Sarrazin as Finance Senator under Governing Mayor Klaus Wowereit (both SPD) in two consecutive legislative periods, the Berlin parliament and administrations were directed to apply a radical “diet” to the state’s allocations and expenditures, while embracing the

14 See: Zawatka-Gerlach, Ulrich. 2018. “Finanzen: Bankenskandal endet mit schwarzer Null [Finances: Banking scandal ends with black zero].” *Tagesspiegel*, November 13. [tagesspiegel.de/berlin/bankenskandal-endet-mit-schwarzer-null-4008664.html](https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/bankenskandal-endet-mit-schwarzer-null-4008664.html)

15 In the sixth chapter of her dissertation “Spekulative Stadtproduktion: Finanzialisierung des Wohnungsneubaus im innerstädtischen Berlin [Speculative Urban Production: Financialization of New Housing in Inner-City Berlin]”, 2017, Laura Calbet I Elias outlines how the conditions for the construction and supply of housing, which in both parts of the city had been largely shaped by state regulations, gradually changed in favor of a market-oriented and increasingly financialized form of housing.

widespread neoliberal discourses for privatization. During Sarrazin's era, which was tainted by favoritism in awarding contracts to party associates and corruption scandals, more than half of the approximately 400,000 publicly owned housing units and business properties were privatized (e.g., those of the publicly owned companies GSG, GSW, GEHAG). Some of the following entries in this timeline illustrate features of this massive privatization.

2003

Real-estate service provider Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH is founded

The private real-estate company **Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH**¹⁶ (BIM) was set up to manage all publicly owned land and administrative buildings to support the consolidation of the state budget. As seen in similar examples around the world, this private company was openly profit-oriented, its policies and economic strategies were not transparent, and it lacked clear monitoring and accountability mechanisms. In 2015, BIM merged with Berliner Liegenschaftsfonds GmbH & Co. KG, which sparked several civil initiatives that criticized the government's real-estate management policies (due to the absence of *Gemeinwohl*-oriented perspectives) and demanded reforms, such as **Stadtneudenken**.

In 2021, BIM's portfolio managed 28.8% of the real-estate assets (land area) of the state of Berlin through subsidiary companies, the main three of which are:¹⁷

- SILB: Sondervermögen Immobilien des Landes Berlin (1,568 buildings, 6,230,399 sq.m., EUR 3.58 billion, 9.9% of total publicly owned land)
- SODA: Sondervermögen für Daseinsvorsorge- und nicht betriebsnotwendige Bestandsgrundstücke des Landes Berlin (1,761 business units, 8,492,133 sq.m., EUR 1.94 billion, 13.5% of total publicly owned land)
- THV: Treuhandvermögen des Landes Berlin (1,659 properties, 3,327,283 sq.m., EUR 512 million, 5.3% of total publicly owned land)

¹⁶ bim-berlin.de

¹⁷ BIM Berlin Immobilienmanagement GmbH. 2022. *Kennzahlenreport 2021* [Key Figures Report 2021]. Berlin: BIM Berlin Immobilienmanagement GmbH. bim-berlin.de/fileadmin/Bilder_BIM_Website/5_Presse/Publikationen/RZ_BIM_Kennzahlenreport_2021_b-frei_NEU.pdf

2003 “Reclaim Your City” exhibitions

Since 2003, “**Reclaim Your City**”¹⁸ (RYC) exhibitions have been organized on an annual basis to advocate for the right to the city, to empower civil society, as well as to encourage the appropriation of urban space. Under the RYC label, artists and groups collectively organize conventions, set up large murals and temporary occupations of selected spaces to provoke public debate on certain issues, e.g. subcultures, graffiti and other kinds of street art, gentrification, freedom of movement. RYC has become an important platform and connector between the right to the city movement and urban subculture.

2008 The Mediaspree versenken initiative and the Spreeufer für alle! referendum

Mediaspree is a large-scale project that was conceived in the 1990s with the goal to develop a long brownfield stretch at the site of the former Berlin wall along the banks of the Spree river in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg to house telecommunication and media companies (together with other urban renewal projects in its surroundings). This plan by the city’s administration was seen as a sell-out of valuable land and was met with strong resistance. Around 2008, the citizens’ initiative **Mediaspree versenken!**¹⁹ (sink Mediaspree!) mobilized many people and caught the attention of the media. This campaign was the first significant movement of its kind and formed a unifying cause for Berlin’s relatively fresh tenants’ movement, which was starting to take shape as more and more capitalist investments were grabbing land and buildings around the city.

In July 2008, the referendum **Spreeufer für alle!**²⁰ (Spree riverbank for all!) was held, demanding that the development plan be aborted. It was a resounding success with 87% of the voters against the Mediaspree project. Nonetheless, as referendums are not binding in Germany, the Berlin Senate continued the project, albeit with some concessions in terms of allocating more areas for public green spaces than originally foreseen. This campaign politicized Berlin’s housing issues and gave momentum to several citizens’ initiatives fighting against the sell-out of their city.

¹⁸ twitter.com/reclaimyourcity

¹⁹ ms-versenken.org

²⁰ spreeufer-fuer-alle.de

2008-2009 | Tempelhof Airport ceases operations and the Squat Tempelhof initiative

Tempelhof Airport is located in the middle the city, in between popular neighborhoods of three districts: Kreuzberg, Neukölln, and Tempelhof-Schöneberg. The terrain is four square kilometers in size, and the airport ceased operations on 30 October 2008.²¹ The Berlin Senate had promised to open the field—or at least parts of it—to the public in 2009 and to develop proposals for constructing on other parts, including housing. As the opening was drawn out, and due to multiple scandals related to mismanagement of public real estate and project budgets in those years, thousands of activists created the Squat Tempelhof initiative and called for a creative protest, which ended in a police operation with several arrests and costed the state around EUR 880,000.²² Eventually, in May 2010, it was opened as a the **Tempelhofer Feld park**, and the **100% Tempelhofer Feld initiative** was founded shortly thereafter.

2008 | Global financial (mortgage) crisis trickles

2010 | Gentrification intensifies

The financial crisis of 2008/2009 accelerated the gentrification processes that had started to take place across the city since its reunification two decades earlier. Access to affordable housing became increasingly challenging with a dwindling stock of housing units due to speculative vacancies, rising rents, and the commercialization of apartments (e.g., Airbnb, subletting), a trend that continues up to this day. Small businesses and social infrastructures have been replaced by restaurant chains, gyms, and other services that mainly cater to higher-income strata and tourists. Along the same lines, countless households have been displaced by rising rents (e.g., following renovations, the costs of which are passed on to the tenants) and the termination of contracts (e.g., owners claiming they want to move into the apartment

21 Reasons for the decision to close the Tempelhof Airport varied from air and sound pollution to technical ones, and the fact that the Berlin Brandenburg International Airport was due to go into operation soon after. Eventually, after several postponements and corruption scandals, the latter opened in 2020.

22 See: Ernst, Florian. 2009 "Squat: Tempelhof kurzzeitig besetzt [Squat: Tempelhof occupied for a short time]." *Tagesspiegel*, July 27. [tagesspiegel.de/berlin/polizei-justiz/tempelhof-kurzzeitig-besetzt-6525934.html](https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/polizei-justiz/tempelhof-kurzzeitig-besetzt-6525934.html)

themselves (referred to as *Eigenbedarf* in German) as a stepping stone before re-leasing the apartment at higher rates). Gentrification and hyper valuation of property remain burning issues across Berlin.

**2010-
2011**

Tempelhofer Feld park opens and the 100% Tempelhofer Feld initiative is launched

In May 2010, Tempelhofer Feld was opened as a public park with regulated hours. The former airport building was placed under heritage protection. In 2011, Tempelhof Projekt GmbH was founded by the Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing to manage the building. Some of its spaces are regularly used for events such as commercial fairs and exhibitions. As for the field, it has become a very popular place for recreation and sports, it is used by hundreds of thousands each year and has hosted several large-scale festivals. It is the largest inner-city open space in the world and is managed by Grün Berlin GmbH, a publicly owned non-profit company.

Although the former airport is seen as a place of freedom due to it serving as the Berlin Airlift (Luftbrücke), it has also always been a controversial space, from when and how it was built during the period of National Socialism and its use as an internment camp and deportation station for holocaust victims to its use between 2015 and 2019 to house refugees in miserable conditions and with a questionable code of conduct.

Following the opening of the park, the Berlin Senate presented its plans for the development of the field, including what it claimed would be affordable housing. Given the prior incidents and the continued lack of confidence, these plans were met with fierce resistance by **100% Tempelhofer Feld**²³ (100% ThF), an initiative founded in 2011 with the aim of influencing decision-making processes related to the reuse of the centrally located premises of the former Tempelhof Airport. The initiative demands that the area be preserved to ensure ecological balance in the city and to serve as a non-commercialized recreational social space, among other *Gemeinwohl*-oriented goals. As such, 100% ThF has been working to fend off speculative proposals and projects for the development of the area, including those for housing projects that are presented as “affordable” but are deemed to be high-end due to the nature of the proposals and the attractive characteristics of the site. In 2014, **a referendum** under the same name was held, leading to the Tempelhof Conservation Act (THF-Gesetz).

23 thf100.de

2011

Kotti & Co.

Since its founding in 2011, the tenants' association **Kotti & Co. Mietergemeinschaft**²⁴ has become one of the most famous neighborhood initiatives in Berlin. It started with a focus on tenants' rights and neighborhood community issues in the popular Kottbusser Tor area and later expanded its activities to include other parts of the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district. Kotti & Co. organizes various kinds of activities—for example, protests, workshops, cultural events, newsletters—and connects tenants' issues to general structural topics such as racism, sexism, and social inequality. In 2017, the initiative succeeded in its struggle to re-communalize the **Neues Kreuzberger Zentrum**²⁵ (NKZ), a large and famous apartment building at Kottbusser Tor.

2011-
2012**The Stadtneudenken initiative and the
"Roundtable on Real-Estate Policy"**

During the **"Kunst Stadt Berlin 2020" Conference**²⁶ on 20 July 2011, the **Stadtneudenken**²⁷ (Rethinking the City) initiative was started to network people from various fields (urban planning, architecture science, culture, art, economics, and social affairs) in order to jointly push for collaborative and socially balanced urban development in Berlin and other cities. It was initiated after **BIM** tendered the publicly owned Blumengroßmarkt wholesale flower market in Kreuzberg to the highest bidder.

In late 2012, the initiative launched the first **"Runder Tisch Liegenschaftspolitik"**²⁸ (Roundtable on Real-Estate Policy, RTL) to stop the fast-paced privatization of publicly owned land and real estate. The RTL facilitates public debate between politicians (including members of the Berlin Senate) and local initiatives with the aim of establishing more inclusive and transparent real-estate policies. It demands that the development and allocation of public real estate should be used as an instrument to promote social and cultural diversity and to create economic equity.

24 kottiundco.net

25 kommunal-selbstverwaltet-wohnen.de/portrait_nkz.html

26 stadtneudenken.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Programm_KUNST-STADT-BERLIN_20.Juli_.pdf

27 stadtneudenken.net

28 stadtneudenken.net/runder-tisch/

After seven sessions, on 16 October 2013, the initiative published the *Catalogue of Demands*²⁹ addressed to Berlin's parliament appealing for transparent management strategies and instruments that guarantee sustainable and *Gemeinwohl*-oriented real-estate policies. Some of their demands were taken into account during that legislative period, and several appeared in electoral programs ahead of the 2016 Berlin state elections.

On 28 April 2017, during the 19th session, the initiative published the *Strategy-Paper for Certification of the RTL*,³⁰ in which they demanded to be provided with the political mandate necessary for its continuation. Since they succeeded in 2018, a coordination desk at the Stadtneudenken initiative is being funded by the Senate for Urban Development and Housing. The RTLs are usually held every trimester. As of the end of 2022, 34 roundtables have been held at the Berlin House of Representatives.

2014

The 100% Tempelhofer Feld referendum and the Tempelhof Conservation Act

On 25 May 2014, 100% Tempelhofer Feld initiated a referendum to vote on the initiative's demand to preserve Tempelhofer Feld for a period of 10 years and to ban construction on the former airfield. With 64.3% voting in favor of the motion, the required threshold was exceeded by far, providing the campaign with legitimacy and momentum. On 14 June 2014, the Tempelhof Conservation Act (Gesetz zum Erhalt des Tempelhofer Feldes, ThF-Gesetz) was passed by the Berlin parliament, giving leverage for the continuation of the initiative's work. Later, a participation structure and platform³¹ was created for decision-making on all matters concerning Tempelhofer Feld. Over time, other initiatives and projects arose in relation to Tempelhofer Feld, such as **Stadtacker**³² and the **Torhaus**³³ initiative. The latter established the radio station **THF Radio**³⁴ and aims to uphold the public debate and negotiation processes regarding the reuse of the former airport building and airfield.

29 Stadtneudenken. "Forderungskatalog an die Fraktionen des Berliner Abgeordnetenhauses [Catalogue of Demands to the Parties Represented in Berlin's House of Representatives]," 2013. stadtneudenken.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Handout-PG1.pdf

30 Stadtneudenken. "Strategiepapier zur Qualifizierung [Strategy-Paper for Certification]," 2017. stadtneudenken.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2017_09_17-Strategiepapier-Runder-Tisch_abgestimmt.pdf

31 Senatsverwaltung für Umwelt, Mobilität, Verbraucher- und Klimaschutz. "Beteiligungsplattform Tempelhofer Feld." *Tempelhofer Feld*, 2016. tempelhofer-feld.berlin.de

32 tempelhofer-feld.berlin.de/projekte/uebersicht/stadtacker/

33 torhausberlin.de

34 thfradio.de

2014 | “Reclaim Your City” squats Dragoner Areal supported by Stadt von Unten initiative

In December 2014 urban activists and neighbors squatted parts of the Dragoner Areal area in Kreuzberg, which faced threats of privatization and luxury urban development. The squatting was organized within the framework of the recurring “Reclaim Your City” exhibition, with the objective of maintaining the site as accessible public space. The process that followed is an example of collaborative work between civic movements and public administration,³⁵ one powered by good civil self-organization and community building.

The founding of the **Stadt von unten**³⁶ initiative (City from Below) earlier that year was instrumental to this success, making it possible to save the Dragoner Areal building from speculative investment due to the perseverance of the urban community. While the daily press spoke of a completed sale to an investor, they called on the Berlin Senate and the democratic parties to exhaust all possibilities of exerting influence on the federal government, which was the owner. Three years later, in 2017, the area between Mehringdamm and Obentrautstraße (Kreuzberg) was transferred to the Special Asset Fund for Properties as a Public Good (**Sondervermögen Daseinsvorsorge, SODA**) and would thus remain in public ownership. Ultimately, on 1 July 2019, the Dragoner Areal building was officially transferred from the Institute for Federal Real Estate (BlmA) to the administrative trusteeship of Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH (BIM), and thus under ownership of the state of Berlin.

2015 | The Bizim Kiez initiative

The **Bizim Kiez**³⁷ initiative was launched in protest of the rental contract of a family-run fruit and vegetable store being terminated in a Kreuzberg neighborhood. Since then, the initiative has been fighting against displacement and for the preservation of residential neighborhoods through various media: for example, sharing information and analyses, networking, (co-)organizing social activities, and creative protest events.

35 Sanierungsgebiet Rathausblock. 2022. *Website*. Bezirksamt Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg von Berlin. Accessed May 5, 2023. berlin.de/rathausblock-fk/

36 stadtvonunten.de/hauptseiten-svu/buendnis-stadt-von-unten/

37 bizim-kiez.de/

2015

The Haus der Statistik initiative and ZUSammenKUNFT Berlin eG

In 2015, news spread about the potential sale of Haus der Statistik: a 45,000 sq.m. building complex formerly used by the GDR State Central Administration for Statistics (Staatlichen Zentralverwaltung der Statistik der DDR) at Berlin's Alexanderplatz that had been vacant since 2008. In order to stop the sale of the complex to investors and the imminent demolition of the deteriorated site, an art campaign was staged. Overnight, the Alliance of Threatened Berlin Studios (Allianz bedrohter Berliner Atelierhäuser, AbBA), which is a group of committed artists and art collectives, attached a large poster to the façade in imitation of an official construction sign with the statement: "Spaces for art, culture and social affairs are being created here for Berlin." The campaign was picked up by the media and journalists, and the future of the building complex immediately became a matter of public debate and interest.

Right after the campaign, the **Haus der Statistik**³⁸ (HdS) initiative was launched as an alliance of various Berlin actors: social and cultural institutions and associations, artist collectives, architects, foundations, and societies. The initiative networked and organized several activities and engaged with the local authorities in constructive deliberations, which advanced the Haus der Statistik model project.

In order to establish the necessary legal framework, the **ZUSammenKUNFT Berlin eG**³⁹ cooperative for urban development was registered in 2016 (the name is a play on words in German using *Zukunft*, which means future, and *zusammen*, which means together). It is one of five partners that form the Koop5, the body that oversees the HdS development process. The other partners of Koop5 are the Berlin Senate, the District Council of Mitte, the state-owned housing company WBM, and Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH (BIM).

³⁸ hausderstatistik.org/

³⁹ zusammenkunft.berlin

2015

The municipal right of preemption (Vorkaufsrecht) is applied for the first time in Berlin

Before 2015, the municipal right of preemption (RPE, also referred to as right of first refusal, in German: Vorkaufsrecht) was only used a handful of times in neighborhoods throughout Germany that are designated as areas with social protection status (Milieuschutzgebiete). As regulated in the Federal Building Code (Baugesetzbuch), this designation is meant to protect fragile social compositions of certain neighborhoods, and therefore different measures apply to them.

In 2015, the RPE was applied for the first time in Berlin, for a house in the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district. In 2016, the coalition agreement of the newly elected government stated that Berlin intended to employ the RPE to support its housing policy goals and reduce speculation. The policy framework stipulated that the districts would receive support from the Senate. As the report from the Senate to the Berlin House of Representatives on the application of the RPE shows,⁴⁰ the number of examined RPE cases increased from 45 in 2017 to 183 in 2018 and then declined slightly to 153 in 2019. From these examinations, the RPE was actually applied to 21 cases in 2018 and to 29 cases in 2019. In a quarter of the cases from 2019, the purchase was conducted not by a public entity, as is customary, but rather by cooperatives. That being said, in 61 of the cases from 2019 where the RPE was invoked, a waiver agreement (Abwendungsvereinbarung) was signed with the original buyer. It is worth noting that a large share of the cases that are examined result in neither the application of the RPE nor in a waiver agreement. In addition, the total number of examined cases is very small compared to the total number of residential real-estate sales.

Given the austerity politics that narrow the budgets of local governments, as well as the rising real-estate prices, the effect of the RPE remains very limited. However, its presence within the legal system provided an important stepping stone for mobilizing tenants, for civil initiatives that are working toward a *Gemeinwohl*-oriented real estate policy, and for expanding the right of preemption, until a **court verdict in 2021**.

40 Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen. 2020. „Wahrnehmung von Vorkaufsrechten. [Utilization of the right of preemption]“ *Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin*, April 21. parlament-berlin.de/adosservice/18/Haupt/vorgang/h18-2823-v.pdf

2015**A referendum on rent leads to the Housing Provision Act (WoVG)**

In 2015, activists started working toward a referendum on rent (Mietenvolksentscheid) for a new social housing program, which was to take place at the same time as the parliamentary elections the following year. The work toward the referendum was stopped when the Berlin Senate for Urban Development and Housing submitted a derivative proposal to the parliament based on negotiations with the initiators of the referendum. The compromise in the form of the Housing Provision Act (Wohnraumversorgungsgesetz, WoVG) has been in force since 1 January 2016 and calls for the provision of social housing in Berlin to be reoriented toward strengthening the publicly owned housing stock. The law also contains tenant-friendly regulations (on tenancy law) for apartments that are owned by municipal housing associations that deviate from the German Civil Code (Bürgerliche Gesetzbuch, BGB).

2015**The merger of Liegenschaftsfonds GmbH & Co. KG and BIM GmbH**

Liegenschaftsfonds GmbH & Co. KG (Federal Berlin Real-Estate Fund Company) was merged with the **BIM GmbH** in 2015. This move assigned all managerial tasks related to publicly owned land and real estate to BIM as of 1 March 2015, increasing its leverage on real-estate policy.

2016**Berlin elections**

The ruling coalition between the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) was replaced by a coalition between the SPD and two new partners: The Left and Alliance 90/The Greens. As a result of these elections, Michael Müller continued as Governing Mayor of Berlin, a post he assumed two years earlier when his long-serving (13 years) predecessor Klaus Wowereit was forced to step down amid scandals reaching intolerable levels, many of which were related to favoritism and mismanagement in real-estate development. Under Müller, Berlin was often in the news for issues regarding the right to housing, either together with renowned pro-justice figures like Barcelona's Mayor Ada Calau or with headlines on real-estate scandals similar to the era of his predecessor.

Katrin Lompscher (The Left) was appointed Senator for Urban Development and Housing and brought about another tone. She proposed Andrej Holm as State Secretary for Housing (see below) and passed the draft bill for the Berlin Rent Cap to the Berlin House of Representatives.

Structural change needs time, and few appointments acknowledged the work and know-how of civic initiatives. Florian Schmidt (The Greens), who is a member of several initiatives, was appointed City District Councilor for Building, Planning, and Facility Management for the district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. At the same time, Andrej Holm, a renowned independent urban activist and social scientist, was appointed State Secretary for Housing. Shortly after he took office, he was dismissed on allegations related to a traineeship he conducted as a teenager at the Stasi (Ministry for State Security of the German Democratic Republic). This turned into a significant political affair and exposed, in our view, the resistance of the Establishment to urban activists gaining administrative power.

2017

SODA established under BIM

Following the passing of a law to this effect in March 2017,⁴¹ the Special Asset Fund for Properties as a Public Good and Non-Operating Properties of the State of Berlin (Sondervermögen für Daseinsvorsorge und nicht betriebsnotwendige Bestandsgrundstücke des Landes Berlin, SODA) was added to the portfolio of the **BIM GmbH**. The declared goal for establishing this fund and its working models was to ensure more transparency and responsibility in the management of public assets. SODA includes all publicly owned buildings and real estate that are currently not in use by public institutions but should be tied by an asset lock to secure these resources for the future. By 2021, 1,761 business units with a total surface area of 8,492,133 sq.m and with a balance sheet value of EUR 1.94 billion were assigned to the SODA portfolio. This represents 13.5% of the real-estate assets (land area) of the State of Berlin.⁴²

41 Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin. 2017. „Gesetz über die Errichtung eines Sondervermögens für Daseinsvorsorge- und nicht betriebsnotwendige Bestandsgrundstücke des Landes Berlin [Law on the Establishment of a Special Fund for the Provision of Public Services and non-operating existing properties of the State of Berlin].“ *Senat von Berlin*, Official Law, SODA ErrichtungsG, March 17. gesetze.berlin.de/bsbe/document/jlr-SODAErGBEp9

42 BIM Berlin Immobilienmanagement GmbH. 2022. *Kennzahlenreport 2021* [Key Figure Report 2021]. Berlin: BIM Berlin Immobilienmanagement GmbH. bim-berlin.de/fileadmin/Bilder_BIM_Website/5_Presse/Publikationen/RZ_BIM_Kennzahlenreport_2021_b-frei_NEU.pdf

2017

The “Mietenwahnsinn” demonstration and the Stadtforum von Unten assembly

Building on the work of the Stop Rents Alliance (Bündniss Mietenstopp) a decade earlier, in April 2017, the “**Mietenwahnsinn**”⁴³ (Rent Hike Madness) demonstration for the Right to the City took place and has since turned into an annual event. It brought together around 5,000 people, who protested against the prioritization of private real-estate companies in German housing politics. The movement is supported by around 200 local housing initiatives, and these demonstrations inspired the 2019 initiative for the “**DW & Co. Enteignen**” referendum.

Shortly after this demonstration, in June 2017, the Xhain⁴⁴ Netz (a network of local initiatives from Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg) organized a critical intervention in the form of the **Stadtforum von Unten**⁴⁵ (City-forum from Below) assembly, which was held within the official “Stadtforum Berlin” meeting on 26 June 2017 in Markthalle IX in Kreuzberg.⁴⁶ A list of demands was established, of which the main points were: participation in the decisions on HOW to participate in city-making, provision of financial resources for the work of initiatives, and the establishment of a coordination hub for participation. The demands considerably influenced the content of the Guidelines for Citizen Participation and laid the grounds for the negotiations for **AKS Gemeinwohl XHain**.

2017

AKS Gemeinwohl Xhain

Soon after the **Stadtforum von Unten** assembly, negotiations started between the Xhain Netz initiative network and City District Councilor for Building, Planning, and Facility Management Florian Schmidt, with the goal of creating new forms of collaboration between civil initiatives and the city district administration and promoting *Gemeinwohl*-oriented urban development. In addition, they endeavored to support and protect civil initiatives and their self-organizing structures and urban spaces. These negotiations resulted in the creation of **AKS Gemeinwohl**

43 mietenwahnsinn.info/

44 Xhain is short for the Berlin district Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg.

45 1stadtforumvonunten.noblogs.org

46 Stadtforum Berlin. 2017. *Website*. Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen. Accessed May 5, 2023. stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/planen/stadtforum/

Xhain,⁴⁷ which works as an interface between district administration, civil society, and politics in the district Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg on *Gemeinwohl*-oriented policies and urban development.

2018 | The “Mietenwahnsinn” demonstration rallies 20,000 protestors

On 14 April, the “**Mietenwahnsinn**” demonstration took place again with over 20,000 participants, around four times more than the year before. In 2019, the demonstration included approx. 25,000 protestors.

2018 | “urbanize! Festival” Berlin 2018

Between 5 and 14 October, the 8th edition of the annual “**urbanize! Festival**”⁴⁸ took place in Berlin. It brought together 20 initiatives and over 2,000 active participants for a rich program of events that spanned the days and nights of the 10-day event. The motto of this edition was *Bewegung. Macht. Stadt.* (Movement. Makes/Power.⁴⁹ City.) and focused on urban development politics and alternatives to neoliberal discourses. The event was important as it initiated and strengthened networks, in addition to sharing and spreading ideas.

The “**urbanize! Festival**”⁵⁰ was initiated in 2010 by *dérive – magazine for urban research*.⁵¹ The event is funded by public institutions and local administrations but mainly relies on the voluntary work of many initiatives and their members to create and implement the festival program.

47 aks.gemeinwohl.berlin

48 berlin.urbanize.at

49 A play on words due to the double meaning of the German word *macht*, which means both “to make” (verb) and “power” (noun).

50 derive.at/festival/

51 derive.at

2019 670 apartments diverted from Deutsche Wohnen to Gewobag

In January 2019, following pressure by the local tenants' union [Mieterbeirat Karl-Marx-Allee](#)⁵² consisting of the historic soviet buildings on Karl-Marx-Allee boulevard (known as the *Zuckerbäckerhäuser*, which means confectioners' houses) and with support from the local authorities and civil society organizations, the City of Berlin re-communalized 670 housing units that were to be sold to Berlin's biggest private housing company Deutsche Wohnen. The units are now in the hands of the publicly owned housing company [Gewobag](#).⁵³

2019 The "Mietenwahnsinn" demonstration mobilizes 25,000

On 6 April, the annual "[Mietenwahnsinn](#)" demonstration took place with over 25,000 participants (5,000 more than a year earlier).

2019 DIESE eG

In May 2019, the [DIESE eG](#)⁵⁴ housing cooperative was founded by concerned tenants and local activists with the goal of buying six houses using the municipal right of preemption within a short timeframe of a few months. The effort was supported by local authorities, who facilitated the financing through federal credit funds. This angered the opposition and stirred a political fight. The investigation committee that was launched by political opponents and their public campaigns against City District Councilor Florian Schmidt were unable to identify any legal violations.⁵⁵

⁵² [mieterbeirat-kma.de](#)

⁵³ [gewobag.de](#)

⁵⁴ [diese-eg.de](#)

⁵⁵ Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin. 2021. „Bericht des 4. Untersuchungsausschusses des Abgeordnetenhauses von Berlin [Report of the 4th Investigation Committee of the Berlin House of Representatives].“ Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin, Drucksache 18/4030, August 25. [parlament-berlin.de/media/download/1930](#)

2019

Campaign and Referendum to expropriate Deutsche Wohnen and other large companies

In June 2019, building on the momentum of the “**Mietenwahnsinn**” demonstrations, a two-step petition process called *Volksbegehren*⁵⁶ was initiated for a people’s referendum (Volksentscheid⁵⁷) to expropriate and communalize the stock of large private housing companies with over 3,000 units, such as Deutsche Wohnen AG. In this case, 77,001 signatures were collected during the first stage of the petition process (almost four times more than necessary), thus passing to the second step, where 349,658 collected signatures were handed to the Senate in June 2021 (171,783 were needed). As the preconditions were fulfilled, the DW & Co. Enteignen referendum was scheduled for 26 September 2021. The petition process caused tremulous debates in political circles and among investors, triggering investigations of the legal grounds in both directions: for and against the expropriation and communalization.

2019

Establishment of the IniForum tenants’ initiative

In October 2019, on behalf of the Committee for Urban Development of the Berlin House of Representatives, the “Roundtable for Housing Policy” was transformed into **Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik Berlin**⁵⁸ (IniForum), financed by the Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing through a civic organization.

By means of what are known as “Urban Policy Hearings” and with the aim of fostering cooperation, IniForum brings together members of the House of Representatives, the Berlin Senate, and local authorities on

56 *Volksbegehren* (petition for a people’s referendum): This is a requirement for conducting a people’s referendum and consists of 2 steps. First, the initiating group or platform should collect (within six months) 20,000 signatures from eligible voters in Berlin in favor of the suggested new law, amendment, or measure (50,000 signatures for amendments to the Berlin Constitution). Second, if the petition is admissible and the Berlin House of Representatives does not adopt the essentials of the proposal within 4 months, the initiator/carrier of the petition needs to collect (within four months) the signatures of 7% of Berlin’s eligible voters (currently about 170,000) in favor of the proposed motion in order for a referendum to be conducted (requires 20% for an amendment to the Berlin Constitution).

57 *Volksentscheid* (people’s referendum): If the 2-step petition for a people’s referendum is successful, the Berlin Senate for Internal Affairs is required to hold an election on the proposed motion within 4 months. Both the majority of the voters and at least one quarter of Berlin’s eligible voters need to vote in favor for the referendum to be successful. Although referendums are not legally binding, they are important tools in demonstrating and communicating people’s stances on proposed issues and thus pressuring politicians in particular directions.

58 [iniforum-berlin.de](https://www.iniforum-berlin.de)

the one hand and members from civil society initiatives on the other. IniForum also functions as a media platform for news articles from its member initiatives and as a research and support service hub for initiatives. In some ways, one could refer to **AKS Gemeinwohl XHain** as its blueprint. Even though IniForum was implemented top-down on a Berlin-wide scale, its hearings have become a vital space for discussion and demands between civic initiatives and politicians.

2019 | The Lause Bleibt! initiative

The **Lause Bleibt!**⁵⁹ tenants' initiative negotiated the halt of a purchase contract with a private investor and convinced the Berlin Senate for Economic Development and Business to re-buy the large ensemble of small businesses and apartments on Lausitzer Str. 10 and 11 in Kreuzberg. It became an exemplary case for the rescue of Berlin's traditional socio-spatial mix (Berliner Mischung) by its residents.

2020 | Sars-Covid-19 Pandemic spreads in Europe

2020 | Berlin's rent cap in force

On 23 February 2020, a rent control law (Gesetz zur Mietenbegrenzung im Wohnungswesen in Berlin, MietenWoG Bln) referred to as the "Berliner rent cap" (Berliner Mietendeckel) entered into force. It was the first time in Germany that a federal state passed a law stipulating rent limits for most of its housing stock for a period of 5 years (it did not apply to business premises). The act and its legal and formal requirements were disputed in several law cases. This legal uncertainty and political dispute around the rent cap rendered it unreliable as a basis for a *Gemeinwohl*-oriented housing sector. Although generating profit through rent increases was limited, other market tactics gained popularity, such as splitting up buildings into single apartment properties for individual sale. At the same time, the law could weaken the Berlin tenant activist scene if people assumed that the rent cap would solve the housing problems. In March 2021, the Federal Constitutional Court declared the **Berlin rent cap to be incompatible** with the German Constitution and therefore invalid.

59 lause10.de/lausebleibt/

2020 | Right to the City Forum 2020

The COVID-19 crisis challenged the urban political movement to find ways to continue networking. Organized by the [Raumstation](#)⁶⁰ collective in May 2020, the 6th annual nationwide [Right to the City Forum](#)⁶¹ was held online. The forum was first held in 2015, and it brings together housing and urban policy activists from all over Germany each year in a different city. Invitations include small tenant and neighborhood initiatives, housing justice campaigns, cooperatives, squatters, and activists for climate justice and decolonization among others who work for solidarity and the creation of alternatives to the capitalist city.

2020 | The Berliner Bodenfonds GmbH state land fund is established

Even though the process was not transparent, as an important step in Berlin's real-estate policy, in June 2020 the Berlin Senate authorized a credit of EUR 250 million, guaranteed by the publicly owned Investment Bank of Berlin (IBB), for the active provisioning of land and for building up a reserve for future generations. The land fund, Berliner Bodenfonds GmbH (BBF), is managed by BIM and focuses on areas with city-wide significance and a broad spectrum of uses for socio-ecological development and comprehensive services of general interest. According to open documents, the work of the BBF is to be overseen by an advisory committee from members of the House of Representatives.⁶² Initiatives have criticized the fact that the investment plans and implementation strategies of BBF are not publicly accessible, whereas BIM argues that public and transparent management would threaten the effectiveness and competitiveness of its market activities.

60 raumstation.org/

61 ras2020.raumstation.org/live/

62 Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin. 2021. "Mitteilung: Aktive Ankaufspolitik zum Aufbau einer strategischen Grundstücksreserve [Notification: Active purchasing policy to build up a strategic land reserve]." *Senat von Berlin*, 18/3345, January 1. parlament-berlin.de/adosservice/18/Haupt/vorgang/h18-3365-v.pdf

2020 Initiatives form around the right of preemption: 23HäuserSagenNein and StopHeimstaden

The **23HäuserSagenNein**⁶³ initiative was founded in July 2020 when twenty-three buildings were purchased by Berlin's biggest private housing company, Deutsche Wohnen AG, within a short period of time. At the time, the use of the RPE was examined but was not applied because the buyer had signed a waiver agreement with the city district, meaning that he/she/they had accepted a set of conditions on the buildings' management for a certain period of time (e.g., 20 years). Such waiver agreements legally suspend the possibility for applying the municipal RPE. The 23HäuserSagenNein case highlighted the need for a change in the RPE procedures and for more transparent negotiations regarding the clauses of waiver agreements.

Similarly, in October 2020, the tenants of 130 buildings that were being sold to the private Swedish company Heimstaden organized a loud protest. **StopHeimstaden**⁶⁴ demanded the preemptive buying of over sixty of these buildings, which are located in areas with social protection status (Milieuschutzgebiete). The end result was the same, with Heimstaden signing a waiver agreement with the city district and tenants demanding more transparent negotiations.

2020 IniForum Hearing#4: the right of preemption

The fourth **IniForum** hearing⁶⁵ on 25 November focused on the evaluation and enhancement of the right of preemption (right of first refusal) as an instrument that allows cooperative intervention in the real-estate market by local authorities, politicians, and tenants. One outcome was a letter of demands,⁶⁶ which was supported by several initiatives (e.g., 23HäuserSagenNein, Mietshäuser Syndikat, Bizim Kiez), addressed to the Berlin parliament and the Berlin Senate. The Senate

63 facebook.com/23haeuser/

64 stopheimstaden.org

65 Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik Berlin. "Hearing #4 – Protokoll: Wie Weiter mit dem Vorkaufsrecht?" 2020. Accessed May 5, 2023. iniforum-berlin.de/tag/hearing-4/

66 Bizim Kiez. 2020. "Petition: Für ein preislimitiertes und durchsetzungsfähiges kommunales Vorkaufsrecht! Das Baugesetzbuch jetzt sinnvoll reformieren [Petition: For a price-limited and enforceable municipal right of first refusal! Reform the Building Code in a sensible way now!]" *Bizim Kiez*, September 17. bizim-kiez.de/blog/2020/09/17/zur-petition-das-baugesetzbuch-sinnvoll-reformieren-forderungen-fuer-ein-preislimitiertes-und-durchsetzungsfahiges-kommunales-vorkaufsrecht/

secretary and several politicians from the governing parties already expressed their agreement with the demands and with bringing them forward at the political level. The letter included seven demands under three goals: make appraisals based on income value, extend procedural windows to allow *Gemeinwohl*-oriented purchase and narrow the time windows for signing waiver agreements and extend the scope of the RPE to cover the entire municipality and to include undeveloped land and share deal acquisitions of real estate.

2020

Establishment of the Baustelle *Gemeinwohl* platform

In the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district of Berlin, there are numerous activists, projects and organizations dedicated to *Gemeinwohl*-oriented urban development and housing. In 2019, at an event titled “Baustelle *Gemeinwohl*” (“Construction site for the common good”), they decided to set up an online platform for *Gemeinwohl* policies and practices to network and combine efforts and to increase visibility. Numerous civic and institutional actors attended the event, as well as several representatives from the local administration. In 2020, the beta version of the **Baustelle *Gemeinwohl***⁶⁷ platform was launched, followed by the final version in 2022. It highlights working domains and features descriptions of the various actors and their activities, along with links to their websites. In addition, it contains studies, articles, maps, and useful tools for *Gemeinwohl* practices.

2021

Berlin Rent Cap overturned by the Federal Constitutional Court

On 15 April 2021, the 2nd Senate of the highest Constitutional Court of Germany overturned Berlin’s rent control law (MietenWoG Bln), following a claim by the liberal and conservative parties and supported by the majority of housing companies in Germany. The court concluded that the law stands against the German constitution due to formal reasons, as the federal state of Berlin was formally not authorized to decide and rule on this issue. According to the German subsidiary system and the “competing legislative competences” (Konkurrierenden Gesetzgebungskompetenz) that divides authorities between the varying levels—municipal, state, and federal—there are

⁶⁷ baustelle-gemeinwohl.de

certain topics that are the prerogative of the federal government, rent law being one of them. Experts argued differently, critiquing the ruling as a very narrow interpretation.

The overturning of the law had dramatic consequences on Berlin's tenants, and countless were obliged to pay higher rents. Many of those tenants became vulnerable to debt caused by subclauses in contracts that were signed as the law was being disputed. These subclauses stated that in the event the rent cap law was to be overturned, the tenant would pay a higher rent (referred to as *Schattenmiete* in German) retrospectively.

2021

Elections at all levels: federal, Berlin state, and Berlin districts

At the federal level, the 26 September 2021 elections ended the 16-year era (four legislative periods from 2005 to 2021) of Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU), and with it, two successive legislative periods where the cabinets were formed by the "old majority parties": the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD). As a result of this election, the new government formed a coalition between the SPD, Alliance 90/The Greens, and the neoliberal Free Democratic Party (FDP), under the leadership of Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD). Scholz had served as Mayor of Hamburg (2011–2018), and as Vice Chancellor and Finance Minister (2017–2021).

After years plagued by a socio-political atmosphere of stagnation and poor crisis management (climate change, COVID-19 pandemic, and others), the new "traffic light" coalition formed by the SPD (red), Greens (green), and the FDP (yellow) promised progress and a new style of building political consensus and communication. Many were skeptical, seeing the new chancellor as a continuation of the politics of his predecessor, with whom he served.

At the city level, the Berlin elections saw some shuffling of cards but the parties of the ruling coalition remained well represented among voters. The SPD remained constant (21.4%), The Greens gained a few points (18.9%), and The Left lost some (14.1%). With the dramatic loss for the latter at the national level and the "traffic light" coalition being negotiated for the federal cabinet, rumors circulated that the same path might be followed for the new Berlin Senate, which triggered significant protest by civil society movements. Ultimately, the new government

was the same as the preceding one, a red-red-green coalition. The new Governing Mayor is Franziska Giffey, former Federal Minister of Education (2017-2021), who's politics is seen as relatively conservative and top-down. For some, this style can be seen in the management of the outcomes of the **Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Enteignen referendum** which was put up for vote on the same day of these elections.

2021

59.1% in favor of expropriating DW&Co.

On 26 September 2021, the same day as the federal and state-level elections, Berlin's voters were requested to cast their ballots on the Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Enteignen referendum on whether large housing companies should be expropriated and their stock communalized. The campaign had started in 2019 and successfully fulfilled the **two-step signature collection** process (called Volksbegehren) that was a precondition for holding a people's referendum. With 59.1% voting in favor, it was a landmark win that was celebrated by housing movements in many places.

Building on the momentum of the "**Mietenwahnsinn**" (Rent Hike Madness) demonstrations, among others, the "DW&Co. Enteignen" campaign demanded that the Berlin Senate initiate all measures necessary to transfer real estate into public ownership, whereby:

- Private profit-oriented real-estate companies that owned more than 3,000 apartments in Berlin would be expropriated in accordance with Article 15 of the German constitution and their holdings would be transferred to public ownership. Cooperatives would not be expropriated.
- The affected companies would be compensated well below market value.
- A public legal entity (AöR) would be created to manage the holdings. Its articles of organization would stipulate that the AöR's holdings could not be privatized.
- In the AöR, the properties transferred to public ownership would be managed with the democratic participation of the city community, tenants, workforce, and the Senate.

With wide-spread support for the demands of the referendum on the one hand and the increased pressure on Berlin's housing security on the other, Berlin's civil initiatives expected that the new government would provide space for a constructive discourse and solution building.

However, continuing old habits, Berlin's Senate created a commission of politicians and experts to propose a new law or measures that address the public demands, but it features no representative from the campaign's initiators.

2021 **Establishment of Häuser Bewegen GIMA Berlin-Brandenburg eG**

In November 2021, a group of housing cooperatives, associations, the Tenement Housing Syndicate (Mietshäusersyndikat), and individuals registered the **Häuser Bewegen GIMA Berlin-Brandenburg eG**⁶⁸ cooperative real-estate agency based on the principle of *Gemeinwohl*, the first such establishment of its kind in the region. It follows the model of a cooperative in Munich called **GIMA München**,⁶⁹ which also served as a reference for establishing **GIMA Frankfurt a.M.**⁷⁰

Based on the principle of social responsibility, the Häuser Bewegen GIMA mediates real-estate purchases by its members from prospective sellers and title holders. It focuses on integrating tenants' interests and engaging them in the process, as well as uncoupling purchases from market prices and connecting them to *Gemeinwohl* principles. The cooperative charges a mediation fee of 1% of the selling price in comparison to the common 7% rate of real-estate agencies. By early 2023, the cooperative had 15 member organizations with a housing stock of approximately 4,000 units.

Between 2018 and 2021, a tenant initiative set the stage for the establishment of the cooperative with a project called "Häuser Bewegen" (Moving Houses), where they experimented with and piloted the founding of a *Gemeinwohl* real-estate agency. It was partially funded by the City District Council of Berlin Mitte, and the two informative flyers it produced can still be found on the website of the cooperative.

68 haeuserbewegen.de

69 gima-muenchen.de

70 gima-frankfurt.de

2021

The Federal Administrative Court overturns an RPE case

As a real-estate company was about to purchase a 20-apartment building in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg in 2017, the RPE was invoked by the district municipality. In protest, the company went to the Administrative Court of Berlin but lost (ruling on 17 May 2018), then lost again in front of the Higher Administrative Court of Berlin-Brandenburg (ruling on 22 October 2019). From there, they appealed to the Federal Administrative Court (Bundesverwaltungsgericht), which ruled on 9 November 2021 that in this case, the application of the RPE was illegal. As a precedent, this case negatively impacted all following proceedings. Like with the **rent cap process**, critics argued that the ruling was a very conservative and questionable interpretation of the constitution.

According to the ruling, municipalities were not allowed to apply the RPE in the manner that had been followed until then: namely, on the premise that the buyer was likely to manage the real estate against the goals of the social protection status of an area (Milieuschutzgebiet) in which the purchase was made. The court stated that such an assumption could not be inferred from past activities or market behavior. The ruling stated that the conditions for Paragraph 26(4) of the Federal Building Code had not been met: that is to say, the RPE was not applicable if the property was built on and used in accordance with the objectives or purposes of the urban development measures (e.g., if the spaces are rented out, which applies to most of the cases) and when the structure of the building erected on that property does not show any deficiencies or defects.

This ruling has rendered the RPE inapplicable to most cases, and the waiver agreements (intended to protect tenants) have become practically void. In Berlin, a broad scene had been mobilizing through and around the RPE instrument and had succeeded in convincing an increasing number of district municipalities to make use of it in favor of tenants and *Gemeinwohl*-oriented housing.⁷¹ This ruling represents a serious set-back in their struggle against the take-over of the housing stock by profit-oriented companies. In response, some political initiatives proposed legal amendments. However, so far nothing concrete has materialized.

71 See: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen. 2020. "Wahrnehmung von Vorkaufsrechten. [Utilization of the right of preemption]" Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin, April 21. parlament-berlin.de/adosservice/18/Haupt/vorgang/h18-2823-v.pdf

2021 | The Neues Vorkaufsrecht Jetzt platform

In response to the Federal Administrative Court ruling that rendered the RPE inapplicable in most cases, a large collective of 60 tenants' initiatives and housing cooperatives launched the **Neues Vorkaufsrecht Jetzt**⁷² platform (new right of preemption now). The platform explains the legal incidents and places the following demands:

- Create a secure legal basis for exercising the right of preemption in the German Building Code (Baugesetzbuch, BauGB).
- Develop an interim solution for houses in areas with social protection status that are sold before the required law comes into existence.
- Ensure compliance with waiver agreements that have already been concluded.
- Develop an interim solution for preemption cases that are pending litigation.

Besides the information about relevant events and campaigns that the platform provides to visitors, there is a subpage dedicated to contacting parliamentarians with a customizable letter demanding the re-instatement of the RPE. In addition, there is a subpage with a map showing the cases in which the RPE was applied: where a waiver agreement was signed and where the property was otherwise purchased. This map is based on the **Commoning Berlin**⁷³ map, which was developed within the framework of this CMMM project.

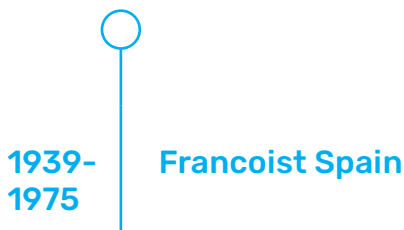


⁷² neues-vorkaufsrecht.jetzt

⁷³ cmmm-maps.eu/berlin/

Section 5 / BCN

BARCELONA: TIMELINE ON HOUSING



After a three-year civil war (1936-1939) that ended the short-lived Second Spanish Republic, which had deposed the monarchy in 1931, General Francisco Franco Bahamonde, leader of the Nationalist forces turned the country into a single-party regime under the FET y de las JONS and ruled until his death in 1975. The Francoists ruled Spain through a methodical war of attrition that saw the incarceration and execution of political opponents and anyone suspected of supporting values contradictory to those of the regime, including those of regional autonomy, socialist democracy, and even women's rights. Hundreds of thousands died as a result of political persecution, hunger, and disease. It is estimated that around half a million fled the country into exile. Horror practices such as kidnaping the children of opponents were widespread, and countless people disappeared and remain unaccounted for.¹ Franco collaborated with other fascists in Europe, such as Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, and was strongly supported by the Roman Catholic Church and particularly its Opus Dei organization.

The Francoists imposed politics and economics of autarky and very thick border. However, in the 1950s, this started to falter due to rising inflation, which accentuated the already wide-spread poverty and vulnerability of large portions of society and as the state stood on the brink of bankruptcy. As a result, the Stabilization Plan was passed in

¹ Richards, Michael. 1998. *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936-1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1959, liberalizing some of the sectors of the economy and opening up parts for international trade. In addition, laws were passed for the provision of housing to encourage a regime of homeownership as a tool for maintaining social order through mortgages.

Under Francoist rule, Catalonia suffered great repression aimed at erasing its culture and replacing Catalan with the Castilian, as well as eliminating its demands for regional autonomy, which it had enjoyed briefly under the Second Republic when it was granted home rule (local parliament and a president of its own). As a hub for socialist political thinkers and activists, Catalonia was the site of frequent raids, arrests, censorship, and executions under Franco's totalitarian regime.

After Franco's death, as he had arranged beforehand, he was succeeded by the grandson of the last king before the abolition of the monarchy, Prince Juan Carlos de Borbón, who reigned as King Juan Carlos I from 22 November 1974 until his abdication on 14 June 2014 to his son Felipe VI.

1978

The Spanish Constitution

After the death of General Franco and the end of nearly four decades of dictatorship, general elections were held for the first time since the Second Republic (1931–1939). The 1977 general elections were held to elect the Spanish Cortes, which included the 350 seats of the Congress of Deputies and the 207 seats of the Senate. Soon after the formation of the new government, steps were taken to repeal the constitution of the Francoist regime and draft a new one. On 29 December 1978, the new democratic Spanish constitution went into effect after being approved in a popular referendum. The new constitution laid the foundation for the welfare state. Chapter three, Governing Principles of Economic and Social Policy, Article 47, refers to the fundamental rights and duties: "All Spaniards have the right to enjoy decent and adequate housing. The public authorities shall promote the necessary conditions and establish appropriate standards in order to make this right effective, regulating land use in accordance with the general interest in order to prevent speculation. The community shall have a share in the benefits accruing from the town-planning policies of public bodies."²

2 The Spanish Constitution, Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 311 (1978). boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1978-31229

1981 The Mortgage Market Regulation Bill

Until 1980, mortgages were only available through the state-controlled Spanish Public Mortgage Bank. The 1981 Mortgage Market Regulation Bill³ (Law 2/1981) enabled private operators to enter the market. This bill also increased the acceptable loan-to-value ratio for mortgages from 50 to 80 percent, introduced variable interest rates, and allowed banks to issue asset-backed mortgage bonds to expand mortgage financing. The enactment of this law, as part of the Moncloa's Pacts,⁴ was inscribed in the tradition of the Francoist peacekeeping policy of "each operator an owner" and laid the grounds for mortgages to become an attractive business for financial institutions.

1982 Barcelona bids to host the 1992 Olympic Games

In January 1981, the mayor of Barcelona, Narcís Serra, a respected political figure and economist, announced that the city would bid to host the 1992 Olympics. The goal was to use this mega-event as a driver to speed up needed urban development projects and open the city to the world after the decades of autarky and Francoist isolationism. In 1982, the bid was drafted, and the first projects were commissioned by the next mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Maragall, and the City Council's Olympic Office in 1983, even though the bid was first accepted years later in 1986. The preparations for hosting the mega-event submerged the city in profound urban transformation and brought about much-needed but also controversial projects, as explained in the [1992 Olympics](#) entry.

1984 First squatted building

The squatting movement in Barcelona, which is part of the larger scene of those engaged in housing struggles, organized a big campaign to occupy an empty building in the city in December 1984, which was

³ Ley 2/1981, de 25 de marzo, de regulación del mercado hipotecario [Law 2/1981, of March 25, 1981, regulating the mortgage market], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 90 (1981). boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1981-8598

⁴ The Moncloa's Pacts were economic and political agreements intended to address inflation and unemployment during the Spanish transition to democracy from the Francoist dictatorship regime to the constitutional monarchy in the late 1970s.

the first recorded case.⁵ Since the 1980s, the “Okupas” movement (from *ocupar*, which means to occupy) has grown and become more significant, and in 2020 it was reported that Catalonia is home to about half of all cases of squatting in Spain, numbering more than 5,000 recorded cases.⁶ Although the 1995 Criminal Code criminalizes squatting, Spain is considered to have the most favorable legal framework for adverse possession in Europe.

1985

The Boyer Decree

To boost home-ownership, what is commonly referred to as the Boyer Decree⁷ (Decreto Boyer, Royal Decree-Law 2/1985) was passed in April 1985, effectively removing rent control and tenancy protection for new rental contracts. The indefinite lifetime of a rental contract was reduced to one year, and the possibility of subrogation (i.e., passing the contract on to next of kin without changing the conditions) was eliminated. These were among the factors that contributed to dramatic increases in rents, and consequently, by the 1990s, mortgages became the most attractive means to access housing.

1985-1986

Designation of Ciutat Vella as an Integrated Rehabilitation Area and the reengineering of El Raval

Ciutat Vella (the old city) lies directly on the Mediterranean Sea and consists of four neighborhoods: La Barceloneta, El Gòtic, El Raval, and El Born (which contains Sant Pere, Santa Caterina, and la Ribera). Until the mid-19th century, this was the political and financial center of the city and hosted a considerable number of industries. However, by the 1980s, many of its buildings had deteriorated considerably and the socio-demographic conditions were precarious. Within the overall developmental visions of the administration, the old city was designated as an integrated rehabilitation area, and several different plans were

5 França, João. 2008. *Habitar la Trinchera: Històries del moviment pel dret a l'habitatge a Barcelona* [Inhabiting the Trench: Stories of the Movement for the Right to Housing in Barcelona]. Barcelona: Fundació Periodisme Plural.

6 Sparks, Tori. 2020. “Okupas: The Multifaceted Problem of Spain’s Squatters.” *Metropolitan Barcelona*, November 17. barcelona-metropolitan.com/living/okupas-the-multifaceted-problem-of-spains-squatters/

7 Real Decreto-ley 2/1985, de 30 de abril, sobre Medidas de Política Económica [Royal Decree-Law 2/1985, of April 30, on Economic Policy Measures], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 111 (1985). boe.es/eli/es/rdl/1985/04/30/2

drafted, including the El Raval Special Plan of Integral Rehabilitation (Pla Especial de Reforma Interior, PERI) and the Barcelona Museums Plan. The objective of this designation was to improve living conditions, the micro-climate, mobility and public transport, the health infrastructure, and intersectoral cooperation, as well as to modernize the district and regenerate the economy. Through a public-private partnership, a company for the promotion of Ciutat Vella (PROCIVESA - Promocio Ciutat Vella S.A.) was created to accelerate municipal intervention, which played a major role in attracting foreign capital and ultimately in selling large parts of the city to capitalist investors.

Among other set goals, the plan aimed to revitalize the historic center by promoting the private rehabilitation of 55,872 dwellings in 5,200 buildings. In 1988, a public-private company was set up for this purpose, with funding from the Catalan and Spanish governments. At the same time, in an effort to reduce density and increase open spaces, the plans saw to the opening of La Rambla (a large promenade and square) in the densely populated El Raval neighborhood, which is largely inhabited by vulnerable strata. This was justified as the “vocation of centrality of this new urban salon”⁸ to link the educational and cultural centers at its northern end with the refurbished port at the southern end. At the same time, the Barcelona Museums Plan was proposed and included the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (MACBA) and the Center for Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB), both located in El Raval. This use of cultural institutions as part of an internationalization strategy in the construction of the Barcelona model resulted in one of the first public-private partnerships: on the MACBA Board of Trustees, the Barcelona City Council shared responsibilities with hotels, restoration companies, and developers.

The restoration and renewal of the buildings in the historic center of Barcelona was justified by the argument that the area had become highly degraded, living conditions were difficult, and levels of crime were high, causing families with sufficient purchasing power to leave while increasing numbers of disadvantaged people had concentrated in the area.⁹ However, the above-mentioned plans and others that fell under

8 Habitat CF+S. 2002. “Área de rehabilitación integrada de Ciutat Vella: revitalización del centro histórico de Barcelona [Integrated rehabilitation area of Ciutat Vella: revitalization of the historic center of Barcelona].” Habitat CF+S. Accessed May 5, 2023. habitat.aq.upm.es/bpes/onu02/bp393.html

9 Brunet, Ferran, Mar López Rancaño, Joan Miquel Piqué Abadal, Jordi Vázquez Capera, and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona Departament d’Economia Aplicada. 1996. *Anàlisi econòmica de les actuacions urbanístiques a Ciutat Vella* [Economic analysis of urban planning actions in Ciutat Vella]. Barcelona: Procivesa.

the umbrella of upgrading and renewing the old city had significant impacts on housing. In El Raval, between 1986 and 1993, the value of new housing increased from 90,000 to 230,000 pesetas per sq.m.¹⁰ In the northern part of El Raval alone (where the MACBA is located), 1,384 dwellings and 293 commercial premises were demolished during this period, an operation that involved the expropriation and eviction of 600 families,¹¹ and the number of inhabitants decreased by roughly 10%.¹² During the twenty years of urban transformation, the Ciutat Vella district lost 30% of its population.¹³

Since the 1992 Olympic Games and with the constant increase in tourism, the neighborhoods of the neighborhoods of Ciutat Vella have suffered massive gentrification, commercialization, a surge of petty crime, pollution and noise, and a loss of privacy and intimacy for the local inhabitants.

1986

Integration into the European Economic Community (EEC)

While under the Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE) government, Spain acceded to the European Economic Community (EEC) on 1 January 1986, which became the European Union in 1992 with the Maastricht Treaty. This step further paved the way for ideas related to the liberalization of urban planning and land use institutions and policies that were underway, influenced by the doctrines of globalized markets. In the following years, the continued process of deregulation of housing, land, and mortgage financial systems attracted an unprecedented influx of fictitious capital, further expanding the secondary circuit of capital (the sphere of commodity circulation, exchange, and consumption).

10 *Ibid.* p. 69

11 *Ibid.* p. 99

12 *Ibid.* p. 189, and see: Cocola Gant, Agustín. 2009. "El MACBA y su función en la marca Barcelona [The MACBA and its role in the Barcelona brand]." *CIUDAD Y TERRITORIO Estudios Territoriales* 41 (159): 101-115. agustincocolagant.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2009-Macba.pdf

13 Fiori, Mirela. 2011. "Urban transformation and residential structure in the historic centre of Barcelona." PhD diss., Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya.

1992

The 1992 Summer Olympic Games

In preparation to host the Olympic Games, the city administrations approved vast projects to reengineer the city starting in the early 1980s. Significant expenditures were made for the rehabilitation and expansion of the road network and transportation infrastructure. The coastal railway tracks were moved underground in order to connect the city (particularly the popular La Barceloneta neighborhood) to the sea and allow for the establishment of urban beaches and coastal promenades, and the harbor was refurbished to expand the area for yachts. The managerial framework of the games closely integrated private investments in boosting telecommunication infrastructures, in creating office buildings and commercial venues, rehabilitating the existing housing stock, and building new units, particularly around the historic center (Ciutat Vella). In terms of sports facilities, large sums were directed to rehabilitating existing degraded ones in multiple neighborhoods, which was received well by the population as these constituted sustainable long-term investments for the benefit of the residents of the city. Overall, the preparations for the games gave a new image to the city and promoted it for international tourism, which continued to grow well after the event (reaching extreme levels). This also served the political aspirations of declaring Catalonia an autonomous region: for example, when a Catalan athlete won a game, the Catalan national anthem was played instead of the Spanish one.

However, the downside of the highly celebrated “Barcelona Model” was that the drastic developments and stark touristification policies, particularly in and around the old city, paved the way for the commercialization and gentrification of neighborhoods and caused a steady increase in rental values, which ended up displacing many locals. Furthermore, cultural projects, such as the Center for Contemporary Culture (CCCB) and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MACBA, opening delayed until 1995) in El Raval, attracted real-estate speculators to vulnerable neighborhoods, which led to the eviction of large numbers of residents. Throughout the city, the homeless were harassed and pushed out to create “clean” streets. Housing projects such as the Olympic Village (Poblenou district), which contained 2,000 new units, did not include any social housing, and yet this project forcefully displaced the entire Roma community that had resided in that area until then. Critics point out that decisions were made between the city halls and private companies, while civil society was largely left out, and that the games caused social fragmentation and furthered exclusion.

1992

The economic crisis and the Real-Estate Investment Trusts and Mortgage Securitization Act

As the Barcelona Olympic Games and the Sevilla Expo came to an end and as the Maastricht Treaty was being finalized, an economic crisis hit Spain and the depreciation of its currency, the peseta, left many of the population, as well as the government, in debt. This created the basis for residential mortgage-backed securities through the Real-Estate Investment Trusts and Mortgage Securitization Act¹⁴ (Law 19/1992), which was presented as the legislative condition required to generate new real-estate investments. The Spanish securitization market grew steadily in the following years and then surged in 1998 with the approval of Royal Decree 926/1998,¹⁵ which further regulated asset-backed securities.

1994

The Urban Rent Act

The Urban Rent Act¹⁶ (Law 29/1994, abbreviated “LAU”) was passed as an extension to the [Boyer Decree](#). On the one hand, it raised the minimum period for rental contracts from one to five years, which provided slightly more security for tenants. However, on the other, it made it possible to increase the rent value within the period of the contract. Similar to regulations in other European countries, it stipulated that increases should be relative to those in the consumer price index, but in the absence of monitoring and enforcement frameworks and the large room for interpretation, it actually allowed for higher increases. While the lengthy processes of legal rulings in cases of unpaid rent curbed increases in the rental market, clauses in this law helped streamline eviction proceedings for non-payment. Furthermore, the subrogation right (passing a contract on to next of kin without changing the conditions)—which was preserved in the Boyer Decree for old contracts and annulled for new contracts—was eliminated for all contract holders, old or new, under this new law.

14 Ley 19/1992, de 7 de julio, sobre Régimen de Sociedades y Fondos de Inversión Inmobiliaria y sobre Fondos de Titulización Hipotecaria [Law 19/1992, of July 7, 1992, on the Regime of Real Estate Investment Companies and Funds and on Mortgage Securitization Funds], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 168 (1992). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1992-16412

15 Real Decreto 926/1998 sobre Fondos de Titulización de Activos y Sociedades Gestoras de los Fondos de Titulización [Royal Decree 926/1998 on Asset Securitization Funds and Securitization Fund Management Companies], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 116 (1998). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1998-11425

16 Ley 29/1994, de 24 de noviembre, de Arrendamientos Urbanos [Law 29/1994, of November 24, 1994, on Urban Leases], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 282 (1994). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1994-26003

1994

Approval of the El Raval Central Plan

Since the approval of the El Raval Special Plan of Integral Rehabilitation (Pla Especial de Reforma Interior, PERI) in 1985, designs for the *Pla Central del Raval* (PCR) were put on and off the agendas of the city council repeatedly until the early 1990s, when an agreement was signed with the University of Barcelona to move its humanities faculties to a designated area in Raval North. In 1994, the final plans were approved for the creation of the Rambla del Raval from scratch, with a total open area of about 20,000 sq.m. at a cost of about EUR 5 million, 80% of which was covered by a subsidy from the EU Social Cohesion Fund. The project entailed the demolition of five street blocks that included more than 1,300 dwellings and close to 300 small businesses in one of the poorest areas of the city. Besides the social and economic implications, the project was criticized for including several heritage listed buildings by iconic architects, the status of which was declassified in order to allow the operation.

The plan encouraged specialized commerce in sectors such as the arts and antiques, restaurants, and entertainment around the new plaza. In the year 2000, work started on another project in which another 50 buildings were expropriated and demolished in and around the Carrer d'en Robador (a street connecting to Rambla del Raval at its center from the east) to free up around 12,700 sq.m. of land. The development of this area included a public underground parking garage, 9,500 sq.m. of commercial space, 10,000 sq.m. for social housing, 10,000 sq.m. for the market, a new building for the UGT trade union headquarters, and a 4-star hotel. Later, the Film Theater of Catalonia was built close by, opening its doors in 2012.

The process of expropriating properties that were marked for demolition extended over many years and was complex for multiple reasons. Many people did not want to lose or swap their homes, many families qualified for an alternative, the speculative aspirations had grown, and many undocumented migrants were living in abandoned apartments. And while the project was mostly promoted under the banner of providing better living conditions in the dense and poor El Raval neighborhood, by the time La Rambla was completed, the average rent in buildings surrounding the area skyrocketed from

15,000 to over 75,000 pesetas per month.¹⁷ Today, the tree-lined plaza created for the community is as touristified as the rest of Ciutat Vella.

1998

The Land Act

Following fierce debates about state intervention between the liberal right and sectors of the left in this period, the government passed the 1998 Land Act¹⁸ (Law 6/1998) under the conservative Popular Party (PP) and with the declared objective of reducing land prices. This national-level legislative reform liberalized land management and planning by (a) reducing the category of land previously excluded from development (for example, land protected for ecological or heritage reasons) to permit residential developments, (b) allowing for greater flexibility in terms of land use and site inspections, and (c) reducing administrative requirements.¹⁹ The wide loosening of requirements brought about by this law led to its popular nickname: the “Build Anywhere Act.” This law emphasized providing conditions that encourage private ownership while removing the social function of ownership from planning obligations of public bodies. Meanwhile, the portion of profits from rent that was previously dedicated to the latter for developing and executing planning policies was re-channelled into the hands of private actors.

1998

Observatori DESC (ODESC)

The **Observatory for Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights**²⁰ (Observatori dels Drets Econòmics, Socials, Culturals i Ambientals, ODESC) was created in 1998 with the aim of emphasizing, promoting, and defending the right to housing, work, education, health services, food, and a safe environment as fundamental human rights to the same degree as civil and political rights are recognized. It combines advocacy with research, offers consultancies and strategic

17 Scarnato, Alessandro. Forthcoming. “Mi casa es tu casa: the creation of the new rambla del raval in the historic center of barcelona, between urban renewal and touristic branding [Mi casa es tu casa: the creation of the new Rambla del Raval in the historic center of Barcelona, between urban renewal and tourist branding].” Unpublished Paper. academia.edu/7839679/THE_CREATION_OF_THE_NEW_RAMBLA_DEL_RAVAL_IN_THE_HISTORIC_CENTER_OF_BARCELONA_1994_2004

18 Ley 6/1998, de 13 de abril, sobre régimen del suelo y valoraciones [Law 6/1998, of April 13, 1998, on Land Regime and Valuation of Properties], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 89 (1998). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1998-8788

19 Cladera, J. R., and M. C. Burns. 2000. “The Liberalization of the Land Market in Spain: The 1998 Reform of Urban Planning Legislation.” *European Planning Studies* 8 (5): 547-564. [tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/713666428?journalCode=ceps20](https://doi.org/10.1080/713666428?journalCode=ceps20)

20 observatoridesc.org

litigation, and organizes courses and conferences. In addition, it is also involved in disseminating research, supports popular demands and struggles, and participates in networking and participatory social campaigns. From the start, housing has been ODESC's main line of action. Together with social movements, Observatori has successfully led housing proposals at both the legislative and public policy levels. For example, a new Catalan housing law to stop evictions and power cuts was approved in 2015 after collecting over 150,000 signatures, and a local policy requiring every new private building to set aside 30% for social housing was implemented in Barcelona in 2019 after being proposed by a coalition of 5 social organizations, ODESC being one of them. Among other projects, it has offered support to the [Platform for People Affected by Mortgages \(PAH\)](#) through a collaboration financed by the Barcelona City Council since 2012. Ada Colau, who has been the mayor of Barcelona since 2015, worked at ODESC from 2007 until she assumed public office.

1999

Adoption of the Euro increases real-estate investments

As stipulated by the Maastricht Treaty, all EU members replaced their currencies with the unified euro, and Spain was one of the first countries to adopt it on 1 January 1999. The adoption of the euro and the significant decrease in interest rates (from 16% in the early 1990s to 3% in 2004) further contributed to making Spain a safe and attractive market for international investors, facilitated trading property titles as financial assets, and turned land and housing into a form of fictitious capital. Between 1998 and 2006, direct foreign investment in real estate increased by 102%.²¹

2000

Approval of the 22@Barcelona Innovation District Plan

Influenced by the international hype around smart cities and digitalization and continuing on the path of systematically renewing particular districts, the 22@Barcelona Innovation District (Districte de la innovació) Plan was announced in 2000 for the Poblenou

21 Cabeza, Marisol García. 2010. "The Breakdown of the Spanish Urban Growth Model: Social and Territorial Effects of the Global Crisis." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 34 (4): 967-980. [researchgate.net/publication/227373742_The_Breakdown_of_the_Spanish_Urban_Growth_Model_Social_and_Territorial_Effects_of_the_Global_Crisis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227373742_The_Breakdown_of_the_Spanish_Urban_Growth_Model_Social_and_Territorial_Effects_of_the_Global_Crisis)

neighborhood in the Sant Martí district. In the mid-1800s, Poblenou (which means “new village” in Catalan) became an industrial hub, especially for textile production, earning it the nickname “Catalan Manchester.” Migrants from all over Spain relocated there until it started to decline in the 1960s.

Along with other urban renewal development plans in the mid-1980s, such as the designation of [Ciutat Vella as an integrated rehabilitation area](#), and with a view to preparing for the 1992 Olympic Games, two large-scale projects were carried out in Poblenou. The first was Vila Olímpica as part of the “Urban Development Special Plan from Barcelona Seafront to Carles I Promenade-Icaria Avenue’s Sector” project in 1986–1992, which created close to 2,000 upper-end housing units, a new port, and commercial facilities in areas largely inhabited by Roma, who were expelled in the process. The second was Diagonal Mar, a new neighborhood created at the coastal end of Diagonal Avenue in 1990–2004 as part of a government-driven project that created more than 1,500 high-end housing units, hotels, a shopping mall, and other commercial facilities. These projects dispossessed the inhabitants who lived there and the urban environment, setting the stage for the following chapter of neoliberal development in the area: the 22@ plan.²²

The 22@ “innovative regeneration project” stretches across 250 city blocks, reengineering the area to host five knowledge-intensive clusters: information and computer technology (ICT), media, bio-medical, energy, and design.²³ To market the development, the term “live-work spaces” was coined, which would become the mantra for many large-scale neoliberal urban development projects worldwide in the decades that followed,²⁴ while 22@ became a model referenced in similar development projects elsewhere. Although the project boasted social cohesion and balanced urban and economic development in its guiding principles, it cleared many low-level residential buildings

22 Benson, Rachel. 2021. “El Poblenou, Barcelona: Impacts of urban renewal and green initiatives on a once working-class neighborhood.” *ArcGIS StoryMaps*, Decembre 6. Accessed May 5, 2023. storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c71bbcaa132145f2b985b039468729aa

23 ECPA Urban Planning. 2023. “Case Study: 22@ Barcelona Innovation District.” Smart Cities Dive. Accessed May 5, 2023. smartcitiesdive.com/ex/sustainablecitiescollective/case-study-22-barcelona-innovation-district/27601/

24 In her presentation titled “Architecture and The Real-Estate-Media Complex” at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, 31 October 2022, Marija Marić recites the “Live, Work and Play” poem, which was composed of unedited advertisements from 34 development projects from around the world and was published in 2019 as part of the Avery Shorts season three, minute 30:43–32:30. See: Harvard GSD. 2022. “Marija Marić, ‘Architecture and The Real-Estate-Media Complex’” by Marija Marić. YouTube. youtube.com/watch?v=6srm_ymfDOI

and changed the historical socio-spatial fabric of the area. The rapidly increasing costs of living displaced large segments of its original inhabitants, and there were repeated cases of eviction of undesired populations such as the Roma. To this day, there is wide civil resistance and calls for change, including the provision of spaces and resources for more affordable housing by Observatori dels barris del Poblenou,²⁵ Ens Plantem civic platform,²⁶ and [The Barcelona Lab for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability](#) (BCNUEJ).²⁷

2002

Eviction on Robador 25 prompts first open discussion on real-estate mobbing

In 2001, the city approved plans that included the expropriation and demolition of another 50 buildings in and around Carrer d'en Robador (also referred to as “Rabador Island,” which connected to Rambla del Raval at its center from the east) as an extension to the [1994 El Raval Central Plan](#) (Pla Central del Raval), which brought about the demolition of five city blocks to create Rambla del Raval. The plans covered roughly 12,700 sq.m. of land, the development of which included a public underground parking garage, 9,500 sq.m. of commercial space, 10,000 sq.m. for social housing, 10,000 sq.m. for the market, a new building for the UGT trade union headquarters, and a 4-star hotel. The contracted companies used intimidation against the inhabitants of several buildings, and this became an exemplary case of real-estate mobbing. The media coverage of Bienvenido Olet’s threat to jump off his balcony if he were evicted from his apartment on Robador street in May 2002 prompted the first open and public discussion about real-estate violence, such as mobbing and harassment practices,²⁸ which has remained an issue ever since.

25 Coòpolis. 2023. “Observatori dels barris del Poblenou [Observatory of the Poblenou neighborhoods].” Coòpolis. Accessed May 5, 2023. bcn.coop/pptt/observatori-barris-poblenou/

26 Facebook. 2023. “Al Poblenou Ens Plantem.” Facebook. Accessed May 5, 2023. facebook.com/PoblenouEnsPlantem/events/?ref=page_internal&paipv=0&eav=AfZap8Yr12UwA0mCUDbF6h8yTVJvyqKwFyxWRbSsmFL8atAeOqprex-IRTV2Jx19MIY&_rdr

27 bcnuej.org

28 Sitesize. 2005. “Taller De Propostes Contra La Violència Immobiliària I Urbanística [Workshop on Proposals Against Real Estate and Urbanistic Violence].” Sitesize, May 20. sitesize.net/webs/coordinadoraraval/dossierviolenciaimmobiliaria/dossierviolenciaimmobilia.htm

2002 | The Catalan Urban Planning Act

Since the central government is responsible for defining broad categories such as property rights and land values and the autonomous communities are tasked with overseeing and implementing land-use, urban planning, and housing policies, the national and very liberal [1998 Land Act](#) was implemented inconsistently throughout the country. Many regional laws were changed to reflect the national Land Act, and close to 30% of municipalities across the country revised their master plans accordingly. In 2002, Catalonia adopted the Catalan Urban Planning Act²⁹ (Law 2/2002), which partly countered the Land Act. This new regional law aimed to regulate urban planning and housing development by clearly defining the obligations of landowners to cede a proportion of their land for public use. Despite the attempts of the Catalan government to prevent speculative practices, both the 1998 Land Act and the 2002 Catalan Urban Planning Act served as pieces in a larger web of legislation that in effect reorganized nested structures and facilitated capital flow into land development, thus further paving the way for land to become a form of fictitious capital. Eventually, in July 2005, this law was repealed.

2003 | The Dignified Housing (Vivienda Digna) Platform

In the years before the financial crisis and the burst of the real-state bubble in Spain, a number of very heterogeneous social movements—local associations, urban movements, squatters—gathered under the [Dignified Housing Platform](#)³⁰ to demand compliance with Article 47 of the 1978 Constitution regarding the right to housing, in spite of the fact that it was a guiding principle and was not considered a fundamental right.³¹ They published a manifesto titled “40 Proposals for Dignified Housing”³² in which they articulate their demands,

29 Ley 2/2002, de 14 de marzo, de Urbanismo [Catalan Urban Planning Act], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 92 (2002). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2002-7296

30 viviendadigna.org

31 Article 47 of the 1978 constitution of Spain states that “[a]ll Spaniards have the right to enjoy decent and adequate housing. The public authorities shall promote the necessary conditions and establish the relevant rules to make this right effective, regulating the use of land in accordance with the general interest to prevent speculation. The community shall participate in the capital gains generated by the urban planning action of the public authorities.” See: The Spanish Constitution, Third chapter Article 47 (1978). app.congreso.es/consti/constitucion/indice/titulos/articulos.jsp?ini=47&tipo=2

32 Plataforma por una Vivienda Digna. 2023. “Reivindicaciones [Demands].” Plataforma por una Vivienda Digna. Accessed May 5, 2023. viviendadigna.org/?reivindicaciones.php

including regulations for speculators, legislative and taxation reforms, the prohibition of auctioning public land, and the establishment of an agency to uncover real-estate fraud. Since its establishment in November 2003, the platform has organized and promoted various mobilizations and gatherings. In addition, it has distributed informative bulletins and working documents to encourage public debate and increase pressure on politicians to counteract the growing housing vulnerability and inaccessibility.

2003

The Thousands of Houses (Miles de Viviendas) collective

During the mass mobilizations in Spain against the Iraq war in 2003 the Thousands of Houses (Miles de Viviendas) collective was established and was quite influential for some time. Until 2007, members of the collective would occupy publicly owned places and buildings after each demonstration. In 2004, they occupied a private building in the La Barceloneta district of Barcelona, integrating the struggles against gentrification. This collective defines itself as a “war machine” (máquina de guerra) as “life is the battlefield” where precarity is nested in the “new complex form of domination over the network-city: unlivable housing, savage urbanism, neo-slavery labor, silly fashion, subdued affections, junk culture, overexploited migrants, neo-fascist regulations, again the usurpation of the common by means of new forms of private property (intellectual, genetic, cultural).”³³ The collective sought to popularize squatting, albeit unsuccessfully, in large part due to the differences and conflicts within the squatting movement.

2006

The H for Housing (V de Vivienda) initiative

Mimicking the title of the dystopian political action film “V for Vendetta,” a group of young people in Barcelona who were also connected to the [Dignified Housing Platform](#) and the [Thousands of Houses](#) collective formed the V de Vivienda (H for Housing) initiative in 2006, which rapidly grew into a national movement. Its strategies included guerilla communication and organizing powerful demonstrations every 3 months. In February 2008, it mobilized simultaneous demonstrations

³³ Translated to English from an interview in Spanish by Espai en Blanc: Espai en Blanc. 2006. “Entrevista al Colectivo ‘Miles de Viviendas’ [Interview with the Collective ‘Thousands of Homes’].” Espai de Blanc, no 1-2 Vida y Política. espaienblanc.net/?page_id=557

in 19 cities across Spain,³⁴ and some of its members were among the lead founders of the [Platform for People Affected by Mortgages](#) (PAH) in 2009. Their emblematic slogan “you’ll never own a house in your whole fucking life” (no vas a tener una casa en la puta vida) started at demonstrations in Barcelona and then spread throughout the entire country. The movement’s members used to meet in one of the spaces occupied by Thousands of Houses during that period, where they also exchanged information with the squatting and anti-eviction movements.

2007 | The Catalan Right to Housing Act

The Right to Housing Act³⁵ (Law 18/2007) was the first comprehensive law that acknowledged housing as a right in Catalonia (this law does not apply to the rest of Spain). Despite the fact that it falls short of the aspirations and demands of the various movements that had been pushing for reform in the housing sector for over a decade, this law recognizes the social value and function of housing and provides the necessary legal framework for mechanisms that regulate the real-estate market: for example, the possibility to fine empty flats, higher regulations on touristic use, and expanding the public housing stock. In the following years, [Observatori Desc](#) and [PAH](#) used this law as a basis for campaigns and motions to the City Councils to operationalize and make the stated mechanisms effective.

2008 | The Subprime Mortgage Crisis

In the decade between 1997 and 2007, housing prices in Spain increased by more than 180%, and by summer 2007, 36% of the Spanish mortgage debt was securitized,^{36,37} with only the UK holding a higher percentage

34 El Mundo. 2008. “‘V de Vivienda’ celebrará manifestaciones en 19 ciudades [‘V de Vivienda’ will hold demonstrations in 19 cities].” El Mundo. Accessed May 5, 2023. elmundo.es/elmundo/2008/02/29/suvivienda/1204280230.html

35 Ley 18/2007, de 28 de diciembre, del derecho a la vivienda [Law 18/2007 of 28 December 2007 on the right for housing], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 50 (2008). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2008-3657

36 Carbó-Valverde, Santiago, David Marqués-Ibáñez, and Francisco Rodríguez Fernández. 2011. “Securitization, Bank Lending and Credit Quality: The Case of Spain.” In *Working Paper Series No 1329*. Frankfurt am Main: European Central Bank. ecb.europa.eu/pub/pdf/scpwps/ecbwp1329.pdf

37 Securitization is the process used to create asset-backed securities (ABS). It takes the illiquid assets of a financing company (the leases, loans, mortgages, and credit card debts of its customers), pools them together, and transforms them into highly liquid securities that are sold to investors. (Source: BDC. 2023. “Securitization.” BDC. Accessed May 5, 2023. bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/entrepreneur-toolkit/templates-business-guides/glossary/securitization)

within the EU at the time. The number of permits for the construction of new housing units increased from around 300,000 in 1995 to its peak of 865,561 permits in 2006 (i.e., more than 3,000 permits issued per day),^{38,39} figures higher than the combined housing production in the UK, France, Italy, and Germany during the same period. However, the around 3.5 million unsold and empty housing units at this point were omens of the about-to-burst housing bubble and a looming socio-economic disaster. In the decade after the crisis hit, between 2009–2018, less than 100,000 permits were issued for new constructions per year, and in 2012 this number remained below 50,000.⁴⁰

As many analysts and scholars documented over the years before and since, it was not accidental that Spain was one of the countries that was hit the hardest by the 2008 mortgage crisis. Since the Francoist regime, promoting property-based debt was the policy of all consecutive governments,⁴¹ entry to the EU expanded rather than tamed the practice, and just like the 1992 economic crisis, the recent crisis created widespread misery and dispossession to average citizens but did little to change the system. Within two years, unemployment more than doubled, rising from 8.2% in 2007 to 17.9% in 2009 and continuing to swell until 2013 when it peaked at 26.1% (29.1% for people aged 25–34 years).⁴² Although economic recovery is considered to have started in 2014/2015, unemployment still stood at 14.1% in 2019, twelve years after the crisis hit,⁴³ which is 70% higher than before the so-called Spanish miracle crumbled. Between 2007 and 2014, more than 600,000 foreclosures were executed⁴⁴ as many mortgage holders

38 Vergés, Ricardo. 2011. "Series Operativas de Edificación: 1992–2009. Visados de Dirección y Certificados de Final de obra de Aparejadores [Building Operational Series: 1992–2009. Management Visas and Certificates of Completion by Quantity Surveyors]." *Estadística Española* 53 (176): 5–48. ine.es/ss/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobheadernam e1=Content-Disposi-tion&blobheadervalue1=attachment%3B+filename%3D176_1.pdf&blobkey=url data&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=902%2F1015%2F176_1%2C0.pdf&ssbinary=true

39 Ives, Pana, and Alberto Urtasun. 2019. "Evolución Reciente del Mercado de la Vivienda en España [Recent Developments in the Spanish Housing Market]." *Boletín Económico* 2/2019: 5. [bde.es/f/webbde/SES/Secciones/Publicaciones/InformesBoletinesRevistas/ArticulosAnaliticos/19/T2/ descargar/Fich/be1902-art9.pdf](https://webbde/SES/Secciones/Publicaciones/InformesBoletinesRevistas/ArticulosAnaliticos/19/T2/ descargar/Fich/be1902-art9.pdf)

40 *Ibid.*

41 Gutiérrez, Aaron and Antoni Domènech. 2017. "The Spanish mortgage crisis: Evidence of the concentration of foreclosures in the most deprived neighborhoods." *Die Erde: Journal of the Geographical Society of Berlin* 148 (1): 39–57.

42 Labour Force Statistics. 2023. "Unemployment rate by sex and age (%): Annual" (dataset). ILOSTAT. Accessed May 5, 2023. ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer45/?lang=en&segment=indicator&id=UNE_DEAP_SEX_AGE_RT_A&ref_area=ESP

43 *Ibid.*

44 Gutiérrez, Aaron and Antoni Domènech. 2018. "The Mortgage Crisis and Evictions in Barcelona: Identifying the Determinants of the Spatial Clustering of Foreclosures." *European Planning Studies* 26 (10): 1939–1960. tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09654313.2018.1509945

became unable to repay their debt, and hundreds of thousands of families were forcefully evicted from their homes.

As the crisis spread in several member countries, the European Central Bank reduced the interest rate in 2009 to encourage lending and bailout and support packages were supplied in 2010 through the European Financial Stability Facility, which was converted into the European Stability Mechanism that same year. Spain was not among the countries to receive a bailout package, but it did receive a rescue package of up to EUR 100 billion in June 2012, which was intended to recapitalize the country's banks. The package was contingent upon the creation of a "bad bank," which, a few months later in November, brought about the Management Company for Assets Arising from the Banking Sector Reorganization (Sociedad de Gestión de Activos procedentes de la Reestructuración Bancaria, Sareb), which is 45% state-owned and 55% owned private shareholders. Sareb absorbed failed loans and acquired close to 200,000 assets valued at over EUR 50 billion from banks that had to be restructured and shrunken, including BFA-Bankia, Catalunya Banc, Banco de Valencia, Novagalicia Banco, Banco Gallego, BMN, Liberbank, Caja3, and CEISS.⁴⁵ In 2014, Spain formally exited the EU/IMF bailout mechanism.

As early as 2009, the government started applying heavy austerity policies and major cuts to communal budgets and funds dedicated to social infrastructures and securities. In their report titled "Shattered Dreams. Impact of Spain's Housing Crisis on Vulnerable Groups" from 2014, Human Rights Watch noted that while Spain was not the only country suffering from the mortgage crisis and ensuing recession, "the scale of the mortgage crisis, the social trauma around foreclosures and evictions, as well as the lack of effective remedies, accountability, and fair pathways to debt relief create a particularly acute situation"⁴⁶ that is unmatched anywhere within the EU. Among other similar incidents, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled in March 2013 that the contractual terms of mortgages in Spain violated EU consumer protection regulations.⁴⁷ The continued shortcomings of the Spanish government in tackling the social impact of the 2008 crisis, which is also referred to as the Great Spanish Depression, provided fuel for the

45 Sociedad de Gestión de Activos procedentes de la Reestructuración Bancaria (Sareb). 2023. "Who We Are." Sareb. Accessed May 5, 2023. sareb.es/en/about-us/who-we-are/

46 Human Rights Watch. 2014. "Shattered Dreams: Impact of Spain's Housing Crisis on Vulnerable Groups." *Human Rights Watch*, May 27. hrw.org/report/2014/05/27/shattered-dreams/impact-spains-housing-crisis-vulnerable-groups

47 *Ibid.*

many social movements that rose in the aftermath of the economic disaster, such as the [Platform for People Affected by Mortgages](#) (PAH) and the [15-M Movement](#), as well as the [Barcelona en Comú](#) platform in Catalonia.

2009

Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca – PAH)

In response to the unfolding mortgage crisis and unfathomable scale of foreclosures and evictions, anti-globalization activists created the [Platform for People Affected by Mortgages](#)⁴⁸ (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca – PAH), which is now one of the biggest grassroots social movements for housing rights in the world. Several of its founders had been active in the [Dignified Housing Platform](#) (Plataforma Por Una Vivienda Digna), the [Thousands of Houses](#) (Miles de Viviendas) collective, and the [H for Housing](#) (V de Vivienda) initiative. The first PAH assembly took place in February 2009, attracting forty people (largely immigrants) who were facing mortgage foreclosure via posters hung in telephone booths and municipal social service centers. The PAH was built on the principle of uniting activists and those unable to pay their mortgage to work together as equals, connecting expert consultations with tangible action on the ground.

The PAH defines itself as a non-partisan citizen's movement, has more than 226 chapters throughout Spain, and its manifesto "Against mortgage fraud, for the right to housing"⁴⁹ (Contra el fraude hipotecario, por el derecho a la vivienda) highlights the collusion of state institutions with the financial sector and speculation. In addition to proposing avenues for reforming the system and giving justice to the victims, it regularly carries out activities such as solidarity sit-ins against evictions, media campaigns, temporary occupations (e.g., of banks), demonstrations, and others. It articulated three non-negotiable demands: first, a retro-active change to Spain's Mortgage Law requiring banks to cancel all outstanding mortgage debt in exchange for the property during foreclosure proceedings (*dación en pago*, which has not been achieved yet); second, halting all evictions of principle and sole family homes; and third, transforming empty houses held by financial institutions into social housing, particularly those held by Sareb, Spain's "bad bank."

48 afectadosporlahipoteca.com

49 Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca. 2023. "Manifiesto [Manifesto]." Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca. Accessed May 5, 2023. afectadosporlahipoteca.com/manifiesto-pah/

2011

15-M Movement – Indignados Movement

The intense gravity of the economic situation throughout Spain as a result of the recession triggered by the 2008 financial (mortgage) crisis prompted initiatives and collectives to organize demonstrations and acts of protests repeatedly to protest the austerity measures of the government and widespread corruption. After a massive demonstration on 15 May 2011 under the motto “we are not goods in the hands of politicians and bankers” (no somos mercancías en manos de políticos y banqueros), several groups of people decided to camp in public squares of different cities overnight. With the local and regional elections in sight a week later, these campouts marked the beginning of a distinct series of peaceful protests across the country aimed at promoting a more participatory democracy and breaking away from the bipartisan dynamic between the People’s Party (Partido Popular, PP, conservatives) and the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, PSOE) and the dominance of banks and corporations. The elections brought a resounding defeat for PSOE.

The campouts, set up in 30 cities including in Barcelona, were spontaneous yet highly organized with assemblies and committees for cleaning, food distribution, and communication and were covered by international media. Although the government attempted to dismantle the camps at various sites, they returned to some sites, gaining traction with every day that passed. The opposition to foreclosures of homes was one of the main axes of the protests, with offshoots organizing to block evictions. In June 2011, protests were staged simultaneously in front of parliaments of several regions. Between late June and early July, people from 16 cities marched on the capital on foot and bicycles to the Puerta del Sol plaza camp in what was called the “Indignant People’s March” (La Marcha Popular Indignada) to celebrate the First Social Forum of 15-M on 23 July 2011, when the movement was formalized. Over several days, people shared the problems from their cities, outlined the positions and demands of the 15-M Movement, and held protest marches and campaigns such as hanging banners with the word “guilty” on banks and governmental offices.

The central Puerta del Sol camp was dismantled on 2 August after heavy police mobilization and violent clashes with protesters, yet the movement continued its attempts to reveal the shameful focus of the government on saving financial institutions while people hungered. A year later, protesters returned to Puerta del Sol to mark the anniversary

of the movement. In the years that followed, their activities continued, laying the foundation for the creation of the [Podemos](#) political party in January 2014, which broke the bipartisan political dynamic.

2013

PAH's Social Work Campaign and the Popular Initiative Legislation

Social Work (Obra Social) was a campaign of occupations for the recovery of the right to housing in response to a generalized state of housing emergency, one that was artificially and deliberately generated by the banks and the government. In July 2013, PAH occupied buildings that were owned by banks, most of them bailed out with public money and by Sareb, the “bad bank” of the Spanish government that was created as part of the EU rescue package of 2012 (see [2008 Subprime Mortgage Crisis](#)). The purpose of the “Obra Social la PAH” campaign was to enforce the right to decent housing as stated in Article 47 of the Spanish Constitution, in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in Article 11 of the ICESCR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), which they considered to be violated by the practices of the Spanish state.

Over a two-year period the campaign worked to (1) reclaim empty housing units to provide shelter for evicted families and recover the social function of housing, (2) increase pressure on financial institutions to accept the dation in payment (dación en pago) formula of dropping debts in exchange for the seized property, and (3) pressure the government to adopt necessary measure to guarantee the right to housing.⁵⁰ As 15-M did before it, the PAH broke with the reform-revolution dichotomy and applied numerous kinds of strategies: from non-violent activities to stop evictions and occupying private buildings to presenting articulate proposals that were prepared collaboratively by members of the PAH, ODESC, and other social organizations to reform laws such as the national and Catalan draft laws on housing. One example is the “Popular Initiative Legislation” (Iniciativa Legislativa Popular), for which the PAH collected 1.6 million signatures. While discussing the proposal in the parliamentary commission, Ada Colau, the spokesperson of the PAH at the time, called the foreclosures a “widespread scam” and the mortgage law “criminal.” This intervention had a widespread impact on the perception of the eviction and

50 Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca. 2023. “Obra Social PAH [Social Work PAH].” Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca. Accessed May 5, 2023. afectadosporlahipoteca.com/obra-social-pah/

foreclosure crisis and helped to reframe it as a crisis of the system and not a “personal flaw” as had been widely propagated until then.⁵¹

To help coordinate the various actors, the PAH created a manual explaining the tools and phases.⁵² The level of organization and mobilization around the campaign brought about small victories where donations in payment were passed in some cases, dozens of evictions were postponed, many evicted families were provided with an affordable alternative, and many municipalities joined the call for reforming the national laws.

2013

Amendments to the Urban Rent Act

In 2013, amendments were made to the [Urban Rent Act](#) (Ley 29/1994, LAU), which itself was an extension of the [Boyer Decree](#). Rent stability was reduced from five to three years, after which the rent value could be raised at the landlords’ discretion and the contract could be terminated with no need to provide a reason (no-fault eviction). The reform also made the process of eviction due to non-rent-payment or the expiration of the contract faster and provided less guarantees for the tenant. As the recession caused by the 2008 mortgage crisis started to recede in 2014, this law contributed to the [rental crisis](#) that started to take shape in 2015.

2014

Podemos formed as political alternative

The [Podemos](#)⁵³ (We Can) political party was officially launched on 16 January 2014 in Madrid, formed by activists of the [15-M Movement](#), which held nation-wide protests starting May 2011. Its manifesto titled “Move a Piece: Turn Indignation into Political Change” (Mover ficha: convertir la indignación en cambio político) was signed by several respected personalities from various sectors. Its first target was the

51 El País. 2013. “Intervención de Ada Colau en el Congreso [Intervention of Ada Colau in the Congress].” *El País*, February 6. elpais.com/politica/2013/02/06/videos/1360141021_027865.html and: The Maldito Roedor. 2013. “Ada Colau dice en el Congreso que la Ley Hipotecaria es ‘criminal’ [Ada Colau says in Congress that the Mortgage Law is ‘criminal’].” YouTube. youtube.com/watch?v=s_6G-gR3BH0

52 Plataforma De Afectados Por La Hipoteca. n.d. *Manual: ‘obra social la PAH’ [Handbook: Social Work La PAH]*. Barcelona: Plataforma De Afectados Por La Hipoteca (La PAH). afectadosporlahipoteca.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/MANUAL-OBRA-SOCIAL-WEB-ALTA.pdf

53 podemos.info

May 2014 European Parliament Elections, where it won 8% of Spanish votes and had five representatives join the body.

A month later, the party started preparations for its first Citizens' Assembly "Yes We Can" (Asamblea Ciudadana "Sí se puede"), which took place in October 2014 and where proposals for the political and organizational principles were presented and discussed. The priorities of the party were defined through a vote that brought about five resolutions for improving public education (45% voting in favor), implementing anti-corruption measures (42%), ensuring the right to housing (38%), improving public healthcare (31%), and auditing and restructuring the debt (23%).⁵⁴

At the assembly, it was also decided not to run in the upcoming May 2015 local elections and instead to support local grassroots allies such as Ahora Madrid and [Barcelona en Comú](#). The party still planned to run for the general elections, which were scheduled for December 2015, and promised that, should they win, they would hold a national referendum on whether to abolish the monarchy. They did not win the majority, but they secured 21% of the votes and became the third largest party in the Spanish parliament, a mere 1% behind the socialist PSOE and 8% behind the conservative PP. As negotiations for forming a governing coalition failed, Spaniards were re-called to the ballots six months later, where the PP managed to expand its win and continued to be the ruling party.

Podemos pursues a larger welfare state, rejects neoliberal capitalism, and endeavors to halt all evictions and to regulate rent values so that they do not exceed 30% of average income. It considers itself to be secularist, anti-racist, anti-fascist, environmentalist, feminist, and supports gender self-determination, LGBTQ, and trans rights. While it started off strongly, it has recently been struggling to maintain enthusiasm among its supporters and has been performing weakly in elections.

54 Public. 2014. "Objetivos de Podemos: Reestructuración de la Deuda y Paralización de los Desahucios [Podemos' Goals: Debt Restructuring and a Halt to Evictions]." *Public*, October 19. publico.es/politica/objetivos-reestructuracion-deuda-y-paralizacion.html

2014-
2015

Barcelona en Comú established and wins city council elections

The **Barcelona en Comú**⁵⁵ (in Common) citizens' platform was announced on 26 June 2014 by mobilizers who were active in the PAH and the 15-M Movement, among other initiatives and collectives of the city. It merged a number of existing leftist and eco-socialist parties and social movements initially under the name Guanyem (Winning) Barcelona. It was constituted as a political party with the aim to run in the 2015 municipal elections in Barcelona and to re-appropriate public institutions. At the launch, they announced their manifesto, which highlighted their intent to reshape political decision-making to be more participatory and democratic and declaring their central principles as ensuring decent housing, quality healthcare, non-segregationist public education, and minimum income for all. The manifesto also stated that "[r]ethinking the model of tourism is one of the first tasks at hand,"⁵⁶ which resounded with the local population, which largely felt the needs of tourists were being prioritized over their own, as well as other clauses on combating corruption and "revolving doors" between holders of public offices and positions in capitalist institutions and capping remunerations for holders of public office.

A year later, in the local elections held on 24 May 2015, Barcelona en Comú won the most votes and its secretary, and former spokesperson of the PAH, Ada Calau, became the mayor of Barcelona. As some of the following entries in this timeline show, the new administration worked to change the system by providing affordable housing and cracking down on speculative (ab)uses of housing. These actions included the creation of the Mediation Service in Situations of Loss of Housing and Occupation (Servei d'Intervenció en situacions de Pèrdua de l'Habitatge i/ Ocupacions - SIPHO) in that same year the party took office. This publicly funded unit is inspired by the mechanisms of the PAH, accompanying families at risk of eviction and mediating between them and their landlords to find alternatives.

The new administration worked to position the city as a forerunner in tackling vulture capital takeovers of living spaces and to acknowledge housing as a basic human right in politics and legislation. While the

55 barcelonaencomu.cat

56 Guanyem Barcelona. 2015. "Why do we want to win back Barcelona?" Internet Archive Wayback Machine, February 10, 2. Accessed May 5, 2023. web.archive.org/web/20150210122118/https://guanyembarcelona.cat/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/principles.pdf

latter became an oft-repeating slogan, the former has remained more difficult to achieve and there is no evidence of far-reaching change so far. Notwithstanding, the new city council also worked to activate and involve neighborhood committees in decision-making, as well as other collaborative formats with civil society. It attempted to reduce the possibilities for corporate lobbyists, ran anti-sexism and anti-racism programs, advocated for gender freedoms, and introduced plans to promote mental health and increase the provision of public spaces, among many other issues aimed at improving the lives of citizens.

2015

Law on Urgent Measures in the Field of Housing and Energy Poverty

Following the grassroots [Popular Legislative Initiative](#) presented by the PAH, ODESC, and the Alliance against Energy Poverty (APE), the Law on Urgent Measures in the Field of Housing and Energy Poverty⁵⁷ (Law 24/2015) was unanimously approved by the Catalan parliament. This represented a great citizens' victory as it was the first legislative framework to hold the private sector accountable for the ongoing housing emergency. Article 5 of Law 24/2015 states that before taking legal action for foreclosure or eviction for non-payment, claimants in possession of numerous properties must offer a social housing alternative to the affected family. The law applies in cases where individuals or families with no other housing alternative demonstrate they are at risk of residential exclusion. Article 7 states that under certain circumstances, the public administration could use empty housing from the private sector to relocate affected persons. In May 2016, the Spanish government challenged this Catalan law before the Constitutional Court, which resulted in some of its articles being declared unconstitutional.⁵⁸

57 Ley 24/2015, de 29 de Julio, de Medidas Urgentes para Afrontar la Emergencia en el Ámbito de la Vivienda y la Pobreza Energética [Law 24/2015, of 29 July, on Urgent Measures to Tackle the Emergency in the Housing Sector and Energy Poverty], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 216 (2015). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2015-9725

58 Observatori DESC. 2023. "Recuperar la Ley 24/2015 ahora es possible [Recovering Law 24/2015 is now possible]." Observatori Desc. Accessed May 5, 2023. observatoridesc.org/es/node/4059

2015 | Rental crisis

The banking regulations introduced in the aftermath of the 2008 financial (mortgage) crisis made it more difficult for low-income households to obtain a mortgage, which forced large portions of society to rent. At the same time, large-scale real-estate investment trusts (e.g., *Sociedades Anónimas Cotizadas de Inversión Inmobiliaria* – SOCIMIs) and international investors were sweeping through cities like Barcelona taking advantage of the conditions created by the debt crisis and the subsequent restructuring of assets from banks and other institutions. Combined with the continued trends of tourism and gentrification, and the conditions created by the [2013 amendments](#) to the [1994 Urban Rent Act](#), rents resumed the pre-crisis climb to once again exceed values that average citizens could afford. As a result, evictions due to inability to pay rent exceeded those related to mortgage debt.⁵⁹

2016 | The Barcelona Right to Housing Plan 2016–2025

About a year after taking command of the city council and to fulfil one of their key promises while campaigning for office, the new administration announced an ambitious plan in October 2016 for how it intended to tackle the ongoing housing crisis in the city. The “[Barcelona Right to Housing Plan 2016–2025](#)”⁶⁰ (*Pla pel dret a l’habitatge 2016–2025*) is aimed at “building a new social pact around housing that prioritises its [social] value”⁶¹ over economic ones and providing the needed mechanisms and infrastructures to shift paradigms and develop comprehensive strategies. Therefore, the plan outlines territorial approaches and regulatory and funding demands. It establishes important mechanisms such as the [Barcelona Metropolitan Housing Observatory](#)⁶² (*L’Observatori Metropolità de l’Habitatge de Barcelona, O-HB*), which has been playing an increasingly important role in collecting and networking knowledge

59 Escorihuela, Irene. 2016. “Els lloguers estan pels núvols: Ens organitzem en un sindicat de llogaters [The rents are in trouble: Let’s organize ourselves into a Tenants Syndicat]?” *El Crític*, Decembre 7. elcritic.cat/opinio/els-lloguers-estan-pels-nuvols-ens-organitzem-en-un-sindicat-de-llogaters-14441

60 Barcelona City Council. 2018. *Qüestions d’Habitatge*, no. 21. habitatge.barcelona/sites/default/files/qh21_h_eng.pdf

61 Municipal Institute of Housing and Rehabilitation (IMHAB). 2022. *Assessment for 2021 Barcelona Right to Housing Plan 2016–2025*. Barcelona: Barcelona City Council, 5. habitatge.barcelona/sites/default/files/156946_balanc_2021_cat-en-gb_web.pdf

62 ohb.cat

since its launch in 2017. Moreover, it increases the use of census as a tool to evaluate the situation on the ground, particularly with regard to vacancies. The plan also defines disciplinary actions and penalties against real-estate mobbing, negligence in repairs, and speculative vacancies, in addition to specifying measures to counter gentrification and to grow and manage the public housing stock. Notably, the plan seeks to provide housing emergency assistance and prevention in order to counter exclusion, as well as to encourage cohousing models, housing cooperatives, and improve the space for initiatives to support affordable housing. Furthermore, along with several other proposed amendments to existing laws, the plan proposes declaring the whole city an area of right of first refusal. Details can be explored in the published documents 2017 Assessment,⁶³ 2018 Report,⁶⁴ 2016–2020 Report,⁶⁵ as well as other documents made available on the website created for municipal actions on housing: [Habitatge](#).⁶⁶

2017

The Barcelona Tenants' Union (Sindicat de Llogateres de Barcelona)

The [Barcelona Tenants' Union](#)⁶⁷ (Sindicat de Llogateres of Barcelona, SLB) was formalized on 12 May 2017 after several meetings⁶⁸ that started a year earlier and brought together activists from various groups and individuals who wanted to tackle the problem of rising rents. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, mortgages had become difficult to obtain and the ratio of renters (vs. homeowners) was increasing in Spanish cities. However, due to fact that homeownership had been politically shaped and promoted by laws in Spain since the 1960s, there was no common feeling of being “a tenant,” and this was the first time that tenants in Barcelona created a wide organizational frame. The tenants' union denounces the expensive rental market and works to confront the abuses of landlords by creating spaces of solidarity and

63 Barcelona City Council. 2017. *2017 Assessment: Barcelona Right to Housing Plan for 2016–2025*. Barcelona: Barcelona City Council. habitatge.barcelona/sites/default/files/pla_del_dret_a_lhabitatge_de_barcelona_2016-2025-en-gb.pdf

64 Barcelona City Council. 2018. *Report 2018: Barcelona Right to Housing Plan 2016–2025*. Barcelona: Barcelona City Council. habitatge.barcelona/sites/default/files/en-web_balanc_2018_-_pla_pel_dret_a_lhabitatge_2016-2025-en-gb.pdf

65 Municipal Institute of Housing and Rehabilitation (IMHAB). 2022. *Report 2016–2020 Barcelona: Right to Housing Plan 2016–2025*. Barcelona: Barcelona City Council. habitatge.barcelona/sites/default/files/balanc_2016-2020_en_ok.pdf

66 habitatge.barcelona/ca

67 sindicatdellogateres.org

68 Observatori DESC. 2023. “Sumem esforços, multipliquem forces [Sum up efforts, multiply forces].” Observatori Desc. Accessed May 5, 2023. observatoridesc.org/en/node/4012

information exchange. It has several working groups that are organized under three lines: content and communication, organization and outreach, and union action. In 2022, the SLB counted 3,234 members in 12 sections, which are coordinated by 130 volunteer members.⁶⁹

2017

onwards

Proliferation of local tenants' unions and housing groups

With the aim of decentralizing the work on the right to housing and seeking new strategies to make the movement more effective, many local housing groups and organizations have emerged in various neighborhoods of Barcelona since 2017, mainly organizing via social media. These include: Grup d'Habitatge de Sants (GHAS),⁷⁰ Grup d'Habitatge dels Tres Turons (GHATT),⁷¹ Ens Plantem Poblenou,⁷² Sindicat d'Habitatge de l'Eixample (SHED),⁷³ Sindicat d'Habitatge de Gràcia,⁷⁴ Sindicat d'Habitatge de Vallcarca,⁷⁵ Sindicat d'Habitatge de Raval,⁷⁶ Sindicat d'Habitatge de la Verneda i el Besòs,⁷⁷ Sindicat d'Habitatge de Sant Andreu.⁷⁸

69 Sindicat de Llogateres. 2023. "El Sindicat: Sindicat de Llogateres [The Syndicat: Tenants Syndicat]." Sindicat de Llogateres. Accessed May 5, 2023. sindicatdellogateres.org/es/el-sindicat/

70 Grup d'Habitatge de Sants. 2023. "Grup d'Habitatge de Sants." Twitter. Accessed May 5, 2023. twitter.com/habitatgesants?lang=de

71 HabitatgeGHATT. 2023. "HabitatgeGHATT." Twitter. Accessed May 5, 2023. twitter.com/habitatgeghatt?lang=de

72 Al Poblenou Ens Plantem. 2023. "Al Poblenou Ens Plantem." Facebook. Accessed May 5, 2023. facebook.com/PoblenouEnsPlantem/events/?ref=page_internal&paipv=0&eav=Afb_6rg0GCDY7clBTf0ULJdvR6T4CYmzisy04MCC-GkeVM1JbT0kSD0Gt78lvRc3rLA&_rdr

73 Sindicat d'Habitatge de l'Eixample Dret (SHED). 2023. "Sindicat d'Habitatge de l'Eixample Dret." Xarxes de Suport de l'Eixample Dret. Accessed May 5, 2023. suporteixampledret.noblogs.org/vaga-de-lloguers/sindicat-dhabitatge-de-leixample-dret/

74 Sindicat d'Habitatge de Gràcia. 2023. "Sindicat d'Habitatge de Gràcia: Cerquem solucions col·lectives, lluitem per un habitatge digne [Sindicat d'Habitatge de Gràcia: Call for Collective Solutions, Let Us Fight for Decent Housing]!" Sindicat d'Habitatge de Gràcia. Accessed May 5, 2023. habitatgegracia.wordpress.com

75 Sindicat d'Habitatge de Vallcarca. 2023. "Sindicat d'Habitatge de Vallcarca." Sindicat d'Habitatge de Vallcarca. Accessed May 5, 2023. habitatgevallcarca.wordpress.com

76 Sindicat Habitatge Raval. 2023. "Sindicat Habitatge Raval." Twitter. Accessed May 5, 2023. twitter.com/ravalsindicat?lang=de

77 Sindicat d'Habitatge de la Verneda i el Besòs. 2023. "Sindicat d'Habitatge de la Verneda i el Besòs." Twitter. Accessed May 5, 2023. twitter.com/SHVernedaBesos

78 Sindicat d'Habitatge de Sant Andreu. "Sindicat d'Habitatge de Sant Andreu." Twitter. Accessed May 5, 2023. twitter.com/habitatgesta?lang=de

2018 **Minimum 30% affordable housing in new projects**

Following months of social mobilization by housing activists and tough counter campaigns by actors in the private sector, the City Council of Barcelona passed a regulation in February 2018 requiring a minimum of 30% of units in new housing and large-scale regeneration projects to be designated for affordable housing. This reform followed similar models in cities like Munich and Amsterdam, delivering up to 300 new affordable housing units per year. The proposal for this regulation came from the PAH Barcelona, ODESC, Sindicat de Llogaters, and other social organizations and was part of the much larger “[Barcelona Right to Housing Plan 2016–2025](#).”⁷⁹

2019 **Royal Decree-Law on National Rental Law Reform**

The Royal Decree-Law on National Rental Law Reform⁸⁰ (7/2019) overruled some aspects of the [1994 Urban Rent Act](#) and the amendments made to it in [2013](#) by extending the minimum duration of rental contracts to 5 years, or up to 7 years if the landlord is a legal person. It also established several other protective measures, for example: the extension of tacit renewal up to three years; to end the contract, the owner must give a 4-month notice; when the landlord is a legal entity, the expenses of the real-estate agency must be covered by the landlord and cannot be passed onto the new tenant as had become common practice; property prices must be indexed by the government; communities can place limits on the use of units for tourist accommodation.

79 Barcelona City Council. 2018. *Report 2018: Barcelona Right to Housing Plan 2016–2025*. Barcelona: Barcelona City Council. habitatge.barcelona/sites/default/files/en-web_balanc_2018_-_pla_pel_dret_a_lhabitatge_2016-2025-en-gb.pdf

80 Real Decreto-ley 7/2019, de 1 de marzo, de medidas urgentes en materia de vivienda y alquiler [Royal Decree-Law 7/2019, of 1 March, on urgent housing and rental measures], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 55 (2019). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2019-3108

2019

Barcelona municipal elections

On 26 May 2019, elections for the city council were held in Barcelona along with other local and regional elections throughout Spain. In the second round, Barcelona en Comú (BComú) scored 4.5% less than in the 2015 elections, collecting a total of 20.7% of the votes and coming in second rather than first place, behind the coalition of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya and the Sobiranistes (republicans, pro-Catalan independence parties). Nonetheless, BComú formed a coalition with the Socialists' Party of Catalonia (PSC-PSOE) and governed with a minority government (18 of the total 41 seats). It is worth noting that these elections took place around 1.5 years after the 2017 Catalan independence referendum, which was held on 1 October 2017 in defiance of orders by the central government that had declared it unconstitutional three weeks before it was due to take place, and in the wake of the political turmoil that had swept through Catalonia in the aftermath of the violent confrontations and arrest orders against elected representatives.

2019

Catalan Congress of the Housing Movement

Organized by and with the support of a large collective of grassroots initiatives and organizations, the [Catalan Congress of the Housing Movement](#)⁸¹ (1r Congrés d'Habitatge de Catalunya) brought together around five hundred people from 70 housing groups, neighborhood unions, tenants' unions, the PAH, and many individuals engaged in the defense of housing rights and finding ways to improve living conditions. Held on 16 and 17 November, the goal of this event was to go on "the offensive" by drafting a common plan for the work on the right to housing in Catalonia to raise mutual support. The program was composed of seven assembly sessions with presentations that analyzed the status quo, the strategies and tactics deployed by the movement, a discussion of the mobilizations, and the proposed joint campaign against the Divarian (BBVA) vulture fund. It also addressed other programmatic and organizational issues intended to stop evictions, burst the rent bubble, expropriate housing units owned by banks and vulture funds, and continue building the popular movement.

81 congreshabitatge.cat

2020 | Sars-Covid-19 Pandemic spreads in Europe

2020 | Evictions Moratorium and other COVID-19 pandemic-related measures

Several moratoriums were passed to prevent low-income households from collapsing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that started sweeping through the country in March 2020. The first was Royal Decree-Law 8/2020⁸² on urgent extraordinary measures to address the economic and social impact of COVID-19, which was passed on 17 March and suspended foreclosure procedures against those who could demonstrate economic vulnerability inflicted by the pandemic for a period of two months. Regarding basic utilities, it prohibited suppliers of electricity, natural gas, and water from cutting off the supply to consumers who were vulnerable, severely vulnerable, or at risk of social exclusion. Two weeks after its adoption, on 31 March, these measures were extended to cover a period of six months until September 2020 by Royal Decree-Law 11/2020,⁸³ which included additional clauses suspending evictions of persons with leasing contracts that expired within the determined period and of vulnerable cases without housing alternatives. In September, Royal Decree-Law 30/2020⁸⁴ again extended the moratorium until 31 January 2021, and afterward it was repeatedly extended every 6 months and is currently due to expire in June 2023.

Royal Decree-Law 37/2020,⁸⁵ on urgent measures to address situations of social and economic vulnerability in the housing and transportation

82 Real Decreto-ley 8/2020, de 17 de marzo, de medidas urgentes extraordinarias para hacer frente al impacto económico y social del COVID-19 [Royal Decree-Law 8/2020 of 17 March on extraordinary urgent measures to deal with the economic and social impact of COVID-19]. Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 73 (2020). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2020-3824

83 Real Decreto-ley 11/2020, de 31 de marzo, por el que se adoptan medidas urgentes complementarias en el ámbito social y económico para hacer frente al COVID-19 [Royal Decree-Law 11/2020 of 31 March adopting additional urgent measures in the social and economic areas to deal with COVID-19]. Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 91 (2020). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2020-4208

84 Real Decreto-ley 30/2020, de 29 de septiembre, de medidas sociales en defensa del empleo [Royal Decree-Law 30/2020 of 29 September on social measures in defence of employment]. Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 259 (2020). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2020-11416

85 Real Decreto-ley 37/2020, de 22 de diciembre, de medidas urgentes para hacer frente a las situaciones de vulnerabilidad social y económica en el ámbito de la vivienda y en materia de transportes [Royal Decree-Law 37/2020 of 22 December on urgent measures to address situations of social and economic vulnerability in the sectors of housing and transport]. Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 334 (2020). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2020-16824

sectors, provided an additional moratorium to stop rental (and some squatting) evictions if vulnerability was proven. This was an important measure, but it also had weak points since it only covered families with minors or individuals with dependents, and it established a state compensation system for homeowners (including big landlords).

In Catalonia, the regional government passed Resolution 1066/XII, which validated Royal Decree-Law 37/2020 and reinforced the protection of the right to housing in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. These laws allowed for the suspension of mortgage, rental, and occupancy evictions, as long as the state of emergency continued and some requirements were met. The Catalan moratorium expired on 30 September 2022.

2020 | Catalan Rent Control Law

The Catalan Rent Control Law⁸⁶ (11/2020), on urgent measures regarding rent containment in housing lease contracts and amending Law 18/2007, Law 24/2015, and Law 4/2016, relating to the protection of the right to housing, was passed in September 2020 after more than a year of preparations and negotiations between the Tenants' Union (Sindicat de Llogateres) and the Government of Catalunya. It is considered a historic victory for the housing movement as it (1) limits and lowers rental values in Catalonia based on its civil code, (2) prevents rent increases in all new lease contracts in the 61 most stressed cities in Catalonia, (3) stipulates that new contracts for rented homes may not exceed the rental value of the previous contract, and (4) foresees that rents must be adjusted to the price index set by the Government of Catalonia. These measures combined might very well lead to moderating rents. Unfortunately, conservative parties denounced it and took the case to the Constitutional Court, which ruled on 10 March 2022 that the law was partially null and void, thus repealing some of its clauses while others remained in force.⁸⁷

86 Ley 11/2020, de 18 de septiembre, de medidas urgentes en materia de contención de rentas en los contratos de arrendamiento de vivienda y de modificación de la Ley 18/2007, de la Ley 24/2015 y de la Ley 4/2016, relativas a la protección del derecho a la vivienda [Law 11/2020, of 18 September, on urgent measures regarding rent controls in housing lease contracts and amending Law 18/2007, Law 24/2015 and Law 4/2016 on the protection of the right to housing], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 258 (2020). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2020-11363

87 Ashurst Spain. 2022. "The Spanish Constitutional Court annuls the limitations on lease rentals imposed in Catalonia since September 2020." Ashurst, March 15. ashurst.com/en/news-and-insights/legal-updates/the-spanish-constitutional-court-annuls-the-limitations-on-lease-rentals-imposed-in-catalonia/

2021

Amendments to the eviction moratorium laws from 2020

Royal Decree-Law 1/2021,⁸⁸ on the protection of consumers and users in situations of social and economic vulnerability, amended [Royal Decree 11/2020](#) and established that people in vulnerable situations who have squatted a property may be evicted when the entry into, or permanence to, the property had occurred through intimidation or violence. This law applies only to owners with 10 or more properties and those who are companies.

Royal Decree-Law 2/2021,⁸⁹ on the reinforcement and consolidation of social measures in defense of employment, extended the protection of tenants in vulnerable situations until the end of the “state of alarm” at the time (9 May 2021).

Royal Decree-Law 3/2021,⁹⁰ adopting measures to reduce the gender gap and other matters in the social security and economic areas, extended the moratorium regarding the suspension of punitive measures against stalled rent payment or loan installments (with or without mortgage guarantee) to those who had not previously requested a moratorium or suspension and to those who were benefiting from one or more of these measures for an accumulated period of less than nine months for each financing scheme.

88 Real Decreto-ley 1/2021, de 19 de enero, de protección de los consumidores y usuarios frente a situaciones de vulnerabilidad social y económica [Royal Decree-Law 1/2021 of 19 January on the protection of consumers and users in situations of social and economic vulnerability], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 17 (2021). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2021-793

89 Real Decreto-ley 2/2021, de 26 de enero, de refuerzo y consolidación de medidas sociales en defensa del empleo [Royal Decree-Law 2/2021 of 26 January on the reinforcement and consolidation of social measures in defence of employment], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 23 (2021). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2021-1130

90 Real Decreto-ley 3/2021, de 2 de febrero, por el que se adoptan medidas para la reducción de la brecha de género y otras materias en los ámbitos de la Seguridad Social y económico [Royal Decree-Law 3/2021 of 2 February adopting measures to reduce the gender gap and other matters in the social security and economic spheres], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 29 (2021). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2021-1529

2021

National Housing Law draft presented by social movements

In 2020, the Spanish government announced that they were working on a national housing law, which would be the first in history at the state level (there are some at the regional level). However, the two parties forming the government, PSOE and Podemos, were not able to agree on key issues. The [Initiative for a Law on Housing](#)⁹¹ (Iniciativa por una Ley (que garantice el derecho) a la Vivienda) is a national coalition of movements, unions, and organizations that gathered in September 2021 to increase the pressure on the government to proceed or to create and propose an alternative draft to the congress. However, the draft they prepared was not passed to the floor and the law is still being deliberated.⁹²

2022

New anti-eviction law in Catalonia

Following [Law 24/2015](#), on urgent measures in the field of housing and energy poverty, which was backed by social movements but nullified by the Constitutional Court a year later, new proposals were passed for an anti-eviction law in 2016 and 2019. Both times, the PAH, ODESC, and APE led the negotiations and pushed to prevent the final version of the law from being watered down. It was finally passed in March 2022 as Law 1/2022,⁹³ amending Law 18/2007, Law 24/2015, and Law 4/2016, to address the housing emergency. The law extends the concept of “Large Holder” (large housing asset holder) to companies and corporate groups that own over 10 housing properties, consolidated the social function of housing, includes cases in which compulsory social rent is imposed and empowers the Catalan Housing Agency to apply it, and allows for the expropriation of vacant housing units in exchange for half their market value, among other things.⁹⁴

91 iniciativaleyvivienda.com

92 Last updated: February 2023.

93 Ley 1/2022, de 3 de marzo, de modificación de la Ley 18/2007, la Ley 24/2015 y la Ley 4/2016, para afrontar la emergencia en el ámbito de la Vivienda [Law 1/2022, of 3 March, amending Law 18/2007, Law 24/2015 and Law 4/2016, to address the housing emergency], Boletín Oficial del Estado no. 65 (2022). boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2022-4208

94 Ilphabitatge. 2022. “La nova Llei Stop Desnonaments catalana és des d’avui una realitat [The new Catalan Stop Evictions Law is now a reality]!” *Ilphabitatge*, February 23. ilphabitatge.cat/la-nova-llei-stop-desnonaments-catalana-es-des-davui-una-realitat/



Section 6

MAPS AND VISUALIZATIONS

examples

Maps and visual illustrations of geographies and events are a practice that is as old as humanity. As we discuss in the *mapping change logbook*¹ (the result of a research project² that explored scholarly, artistic, and activist work on mapping), the contemporary forms and applications of maps remain largely shaped by colonial epistemes of the practice and its tools. The recent democratization of mediums to produce maps has not translated into an equal shift in terms of breaking away from dominant paradigms of spatial correlation and representation. This is due to several factors, ranging from technological availability and compatibility and issues of literacy to social perceptions. First and foremost, however, it is due to the continued neocolonial capitalist hegemony over systems of spatial valuation and governance, economic production, and their fractions in knowledge production discourses. Nonetheless, change is underway, as demonstrated by examples featured in publications such as *This Is Not An Atlas*,³ *Diagrams of Power: Visualizing, Mapping, and Performing Resistance*,⁴ *Counterpoints: A San Francisco Bay Area Atlas of Displacement*

1 Aruri, Natasha, and Katleen De Flander, Andreas Brück. 2022. *Mapping Change Logbook*. Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin. DOI: dx.doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-15560. Ebook: mapping-change.labor-k.org/overview/

2 The research project was titled "Mapping for Change? Critical Cartography Approaches to Drive Socio-Environmental Urban Transformation." It was implemented by K LAB between fall 2018 and early 2022 and was funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung through its program: "Original – isn't it? New Options for the Humanities and Cultural Studies" (now OpenUp).

3 kollektiv orangotango+ (ed.). 2019. *This Is Not An Atlas*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag. notanatlases.org

4 Dávila, Patricio (ed.). 2019. *Diagrams of Power: Visualizing, Mapping, and Performing Resistance*. Eindhoven: Onomatopee.

& *Resistance*,⁵ among others. Initiatives, artists, and scholars are exploring alternative ways of seeing, sensing, and representing space and utilizing maps and visual illustrations as a means of communicating resistance and mobilizing around alternative spatial political agendas.

In this section, we share a selection of maps and illustrations that have been produced for issues related to housing in Belgrade, Berlin, and Barcelona that we found relevant to our endeavors in this CMMM project. Some of these were produced by civic initiatives, others by scholars, and some were part of investigative journalism pieces. Some were created with the specific target of impacting local urban policies, others identify powerful speculators to organize effective resistance, and others visualize and disseminate collected data to draw attention to particular issues. As this selection illustrates, in Berlin and Barcelona, maps (especially GEOdata-based ones) and visualizations are relatively widely used by those involved in struggles for the “right to the city” to support civil mobilization against real-estate speculation, evictions, and social segregation. In contrast, in Belgrade, mapping practices are sporadic and project-based. In most cases across the three cities, the maps provide information on the geographic location (as a dot on a surface, often from a large provider like Open Street Map or Google) of evictions, displacements, and similar issues, while further qualitative data are not included. In a few cases, attention was paid to aesthetics, making the contents of the map more vivid.

A recurring problem for many mapping projects by and for local housing movements is that the resources and capacities are not sufficient for producing nuanced and customized maps and for ensuring they are maintained and updated, which limits their usability over time. Interlocutors in Belgrade stressed the fact that the mechanisms and dynamics of funding often force civil society groups to jump from one project to the next, which negatively impacts the dissemination and sharing of produced knowledge and work, including maps. At the same time, it represents a structural challenge for keeping topics in focus for longer periods of time so that they can reach maturity and have a more tangible impact on public awareness and political discourses. In Barcelona, interviewed housing activists noted that the lack of time and technical knowledge is the main obstacle to producing and updating critical maps. The severity of the housing

5 Anti-Eviction Mapping Project. 2021. *Counterpoints: A San Francisco Bay Area Atlas of Displacement & Resistance*. Oakland: PM Press.

crisis forces them to channel most of their scarce resources into fighting the daily evictions and critical cases, leaving little to no time and energy left over for undertaking wider research and data visualization projects for the much-needed communication strategies with decision-makers.

At a different level, while web-based geodata maps can cope with temporary hibernation and be reactivated when resources are available again—such as the case of Berlin’s Leerstandsmelder map—it is more difficult to update information on maps that are created in static formats such as PDF, as is the case for the “Valuation, Displacement and Resistance in Kreuzberg 36” map. It is worth nothing that in parallel to the development of the latter map, the Orangotango and Pappsatt collectives created the “Berlin not for sale” mural at the corner of the streets Manteuffelstraße and Naunynstraße, an activity that highlights the power of communicating and aesthetically articulating housing struggles within the everyday lived spaces of the city and beyond virtual and print mediums.

As shown in [Section 10](#) and [Section 11](#), which report on the workshops conducted by our team with partners and peers, the examination of existing maps and visual illustrations informed our decisions when narrowing down and defining the specific targets, designs, and foreseen operationalization and lifespan of the three maps that we eventually produced and that can be found in [Section 15](#). In addition, having noted the importance of reaching out beyond virtual and print mediums, we produced posters that go hand in hand with the maps, which can also be found in [Section 15](#).

Section 6 / BGD

2012

Who governs Belgrade?

Author(s): Dubravka Sekulić, Senior Tutor at the School of Architecture at the Royal College of Art (London)

Description: This map was designed as part of the 2012 Belgrade International Architecture Week (BINA). It shows the city-level institutions that are responsible for urban planning and governing in Belgrade and their interrelations. Besides clearly outlining the institutional infrastructure, this map also shows how numerous institutions have overlapping responsibilities and illustrates the lack of coordinating bodies that would ensure cooperation and consistency between them. For example, several municipal secretariats, as well as district-level departments, are responsible for implementing housing policies and measures. However, there is not a single institution or body that is responsible for multisectoral collaboration, monitoring, and evaluation or for delivering feedback on successes and challenges in relation to the overarching housing strategies.

This map has not been updated since its completion in 2012 and therefore does not match the present state of the institutional infrastructure exactly.

Distribution: The map was printed as a limited edition and distributed free of charge during and shortly after the 2012 BINA.

Link: not available online

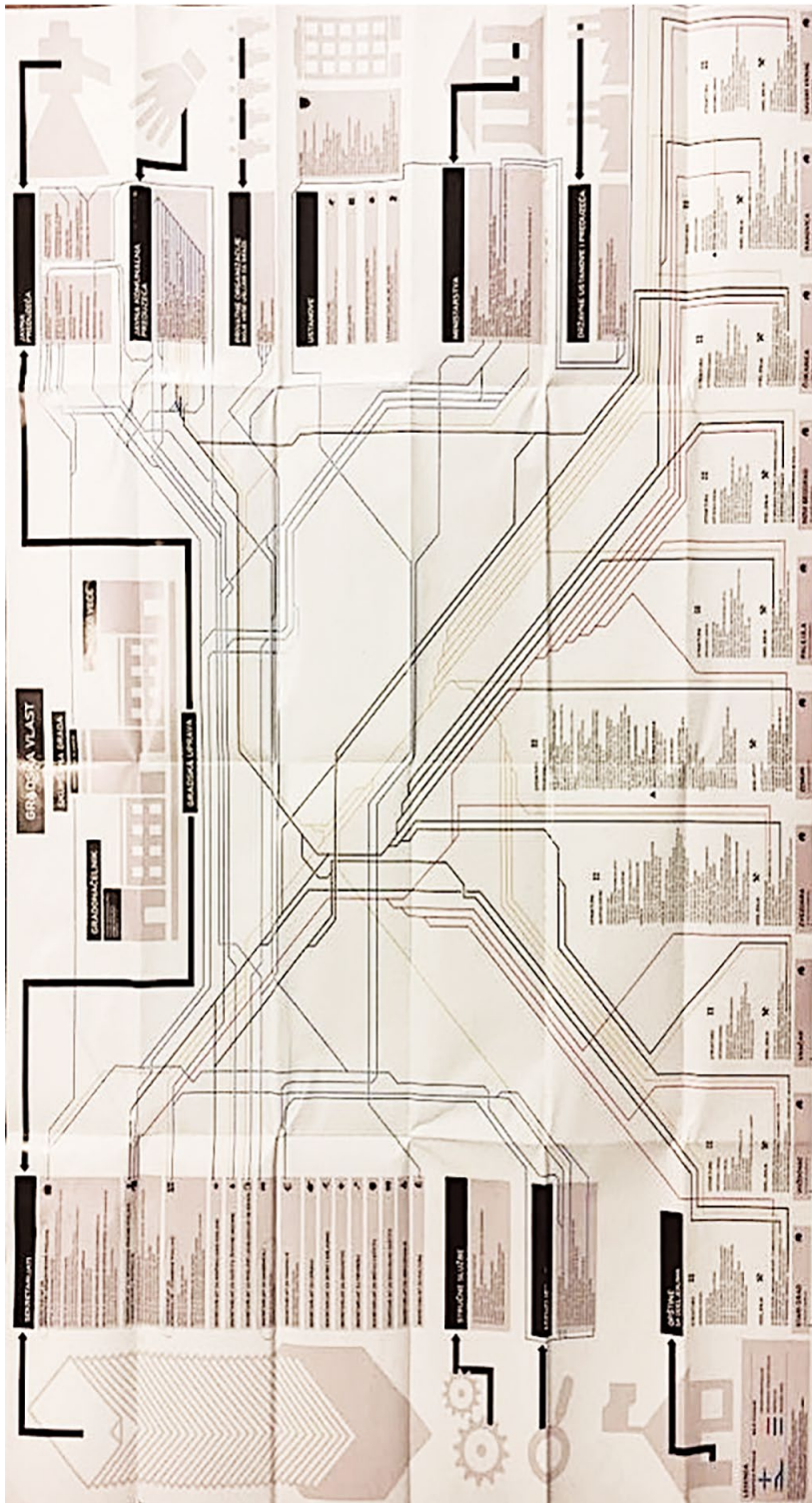


Figure 11.1 The “Who Governs Belgrade” illustration by Dubravka Sekulić which shows the network of city-level institutions, district municipalities, and their interrelations.

2013

The Map of Action

Author(s): Iva Čukić, Director of the Ministry of Space collective (Belgrade)

Description: While researching spatial struggles and efforts in many cities in Serbia, these schematic alternative maps were created to highlight the country's active initiatives and ongoing uprisings at the time. The maps identified around one hundred initiatives in over forty municipalities that were engaged in the field of spatial development in the period between 2010 and 2013. They show different types of actions and urban struggles, from those aimed at creating new independent spaces in the city and those focused on defending public and green areas to others aimed at improving urban transportation. Furthermore, they document several types of protests and petitions, as well as the locations of various social and cultural community centers. By visualizing the geographic distribution of these communal struggles, the maps aim to widen the usual focus on larger cities in Serbia to include smaller ones.

Distribution: The map is part of the *Map of Action* book, which was published in print and in digital formats via various outlets of the Ministry of Space.

Link: ministarstvoprostora.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/mapa-akcije-poster.pdf

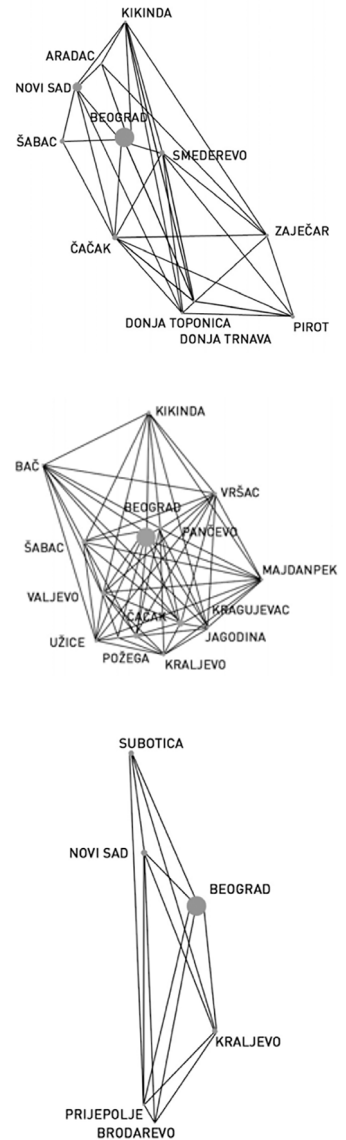
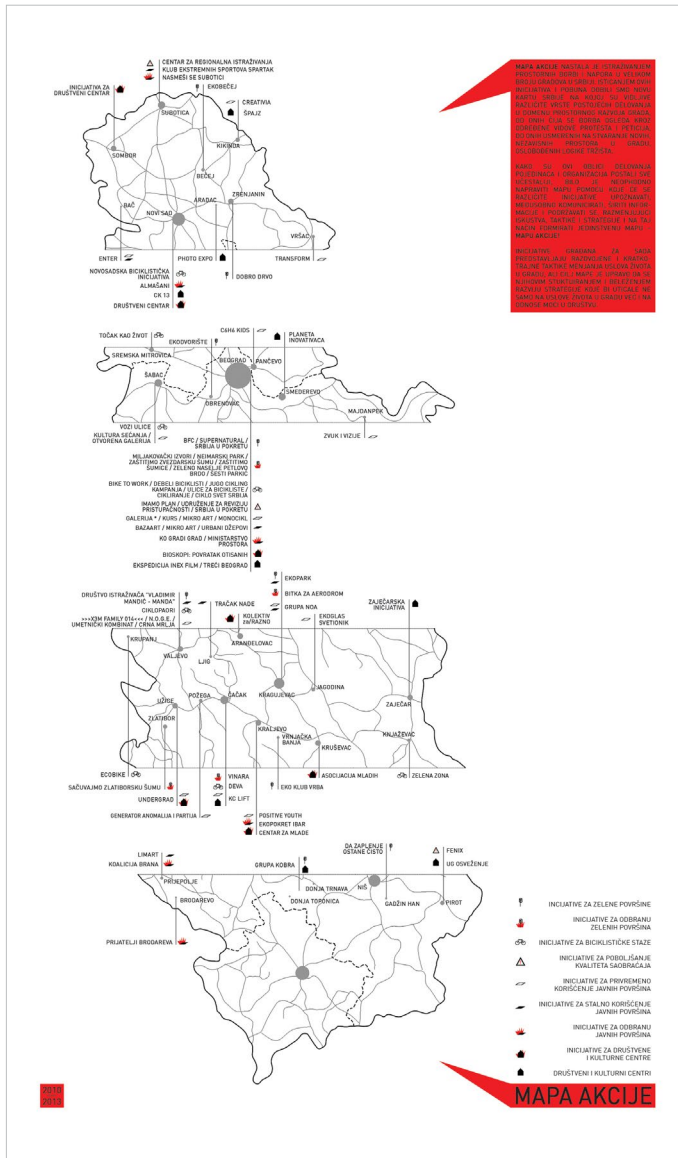


Figure 11.2 (Left) Poster accompanying the “Map of Action” book (2013). It captures some of the spatial struggles and their geographic distribution throughout Serbia. (Right) Extracts from the Map of Action book (2013) schematically show the geographic distribution of civic initiatives across the territory of Serbia based on their thematic focus: social and cultural community centers (left), initiatives related to the temporary use of public spatial resources (center), and initiatives defending public spaces (right).

2015

Spacebook

Author(s): Ministry of Space collective (Belgrade)

Description: In the early years of the **Ministry of Space**, much of its work was focused on the issue of the (temporary) employment of unused spatial resources for the needs of communities; therefore, it created a web-platform as a means of mediation. Envisioned as a commons itself, the platform used crowdsourcing and invited citizens and activists to upload information on empty or unused buildings (not exclusively under public ownership) in various neighborhoods, including the location, size, ownership regime, and other specific features (if applicable). Furthermore, the contributors were provided an optional field to note down their spatial needs in detail. The *Spacebook* was intended for matchmaking between the needs and the resources, an act which some of the users of the platform also took into their own hands.

The *Spacebook* was launched in 2015, but due to limited resources, the Ministry of Space was unable to continue maintaining and promoting the platform, and therefore it was removed.

Distribution: The platform was available online and was promoted during the period between 2015 and 2017 via various social media channels run by the Ministry of Space.

Link: not available online

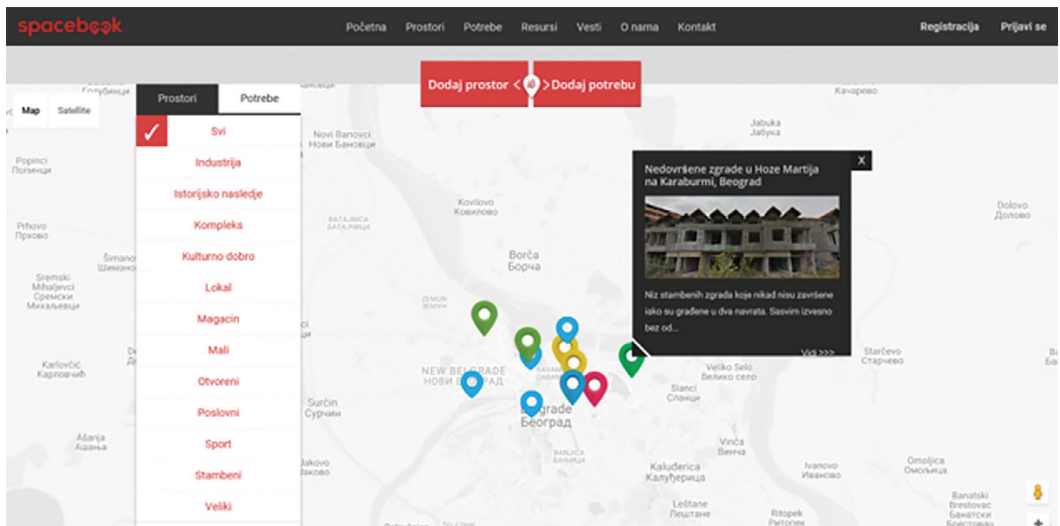
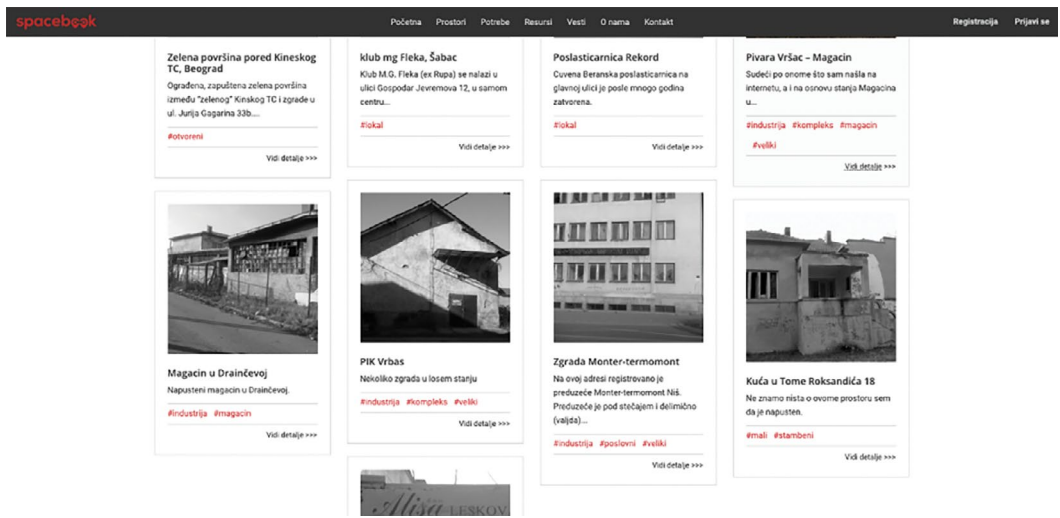


Figure 11.3 Screenshots from the “Spacebook” platform showing part of the catalog of unused spaces (top), and the distribution of crowdsourced unused spaces on a geographic map of Belgrade (bottom).

2019 | How does the city build?

Author(s): Sara Devic, Parsons Housing Justice LAB

Description: Architect and researcher Sara Devic used the opportunity of being an employee (now former) of the city government of Belgrade to collect and systematize information that is dispersed in numerous regulations and is incoherent to outsiders. She created this infographic to explain the full span of procedural and regulatory processes for public construction projects carried out by the city (e.g., for the construction of an institutional building, social housing, or for any other purpose where the city is the investor). This infographic is the first to present the sets of responsible institutions and necessary documents and to clarify the chronology of the complex process in an accessible and easy-to-understand manner. The political relevance of this infographic is that it explains the extents of possibilities for corruption and other wrongdoings in public real-estate investments.

Distribution: Sara distributed the infographic to numerous activists and initiatives concerned with Belgrade's urban development as a valuable aid in their struggles. These include the municipalist platform Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own, Who Builds the City, and the Ministry of Space, among others.

Link: not available online

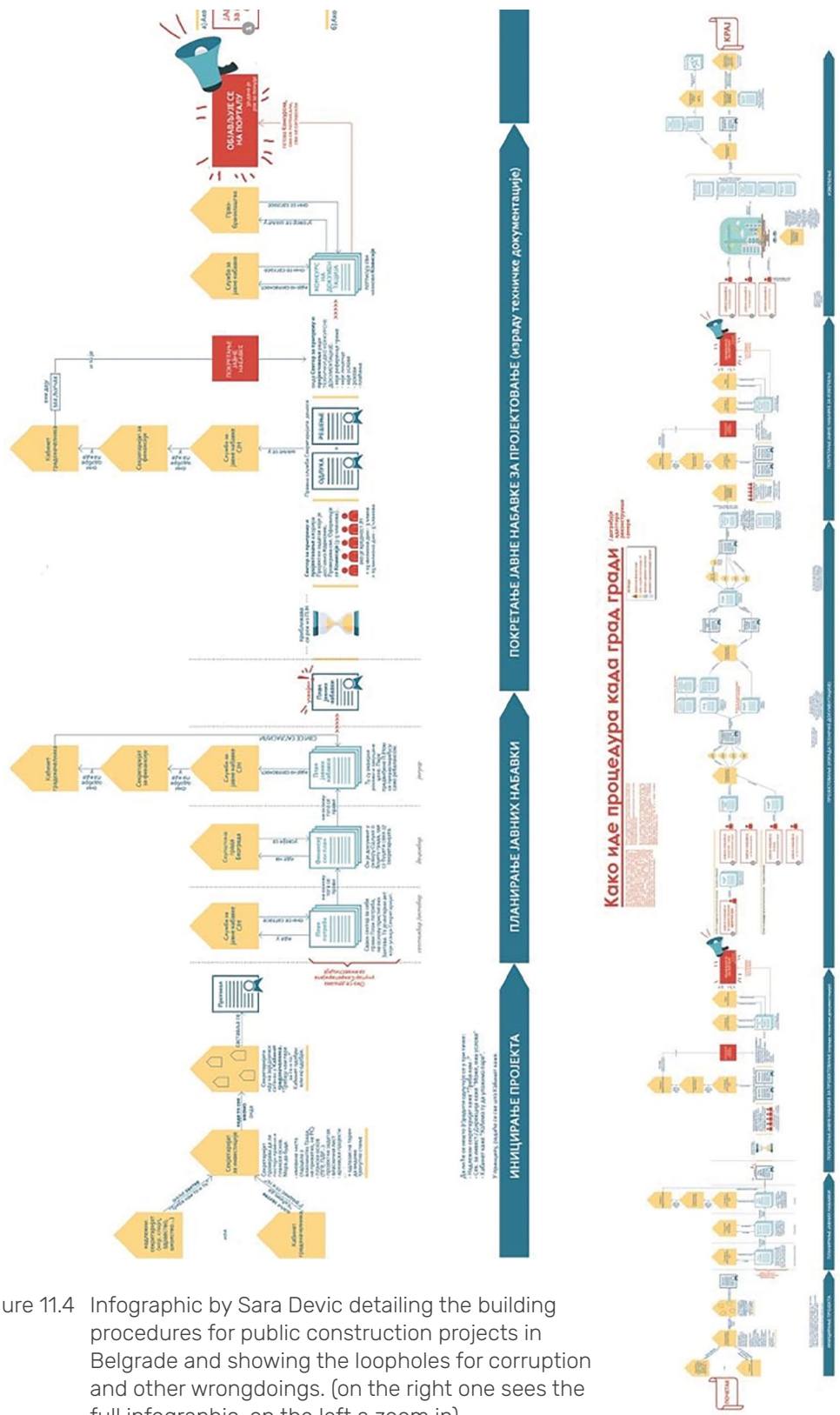


Figure 11.4 Infographic by Sara Devic detailing the building procedures for public construction projects in Belgrade and showing the loopholes for corruption and other wrongdoings. (on the right one sees the full infographic, on the left a zoom in).

2019 | Two possible building procedures

Author(s): Sara Devic, Parsons Housing Justice LAB

Description: This infographic compares the monetary and time costs required to legally and illegally build a six-floor residential building on a particular plot in one of Belgrade's city districts. The upper part of the illustration shows the legal procedure, for which Sara collected data from interviews with employees from the division for building permits at the Secretariat for Urban Planning and Construction (City of Belgrade). The lower part of the illustration shows the illegal building procedure followed by a legalization procedure regulated in the 2015 Law on Legalization of Buildings, with data from the Office for Legalization (City of Belgrade). The infographic clearly demonstrates that building "by the book" takes almost three times longer and costs around 10% more than following the illegal path, which ends with the same status through a process of legalization. The graph explains the logic behind the persistent presence of illegal construction and points to the systemic problem of the deregulation of city development. In addition, illegal constructions often disregard the construction parameters defined by the official master plan, and profit-driven developers exceed the prescribed building density or height to maximize their profits.

On the right edge of the infographic, one finds a segment of the author's conversation with an employee from the Office for Legalization, who explains that if the purpose of the illegally built structure is compatible with the zoning category, "other parameters are not considered at all" in the process of legalization. Furthermore, the employee also claims that there are no inspection mechanisms in place to control whether the received documentation of a building and the actual construction on the ground match: "there is a stamp from the architect and static engineer in the document, so if they confirm that this is what is built, we trust that."

Distribution: The infographic is not yet published but was shared with the Ministry of Space prior to being disseminated. Sara Devic plans to publish the infographic along with a text that addresses the problems of the current local spatial policies in Belgrade.

Link: not available online

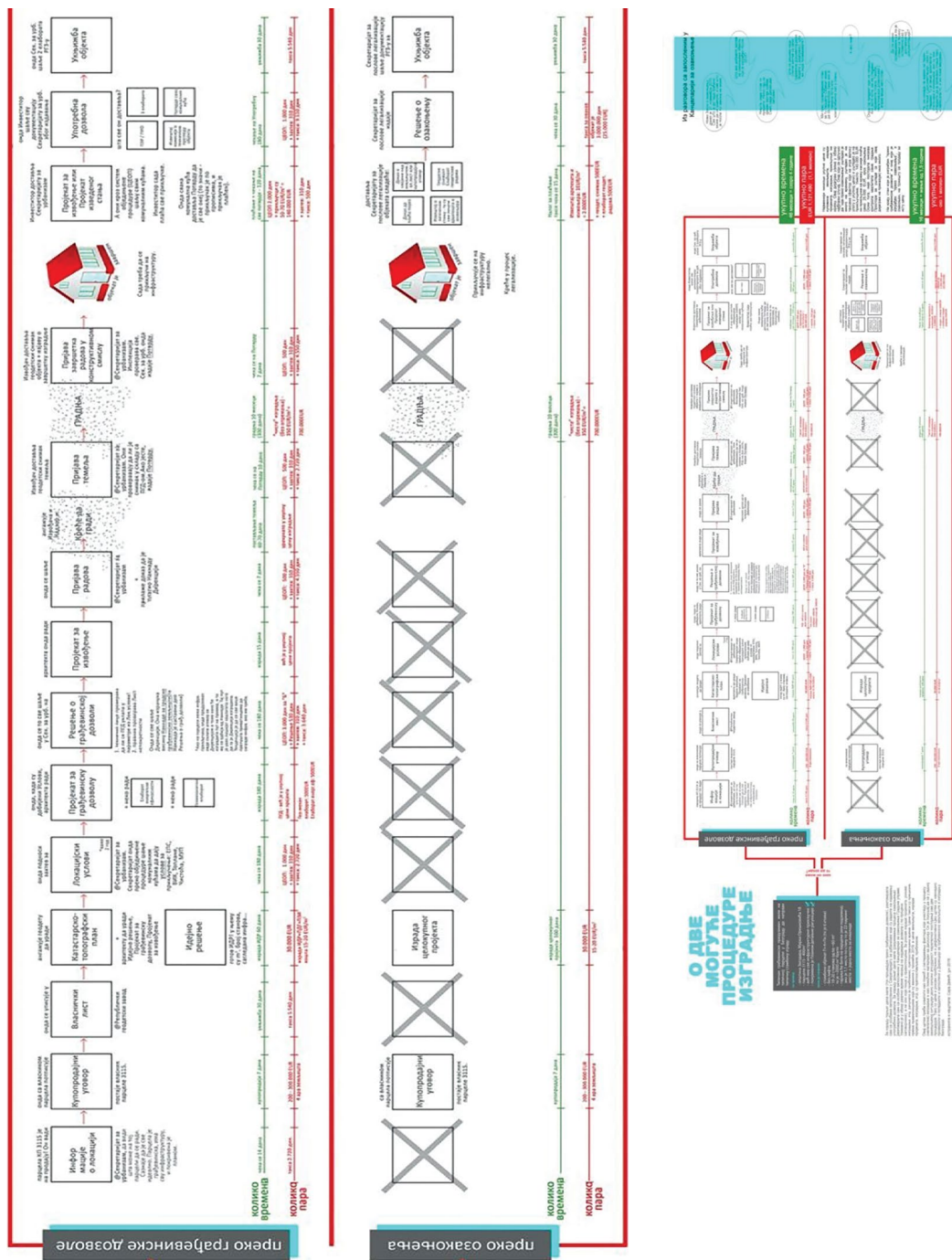


Figure 11.5 Infographic by Sara Devic comparing the monetary (red line) and time (green line) costs of legal and illegal building procedures. The illustration is based on a particular land parcel in Belgrade. The parameters are a six-floor residential building measuring 2,000 sq. m. (on the right one sees the full infographic, on the left a zoom in on the comparative procedure).

2022 | Where is the Plan?

Author(s): Ministry of Space collective (Belgrade)

Description: Since its establishment in 2010, the Ministry of Space (MoS) collective has been continuously working to build infrastructures for better and more inclusive citizen participation in urban development via three parallel tracks: 1) strengthen citizens' capacities to participate by improving their knowledge of how to read and understand urban plans and how to use existing procedural opportunities to take part in decision-making on proposed plans; 2) analyze and publicly present the challenges and problems of the current regulatory and institutional frameworks in relation to citizen participation in urban planning; 3) experiment with innovative deliberative democratic tools to enhance approaches to participation and strive to institutionalize such tools in Serbia.

The "Where Is the Plan?" GIS platform was designed to gather, systematize, and provide easy access to all available information on current urban planning processes in Belgrade, starting in 2022 and with the aim of continuing to add new information in the following years. The map situates each proposed plan within the city's territory and displays relevant details: level/type of plan, current adoption phase, content (both graphical and narrative documents), and possibilities to influence the adoption process and content in each respective case. As such, the map allows citizens to be adequately informed, and it can help citizens mobilize around spatial interventions in their neighborhood.

Distribution: The web platform is freely accessible to anyone with the link. The link was and will continue to be widely distributed via the various MoS communication channels.

Link: gdejeplan.ministarstvoprostora.org/

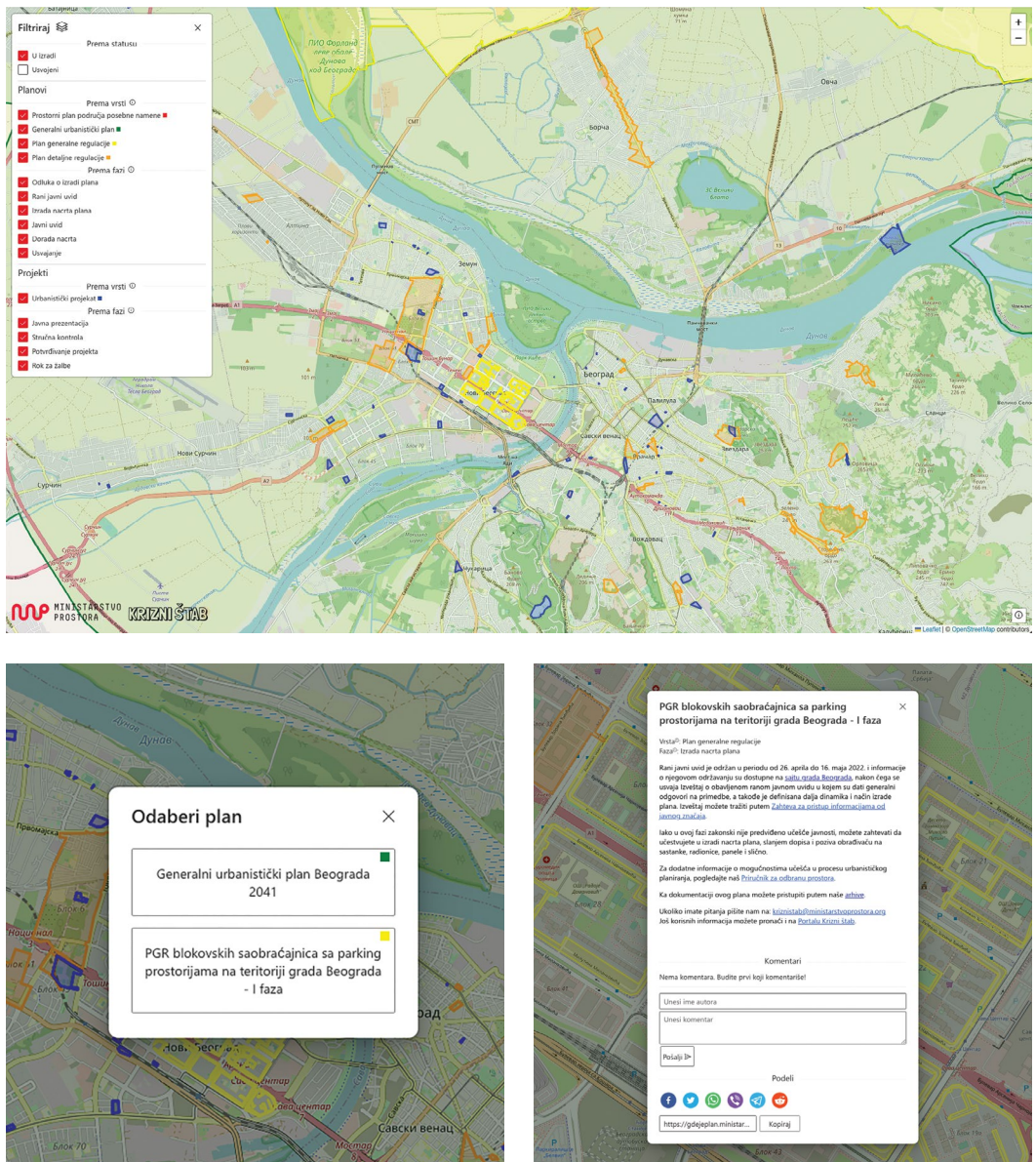


Figure 11.6 Screenshots from the web platform “Where Is the Plan?” showing the distribution of urban plans that are being developed. The platform allows visitors to explore additional information about each plan: for example, the current adoption phase or procedural level of the plan, where it is possible to find the complete documentation, how citizens can get involved in the creation and adoption processes of the particular plan.

Section 6 / BLN

1969

Photomontage: Oranienplatz motorway planning

Author(s): Georg Kohlmaier / Barna von Sartory

Description: This is a photomontage of a motorway extension that was planned by the West Berlin Senate. It shows the junction that was planned at Oranienplatz, which lies at the heart of the residential district Kreuzberg. An aerial view of the plans was never made. To show the future devastation, they took an image of a motorway intersection in Los Angeles and placed it in Kreuzberg, demonstrating the level of destruction it would bring to the old city structure.¹ The contrast of this photomontage—the clear lines of the motorway curving through the dense district—reveals the planning paradigm of the 1950s to 1970s in a way that is easy to grasp. The image also symbolizes the origins of urban civic movements that aimed to counter spatial and housing policies of the time in West Berlin. Although the motorway plans were ultimately shelved, they had far-reaching consequences, and one could say that they made Kreuzberg the district of resistance (Widerstand Kiez) it is today. At the beginning, when the authorities were still pursuing their plans, they carried out forced evictions and massive demolitions, which led to higher vacancies and neglect. To prevent an entire district from being carved out and erased, a resistance movement took shape that occupied the vacant houses and coordinated its efforts to save Kreuzberg from the motorway.

Distribution: As a picture that is now part of the collection of the Berlinische Galerie museum.

Link: sammlung-online.berlinischegalerie.de/443/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=213237&viewType=detailView

¹ Rellensmann, Luise. 2015. "Radically Modern in 1960s Berlin [2]." *Uncube Magazine*, October 13.



Figure 11.7 Photomontage, 1969, Autobahn Planning for Berlin-Kreuzberg, or the Fastest Way to the Berlin Wall (Unbuilt) – Public Planning: Aerial View Oranienplatz © Georg Kohlmaier/Elisabeth von Sartory/Berlinische Galerie.

**2010-
2016****Vacancy Reporter (Leerstandsmelder Berlin)**

Author(s): Multi-actor, overall: Gängeviertel e.V., for Berlin: openBerlin e.V.

Description: Leerstandsmelder shares and collects information on vacancies in Berlin and many other major cities. It is based on the rationale that the current housing shortage in these cities can be countered by eliminating unnecessary and speculative vacancies (there are no exact statistics on this, but observers estimate that there are thousands of unused units). Leerstandsmelder is a collective and freely accessible data pool, independent of municipal information channels. Registered users can exchange information about the vacant buildings and discuss ideas on alternative uses. The ability of Leerstandsmelder to provide a realistic picture of the current situation and increase pressure on politicians for action depends on the levels of participation.

Distribution: After the launch of Leerstandsmelder for Hamburg, several local initiatives used the tool for other locations, including Berlin. Since 2016, there have been no new entries on this page. A new edition is planned with funding from the Prototype Fund.

Link: leerstandsmelder.de/berlin

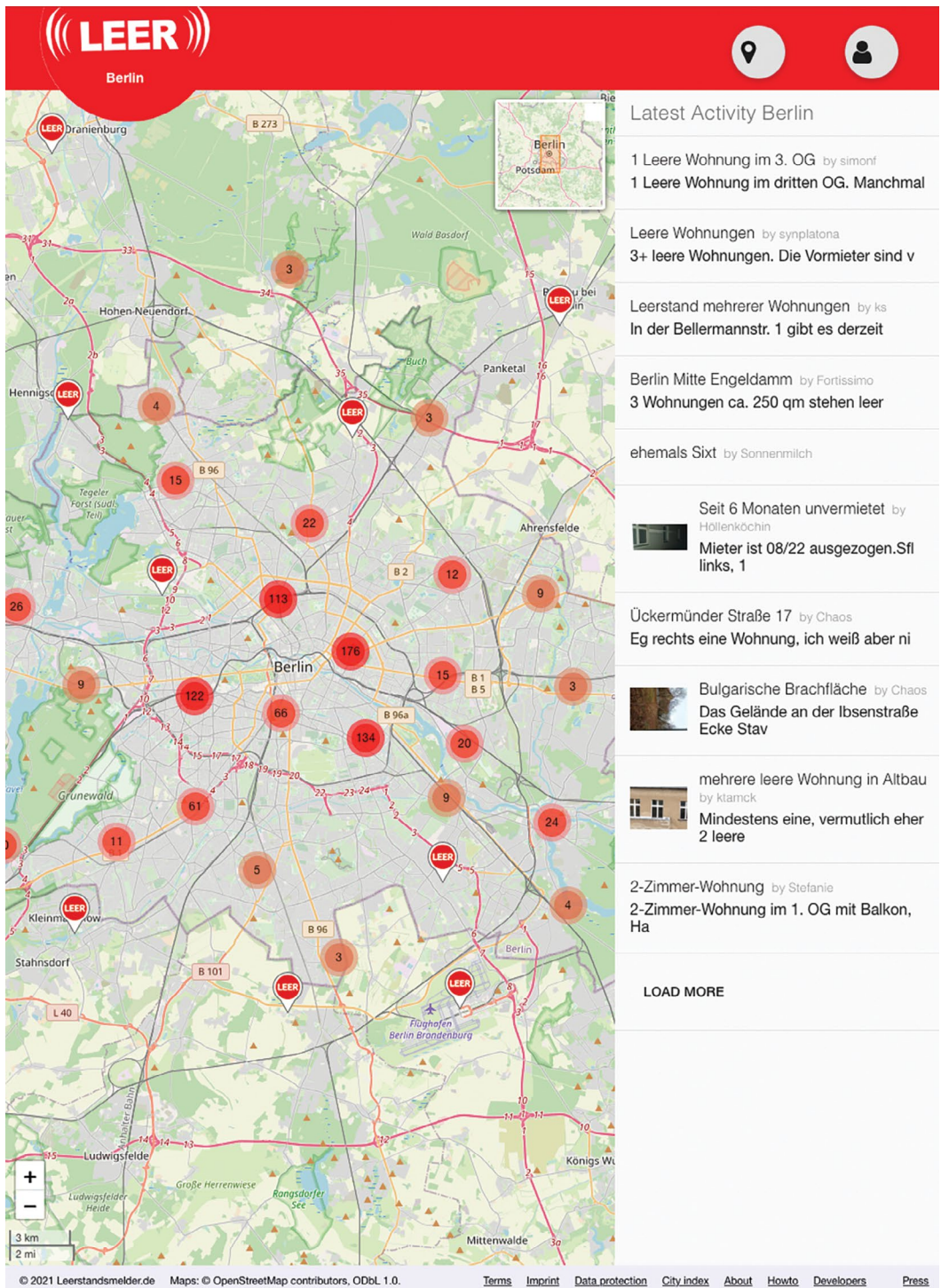


Figure 11.8 Screenshot of “Vacancy Reporter” (Leerstandsmelder Berlin), which is a subpage of a larger website operated by a network of local initiatives.

2014 | Berlin Squatted (Berlin Besetzt)

Author(s): Pappsatt Medienkollektiv, reclaimyourcity.net, and Eike Send, together with Papiertiger-Archiv, Umbruch-Foto-Archiv and azozomox

Description: This relatively new illustration of the squatting movement shows the history of Berlin's squatting scene and narrates the emergence of the Instandbesetzung ("repair crew" occupation), a culture of squatting with the declared aim of saving derelict buildings from demolition and making them habitable again. For Berlin, this culture constitutes an important layer for understanding today's housing movement and its self-identification. The authors state: "The map wants to visualize collective and self-governed spaces, meaning the representation of resisting actors and spaces within the struggle for the 'right to the city' in order to show that political fights/movements can be successful. The map is intended to be a contribution to the political debate and to show the urban space of Berlin as a result of fights for the appropriation of space." (Pappsatt-Kollektiv/Morawski 2018: 223).^{2,3}

Distribution: Via its website.

Link: berlin-besetzt.de/

-
- 2 Pappsatt-Kollektiv und Tobias Morawski. 2018. "Mapping the Squatting Movement." In *This Is Not an Atlas: A Global Collection of Counter-Cartographies, Sozial- und Kulturgeographie*, edited by Kollektiv Orangotango, 222-227. Vol. 26 of *Social and Cultural Geography*. 1st ed. Bielefeld: Transcript.
 - 3 Asmuth, Gereon. 2014. "Besetzer in Berlin: Da ist unser Haus [Squatters in Berlin: There is our house]." TAZ, August 8. taz.de/Besetzer-in-Berlin/15036363/

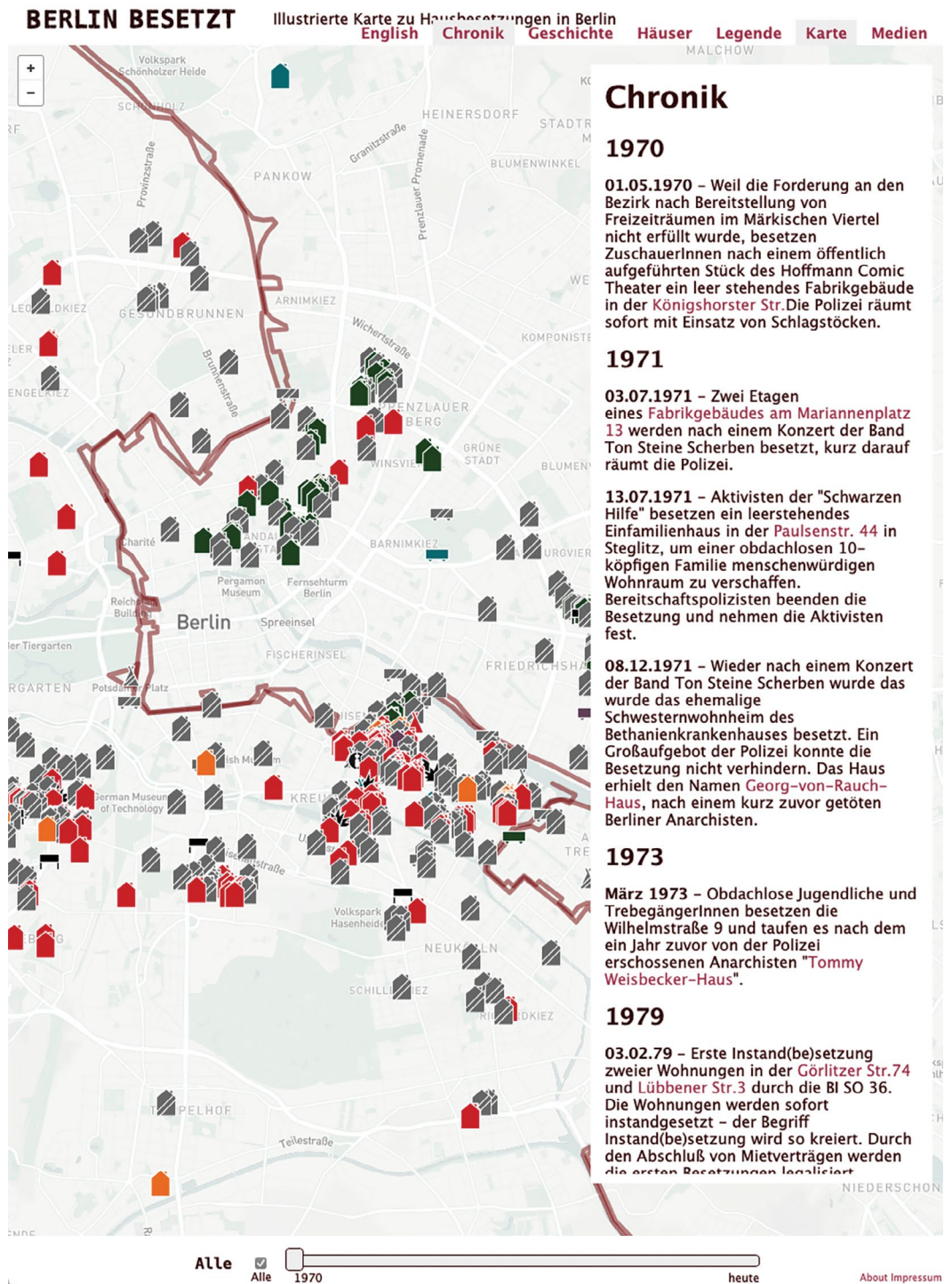


Figure 11.9 Screenshot of "Berlin Squatted" (Berlin Besetzt) map, a project on Berlin's squatting history and scene today by Pappsatt Medienkollektiv, reclaimyourcity.net, and Eike Send, together with Papiertiger-Archiv, Umbruch-Foto-Archiv and azozomox

2014

Valuation, Displacement, and Resistance in Kreuzberg 36 (Aufwertung, Verdrängung und Widerstand in Kreuzberg 36)

Author(s): Kollektiv Orangotango, Pappsatt Medienkollektiv, reclaimyourcity

Description: This map addresses the “right to the city” issue and focuses on the highly contended Kreuzberg district. It shows both the consequences and materializations of neoliberal politics on the one hand and the structures of self-empowerment and loci of alternatives in the district on the other. According to the authors: “The map can serve as an instrument for the socio-spatial analysis of real-estate exploitation interests and profit-oriented urban design. In addition, it can make urban political protests and alternatives visible, provide suggestions for networking, urban political engagement, and concrete support, and be used as educational and propaganda material.” The map’s launch included the mural “Berlin not for sale,” which was created in the summer of 2014 on the façade of a building near Görlitzer Bahnhof in Kreuzberg, depicting real stories from among the many cases captured by the map. The mural was designed by the collectives Pappsatt, Memfarado, and orangotango, and the motif was developed over several months with the residents of the self-managed housing project Manteuffel 39. The wall was provided by an alternative Kreuzberg cooperative, and the mural was financially supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation for Youth Education.⁴

Distribution: PDF to Download and print (first edition in 2014, second edition in 2018), together with the mural “Berlin not for Sale” at the corner of Manteuffel- and Naunynstraße.

Link: orangotango.info/karte-aufwertung-verdrangung-und-widerstand-in-kreuzberg-36/

⁴ Kollektiv Orangotango. 2022. “Berlin NOT for sale: Upgrading, displacement and resistance – The mural “Berlin not for Sale” shows current urban politics in Kreuzberg.” Kollektiv Orangotango. Accessed 23 January 2023. orangotango.info/mural-berlin-not-for-sale/

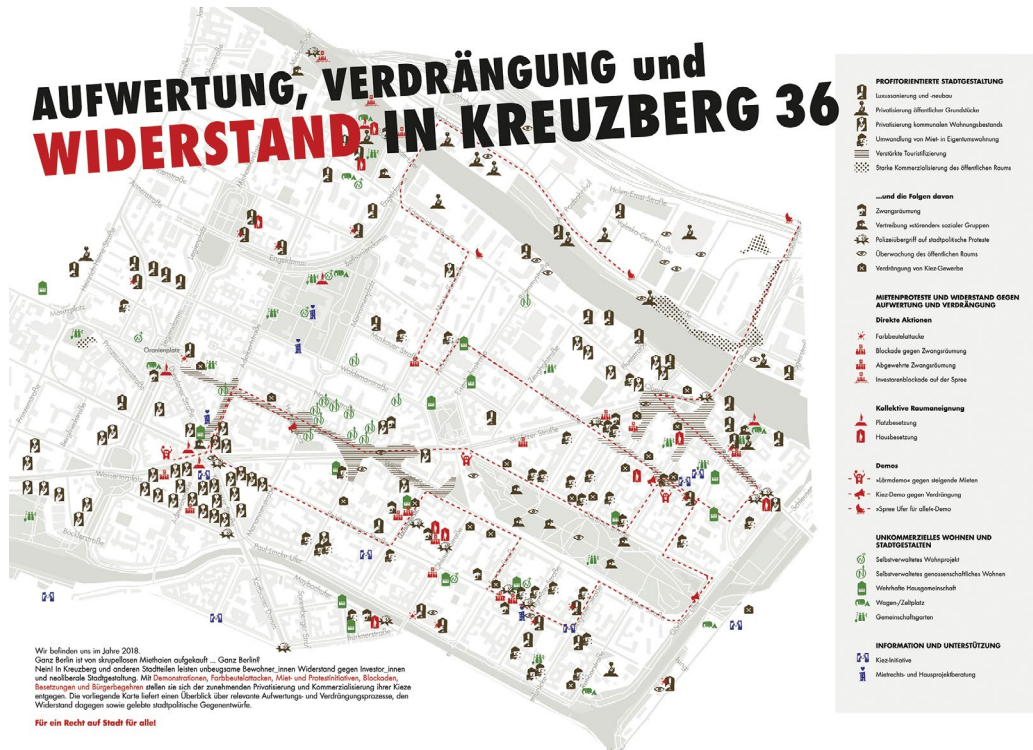


Figure 11.10 The “Valuation, Displacement, and Resistance in Kreuzberg 36” (Aufwertung, Verdrängung und Widerstand in Kreuzberg 36) map showing sites of dispossession, as well as loci of self-empowerment (above). The mural “Berlin not for sale,” 2014, near Görlitzer Bahnhof, depicting the real-estate transactions in Kreuzberg as a monopoly game (on the right). (c) Kollektiv Orangotango, Pappsatt Medienkollektiv, reclaimyourcity.



2014 | Moabit Gentrifizierung Crowdmap

Author(s): "Roundtable against Gentrification" (RTgG) in Moabit and the Who owns Moabit? Initiative (Wem gehört Moabit?), residents via crowdsourcing

Description: The is a map based on crowdsourcing in collecting and documenting information about house sales, conversions into condominiums or vacation homes, modernizations, rent increases, and vacancies in Moabit. Residents share their knowledge by adding new entries and commenting on existing ones in this curated map. In this way, the community of Moabit is better informed about what is happening in their neighborhood, and tenants can collaborate and come to the roundtable meetings of the initiative.

Distribution: Entries are accessible either through the crowdmap site or other materials available on the website of the Who owns Moabit? initiative.

Link: moabit.crowdmap.com

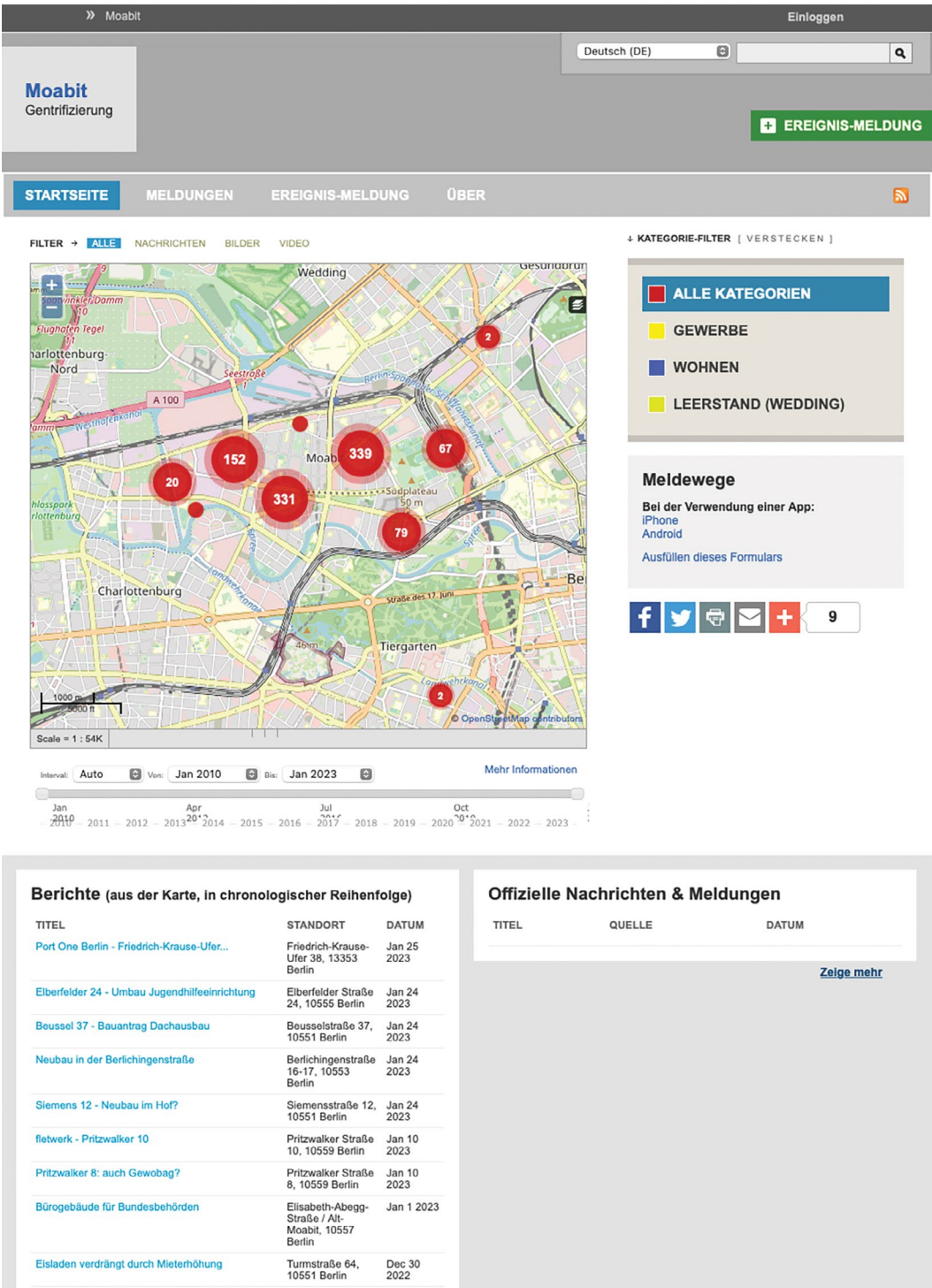


Figure 11.11 Screenshot of the “Gentrification of Moabit” (Moabit Gentrifizierung) crowdmap from “Roundtable against Gentrification” (RTgG) in Moabit and the Who owns Moabit? (Wem gehört Moabit?) Initiative, which operates as an independent portal.

2015

Places of Displacement (Orte der Verdrängung) in Kreuzberg 61

Author(s): Who owns Kreuzberg? initiative (Wem gehört Kreuzberg?), residents via crowdsourcing

Description: Through data crowdsourced from residents in the area, the map shows how displacement is occurring in the western part of Kreuzberg, the area that used to belong to the old 61 postcode. The red pins mark the rental apartments that were converged to condominiums or speculative vacancy, while the blue pins represent new condominium construction sites. The map is informative, builds an archive, gives scale to the magnitude of the problem, and it features side by side with the particular campaigns of the initiative.

Distribution: The map is embedded in the online blog Wem gehört Kreuzberg?

Link: wem-gehoert-kreuzberg.de/index.php/karte-verdraengungsprozesse

WEM GEHÖRT KREUZBERG

Start **Karte: Verdrängungsprozesse** Bleibe(n) Stadt von Unten - DragoAreal Bockbrauerei Stadtnatur K61
Gedenkort Fontanepromenade 15 Presse Multimedia Links Über uns Kontakt

Q suchen...





Orte der Verdrängung

Die interaktive Karte ist nur so aktuell, wie ihr uns mitteilt, was bei euch in den Häusern an Umwandlung, Entmietung, Eigenbedarfskündigungen, spekulativer Leerstand, Verdrängung.... passiert.

Hier noch einen [ausführlicheren Text](#) dazu.

Schreibt uns eine Email an: [haeuser\(at\)wem-gehoert-kreuzberg.de](mailto:haeuser(at)wem-gehoert-kreuzberg.de)

Legende zur Karte:

-  Häuser, für die es eine Abgeschlossenheits- bzw. Teilungserklärung gibt oder bereits in Eigentum umgewandelt, Leerstand sowie Ferienwohnungen, die bekannt wurden, Entmietung, überbeuerte Mieten, Luxussanierung, Verdrängung von Mieter*innen
-  Neubau – überwiegend Eigentum, auch hier in Kreuzberg durchaus im hochpreisigen (Luxus-)segment
-  Häuser, in denen das Vorkaufsrecht angewendet wurde
-  das 4,7 ha große Areal hinterm Kreuzberger Finanzamt, das sog. Dragonerareal

(Angaben in der Karte natürlich ohne Gewähr)

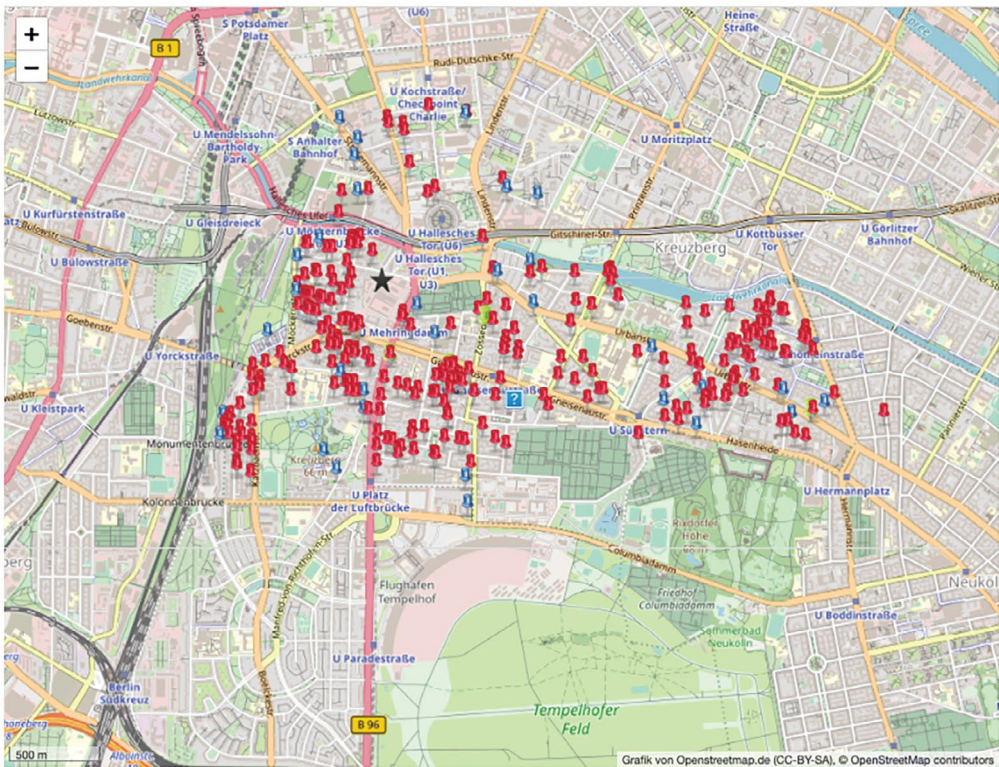


Figure 11.12 Screenshot of the “Places of Displacement in Kreuzberg 61” (Orte der Verdrängung in Kreuzberg 61) map by the Who owns Kreuzberg? (Wem gehört Kreuzberg?) initiative.

2015

Map of Displacement (Karte der Verdrängung) in S036

Author(s): Bizim Kiez, residents via crowdsourcing

Description: The map attempts to provide insight into the current sites of change and displacement in the southeastern part of Kreuzberg, which used to belong to the postcode 36, in the areas with social protection status (Milieuschutzgebiet) of Luisenstadt. The information is collected via public information and crowdsourcing, which means the data cannot always be verified. The map makes it possible to search for content and allows residents to contact each other via the platform.

Distribution: This map was created with Google My Maps and is linked on the Bizim Kiez website.

Link: [google.com/maps/d/viewer?hl=de&z=15&mid=1RWHZz-WOgpzr1UQ9oKGBSjeqvKs&ll=52.49590195119296%2C13.433706570293706](https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?hl=de&z=15&mid=1RWHZz-WOgpzr1UQ9oKGBSjeqvKs&ll=52.49590195119296%2C13.433706570293706)

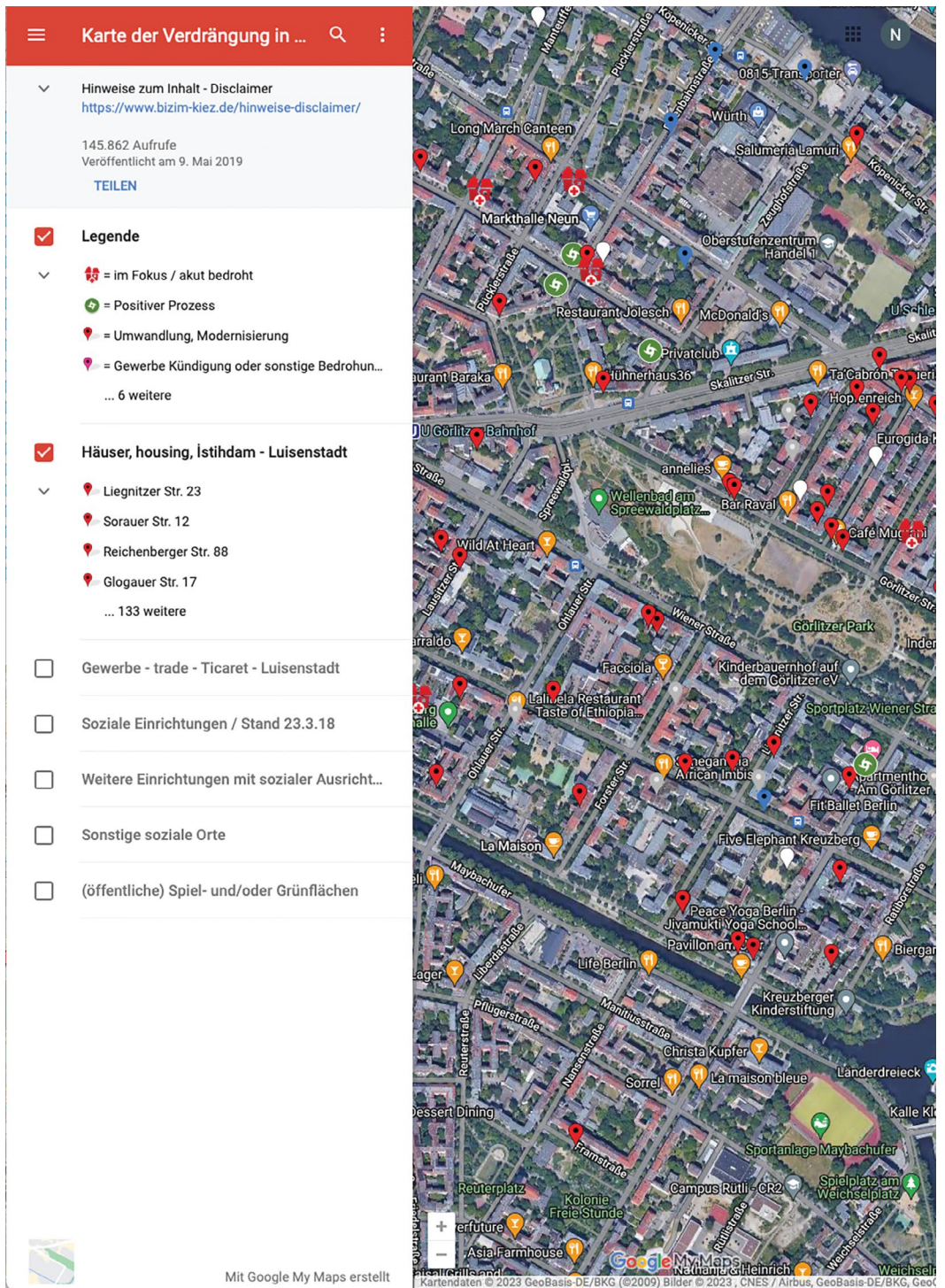


Figure 11.13 Screenshot of “Map of Displacement in SO36” (Karte der Verdrängung in SO36) by Bizim Kiez and residents via crowdsourcing.

2015 | Meta-map: StadtPolitikPlan

Author(s): Multi-actor, coordinated by We're all staying! (Wir bleiben alle!)

Description: This is an automated meta-map that combines data from several digital maps related to the housing movement in Berlin. The different maps and the respective links to the originals are shown in a menu. The map seeks to give an overview of the different events, and it features side by side with the campaigns of the We're all staying! initiative (Wir bleiben alle!).

Distribution: Via the website of Wir bleiben alle!

Link: wirbleibenalle.org/map

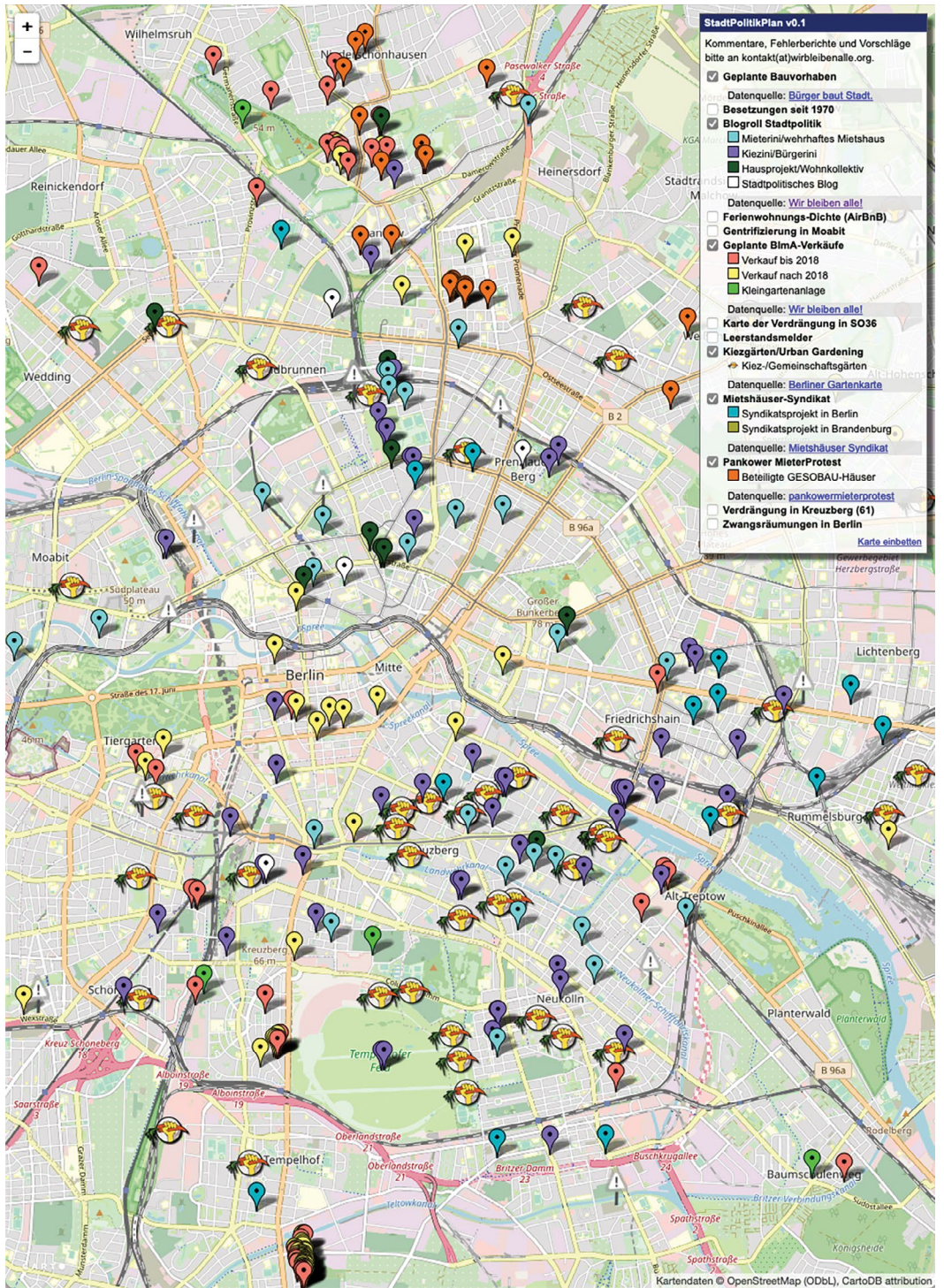


Figure 11.14 Screenshot of the meta-map on the “StadtPolitikPlan” website.

2015

AirBnb vs. Berlin**Author(s):** Alsino Skowronnek, Lucas Vogel, and Jonas Parnow

Description: This website shows the distribution of AirBnb short-term rentals in Berlin, as well as information on the network's top 10 hosts in the city using various maps and diagrams. The data was retrieved via the AirBnb application programming interface (API). Even though this was "only" a student project on storytelling in data journalism, the website attracted considerable attention and stimulated discourse. The project spread very quickly and widely via social media channels such as Twitter and, according to the authors, after only half an hour, the first email came from Airbnb with questions about the origin of the data and the general intention of "Airbnb vs. Berlin." Journalists picked up the interest from social media, and the maps were covered on various online news sites including Vice (Motherboard), Netzpolitik, Wired, and Zeit Online, as well as via radio, print magazines, newspapers, and later television.

Distribution: Via its website. Press releases to journalists included a "press kit" with all graphics available for download.

Link: airbnbvsberlin.de



Wohnungsnetzwerke

Bietet man lediglich ein Zimmer in seiner Wohnung an, dürfte die Begrüßung der Gäste, die Instandhaltung und Herrichtung des privaten Hotelzimmers nicht schwer fallen.

Doch was, wenn man mehrere Zimmer oder Wohnungen anbietet, die womöglich noch über die ganze Stadt verteilt sind?

Betrachtet man die 281 Wohnungen der Top 10 Airbnb-Nutzer in Berlin auf einer Karte, zeigt sich insgesamt eine nicht überraschende starke Konzentration in den inneren Bezirken.

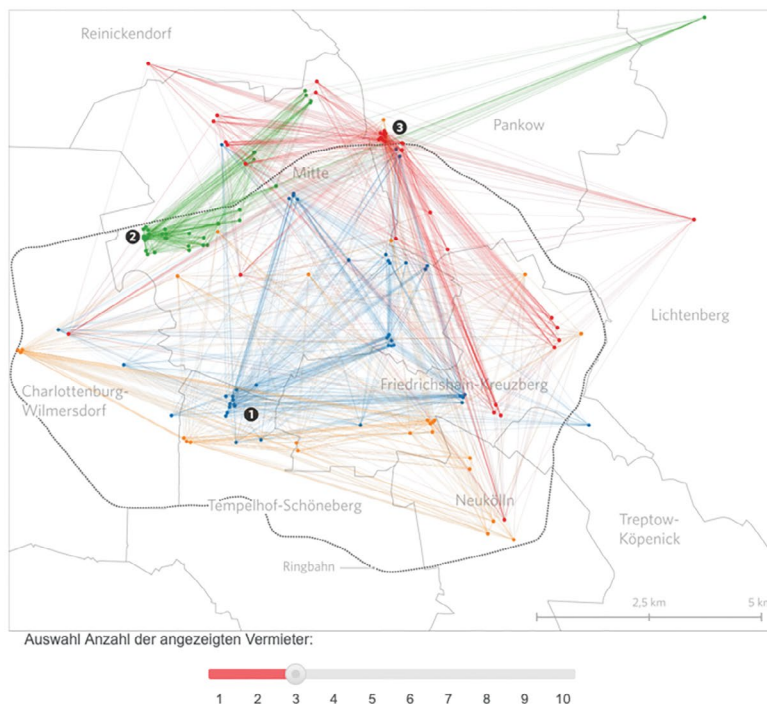


Figure 11.15 Screenshot of the “Apartments Network map on the AirBnb vs. Berlin” website, by Alsino Skowronnek, Lucas Vogel, and Jonas Parnow

2018 | Who owns Berlin? (Wem gehört Berlin?)

Author(s): Multi-actor, coordinated by Plattformnachwuchsarchitekten

Description: This online map depends on crowdsourcing to collect information and stories about building ownership and management in Berlin. The authors work together with residents against the sellout of the city and for Gemeinwohl-oriented (public-welfare oriented) urban development. They work with local multipliers such as Volksentscheid Transparenz (Referendum for Transparency), and the map is networked with other Who owns the city? portals (Wem gehört die Stadt) like Who owns Moabit? and Who owns Hamburg?. The map seeks to inform and mobilize people and agents on “enforcing EU laws to combat money laundering and tax evasion in the real-estate sector in Berlin, closing tax loopholes, and taking effective action against vacancies and unnecessary demolition. After all, what happens to properties and real estate shapes the cityscape for everyone and is a decisive factor for social peace in the city.”⁵

Distribution: Via its website.

Link: wem-gehoert.berlin/karte

⁵ FAQs. 2018. *Wem gehört Berlin?*. Accessed 17 January 2023. wem-gehoert.berlin/faq/

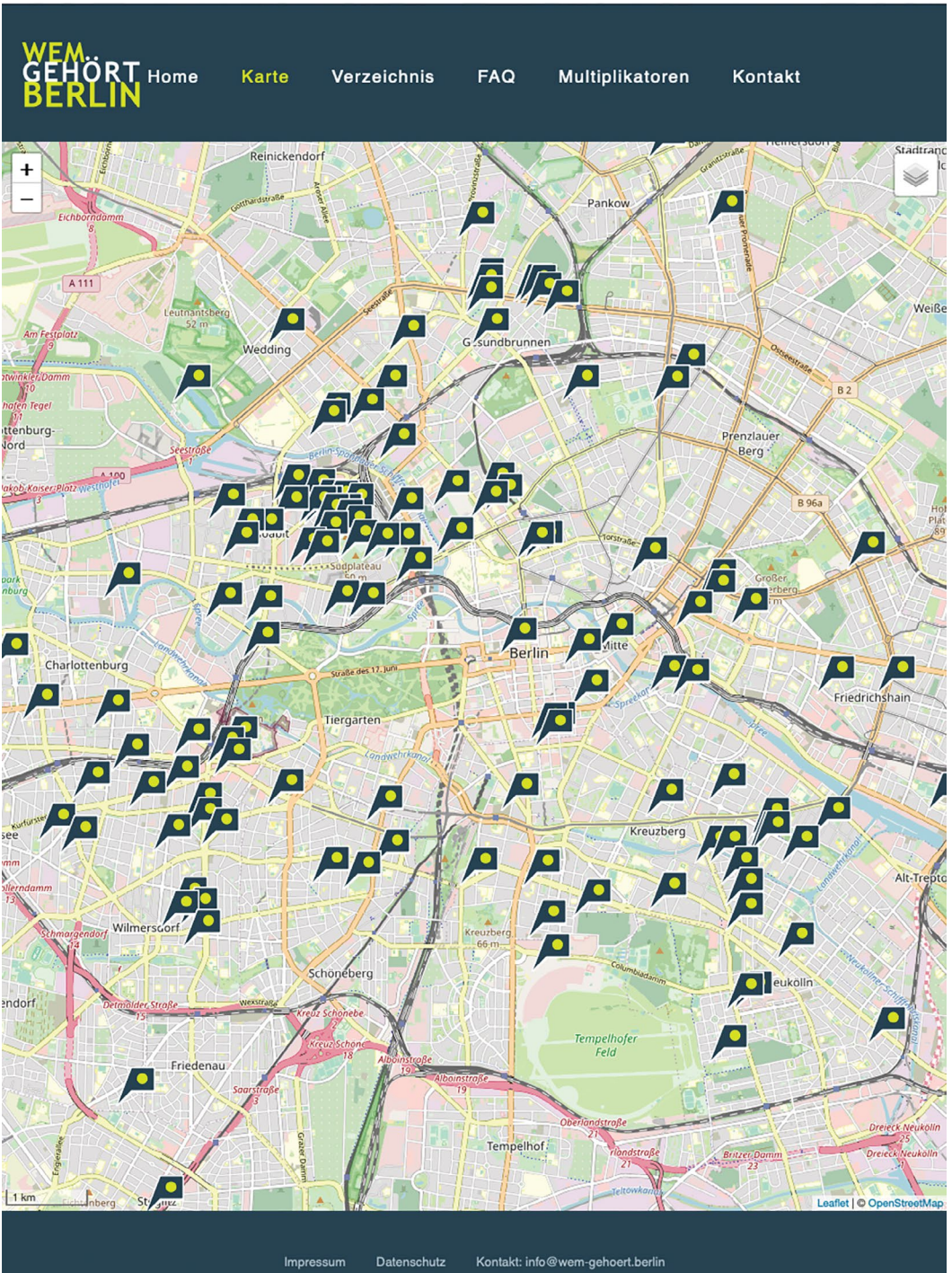


Figure 11.16 Screenshot of the map of the “Who owns Berlin?” (Wem gehört Berlin?) research project and website.

2019

Who owns/ed Boxi? (Wem gehört(e) der Boxi?)

Author(s): David Amacher, Dominik Berton, Felix Jaekel, Léonie Schwöbel (students of the Potsdam University of Applied Sciences)—with the support of Tagesspiegel Innovation Lab—Michael Gegg, Hendrik Lehmann, David Meidinger, Helena Wittlich.

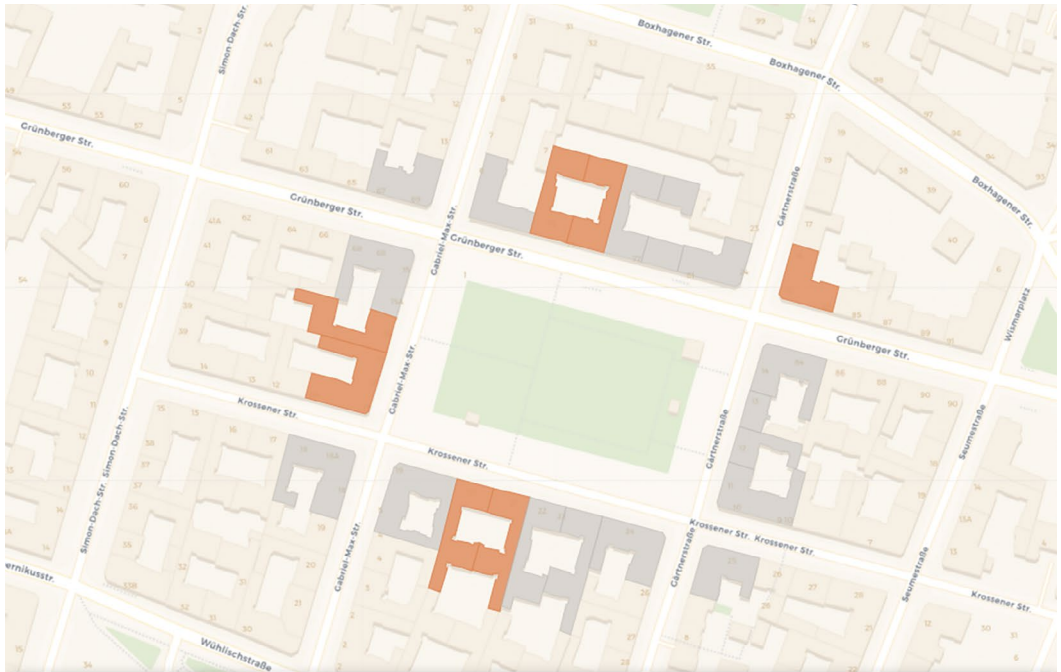
Description: Boxi is short for Boxhagener Platz, a square in the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district. This storytelling and data visualization website is a project by students at the Potsdam University of Applied Sciences with the support of Tagesspiegel Innovation Lab and CORRECTIV. It is part of the larger Who owns Berlin? (Wem gehört Berlin?) project. The data was gathered through historical research and interviews, and it includes large landowners, expropriations, vacancies, and squatters, as well as a little-known real-estate company in Denmark that now owns about two thousand apartments in the city.

Distribution: Website published by Tagesspiegel

Link: interaktiv.tagesspiegel.de/lab/wem-gehoert-der-boxi

Wem gehört(e) der Boxi?

Immobilieninvestoren schufen den Boxhagener Platz Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts. Erst teilten sie den Grund auf, dann die Häuser. Eine hausgenaue Eigentums-Dokumentation vom 18. Jahrhundert bis heute.



Die Profis

Mieten als Geschäftsmodell



Sechs Häuser gehören professionellen Immobilienunternehmen. Die großen zehn privaten Berliner Eigentümer wie Deutsche Wohnen und Co. sind nicht am Platz vertreten. Umso interessanter, dass einige der weniger bekannten Unternehmen, die am Boxi investieren, inzwischen berlinweit beachtliche Immobilienbestände angesammelt haben...

Figure 11.17 Screenshot of the “Who Owns/ed Boxi?” (Wem gehört(e) der Boxi?) website by students of the Potsdam University of Applied Sciences and Tagesspiegel.

2019 | Property and Everyday Life

Author(s): nGbK- research project “In Dissent? Neighborhood, Gentrification, and Artistic Engagement on Oranienstraße” (Im Dissens? – Nachbarschaft, Gentrifizierung und künstlerisches Engagement in der Oranienstraße). Working group: Stefan Endewardt, Joerg Franzbecker, Anna Heilgemeir, Naomi Hennig, Ulrike Jordan, and Dagmar Pelger. In collaboration with: Nija-Maria Linke, Franziska Bittner, Ruschka Steininger, and Andrea Bellu.

Description: The “Property and Everyday Life” mapping project traces the relationship between neighborhood, gentrification, and artistic engagement at a spatial level. Property ownership is examined closely to better understand the role that art and cultural spaces on Oranienstraße are (or could) play in the context of the increasing displacement of local tradespeople. Based on the premise that overlaying the invisible forms of ownership is important to comprehend the everyday uses of the city and its streets, three layers of information were combined in the map: 1) the level of ownership, 2) the level of local everyday life in the stores along the street, and 3) the level of art and cultural sites, which often have a trans-local impact. The data that was collected for this map was also used for the “Who Owns Kreuzberg?” map (in collaboration with Kunstblock and beyond) and it is freely available for future projects on this topic.

Distribution: The map was created in and for the publication with the same name. For some time, it was distributed in the neighborhood stores of Oranienstraße. It is available on the nGbK website in the form of an online newspaper, which can also be downloaded as a PDF.

Link: ngbk.de/images/stories/PDF/eigentum-alltag_download.pdf

2020 | Current cases of the Heimstaden AB - deal

Author(s): Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik Berlin

Description: In 2020, within a few months, the Swedish residential real-estate investor Heimstaden AB purchased more than 140 houses with nearly 4,000 apartments throughout Berlin. The map shows how the “Heimstaden deal” spreads over a large part of Berlin and provides some information about the cases. It is intended to inform the tenants of the affected houses, connect them, and support them in joint protest and resistance.

Distribution: Via its website.

Link: iniforum-berlin.de/2020/10/vernetzung-zum-protest-gegen-heimstaden-ab/#more-2645

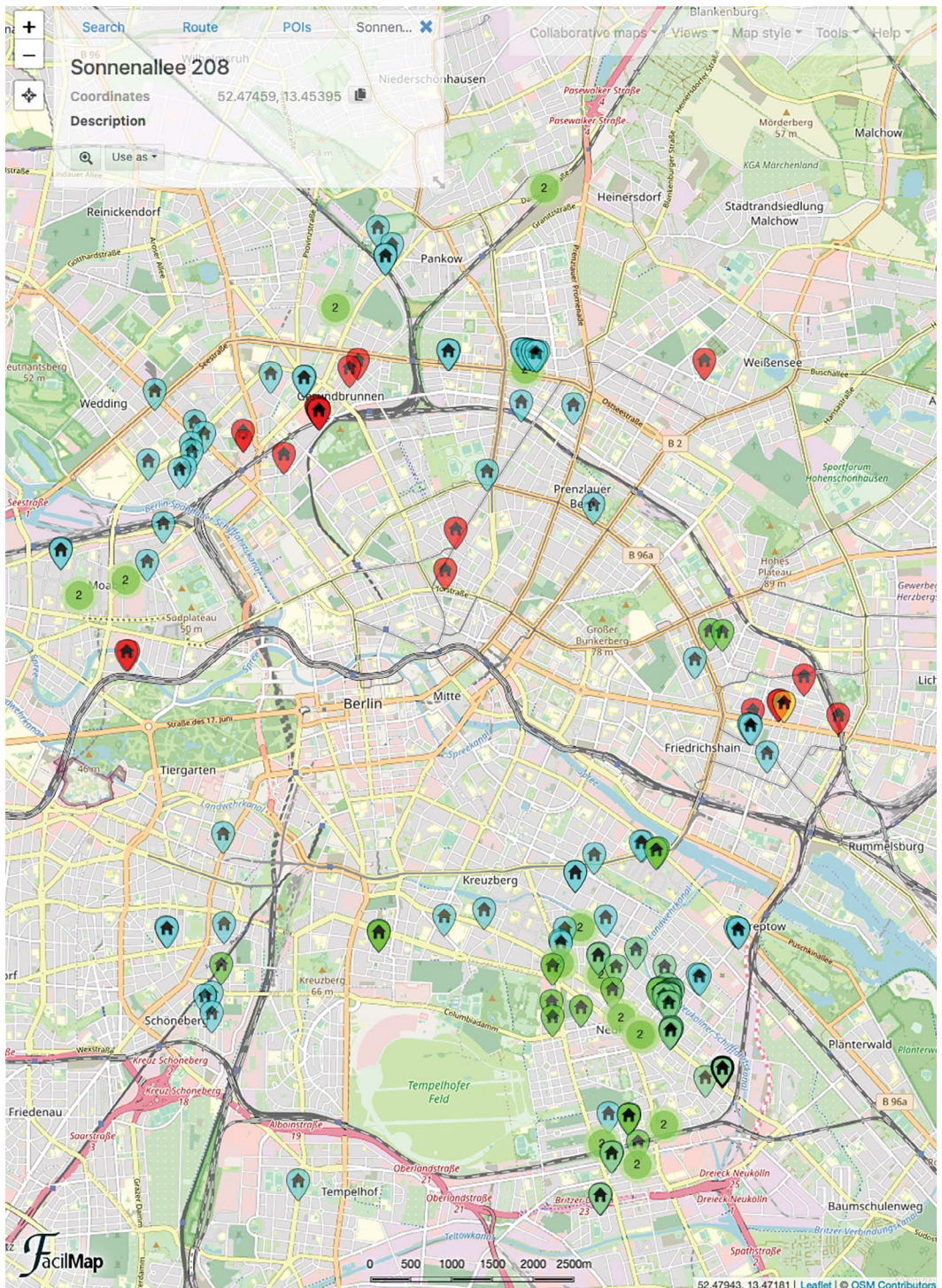


Figure 11.19 Screenshot of the “Current cases of the Heimstaden AB - deal” map by Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik Berlin.

Section 6 / BCN

2003 | Temporal maps of PobleNOW

Author(s): Laïa Sadurní and Vahida Ramujkic (Rotor)

Description: “Safari Poble Now” and “PlanariaePoble Now” are two works from among several maps that Rotor developed in the period between 2001 and 2008 of the highly gentrified Poblenou neighborhood in Barcelona. The maps graphically translate their critical views on how urban planning and development is impacting the area.

Distribution: Printed posters, as well as download from website.

Link: concentricfields.org/ca/cartografia/?project=2

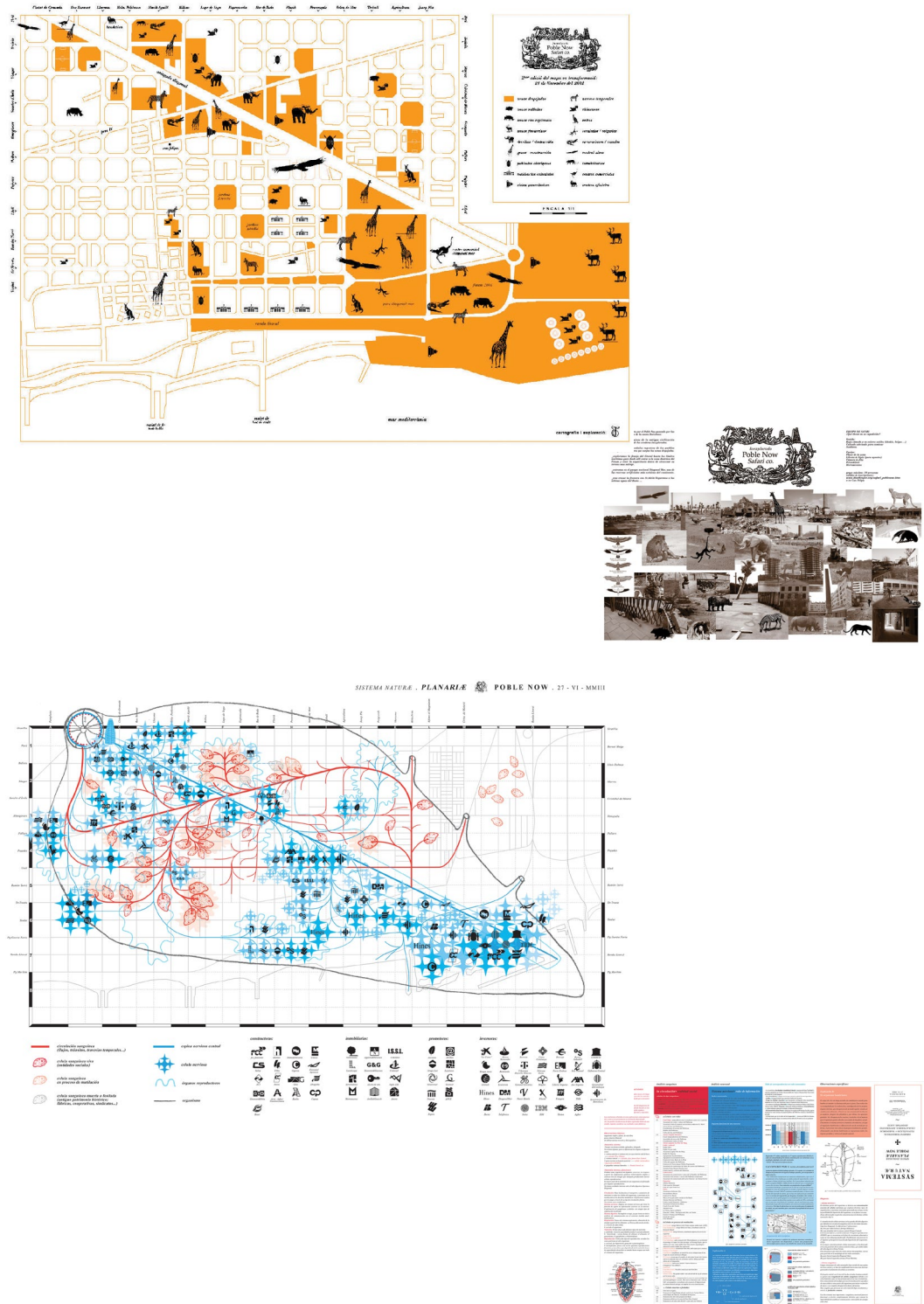


Figure 11.20 Screenshots of “Safari Poble NOW” (above) and “PlanariaePoble NOW” (below), 2003, by LaiaSadurní and VahidaRamujkic (Rotor).

2004

The “What’s the Forum really about?” (de què va realmente el Fòrum) map

Author(s): Collective work from various groups against the Universal Forum of Cultures 2004

Description: The 2004 “Universal Forum of Cultures” was an international event that spanned 141 days and included conventions, performances, markets, games, concerts, street performances, theater, dance and cabaret companies, circus acts, and exhibitions. The official aims of the events included support for peace, sustainable development, human rights, and respect for diversity. It concentrated on the highly gentrified Poblenou neighborhood in Barcelona and was connected to the agenda of the [22@ redevelopment project](#). The events were contested by local social movements, who mobilized during that period to reveal what was happening behind the scenes. Among other activities, they produced this map showing the intertwining of gentrification, surveillance, pollution, destruction of natural resources, and other forms of repression.

Distribution: Print format at El Lokal, Infoespai, Arran, and Espai Obert, and later uploaded to the website below.

Link: sindominio.net/mapas/ing/mapa_ing.htm

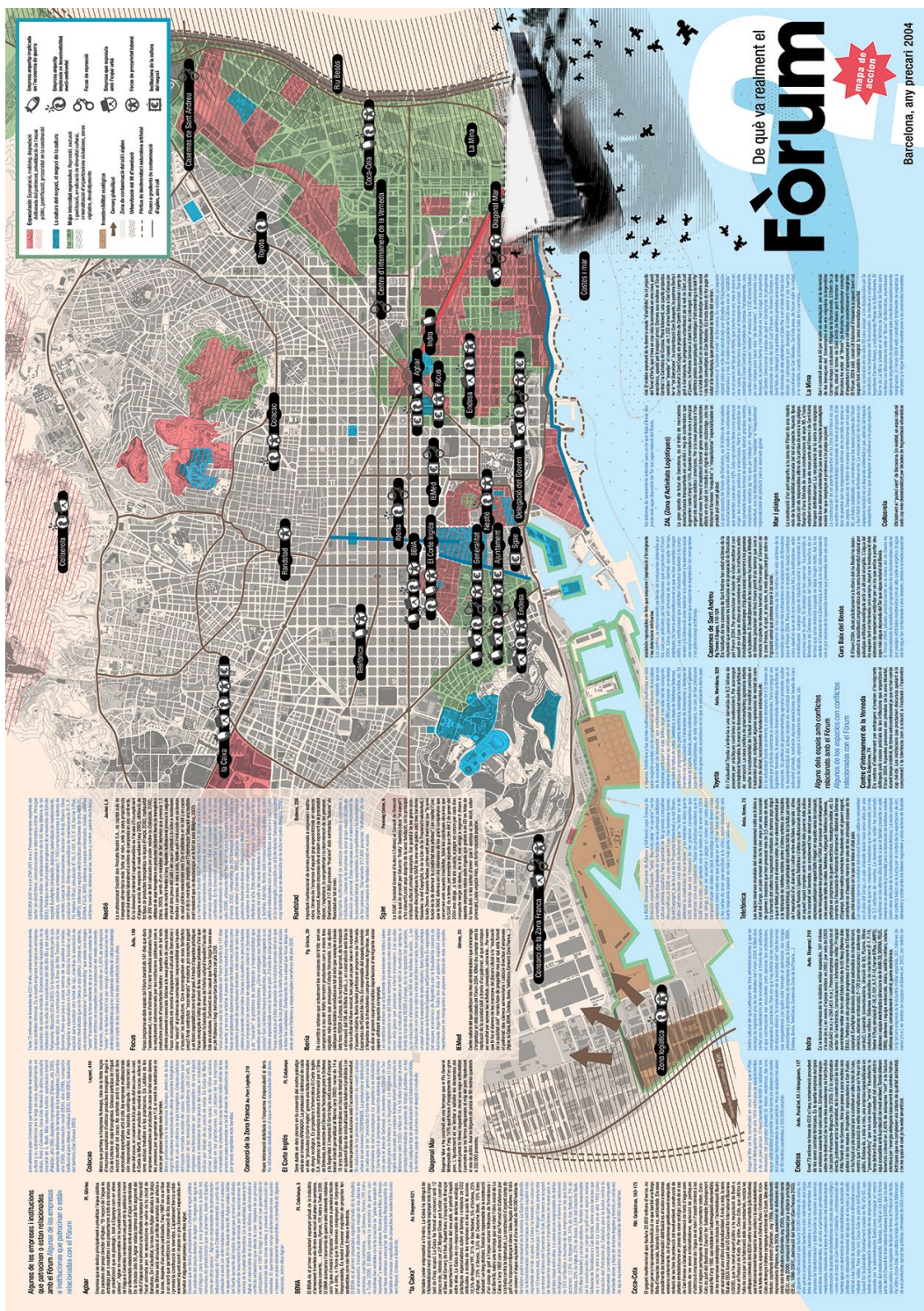


Figure 11.21 Image showing the “What’s the Forum really about?” (de què va realmente el Fòrum) map, 2004, by a collective of various groups in protest against the “Universal Forum of Cultures” event.

2017

Morphologies of Tourism (Morfologies del turime)

Author(s): 300000Kms

Description: This is a collection of 19 cartographies developed for the FADFest'17 Barcelona Arts and Design Festival and grouped into 4 chapters that illustrate the tourist attractions, hotels, and available services, while also addressing the potential population displacement caused by tourism. The maps are based on an analysis of soft data with the aim of generating the information necessary to understand the complex phenomenon and better inform future decisions and at the same time to serve as a public monitoring tool.

Distribution: As a printed exhibition within the FADFest'17, where the panels were mounted onto seats of a bus that visited various neighborhoods, and online via own website.

Link: turismebcn.300000kms.net/

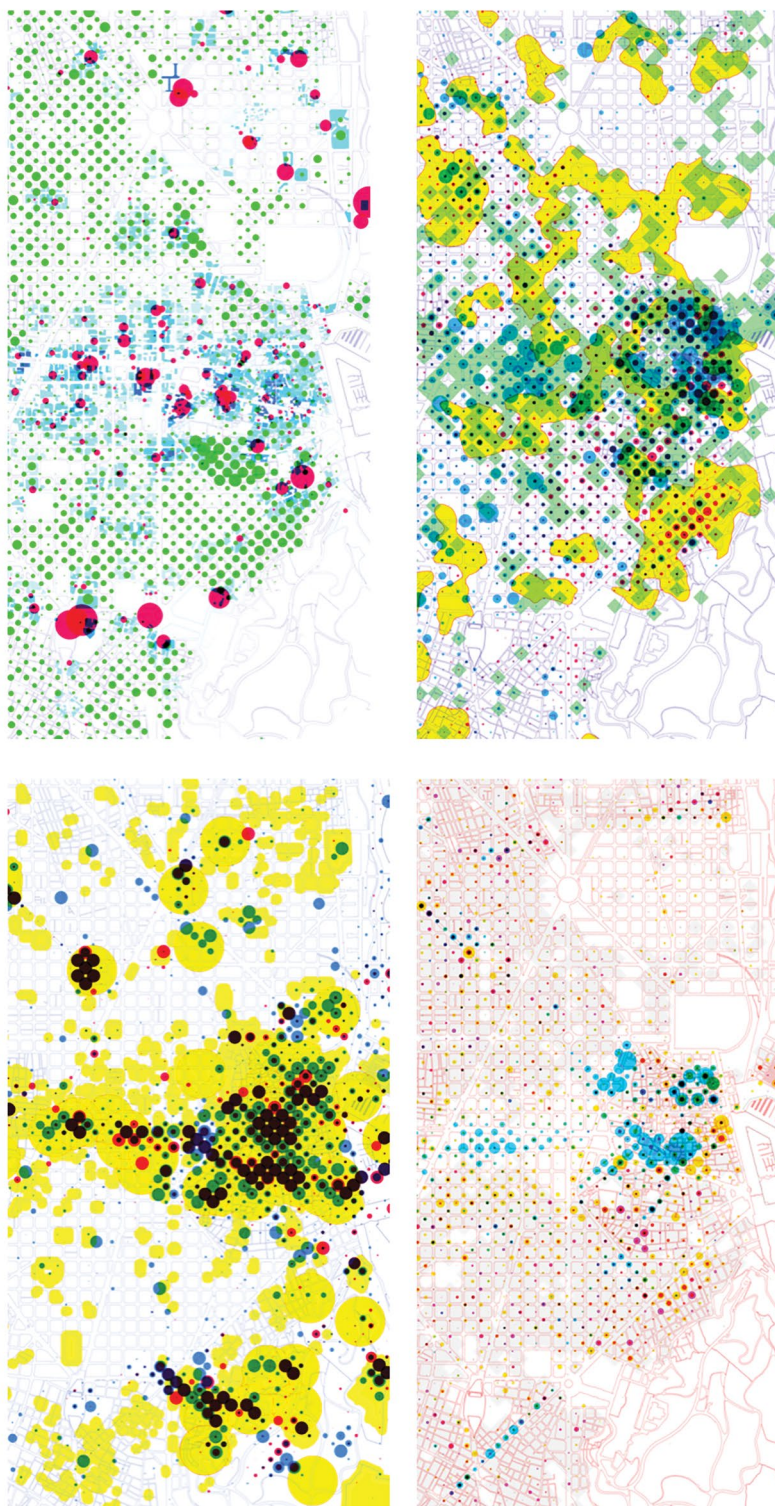


Figure 11.22 Screenshot of “Morphologies of Tourism” (Morfologies del turime), 2017, by 300000Kms for the FADFest’17 Barcelona Arts and Design Festival.

2017

The “Buildings affected by the new rental bubble” (Edificis afectats per la nova bombolla del lloguer) map

Author(s): La Directa¹

Description: This map was part of their investigative journalistic piece *Buildings with a “Bug”: A Priority Target for Speculative Investment* (Spanish: Edificis afectats per la nova bombolla del lloguer; Catalan: Edificis amb ‘bitxo’: objectiu prioritari de la inversió especulativa), which was aimed at shedding light on the emerging trend toward ownership concentration. It shows the locations of buildings that are entirely owned by a real-estate company and provides basic information, such as the address, investment companies, and financial ties. It is a partial map because its data come from cases collected by neighborhood unions and are by far not a complete examination of those neighborhoods. Notwithstanding, public debates on the topic led to further checks with regard to how many more properties the large owners tagged in this map actually possessed.

Distribution: It was distributed online as part of an investigative journalistic report.

Link: directa.carto.com/viz/71281206-286a-11e7-b643-0e3ff518bd15/public_map

¹ La Directa: A Catalan-language media outlet on current affairs, research, debate, and analysis. With the purpose of contributing to social transformation, it aims to denounce abuses and injustices, as well as to promote alternatives.

2018-
2019

The “Properties of big owners” (Immobles dels grans propietaris) instamap

Author(s): Sindicat de Llogateres (Tenants’ Union)

Description: In February 2018, the Barcelona Tenants’ Union decided to expose 15 big landlords that owned more than 3,000 apartments in Barcelona as part of the larger #NosQuedamos campaign (#WeStay) against evictions and abusive rent increases. The aim of the map was to show that property ownership has become quite concentrated. It was designed as a collaborative map using cases reported to the Tenants’ Union. Besides the political message against property concentration, the map serves as a tool for tenants to self-organize, allowing those living in buildings owned by the same landlord to connect, share strategies (e.g., rent strike), or launch a campaign tailored to their particular needs as an affected group. The map was last updated in 2019, citing difficulties in accessing the cadaster data and other public datasets.

Distribution: The map was distributed online through social media, especially Twitter, and it is available on a website.

Link: instamaps.cat/visor.html?businessid=118ed08fb83245263cdaf8c8a68a6422&3D=false&embed=1#13/41.3959/2.1545

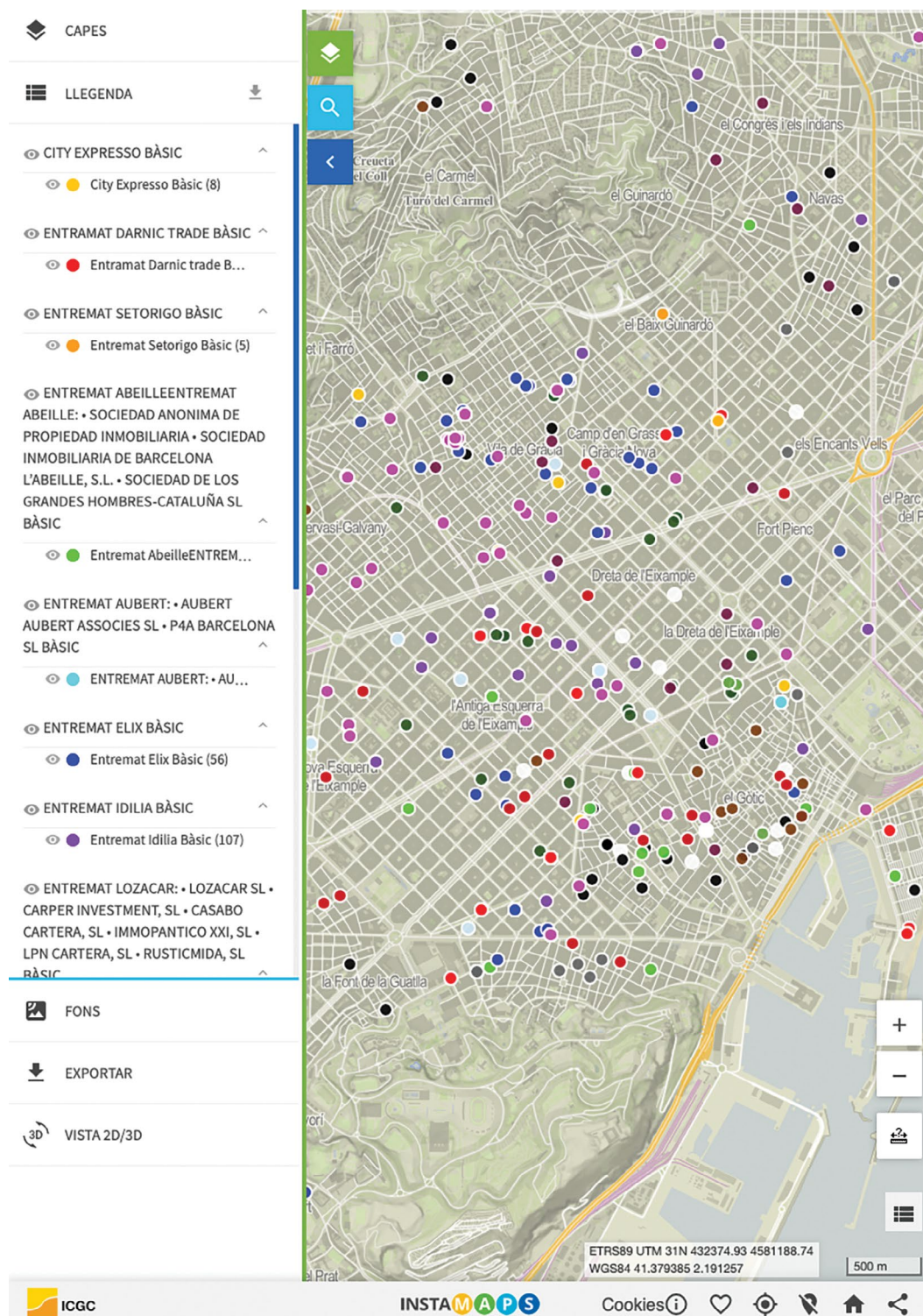


Figure 11.24 Screenshot of the “Properties Owned by Large Homeowners” (Immobles dels grans propietaris) instamap, 2018–2019, by Barcelona Tenants Union.

2018

Structure and concentration of home ownership in the city of Barcelona

Author(s): Metropolitan Housing Observatory of Barcelona,
(L'Observatori Metropolità de l'Habitatge de Barcelona, OH-B)

Description: The four maps shown here were taken from the OH-B 2018 report *Structure and Concentration of Home Ownership in the City of Barcelona* (Estructura i concentració de la propietat d'habitatge a la ciutat de Barcelona). The first two maps (at the top) show the weight of the different owner profiles in each of the neighborhoods of Barcelona. The data show that individuals and local administrations (shades of brown) have a greater weight in the city's peripheral neighborhoods, while legal entities (shades of purple; e.g., companies) have a higher weight in the central districts. The other two maps (below) show the territorial distribution of the properties of the big homeowners. On average, public administrations have the highest number of dwellings per plot outside the central areas of the city, whereas all other main contributors are mainly located in central districts. The four maps together make a clear statement about the imbalance of homeownership in Barcelona.

Distribution: As part of the report, which is available on the website of the Metropolitan Housing Observatory of Barcelona.

Link: ohb.cat/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Propietat-BCN-2018.pdf

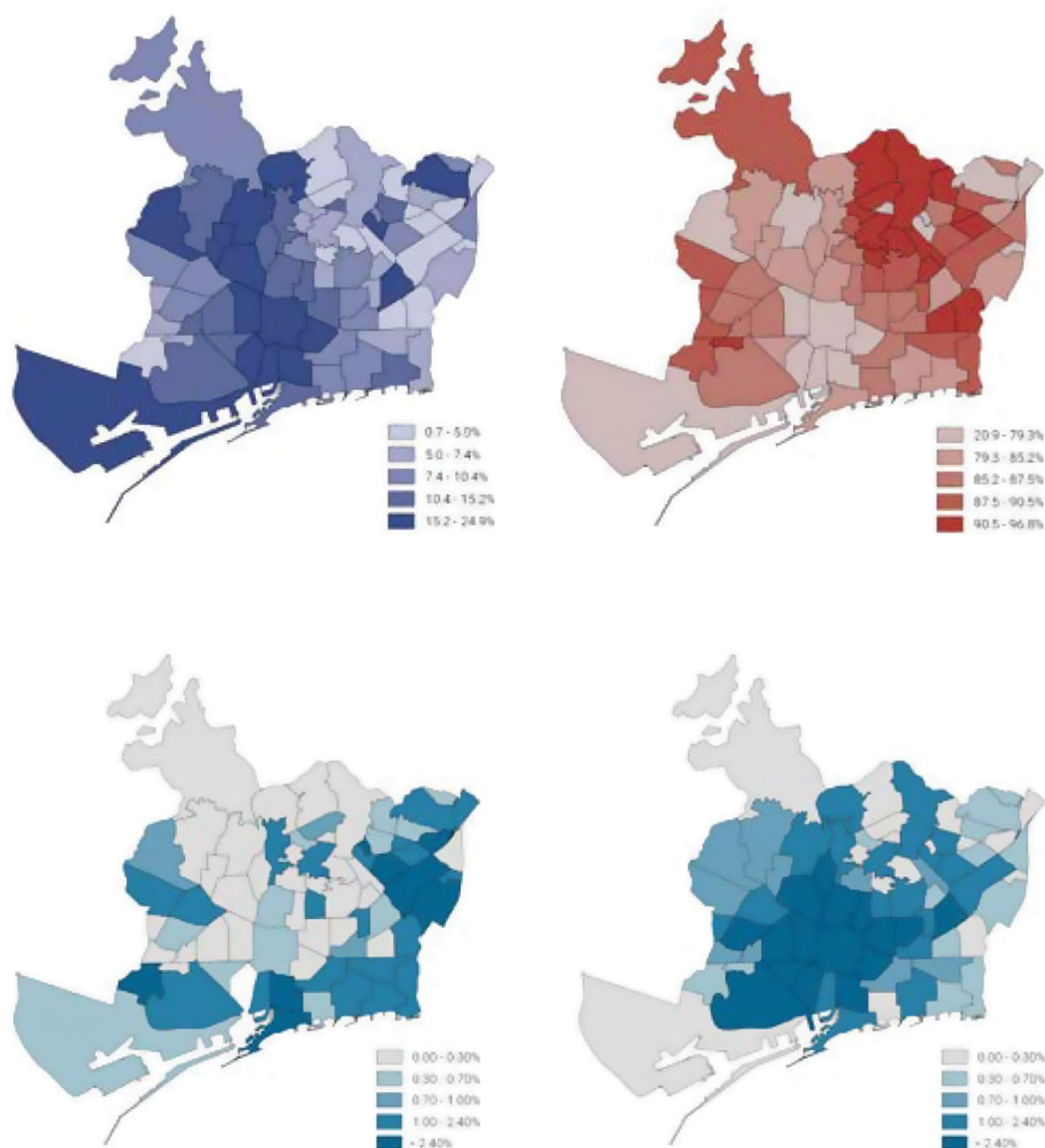


Figure 11.25 Four maps from the report “Structure and Concentration of Home Ownership in the City of Barcelona” (Estructura i concentració de la propietat d’habitatge a la ciutat de Barcelona), 2018, in Catalan, by L’Observatori Metropolità de l’Habitatge de Barcelona (Metropolitan Housing Observatory of Barcelona) (OH-B). **At the top** are two maps showing the weight of legal entities (to the left) and natural persons (to the right) contributing to housing within each neighborhood (2018:12). **Below** are two maps showing the percentage of homes of main taxpayers (Decile 90) who are public administrations (to the left) and those who are not public administrations (to the right) (%/total of the city) (2018:17).

2017-
2018

Using Carto and Google Maps to tag places of displacement by tourism

Author(s): Resistim al Gòtic, No ensfaran fora, Fem Sant Antoni

Description: Several anti-gentrification initiatives use the Carto and Google Maps engines to tag apartments or buildings converted for tourism to inform fights against speculation in Barcelona. Often the maps do not provide the date of the last update or activity, making it hard to determine their accuracy. Notwithstanding, seen as snapshots and archives, these maps are helpful for tracking changes and analyzing patterns. Three examples are:

1. The Carto map “Tourist Accommodations in Ciutat Vella” (Allotjaments turístics), 2017, by We Resist in the Gòtic (Resistim al Gòtic), a group formed by residents collectively fighting against speculation and real-estate harassment in their neighborhood. This map contains information about hotels, hotels under construction, hostels, and Airbnb a.o.
2. The Google-based “Gentrification Map” (Mapa de la gentrificació), 2017, by No ensfaran fora (They won’t kick us out), a coordinating web platform for the neighborhoods of Raval, Poble Sec, and Sant Antoni. It contains information about real-estate agency branches, headquarters of speculators, large real-estate developers, hotels, buildings for tourist rental, vacant municipally-owned buildings, and spaces for self-organization.
3. The Google-based “Sant Antoni: Tourist Apartments” (Allotjaments turístics), 2018 by Fem Sant Antoni (Let us make San Antoni), a group of collectives and neighbors who want to decide on the issues affecting their daily lives. The map contains information about hotels, hotels under construction, hostels, and Airbnb a.o.

Distribution: The maps are linked to the websites of the organizations, and the second and third are also linked to the website of the Barcelona Tenants Union.

Links:

1. marticuso.carto.com/me
2. noensfaranfora.wordpress.com/mapes/
3. google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1f9y8fWZHdzgVkBHOHjqXha_3REc&ll=41.380506251636774%2C2.1587920000000116&z=15

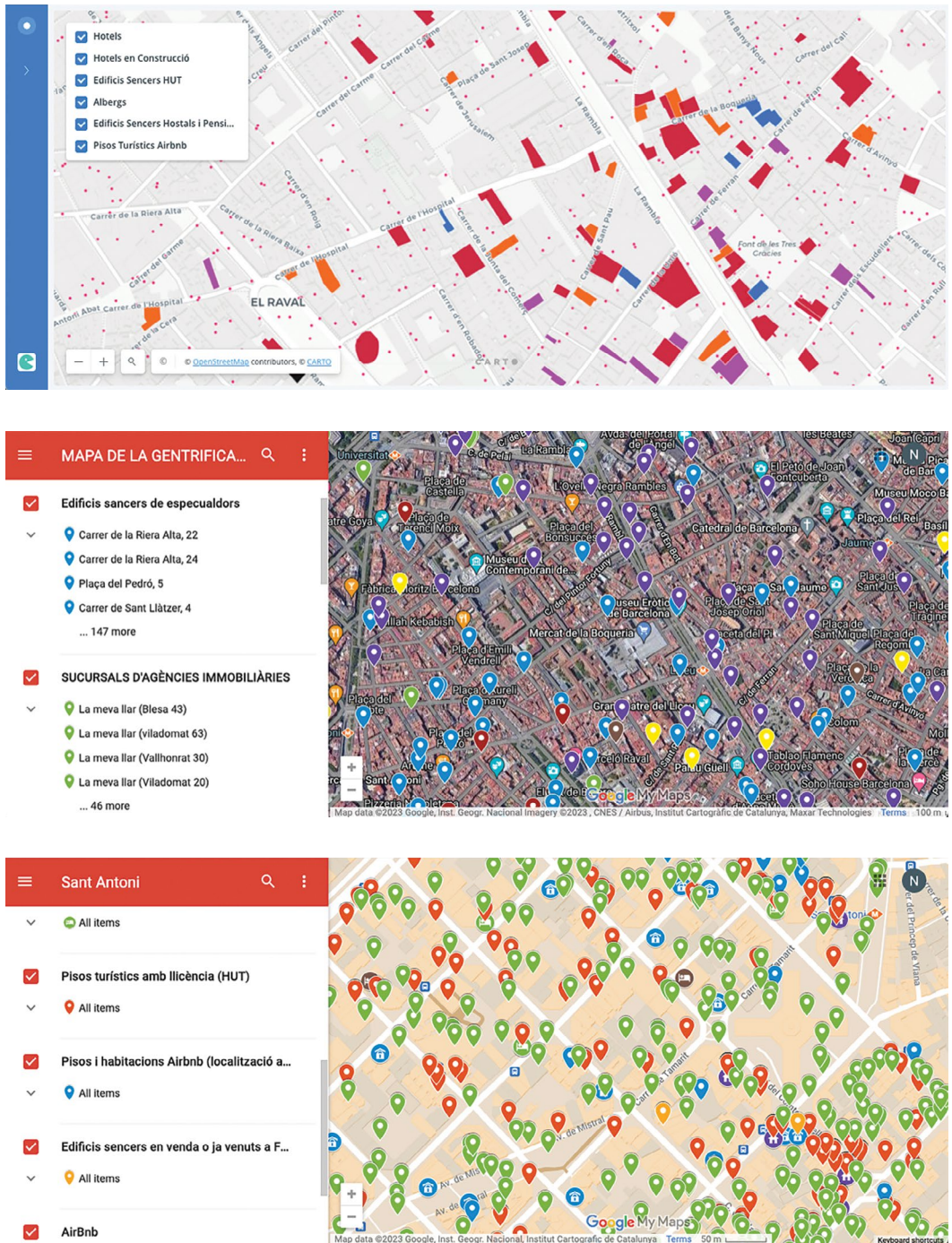


Figure 11.26 At the **top** is a screenshot of the "Tourist Accommodations in Ciutat Vella" (Mapa de l'Allotjament Turístic a Ciutat Vella) Carto map, 2017, by Resistim al Gòtic. In the **middle** is a screenshot of the "Gentrification Map" (Mapa de la gentrificació) Google map, 2017, by No ens faran fora. At the **bottom** is a screenshot of the "Sant Antoni: Tourist Apartments" (Allotjaments turístics) Google map, 2018, by Fem Sant Antoni.



Section 7

WHO DECIDES ON WHAT?

*governmental structures,
participation tools, and
political movements*

This brief section provides an overview of the institutions that are involved in decision-making related to spatial governance and planning in the three cities: Belgrade, Berlin, and Barcelona. It serves to create a rough picture of the hierarchies among the different actors and their scopes of operation and to demonstrate similarities and differences among the three locations. For example, in Belgrade the system is quite centralized toward the national government and local levels have no space to engage in discourses that vary from those set by the ruling party. In the city-state of Berlin, although the principle of local planning sovereignty (Prinzip der Kommunalen Planungshoheit) applies to the district (Bezirke) administrations as laid out in the constitution, this remains subject to the policies and budgets that are set for them by the higher levels of the state and federal governments. As for Barcelona, although the country is composed of autonomous states similar to Germany, the constitution grants full power to the governments of the autonomous regions on issues of land-use planning, urbanism, and housing (this excludes some key domains such as eviction procedures). Hence, in legislative terms, the government of Catalonia enjoys more freedom of action than the government of Berlin.

Besides the governmental structures, this section briefly outlines the legislative frameworks granting the rights for community participation in decision-making processes on spatial issues and describes the scene of civil society initiatives and alternative political platforms that are actively working toward changing discourses and developing solutions to the prevailing housing unaffordability and inaccessibility in the three cities. Additionally, the Barcelona team added what they see as the major large-scale private real-estate companies that currently dominate the market. Complementary to this section, an index of actors in the three cities can be found on the posters in **Section 15**.

Section 7 / BGD

HOUSING IN BELGRADE: *who decides on what?*

Article 15 of the Law on Local Government¹ outlines a decentralized system and recognizes that local governments have the power to decide on local strategic agendas, as well as on local spatial and urban plans for municipal development.² Nevertheless, it also stipulates that local-level decisions have to be coherent with plans set at the regional and state levels, as well as with legislation determined by the national parliament (be it a law that regulates land ownership, taxes, or housing assistance). Although local governments have some autonomous sources of income stipulated in the Law on Financing of Local Governments,³ the central government controls the public budget and significantly determines allocations to local bodies. This leads to limited maneuvering room for the implementation of locality-based policies that deviate from the political lines of the central government. In recent years, this has been aggravated by the fact

1 In Serbian: Zakon o lokalnoj samoupravi (Official Gazette, no. 129/2007, 83/2014, 101/2016, 47/2018).

2 Article 15 states that local governments can own property, besides that which is designated as state property, within its territory of jurisdiction. This is an important fact when it comes to the potential development of non-profit housing models, which local governments have the jurisdiction to initiate and participate in, as part of the housing programs and local housing strategy.

3 In Serbian: Zakon o finansiranju lokalne samouprave (Official Gazette, no. 62/2006, 47/2011, 93/2012, 99/2013, 125/2014, 95/2015, 83/2016, 91/2016, 104/2016, 96/2017, 89/2018, 95/2018, 86/2019, 126/2020). This law stipulates that the local public budget receives funding from partial property taxes, local administrative and communal taxes, potential concessions, renting of local government property, donations to the particular local government, and other income from private contributions. Aside from these basic income resources, other resources are mostly dependent on the decisions of the state government.

that the Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska Napredna Stranka,⁴ SNS, the ruling party since 2012) is itself extremely centralized and hierarchically structured and has abused the existing regulations on the relation between local and national governments to serve its agendas. This looped system currently coalesces with the fact that, since the 2020 elections, the SNS has been holding power in all municipalities in Serbia, including Belgrade. This “sweeping victory” was a result of the boycott of the elections by opposition parties and political movements.⁵

The combination of the current legal frameworks with an environment of widespread corruption represents a great challenge for institutionalized democratic mechanisms of citizen participation, reducing such activities to *pro forma* and preventing any substantial impacts (be it via elections or the adoption of an urban plan). Furthermore, as reiterated throughout the various Belgrade sections of this book, the problem of non-transparency—with regard to both procedures and their related documents and proposals—is present at both levels of government. As a result, all decisions on local development follow the same pattern, trickling down from the top—either directly from the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, or from his SNS party members in the Belgrade city government. As the past years have shown, decisions by those in power are based on the capitalist interests of groups with which they enjoy personal or businesses relationships, including actors beyond the territory of Serbia. The most prominent example remains that of the **Belgrade Waterfront** development project, although there are more recent examples that are equally angering and even more destructive.

One other example is the Tesla Grad mega project that was announced in 2017 and is to be developed in the Makiš area, which is the main source of water for the city. To accommodate the project, city authorities have halved the buffer zones around the water sources against the advice of experts who warned that this step would negatively impact the quality of the water and that it would block the natural ventilation along the valleys of the rivers Topčiderska Reka, Železnička Reka, and Ostružnička Reka, in addition to other devastating environmental impacts.

4 In spite of its name, the party was formed in 2008 after a split from the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), which is a far-right, ultranationalist party in Serbia. The SNS, like the SRS, propagates nationalistic and conservative sentiments, while simultaneously seeking to join the EU. It is suspected of having connections with organized crime structures, yet substantive investigations are hindered by the SNS's autocratic governance, which is condoned by the mainstream media outlets that largely fall under its control.

5 The boycott was organized because the basic pillars for free and democratic elections were violated. For example, the public media outlets (and most of the private ones) that are controlled by the ruling party were broadcasting biased programs, pro-government tabloids frequently blasted SNS critics as foreign stooges or criminals, and there was evidence of abuse of power in several enterprises to force workers to vote for the ruling party. For more information, see the [timeline](#).

Another such project is the Filmski Grad neighborhood in the Košutnjak urban forest, which was announced in June 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposal uses the renovation of the existing film studio facilities as a springboard to claim ten times the area for a development that would include retail and office spaces and high-end housing. It massively reduces the area of the forest that is dubbed “Belgrade’s oxygen factory” and was declared a “nature monument” in 2014 and therefore, supposedly, under protection.⁶

Thus, in contrast to the constitutionally established system that differentiates between state and local competences and opposing the principles of democracy claimed by the government, the main strategies and decisions regarding spatial development in Serbia, including housing, are *de facto* made at the state level and in the bureaus of the SNS. Under such circumstances, local governments, with their conditioned operational spaces and limited budgets, are reduced to executors of state-level decisions. In the “**Law Proposal: Rent Control**” poster and index we mapped much of the landscape of actors relevant to shaping and operationalizing the housing sector. In this section, we highlight the most pertinent governmental ministries, councils, and agencies, and we name civil society initiatives and actors that are our strategic partners in our current endeavors on the issue of housing.

Governmental institutional structures relevant to housing

From the perspective on the work of the Ministry of Space (MoS), the following six **NATIONAL LEVEL** governmental bodies are the most relevant:

- **The National Assembly** is the highest authority at the national level and is the body responsible for appointing the ministers (including those directly in charge of urban development) and adopting the laws and national strategic documents that regulate urban planning and construction, housing, and land use.

⁶ This status of the forest as a “nature monument” has not protected it against the massive felling of trees for commercial purposes, which has increased in the past several years and in which high SNS and state officials are implicated. Exemplifying the graveness of the problem were the statements made by the Minister of Environmental Protection, who commented on the protests against these practices by saying that citizens are overdramatizing as the “tree is a renewable resource” (Santovac, Adam. 2019. “Revoltirani Čukaričani opkolili zgradu opštine zbog seče drveća na Košutnjaku [Revolted inhabitants of Čukarica surrounded the Municipality administration building because of the cutting trees in Košutnjak park].” *N1 Srbija*, January 27. rs.n1info.com/vesti/a495378-protest-pred-opstinom-cukarica/).

- **The Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure** is the main body in charge of all large-scale infrastructure projects (roads, public buildings, public housing, pipelines, etc.). It is also responsible for preparing the legal acts and strategic documents related to the area within its jurisdiction. This includes designing, monitoring, analyzing, and securing monetary and non-monetary resources for programs of housing support, as well as drafting and monitoring the National Housing Strategy (currently underway).⁷ It is also responsible for commissioning and overseeing the development of urban and spatial plans at the national level and for developing guidelines to ensure public participation in urban development and spatial planning. However, the ministry's Housing, Communal Matters, and Energy Efficiency unit employs only seven people at the moment, of whom only three are assigned to housing issues.
- **The Ministry of Finance** controls public budget allocations and expenditures, including the allocation of what are known as specifically purposed resources for local governments (which complement their regular income from taxes and other local sources). Evidently, this directly impacts the implementation of any public policies, including those related to housing. This ministry also determines tax policies, including those related to housing investment or social housing.⁸ In addition, as it is the body that regulates the banking system, its decisions trickle-down in many forms: for instance, in the changing terms and conditions of housing loans and the rights of banks toward indebted citizens.
- **The Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans, and Social Affairs** drafts legal acts and strategic documents related to social protection measures that include some form of housing provision for vulnerable groups,⁹ a matter that is coordinated and overseen together with the Commissariat

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- 7 The first draft of the National Housing Strategy for Serbia was published in December 2019, after which a phase of revision and deliberations was supposed to follow. The outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic shortly after the release overshadowed this process. As people were leaving for winter holidays in December 2021, the Ministry for Construction, Transformation, and Infrastructure published the National Housing Strategy and announced a so-called *public discussion*. The door for objections to the strategy has been open, but we have no information about the current standings or the status of procedures. For more information, see the [timeline](#).
- 8 Subsidized rent in social housing includes a property tax, although there is no basis for such a cost as tenants do not own the apartments.
- 9 The [Law on Housing and Building Maintenance](#) prescribes several models of housing support to vulnerable groups and holds the Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure responsible. Yet, the Law on Social Protection also considers temporary accommodation and so-called "housing with support" as mechanisms of social protection (within the jurisdiction of the entire social protection system, from the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans, and Social Affairs to local government departments responsible for social protection). Bearing in mind the lack of further regulations for the indicated programs, it is often challenging to address requests related to housing policy, in particular regarding vulnerable groups, because the responsibility is dispersed among several governmental bodies.

for Refugees and Migration. The ministry also sets guidelines for and monitors programs of social protection of vulnerable groups by lower-level governments and institutions.

- **The State Property Directorate** maintains records of state-owned real estate and administers respective processes of acquisition, purchase, and leasing. It is responsible for the allocation of state-owned real estate for the designated purpose, be it residential, commercial, or administrative functions.
- **The State Ombudsman** (Protector of Citizens) represents an independent state-level body that ensures citizens' rights are upheld and overlooks the work of governmental and public institutions in relation to those rights. However, since the National Assembly elects the head of this body, the level of its independence greatly depends on the political structure of the assembly and the party in power at the time. Notwithstanding, the State Ombudsman is granted the right to submit initiatives for amendments on legal acts to the National Assembly by the Law on Ombudsman.¹⁰ He/she/they is also responsible for providing an opinion from the perspective of human rights during the drafting and adoption process of legal acts. Although the recommendations proposed by the Ombudsman are not binding for the government or public institutions, they do support and strengthen citizens' cases. Therefore, this body could serve as an address for requests related to housing by housing movements or any non-governmental organization, given that Article 11 (1) and General Comment no. 4 of the European Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights elaborate on the right to adequate housing.

The **INTERMEDIARY** between the national and local levels is the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM), which acts as a medium between national and local governmental institutions and plays a relevant role in housing issues. It was founded in 1953 as the Association of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia and is a partner to local governments and state institutions, supporting the decentralization and strengthening of capacities of the local self-government system. The SCTM represents local authorities before the National Assembly, the Government of the Republic of Serbia, and its public institutions. There are eight committees within the SCTM that are permanent working bodies focused on topics relevant to the functioning of local self-governments. One of these committees is responsible for housing, urban planning, and construction. The latest contribution from SCTM in relation

¹⁰ In Serbian: Zakon o zaštitniku građana (Official Gazette, no. 79/2005 and 54/2007).

to housing is the publication *Guidelines for Local Self-Governments on the Implementation of the Housing Support Program*.¹¹

At the **LOCAL LEVEL**, the Law on the Capital City¹² differentiates Belgrade from other local governments, allocating more power and resources to its administrative bodies. Among other stated jurisdictions, Article 8 stipulates that the city authorities are “responsible for sustainable housing on the territory of Belgrade within the framework of the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance.” However, there is no coordinating body responsible for housing in the city administration. Rather, the responsibilities are dispersed among different bodies and units, which represents a challenge for civic organizations trying to shift the paradigms on housing, while at the same time providing maneuvering room for the administration to execute existing housing policies and ignore new housing problems. That being said, the decision-making infrastructure related to housing at the level of Belgrade is distributed among four bodies:

- **The City Assembly** is the highest authority and decides on the city’s budget and urban development programs. It regulates land use and adopts spatial and urban plans and other regulatory documents. The City Assembly also appoints the Mayor and the City Council, which are the main executive powers at the city level.
- **The City Government** is the administrative body supporting the executive level: the Mayor, City Council, and City Assembly. It prepares legal documents for the regulations that the City Assembly adopts and is responsible for implementing the decisions of the executive level within the jurisdictional area and for monitoring and evaluation measures. This is done through 25 sectoral secretariats. The following five are the ones particularly relevant for the housing sector (the descriptions of domains of responsibilities are not comprehensive; we only name the ones related to housing):
 - › **The Secretariat for Finances** is responsible for drafting the annual budget allocations and monitors spending. Its consent mandates the execution of programs and the ability to render communal services and those of public enterprises, including those in the areas of urban planning and housing support programs.

11 Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities. 2020. “Priručnik za pružanje stambene podrške u jedinicama lokalne samouprave [Manual for Local Governments on the Provision of Housing Support].” Belgrade: Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities. skgo.org/storage/app/uploads/public/160/888/732/1608887327_Priru%C4%8Dnik%20za%20pru%C5%BEanje%20stambene%20podr%C5%A1ke%20u%20JLS%2023122020%20web.pdf

12 In Serbian: Zakon o glavnom gradu [Official Gazette, no. 129/2007, 83/2014, 101/2016, 37/2019].

BELGRADE

Area: 360 sq.km.
Population: 1.197 million (2021)
Districts: 17



Figure 11.1 An illustration of the seventeen administrative districts (municipalities) of Belgrade.

- › **The Secretariat for Urban Planning and Construction** is responsible for drafting the urban development plans for the 17 municipalities¹³ that make up Belgrade. It controls the licensing processes for new construction projects and participates in the preparation of any proposals related to spatial regulations. Among other duties, it is tasked with organizing public discussions as mechanisms for citizen participation in urban planning.
- › **The Secretariat for Communal and Housing Affairs** is responsible for regulating and provisioning communal services in Belgrade,¹⁴ for overseeing construction projects related to public buildings, and for all work related to the maintenance of residential buildings.
- › **The Secretariat for Property and Legal Affairs** is responsible for keeping the register of Belgrade's publicly owned spaces, housing units, and housing estates.¹⁵ It runs programs related to solving housing needs and manages the city-owned land, including conversions from public to private property.¹⁶
- › The Secretariat for Social Protection helps draft and oversees the execution of programs of social protection and assistance, including housing support.
- **The Chief Urban Planner** for the City of Belgrade (previously called the Chief Architect) is a post that was established in the early 2000s, currently

13 Belgrade is a metropolitan city spanning over approximately 3,222 sq. km, combining urban, suburban, and rural areas. Out of the 17 municipalities, 11 are classified as urban (totaling 1,320 sq. km) and six as suburban (totaling 1,902 sq. km).

14 It is worth noting that decisions of communal enterprises operating within districts and neighborhoods are to a great extent dependent on the politics of superiors within the city administration. Communal enterprises are the bodies tasked with, among other things, overseeing the quality of housing units, which directly relates to the maintenance-related indebtedness of citizens, a situation that has resulted in evictions. This link proved to be relevant when, at one of the CMMM workshops on housing-related indebtedness, questions were raised as to which levels of enterprises or government should be addressed with requests to reschedule communal debts of low-income tenants in social housing units. A lawyer and activist of the Efektiva association of consumers explained at that point that the city government has the final say and not the particular enterprise itself.

15 From an interview with one of the experts involved in several social housing projects in Belgrade (with EU funding schemes), we found out that once the units are finished, the Secretariat for Property and Legal Affairs becomes responsible for managing the space, while the Secretariat for Social Affairs is the body responsible for the tenants. This duality, lack of coordination, and failure to align priorities and policies has often created problems as the challenge of maintaining the units is often closely related to other elements that foster precarious living conditions for the tenants.

16 This Secretariat in particular was responsible for the proposal of the Belgrade Housing Strategy 2020–2030, see the [timeline](#) section.

assigned to Marko Stojičić.¹⁷ The Chief oversees the Belgrade Urban Planning Bureau, which has been part of the city authorities since 1948 and whose status was changed to a public company in 1999. The Chief answers directly to the Mayor and the City Assembly. According to the organizational chart for the tasks within Belgrade's city government,¹⁸ the Chief Urban Planner coordinates the production of planning documents and coordinates between the Secretariat for Urban Planning and Construction and other public departments that are involved in the procedures of drafting and adopting urban plans. The Bureau of the Chief Urban Planner includes a section for what are referred to as "capital projects," which sees to the "development of strategic policies in the area of construction and their execution, the improvement of the business environment in the construction industry, and the promotion of the best strategic development projects."¹⁹ Although the Chief Urban Planner is not directly involved in housing policies, the responsibilities listed here include parameters relevant to housing conditions, which means that s/he has an impact on the housing sector and its challenges.

- **The Belgrade Land Development Agency (Beoland)** is the body to which the City of Belgrade has delegated the responsibility for managing city-owned land and coordinating the implementation of ratified urban plans in Belgrade. Whereas the Urban Planning Bureau leads and coordinates the drafting of the plans, Beoland directs the process and acts as the medium between the investors and the city-level institutions.

With regard to **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION** in processes initiated by governmental institutions, the legislative framework explicitly proclaims participation as one of the main principles and elements for all local or national spatial policies, which would include the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia from 2010 to 2020, the National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, the Public

17 In addition to his post as Chief Urban Planner, Marko Stojičić is also the President of the Planning Commission. At yet another level, he is the owner of a company that was granted permission to cut down trees for commercial purposes in the Košutnjak urban forest, in violation of the protection laws and against public protests.

18 *Pravilnik o organizaciji i sistematizaciji radnih mesta u gradskoj upravi Beograda: The City of Belgrade. 2019. Pravilnik o organizaciji i sistematizaciji radnih mesta u Gradskoj upravi grada Beograda, Službi za centralizovane javne nabavke i kontrolu nabavki, Službi za budžetsku inspekciju, Službi za internu reviziju grada Beograda, Kancelariji za mlade i Službi glavnog urbaniste grada Beograda* [Rulebook on the organization and systematization of workplaces in the City Administration of the City of Belgrade, the Service for Centralized Public Procurement and Procurement Control, the Service for Budget Inspection, the Service for Internal Audit of the City of Belgrade, the Youth Office and the Service of the Chief Town Planner of the City of Belgrade]. Belgrade: City of Belgrade. beograd.rs/images/data/eb1d55c35b5250eff8a6694392ab0594_3749688896.pdf

19 *Ibid.*

Administration Reform Strategy in the Republic of Serbia, the Law on Planning and Construction, and many others. However, as mentioned earlier, participation mechanisms lack consistent and effective implementation.

The Law on Referendum and Popular Initiative, the Law on Local Self-Government, and the Statute of the City of Belgrade are legal instruments that encourage the direct involvement of citizens in decision-making and allow for the initiation of legislative or constitutional changes. These mechanisms include: **(1)** popular initiative (a mechanism that could be applied at the national level), **(2)** citizens' initiative (a mechanism that could be applied at the local level), **(3)** national referendum, **(4)** local referendum, **(5)** community assembly (a mechanism that could be applied at the municipal level), and **(6)** submitting amendments to the City Assembly.

More specifically, under the Law on Planning and Construction, participation is also envisioned in the process of developing and adopting spatial and urban plans and strategic documents through: **(1)** early public inquiry, **(2)** public inquiry, and **(3)** public discussion. However, actual participation is very low, partly due to the lack of trust in procedures and the non-binding nature that repeatedly falls short of impacting governmental discourse and plans and partly because citizens are insufficiently informed about the procedures underlying the adoption of different strategies and plans, and thus their legislative rights and possibilities to have a say.²⁰ Yet, the increasing frequency of public demonstrations and actions against the adoption of capitalist and environmentally destructive urban development proposals (which often feature higher-end housing) in Belgrade and in other Serbian towns, points to a broadening of citizens' awareness to their right to effective—and not *pro forma*—participation. Moreover, globally, awareness for spatial conflicts and their mitigation through urban and spatial planning is rising, which opens up possibilities for new kinds of discussions and more public attention by means of subtopics in urban development, be it housing, spatial climate change adaptations, or land management.

20 The representative survey on the problems and perspectives of urban development in Belgrade that was conducted by the Ministry of Space in 2021 supports this. Firstly, when asked who has the most power in determining the development of Belgrade, respondents overwhelmingly named city authorities (86%), whereas only 3% thought that citizens participate in decision-making processes related to their city. In addition, around 50% of respondents agreed that citizens are poorly informed about the planned city development and about specific urban plans and projects. When it comes to mechanisms of participation, only 5% of respondents confirmed that they had sent objections to some urban plan, while as many as 93% had never done so. See: Ministarstvo prostora. 2021. "Beograd raste i nastaviće, a da li se razvija? Istraživanje javnog mnjenja o problemima funkcionisanja Beograda i prioritnim pravcima njegovog razvoja" [Belgrade grows and it will continue to do so, but is it developing? Public opinion poll on the functioning problems of Belgrade and priority directions of its development]. Belgrade: Ministry of Space / Institute for Urban Politics. ministarstvoprostora.files.wordpress.com/2022/08/beograd-raste-i-nastavice-ali-da-li-se-razvija_-_ministarstvo-prostora.docx-1.pdf?force_download=true

Non-governmental structures: initiatives and political movements

As laid-out in the Belgrade Timeline, in recent years and noticeably after the 2015 “**So-Called Housing Issue**” gathering, a growing number of **INITIATIVES** that focus on housing have emerged. On the one hand, citizens who have been directly struck by housing-related injustices have united to fight for their cause (CHF Srbija,²¹ Efektiva,²² Association of Protected Tenants,²³ etc.). On the other hand, activists and civil society organizations have become louder in demanding a radical shift in the treatment of housing—from “housing as a commodity” back to “housing as a right”—and hence in demanding the necessary changes in legislation and practice.

From among the many initiatives, at the moment the five most active—which also happen to be based in Belgrade and primarily focus on the city’s built environment and housing issues—are:²⁴ **Housing Center** (Hausing Centar), **Who Builds the City** (Ko gradi grad), **Ministry of Space** (Ministarstvo prostora), **The Roof** (Združena akcija Krov nad glavom), and **A11—Initiative for Economic and Social Rights** (A11—Inicijativa za ekonomska i socijalna prava). Even though these organizations and initiatives have worked separately toward a just housing system in Belgrade and Serbia starting as early as 2004, their impact remains limited.

To join resources and efforts in fighting for safe and affordable housing as a fundamental right that is guaranteed for all—regardless of income, gender, ethnic origin, or any other affiliation—these five organizations came together to draft an alternative proposal for the City of Belgrade’s Housing Strategy 2019–2029. In addition, the five initiatives decided to work closer together and to coordinate their individual activities so that they complement each other. Under the name **Housing Equality Movement** (Pokret za stambenu jednakost),²⁵ these organizations plan to employ their experiences and undertakings—be it direct actions, campaigns, legal processes, or research—to push for a paradigm shift toward adequate, safe, and affordable housing as a key issue of public interest. The movement’s aspiration is for this shift to become recognizable in housing policies and practices at local and national levels, including the needed legislative frames to embed the changes into existing systems of governance. The alternative roadmap with objectives and measures created as a proposal for the Belgrade’s Housing Strategy 2019–2029 articulates what

²¹ chfsrbija.org/

²² efektiva.rs/

²³ zasticenistanari.rs/

²⁴ A synopsis about each of these organizations can be found in the [timeline](#) section.

²⁵ stambenipokret.rs/en/stambeni-pokret/

the movement is struggling to achieve.²⁶ Aside from the vision to gather more initiatives and organizations, it is dedicated to the following tasks: monitoring the work of institutions and informing the public about the results of this work; seeking to influence the changes in the legislative framework and institutional infrastructure in favor of a more need-based housing policy; and, conducting research on and proposing possible measures and models for the development of non-profit housing.

Although not specifically focused on the issue of housing, when mapping the relevant actors, one should not exclude the **POLITICAL MOVEMENTS** that could possibly influence public opinion or potentially even political discourse if they achieve good results in the upcoming 2022 elections for local parliaments. Depending on the results of the polls, political movements could institutionalize a more democratic system in the creation and adoption of housing policies and strategies, implement measures and programs to improve the housing conditions, revive existing laws, and pass new legislation to ensure long-term sustainable housing solutions for all citizens. At the moment, there are three such potential movements: **Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own**, the newly established Platform Solidarnost, and the Radical Left Party. Their members are activists in the housing movement and in urban struggles. As such, their political agendas regarding urban development and housing are relevant and share the principle of treating housing as a right.

²⁶ Housing Equality Movement. 2022. *Website*. Accessed 17 January 2023. stambenipokret.rs/en/towards-housing-equality/

Section 7 / BLN

HOUSING IN BERLIN: *who decides on what?*

Berlin is a city-state within the Federal Republic of Germany, which contains 16 states. The Principle of Local Planning Sovereignty (Prinzip der Kommunalen Planungshoheit) provides local governments throughout the country with extensive leeway for independent decision-making on urban development and housing policies. Yet, all policies, laws, and projects must adhere to the federal laws and are influenced by political agendas and budgets allocated by the federal ministry responsible for this portfolio, which has changed several times since the establishment of the Republic.

When our project started, housing was under the Federal Ministry of the Interior, whose name was changed in 2017 into Bundesministerium des Innern to Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community). This name change was a result of pressure by the then incumbent Minister Horst Seehofer of the conservative CSU party of Bavaria. This move received a great deal of criticism as it constituted a power grab in relation to issues concerning the sensitive construction sector and particularly housing policies. It was seen as an attempt to fend off growing demands for greater protection against the marketization of housing and for jump-starting investments in social housing, among other pressing issues that lie at the core of housing justice.¹ With the success of social movements in

1 The term *Heimat*—whose literal translation is “homeland” and not “community,” as the official English translation by the ministry suggests—was not a banal move. Rather, it was the materialization of growing politics stemming from what is known as *Leitkultur* (leading or core culture), which is promoted by a growing stream of right-wing politicians who claim to protect their versions of “German values,” while in effect excluding those with other ideologies (particularly people with a migratory background and Muslims specifically).

politicizing urban spatial management in the past years, and the significant mobilization around the **Deutsche Wohnen & Co Enteignen** initiative in Berlin, the following (current) federal government—which was elected in 2021 and is a coalition between the SPD,² Grüne,³ and the FDP⁴—created the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (Bundesministerium für Wohnen, Stadtentwicklung und Bauwesen), resembling a return to 1961 (see Figure 7.2, p. 232).

Governmental institutional structures relevant to housing

At the **FEDERAL LEVEL**, the governmental bodies relevant to the housing sector in Berlin largely resemble those in Belgrade: the parliament, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and the Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building.

As a **CITY-STATE**, Berlin is governed through a two-tier structure (Zweistufige Verwaltung). The first is the Berlin Senate (Berliner Senat), the central administration, which is headed by the **governing mayor**⁵ (Regierender Bürgermeister:in) and includes up to ten senators; the second is the District Administrations (Bezirksverwaltungen). Berlin has twelve districts, and each district office (Bezirksamt) is headed by a **district mayor** (Bezirksbürgermeister:in) and includes district councilors (Bezirksstadträt:innen). The legislative bodies at the two levels are the Berlin House of Representatives (Berliner Abgeordnetenhaus) at the city level and the district parliament (Bezirksverordnetenversammlung, BVV) at the district level. The district parliament is directly elected by the district's residents, while the House of Representatives is formed according to city-wide voter shares per party.

The **Berlin Senate** is composed of up to ten Senate departments (Senatsverwaltungen), which draft, administer, and oversee the implementation of political decisions and guidelines. Aside from electing the governing mayor and controlling the work of the Senate, the main task of the **Berlin House of Representatives** is legislation. The Senate Departments draft laws and manage

2 SPD: Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands / Social Democratic Party of Germany

3 Bündnis 90/Die Grünen: Alliance 90 / The Greens

4 FDP: Freie Demokratische Partei / Free Democratic Party

5 As Berlin is both a city and a federal state (Land). At the state level, the position of Governing Mayor of Berlin corresponds to that of a Minister President of one of the other federal states (Länder). The representatives of the state government are elected by the Berlin House of Representatives. The governing mayor nominates the senators.

1949	Bundesministerium für Wohnungsbau Federal Ministry for Housing Construction
1961	Bundesministerium für Wohnungswesen, Städtebau und Raumordnung Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Spatial Organization
1965	Bundesministerium des Innern Federal Ministry of the Interior
1972	Bundesministerium für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau Federal Ministry for Spatial Organization, Housing and Urban Development
1998	Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau- und Wohnungswesen Federal Ministry for Transportation, Construction and Housing
2013	Bundesministerium für Umwelt Federal Ministry for the Environment
2018	Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community
2021	Bundesministerium für Wohnen, Stadtentwicklung und Bauwesen Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Construction

Figure 11.2 List of the different ministries to which, responsibility for housing and urban development was assigned in post-war West Germany and after 1990 in re-united Federal Republic of Germany.

high budgets on Berlin-wide issues and domains that transcend the borders of single districts. Within the scope of this section, we highlight three aspects that we find relevant for understanding the hierarchies and decision-making structures in relation to the housing sector:

- Each **chair of a department** (Senator) is negotiated by the parties that make up the coalition of the city government (similar to the processes at the federal government level).
- The **Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing** (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen, SenSW) is responsible for: setting policies and realizing large-scale and vital projects; issuing guidelines for publicly owned housing companies; supporting mechanisms for housing cooperatives (Genossenschaften) and similar entities; issues relating to rent (e.g., legal clauses, monitoring values, subsidies); setting and updating the overall master plan for the city and delineating areas for future development or regeneration; programs and regulations related to the maintenance and upgrading of buildings; defining the structures for strategic city development programs and allocating and acquiring budgets

for implementation; supporting self-management mechanisms within localities; commissioning research and studies on all matters relating to the built environment and the city as a system; archiving and updating all sorts of data relevant to decision-making, planning processes, and spatial management; and many other tasks. It is important to highlight that the SenSW is also responsible for developing guidelines for ensuring public participation in urban development and spatial planning.

- The **Senate Department for Finance** (Senatsverwaltung für Finanzen, SenFin) is responsible for the overall allocation of budgets, taxation, and management of capital. Its tasks involve the allocation of the budget for the SenSW, including providing funds to publicly-owned companies to, for example, purchase real estate through the municipal right of preemption (right of first refusal, RPE), the main focus of our work.

The exiting governing mayor of Berlin, Michael Müller (SPD), positioned himself in the media as being supportive of the demands of civic movements for recognition of housing as an urgency and a basic human right, rather than a speculative commodity of markets. Yet, when he left office, the **rent cap** (Mietendeckel) had been revoked, **right of preemption** (RPE) as a legal mechanism had become futile, and a public **referendum on socializing (expropriating) large real-estate companies** had been held, with 59.1% voting in favor.⁶ It remains to be seen whether and how the current Governing Mayor Franziska Giffey (2021, SPD) and the new Berlin Senate as a cabinet (which also includes The Greens and The Left) will address public demands on housing and what constitutional solutions they might lay.

At the **LEVEL OF THE DISTRICTS** (Bezirke), the **BVV** (district parliaments) have limited capacities in relation to decisions on the governance of the housing sector and are dependent on the political lines drawn by the Berlin Senate. They do, however, enjoy legislative rights and legal competences on issues that are vital for the housing justice movement. For example, they are the organ that decides on behalf of a proposal by the district parliament whether to designate a certain neighborhood a conservation area (Erhaltungsgebiet), and therein whether to grant it the social protection status (Milieuschutzgebiet), which provides some level of protection and allows the local authorities to invoke their RPE. This is also the level at which spatial strategies are translated into spatial plans, as well as where tourism guidelines are determined (e.g., policies to tackle Airbnb).

⁶ In reality, Müller focused his efforts on managing the outrage about exploding rental and purchase prices and corporatization of the housing stock, rather than directing them toward creating long-lasting systemic change.

BERLIN

Area: 892 sq.km.
Population: 3.645 million (2019)
Districts: 12



Figure 11.3 An illustration of the twelve administrative districts (municipalities) of the city-state Berlin.

At the beginning of each legislative period, the BVV elects the **district offices**, which are collegial administrative bodies consisting of the district mayor and a number of district councilors. This collegium decides on issues that do not fall expressly within the jurisdiction of the BVV. The district office can introduce its own proposals to the BVV or object to its resolutions. Similar to the way the Berlin Senate is formed, each district councilor is negotiated and named by the parties governing the city district, and this person is charged with the duty to fulfill the coalition agreement (and his/her political ambition). This influences the work of most councilors as they do not just run their administrative department to their best of their knowledge, but rather as a politician with a political agenda. This fact is the reason why the RPE, for example, is often applied in some city districts and in others it is not. It is important to recognize this as a core challenge if we as a community are to find structural solutions for the local government systems and decision-making mechanisms.⁷

It is worth noting that the term district office also stands for the entire administrative authority of a district with around ten specialized departments (Ämter), which have their own budget and competences (e.g., health, employment, youth, urban development). How the individual departments are set up and to which district councilor they are assigned is decided by the district office at the beginning of its term in office. Like the Senate departments, each district office department can fund projects/companies or pay authorized entities for defined measures to fulfill their public service mandate (e.g., the district Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg financially supports **AKS Gemeinwohl**, and it commissioned the ASUM GmbH to conduct milieu protection studies and to support the RPE process).

Besides the hierarchies explained above within the public administration system, there are several dimensions at play that are worth noting: First, the issue of **ACCESS TO INFORMATION** regarding real-estate ownership and transactions, whereby:

- The administration and transaction of publicly owned land and properties are managed by **Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH** (Berlin Real-Estate Management, BIM GmbH), a publicly owned private company, and indirectly also by the Consultant Committee for Real-Estate Portfolios (Portfolioausschuss), which consists of representatives of the specialized administrations, districts, and the financial administration. Neither body provides public access to their databases on publicly owned properties or applies mechanisms of participatory decision-making on how these public

7 In **Sound Clip 8**, Julian Zwicker (CMMM BLN Team) calls for the abolition of the practice of making coalition contracts when forming governing bodies in Germany.

assets are managed. Their strategies on clustering publicly owned real estate are accessible, though they only report their decisions to the Berlin House of Representatives.

- Access to the land registry is limited to people directly involved with the particular property, such as courts, notaries, tenants, and potential buyers in advanced stages of the process (leading to investigative data mining by big real-estate companies).
- Tenants do not have the right to be informed about an ongoing purchasing process concerning the building in which they are living until the transaction has been legally completed. Only after the new owner completes registration, tenants are informed within the scope of “duties and benefits.”

Second, regarding **PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS** in relation to the housing sector in Berlin we note that:

- Publicly owned housing companies (Wohnungsbaugesellschaften) are overseen by institutionalized committees made up of representatives from science, tenants’ organizations, politics, and administration through Wohnraumversorgung Berlin AöR (Housing Provision Berlin, public law institution). This was introduced in 2016 by the Senate for Urban Development and Housing as a result of the **Referendum on Rent** (Mietenvolksentscheid). However, even though tenants’ associations participate in these bodies and have restricted access to information, they have no authority at leadership levels, and in fact, they have very little influence on measures decided upon by the management of publicly owned housing companies.
- Within spatial planning procedures, public participation is enshrined in Paragraph 3 (Public Participation) of the Federal Building Code (BauGB), which stipulates that citizens must be consulted before a spatial planning procedure or plan (Bebauungsplan/B-Plan) is implemented by the authorities or by public-private partnerships. This means that citizens can hand in statements, which can, but do not have to, be considered in the finalization of the plan or procedure. In some cases, public discussions are organized on proposed plans. However, the critique of social movements is that actual co-production processes are missing where citizens and civil organizations, local authorities, and private companies can discuss each other’s particular interests, needs, and limits in order to produce more consensual spatial plans and procedures.

- According to the Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries (Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung der Bundesministerien, § 47 III GGO), certain organizations (e.g., employees' and employers' associations, environmental NGOs, industrial associations) have the right to take part in legislative procedures and submit argumentative and position statements. Similar to the rules of public participation, considering these statements is not obligatory and lobbying often influences the evaluation.
- The new guidelines that were passed by the Berlin Senate in 2019 regarding public participation in urban development and spatial planning introduce several instruments to be implemented by public administrations as of 2020/21 to enhance the transparency and participatory dimensions of such procedures. These include:
 - › Organizing a **public table** to inform citizens about plans and procedures for which public participation is mandatory in the decision-making process (see above). What is new is that citizens or organizations can now claim participation in procedures where public participation was not mandatory before.
 - › Setting up **contact points** or consultant desks for citizen participation at both the city and city district level (AKS Gemeinwohl could be considered a model)
 - › Create a **participatory committee** (as part of a new understanding of co-production and collaboration) that provides recommendations to individual procedures and plans. There are six seats for representatives from civil organizations, eight seats for direct citizen representatives, six seats for administration, and four seats for politicians. Creating this committee is mandatory at the city level and optional at the district level.

Third, regarding available **INSTRUMENTS TO INFLUENCE** urban planning, the construction sector, and housing, we note the following:

- Instruments for authorities that are not transparent to the public:
 - › Urban planning contracts (Städtebaulicher Verträge § 11 BauGB) are negotiated between property developers and authorities. They regulate the aims and goals of the intended local urban planning process, environmental considerations, target group(s) of development, use of (new) buildings, and costs, among others.

- Planning or building permits (Baugenehmigungen) are granted by the local planning authority at the district level: for example, to change or modernize an existing building, add new parts to existing buildings (re-densification), or for new constructions.
- Instruments that are available for citizens:
 - Petition for a people's referendum (Volksbegehren): This is a requirement for conducting a people's referendum and consists of 2 steps. First, the initiating group or platform should collect (within six months) 20,000 signatures of eligible voters in Berlin in favor of the suggested new law or amendment or the demanded measure (50,000 signatures for amendments to the Berlin Constitution). Second, if the petition is admissible and the Berlin House of Representatives does not adopt the essentials of the proposal within 4 months, the initiator/ carrier of the petition must collect (within four months) the signatures of 7% of Berlin's eligible voters (currently about 170,000) in favor of the proposed motion in order for a referendum to be conducted (requires 20% to invoke an amendment to the Berlin Constitution).
 - People's referendum (Volksentscheid): If the 2-step petition for a people's referendum is successful, the Berlin Senate for Internal Affairs is required to hold an election on the proposed motion within 4 months. Both the majority of the voters and at least one quarter of Berlin's eligible voters need to vote "in favor" for the referendum to be successful. Although referendums are not legally binding, they are important tools in demonstrating and communicating people's stances on proposed issues and thus pressuring politicians in particular directions.
 - People's referendum at the city-district level (Volksentscheid Bezirk): This process is similar to a people's referendum at the city level with the difference that there is only one required preceding petition step: 3% of the eligible voters of the particular district need to sign in favor of the petition. From there it moves directly to the referendum phase, where the majority of the voters and at least 10% of the eligible voters of the city district need to vote "in favor" of the motion for the referendum to be successful.

Non-governmental structures: initiatives and political movements

As laid out in the timeline, in Berlin the right to housing has been in the public domain for decades. The city is known for its strong squatting scene, which had its peak during the 1980s and 1990s, and more recently in demonstrations (e.g., “**Mietenwahnsinn**”), public campaigns (e.g., “**Mediaspree versenken**”), initiatives (e.g., **Stadtforum von Unten**, **100% Tempelhofer Feld**, **Bizim Kiez**), and referendums (e.g., **Tempelhofer Feld**, **Mietenvolksentscheid**, **Spreeufer für alle!**, **DW&Co. Enteignen**). Furthermore, blueprints for “new” frameworks of collaboration and co-production are being developed and tested to explore how the private housing sector, civil initiatives, and city administration can work together toward Gemeinwohl-oriented strategies and policies in housing (e.g., **AKS Gemeinwohl**, **Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik**, **Modellprojekt Haus der Statistik**).

The examples above are a result of the rich scene of socio-political activism in Berlin and their success in politicizing views on what just urban space constitutes. Repeatedly, talks among various actors emerge on creating a political platform besides existing parties similar to **Barcelona en Comú** or **Nedavimo Beograd**. However, such a framework has not materialized to date. This is in part due to the fact that political parties claim to have open ears and attempt change, which blurs the scene. Additionally, some observers point to the sheer size of existing actors and agendas as a factor that significantly complicates the process toward creating an alternative unifying platform. That being said, as the mobilization around the DW&Co. Enteignen has demonstrated, although the housing movement in Berlin has no particular address or features yet, it is present and able to exert pressure on politics.

Section 7 / BCN

HOUSING IN BARCELONA: *who decides on what?*

Spain is a constitutional monarchy composed of 17 autonomous regions—Catalonia being one subnational unit—with a complex territorial organization that attempts to strike a balance between unity and autonomy, between the Spanish Constitution and the Statutes of Autonomy. Therefore, it has a multilevel legal system that regulates the relationships between the different levels of government. In this section, we first outline the hierarchies among the various executive branches of government and the distribution of competences in relation to the housing sector, then we highlight some of the main socio-political collectives engaged in the housing struggle, and we close with naming the largest private companies that are in effect steering the market and describing how activists are resisting their actions.

Governmental institutional structures relevant to housing

At the **NATIONAL LEVEL**, the **Central Government of Spain** (based in Madrid) is responsible for both the coordination and regulation of real estate and housing as an economic sector and the implementation and realization of basic conditions that ensure housing rights, in accordance with two articles of the Spanish Constitution:

Article 47 stipulates the regulation of the territory by public entities to serve the public interest and guarantees participation of local communities in the capital gains produced by the urban expansion of the city and the

execution of public utility projects. For example, the urban environment needs to be adequate for the development of housing.

Article 33 stipulates that private property needs to consider the social function of housing (e.g., not leave units empty while there is a need for housing). This sets some kind of limitation to private property but also makes the right to affordable, decent, and adequate housing a subjective (and not fundamental) right.

The fact that the right to housing is not considered a fundamental right in the Spanish constitution also means that it cannot be claimed in court, which clearly weakens its enforcement. At this point, there are several debates at the constitutional level in terms of the scope of the right to housing and the limitation this can entail regarding the right to property, which, since the 1950s, has been highly protected in Spain.

Based on the National Housing Plan, the Central Government is also the organ that determines the budget allocations of the autonomous regions from collected taxes, which directly impacts the potential expenditure potential of the regional governments. The budget for housing is mainly managed by the autonomous regions and distributed, to some extent, to local governments. Together with the national budget, both regions and municipalities invest part of their own budget in housing.

At the **REGIONAL LEVEL**, Article 148.1 of the Spanish constitution grants full power to the Autonomous Communities in relation to land-use planning, urbanism, and housing. In the case of Barcelona, these competences lie in the hands of the **Government of Catalonia** (Generalitat de Catalunya). Nonetheless, for the last 7–8 years, any housing law passed by the Autonomous Communities has been denounced to the Constitutional Court by the conservative party (Partido Popular – PP), claiming that they exceeded their competences and resulting in the nullification of the regional law in every case.

The 2006 Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia stipulates “housing as a right” in Article 26 and as a ruling principle¹ in Article 47. In 2007, the [Catalan Law on the Right to Housing](#) (Llei del Dret a l’Habitatge de Catalunya) was passed with further specifications, including a penalty for non-compliance with the social function of property (which has been poorly used despite some campaigns by social movements to, for instance, fine property owners for leaving housing units empty), the designation of real-estate mobbing as a discriminatory practice

1 Ruling principles are defined as programmatic principles of economic and social policy that are used as a basis for the actions of public authorities, positive legislation, and judicial practice.

BARCELONA

Area: 102 sq.km.
Population: 1.666 million (2020)
Districts: 10



Figure 11.4 An illustration of the ten administrative districts of the city of Barcelona.

with legal penalties (with very few cases denounced), and the requirement for municipalities to dedicate a minimum quota of 15% of the housing stock to social housing policies² (yet in Barcelona, it only started being implemented 10 years after the law was enacted). The law is very good in terms of the protection of the right to housing. However, its implementation has been far from satisfactory. So far, some of its tools have been used only when civil society actors have pushed.

At the **MUNICIPAL LEVEL**, next in the hierarchy is the **City Council of Barcelona** (Ajuntament de Barcelona), which is responsible for urban ordinance, management, execution, and discipline. The City Council also promotes, manages, and administers the public heritage of housing in accordance with the financial sustainability criteria imposed by the 2013 Sustainability and Rationalization of the Local Administration Act (which applied the national Law on Budgetary Stability and Financial Sustainability, following the austerity policies of the EU). In the same vein, it is also responsible for the conservation and rehabilitation of the current building stock, it carries out assessments regarding social needs, and it provides assistance to people at risk of social exclusion in its territory, among other duties.

Master plans are developed by local administrations, although they must be approved by the regional government. In Barcelona, the district level has some decision-making power over land use as well, such as the participatory process in the case of Ciutat Vella, which received the National Planning Prize in 2019.³

The **Housing and Rehabilitation Department**, currently headed by Lucía Martín González, is the driving force behind housing policies in Barcelona and establishes the specific guidelines for the city. It works closely with two other institutions: **Barcelona's Housing Consortium** (formed by the City Council and the Government of Catalonia), which develops the functions, activities, and services related to affordable housing in the city, and the **Municipal Institute of Housing and Rehabilitation**, which integrates the promotion and management

2 Housing intended for social policies is considered to be all housing covered by any of the protection modalities established by the law or by housing plans and programs, which, in addition to housing with official protection for purchase, rental, or other forms of cession of use, may include: publicly owned houses, public endowment houses, immigrant lodging, houses forfeited to the public administration, houses of insertion, co-owned houses, private rental houses managed by social mediation networks, private rental houses for forced extension, houses leased under urban farming, houses provided by companies to their workers, and other houses promoted by public operators at an intermediate price between officially protected housing and free-market housing but not governed by free-market rules.

3 Diosdado, Ana. 2019. "El Plan de usos de Ciutat Vella, en Barcelona, Premio de Urbanismo Español 2019 [The Plan of uses of Ciutat Vella, in Barcelona, Spanish Urbanism Award 2019]." Metalocus, November. metalocus.es/es/noticias/el-plan-de-usos-de-ciutat-vella-en-barcelona-premio-de-urbanismo-espanol-2019

of the public housing stock and all housing-related municipal services (such as subsidies, emergency assistance, and rental support). The Municipal Institute of Housing and Rehabilitation belongs to the Department of Social Rights, Global Justice, Feminism, and LGBTIQ rights. It is responsible for the detailing and implementation of the [Barcelona Right to Housing Plan 2016-2025](#). In 2021, the budget allocated to the housing and urban planning sector was EUR 140 million, while EUR 13 million was allotted to the housing management.

Non-governmental structures: initiatives and political movements

As mentioned in earlier sections, the 2008 financial crisis caused large-scale foreclosures and evictions throughout Spain, placing struggles on the right to housing at the center of socio-political movements and raising public awareness. As a result, Barcelona currently has a rich scene of activists and collectives. Some of those whose work is relevant to our endeavors are:

The **Federation of Neighborhood Associations of Barcelona** (Federació d'Associacions de Veïns i Veïnes de Barcelona – FAVB): This civic organization was created in 1972 and works to support the citizens of Barcelona in order to improve their quality of life. It brings together over one hundred neighborhood associations and coordinates their joint activities and campaigns to promote solidarity, equality, and coexistence.

The [Platform for People Affected by Mortgages](#) (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca – PAH): Established in 2009, the PAH is one of the most relevant nonpartisan civic movements on the right to housing in Barcelona. Today, the PAH is represented at more than 226 localities throughout Spain, with both directly affected people and those in solidarity organizing to denounce and change their unjust realities through political, legal, and media activities and campaigns. Its main objective is to fight against unjust legislation in order to create solutions for those affected by the mortgage scam. To that end, the platform proposed three emergency legislative measures as the minimum benchmark:

- › An immediate stop of evictions until definitive solutions are found for the evictees. Different laws exist, but none forbids evictions of vulnerable households;
- › Permit retroactive payments for those who cannot afford their habitual residence due to income losses caused by the financial crisis. Some of the relevant legislations were changed slightly after several rulings

by the European Court of Justice against Spain. However, this primary demand was not fulfilled at all; and,

- › Create a public housing stock to which social rents apply from the homes that were seized by banks, particularly those foreclosed by the SAREB (see below). To date, SAREB has given some dwellings—most of which are in bad conditions—to public administrations to become public housing. However, it still owns tens of thousands of housing units and thus the struggle goes on.

The **Alliance Against Energy Poverty** (Aliança contra la Pobresa Energètica – APE): This social movement, established in 2014, is a close ally of the PAH. APE focuses on the growing problem of energy poverty, which affects a large part of the population, and it aspires to guarantee the universal right to the basic services of water and energy. It does so by exerting pressure on public institutions to safeguard these rights and on the large utility companies to assume their responsibility. APE has three main demands:

- › Universal access to water and energy (every family, even if unable to pay, must have guaranteed access to utilities, allowing them to live with dignity);
- › Stop indiscriminate cut-offs (the public administration must exercise its role as the guarantor of human rights and cannot leave this decision to the utility companies); and,
- › Accountability (all costs of ensuring these basic services must be assumed by the companies themselves with their multi-million profits).

The **Tenants' Union of Catalonia** (Sindicat de Llogateres): Founded in 2017, the Tenant Union of Catalonia has become a key player on the right to housing, counting over 2000 members. Powered by the fact that over 40% of Barcelona's residents are tenants, its work centers around tackling the issues of rising rents and real-estate speculation, which have been contributing to evictions. Based on the social function of housing, they fight against touristification and gentrification. The union:

- › Empowers and mobilizes citizens by offering advisory services related to rental conditions;
- › Pushes for the development of legislative measures to control rents (a rent control law was recently passed in Catalonia thanks to their pressure); and,

- › It conducts campaigns to influence overarching issues such as the Urban Leasing Law (Ley de Arrendamientos Urbanos - LAU).

The **Observatory DESC** (Observatori DESC - ODESC): Established in 1998, ODESC works toward the recognition of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights (the right to housing, work, education, health, food) as fundamental human rights to the same degree as civil and political rights. To accomplish this, it engages in research and advisory work, organizes courses and conferences, exerts political pressure, and sometimes turns to strategic litigation—all this without losing sight of the importance of networking and participation in social campaigns.

In addition to the movements and collectives mentioned above, a large number of local housing groups have emerged in many neighborhoods of Barcelona in the past decade to fight against housing exclusion and gentrification. Some of these are: Sindicat d'Habitatge del Raval, Sindicat de Barri del Poble Sec, Grup d'Habitatge de Sants, Sindicat d'Habitatge de Gràcia, Sindicat d'Habitatge de Vallcarca, Sindicat d'Habitatge de Sant Andreu, Sindicat d'Habitatge de Nou Barris, and Associació 500x20. These groups provide essential support to the organizations above and others through direct disobedience activities and by strengthening social relations. Their logic can be described as that of materializing territorial fights in everyday life as the best strategy to counter speculation and social segregation. They are driven by the belief that situated knowledge (the idea that all forms of knowledge reflect the conditions in which it are produced and at some level reflect the social identities and social locations of knowledge producers) and community solidarity are indispensable for organizing effective resistance. These and other efforts brought about the first **Catalan Congress of the Housing Movement** (1r Congrés d'Habitatge de Catalunya) in 2019, which was attended by hundreds of people from different organizations (see timeline). The second housing congress is currently being prepared and is scheduled for 2024.

Private sector players

Despite the political and organizational differences between the multiple actors mentioned above, their actions are all oriented toward confronting the private-market sector, meaning urban developers and investors. Some of those with the largest presence in Barcelona are the following:

- **SAREB: Company for the Management of Assets Resulting from the Restructuring of the Banking System** (Sociedad de Gestión de Activos procedentes de la Reestructuración Bancaria): This “bad bank”⁴ of the Spanish government, created in 2012, is a government-owned company responsible for managing and selling the assets transferred by the four nationalized Spanish financial institutions that were “rescued” (BFA-Bankia, Catalunya Banc, NGC Banco-Banco Gallego and Banco de Valencia). In the early years of the financial crisis, thousands of homes were transferred to its portfolio using taxpayer money, and it has been selling them off to speculators to reduce its debt as demanded by the EU’s bailout contracts. In this regard, the SAREB is Ours (La Sareb es Nuestra) campaign,⁵ which was launched by the Obra Social of the PAH (a statewide work and coordination space specifically focused on squatting) in 2015, is well known.
- **Blackstone:** This North American investment bank manages assets—especially real estate—mainly in the United States and Europe. Its aggressive management has led it to being frequently referred to as a vulture fund. In Spain, it operates under the name Anticipa Real Estate, the real-estate management company that took over the mortgages of Catalunya Caixa, of which it has already put up 100,000 mortgages for sale. It hides behind six listed real-estate investment corporations (Sociedades Anónimas Cotizadas de Inversión Inmobiliaria – SOCIMIS: Euripo, Torbel, Albirana, Testa, Corona and Fider) that were created by the Socialist Party and that, thanks to the Popular Party, do not pay corporate tax, as well as numerous other companies such as Budmac or Alquilerovers. In just a few years it has become the largest real-estate manager in the country, and this is why the PAH started a pressure and escrache⁶ campaign in 2019 under the hashtag #BlackstoneMata.⁷

4 A “bad bank” is a corporate structure that isolates non-liquid and high-risk assets (typically non-performing loans) held by a bank or group of banks

5 PAH Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca. 2015. “La SAREB es nuestra.” PAH Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca. Accessed 24 April 2023. afectadosporlahipoteca.com/2015/10/21/la-sareb-es-nuestra/

6 “Escrache” is a type of direct action demonstration that involves shaming public figures, usually by congregating around their homes and chanting.

7 PAH Barcelona. 2019. “Blackstone mata.” PAH Barcelona. Accessed 24 April 2023. pahbarcelona.org/es/blackstone-mata-3/

- **Divarian:** Since 2017, 20% of this joint company is owned by BBVA and 80% by Cerberus, when the BBVA vulture fund sold toxic real-estate assets for a gross value of EUR 13,000 million (EUR 5,000 million net) to Cerberus. It has been especially contested in Catalonia, where it has been the subject of great scrutiny from social movements. In September 2020, the PAH released a statement⁸ demanding BBVA to take responsibility for the sales it executed. Its main demand is the establishment of a direct intermediary to carry out the negotiations of the social rental contracts established by Law 24/2015. In 2020, the Catalan housing rights movement launched the War on Cerberus campaign (Guerra a Cerberus) to get it to stop evictions and comply with the law.
- **Lone Star:** This is the North American vulture fund to which CaixaBank transferred almost its entire portfolio of foreclosed real estate (managed by Building Center) to pay off its debts. On 28 June 2018, Lone Star bought 80% of Caixabank's real-estate portfolio (7 billion non-performing assets of a charter with a gross value of EUR 12.8 billion) for 3.974 billion and created the company Coral Homes as the new owner of these homes. Under the hashtag #CaixabankDesahucia, the PAH issued a statement⁹ denouncing this transaction since Caixabank was one of the entities that benefited from the bank bailout with EUR 6.465 billion without giving any kind of social consideration for this capital.
- **Airbnb:** Since Airbnb and other tourism platforms offer many residential units as short-term tourist rentals, they have become important actors in the city when it comes to the right to housing. The city council has implemented several measures to limit their expansion and has fined several of the platforms due to their lack of transparency. Barcelona has legalized around 9,600 touristic apartments and passed a zoning legislation called [PEUAT: El Pla Especial Urbanístic d'Allotjaments Turístics](#)¹⁰ (The Special Urban Plan for Touristic Lodging), which limits where new short-term rentals are allowed (the city center has reached its capacity and no new ones are allowed).

8 PAH Barcelona. 2020. "¡BBVA, da la cara!" PAH Barcelona. Accessed 24 April 2023. pahbarcelona.org/es/bbva-da-la-cara/

9 PAH Barcelona. 2018. "Caixabank no solo vulnera derechos fundamentales, también incumple las leyes. 2018." PAH Barcelona. Accessed 24 April 2023. pahbarcelona.org/es/caixabank-no-solo-vulnera-derechos-fundamentales-tambien-incumple-las-leyes-2/

10 ajuntament.barcelona.cat/pla-allotjaments-turistics/ca



Section 8

WHAT ARE WE UP AGAINST?

main factors behind housing injustice

This section highlights what we consider to be the primary factors behind the current housing injustices in Belgrade, Berlin, and Barcelona. Some factors are recurrent in the three cities, such as the financialization of the housing sector, which is an epidemic ravaging through cities worldwide despite the warnings from the 2008 mortgage crisis. According to the UN Human Rights Council's Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and on the Right to Non-Discrimination in This Context, back in 2017, the value of real estate amounted to nearly 60% of all global assets, 75% of which were residential real estate, a reality that severely impacted people in need of adequate and affordable housing.¹ With the continuation of the financialization trends as shown in this section, these figures have become more severe today. In fact, the 2008 financial (mortgage) crisis, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, have served to exacerbate the problem of financialization of housing.

Other factors causing injustices in the housing sector are more site-specific and have to do, for instance, with pressures resulting from policies such as the Golden Visa (in Barcelona), lacking or dwindling protections for tenants (in Belgrade and Barcelona), or the lack of institutional capacities and resources (political will) to tackle housing injustices (in Belgrade). While homeownership in Barcelona has been systemically promoted since the Francoist regime

¹ Farha, Leilani. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and on the Right to Non-Discrimination in This Context* (A/HRC/34/51). Geneva: United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2017. Accessed on May 5, 2023. digitallibrary.un.org/record/861179#record-files-collapse-header

and has contributed to recurring real-estate crises, in Belgrade the end of socialist Yugoslavia brought about the end of the former societal models and the balance rapidly shifted toward private ownership in the 1990s. In contrast, more than 85% of Berlin's residents remain tenants,² yet the governmental policy of promoting homeownership and facilitating the conversion of units into condominiums is rapidly changing the equation.

As illustrated in the **timeline** (Section 5), the factors visited in this section are not all encompassing but rather a selection of what our team views as the major factors in each of the cities. Touristification was also viewed as a major cause, yet we do not delve into it because of the abundance of good work on the subject³ and because it proved too large to be properly captured within the scope and size of our project. Other factors that were discussed and we wish to acknowledge—although they are not included here—are the demographic changes and migration into the cities (whether by documented or undocumented immigrants), gentrification, corruption, and the role of large-scale developments.

2 Investitionsbank Berlin. 2021. *IBB Wohnungsmarktbericht 2021: Tabellenband* [Housing Market Report 2021: Spreadsheet]. Berlin: Investitionsbank Berlin, p. 5. ibb.de/media/dokumente/publikationen/berliner-wohnungsmarkt/wohnungsmarktbericht/ibb-wmb-2021-tabellenband.pdf

3 We recommend exploring this recently published article: Colomb, Claire, and Tatiana Moreira de Souza. 2023. "Illegal short-term rentals, regulatory enforcement and informal practices in the age of digital platforms." *European Urban and Regional Studies* 0(0). doi.org/10.1177/09697764231155386

Section 8 / BGD

REGULATED DEREGULATION ENGENDERS PRECARITY

“The concept of housing development should be based on the *reform of the housing system* in terms of property rights, the financial system, maintenance and reproduction of the housing stock, reform of the land and planning system, establishment of a land market, inclusion of activities of the private sector, etc.”
[emphasis added]

General Plan of Belgrade 2021 (Belgrade Master Plan from 2003, Official Gazette of the City of Belgrade, no. 27/03)

While for some readers this guideline might sound like a banal statement, in effect it confirms quite explicitly the politics of engendering capitalist logics in the housing system. Since the passing of the General Plan of Belgrade 2021 (which was adopted in 2003), it has served as a tool to translate what the legislative reforms since the 1990s have been paving the way for: namely, the commodification of housing and the creation of more housing inequalities. The neoliberal urban development and renewal policies in contemporary Belgrade are largely similar to those in other European capitals and major cities, although the manifestations may differ in accordance with the contextual specificities. The events and legislation outlined in the timeline have given rise to the following main trends in planning practice and in the housing sector in Belgrade, which are some of the main issues that housing initiatives and civic organizations are trying to tackle:

- **Regulated deregulation¹ of planning:** As Aalbers' term insinuates, the tendency in Belgrade's urban planning (including the housing sector) is to adapt legal systems and frames to provide a free field for investor-led urban visions, development, and speculative construction. This is demonstrated by the adoption of numerous overlapping yet occasionally contradictory regulations, the flexibilization in determining building parameters, an increase in the *direct implementation*² procedure (which ultimately cancels strategic planning), and the lack of participatory decision-making in planning procedures, which leads to the exclusion of public control mechanisms, among other aspects.
- **Lack of affordable, adequate, and secure housing:** There has been a continuous lack of affordable housing since the break-up of the socially-owned housing system starting in the 1990s. This break-up was followed by the passing of laws that coupled the extreme decrease of investments in public housing with the widespread privatization of the public housing stock. Besides leaning on family (through multi-generational households or inheritance), the main option to resolve housing needs is the market, either by renting or by buying and taking out a mortgage. However, the unregulated rental sector and the increasingly expensive square meter prices often lead to either debt (frequently resulting in evictions) or inadequate housing conditions.
- **Rise in housing-related indebtedness:** Mortgages from commercial banks were introduced in the 1990s and intensified in the 2000s. Yet, long-term loans are not paralleled with long-term working contracts that would secure the ability to make the regular payments. In addition, the discrepancy between the rise of housing-related costs and that of incomes has contributed to indebtedness and worse living conditions.
- **Rise in evictions:** In support of speculative real-estate practices, laws have been passed to facilitate evictions, which have become increasingly frequent, leaving some without any housing alternative or resources to obtain one. The most common reasons for evictions are tenant indebtedness or simply scams by construction company or bailiffs.

1 The term is borrowed from Manuel Aalbers, referring to substantial deregulation that is masked by more and more regulations. It is insightful when it comes to understanding the false dichotomy of state vs. market. In fact, the state supports the market heavily by passing market-friendly regulations and orienting the course of official planning. In particular when it comes to urban development, it provides the cover of legitimacy. See: Aalbers, Manuel B. 2016. "Regulated Deregulation." In *The Handbook of Neoliberalism*, edited by Simon Springer, Kean Birch, and Julie MacLeavy. New York: Routledge.

2 This refers to the procedure in which the building parameters are not determined by the urban planning documents, but rather via the concrete project with which an investor applies for a building permit. This strategy amplifies the impact of the investor logic on the built environment.

- **Touristification:** Although not yet at the levels of other larger European cities, the number of short-term rental units in Belgrade is growing rapidly due to platforms such as AirBnb. This is leading to the typical rent increases, emptying out central neighborhoods of local inhabitants. Although to some extent the COVID-19 pandemic transformed some of the short-term rentals back into long-term ones due to a decrease in overall traveling, it has yet to be seen to what extent short-term renting will bounce back or even spread further.

To better understand these trends, we will elaborate on the following issues: **(1)** lack of diversity in housing solutions, **(2)** precarious tenancy, **(3)** homelessness and substandard housing conditions, and **(4)** lack of capacities and resources in institutional infrastructures. While under a classic scenario the analyses of census-generated data on population structure and dwellings plays a key role, in Serbia this kind of data is insufficient to substantially inform housing policies and strategies because there is a need for more refined and nuanced statistics. Additionally, the long intervals between census cycles make it hard to account for or capture changing dynamics and needs. While census data can provide valuable indicators about the trajectory of developments, it should not serve as the main basis for decision-making. However, we can deduce the following from the data available:³ Serbia has an overall declining population while Belgrade's population is growing; Belgrade has an increasing number of housing units, but at the same time, the number of unused units is growing as a percentage, which points to the fact that profit generation has become the main purpose of the housing sector; and, there is a growing discrepancy between incomes and housing costs, making it virtually impossible for an average person to buy an apartment in Belgrade.

1. Lack of diversity in housing solutions

Under the current political economy in Serbia, the possible mechanisms for finding a home (beyond family strategies) have been reduced to either the market (with or without a bank loan) or the scarce and limited housing support programs. The market is thus the dominant regulator for housing development, provision, distribution, and pricing. Frameworks for societal or cooperative ownership have been nullified, the rental market has been deregulated, and protections of tenants are non-existent, as are reliable frameworks for social housing or guarantees for supply of affordable housing. This has led to the following trends:

3 See: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. 2022. "Census 2011." Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. Accessed 17 January 2023. stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/oblasti/popis/popis-2011/

| Domination of private ownership of the housing stock

The 2011 census⁴ found that 97.7% of the apartments in Belgrade are privately owned by one or more persons (this does not imply that the tenant is the owner), while only 1.07% are publicly owned by the City of Belgrade (approximately 7,000 apartments, of which 4,500 were inherited from the socialist period). This situation is due to the massive privatization of the housing stock that started in the 1990s. Because of how that stock was privatized, which allowed for an apartment to be purchased by the tenant holding the right of occupancy, today there is a great number of fragmented homeowners rather than just a few legal entities or companies (in contrast to the Berlin experience, for example, after German reunification). Yet, it is important to note that there is a category of “poor owners” where households that bought an apartment do not have sufficient resources to maintain it. In contrast to what is happening in many other cities, in Belgrade there are presently no signs of larger real-estate companies (corporate landlords) buying multiple housing units or residential buildings. Rather, the prevailing trend at the moment is that of smaller private landlords.

| Investment skewed toward middle- to high-income housing units

Due to the paradigm of housing commodification and the volatile economy in Serbia, real estate is considered the most secure investment, as well as a lucrative business. In addition, owning a housing unit is seen as the best way to secure one’s shelter and that of one’s children.⁵ This has translated into a continuous demand for housing units and, consequently, a strong increase in construction in recent years. The unfair competition between housing as a capital investment and housing as a home and material security has resulted in the bulk of built units favoring the middle- to high-income strata. Housing prices have risen sharply and a continuously shrinking share of the population can afford a home on the market.

4 *Ibid.*

5 According to the National Geodetic Bureau, during the first half of 2020, the housing market was the most vivid real estate market in Serbia, with 16,492 of housing units being subject of transaction, of which almost half (6,879 units) in Belgrade. Purchases took place mostly in Euros (94%), where two-thirds were conducted in cash and only a third through bank loans. Belgrade has the largest share in Serbia with around EUR 594 million worth of transactions. The cost per square meter in newly constructed residential buildings ranged between 720 EUR/sq.m. in the outskirts of the city to 9,124 EUR/sq.m. in the Savski Venac central district, where the Belgrade Waterfront is being built. (National Geodetic Bureau. 2020. *Izveštaj o stanju na tržištu nepokretnosti za prvo polugodište 2020. godine* [Report on the status of the real estate market for the first half of 2020]. Republic of Serbia Republic Geodetic Authority. rgz.gov.rs/content/Vesti/2020/11%20%D0%9D%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B1%D0%B0%D1%80/Polugodisnji_2020__za%20profesionalne%20korisnike.pdf)

Figure 8.1 Average price per square meter (EUR) for old constructions (above) and new constructions (on the right) in Belgrade districts, 2017–2022. Source: National Geodetic Bureau. 2022. *Izveštaji o stanju na tržištu nepokretnosti 2017 – prvo polugodište 2022. godine* [Report on the status of the real estate market for the years 2017 – first half of 2022]. Republic of Serbia Republic Geodetic Authority. rgz.gov.rs/usluge/procena-i-vo%91enje-vrednosti-nepokretnosti/izve%C5%A1taji-sa-tr%C5%BEi%C5%A1ta/izve%C5%A1taji

Average price (EUR) per sq. m. for old constructions in Belgrade districts, 2017–2022

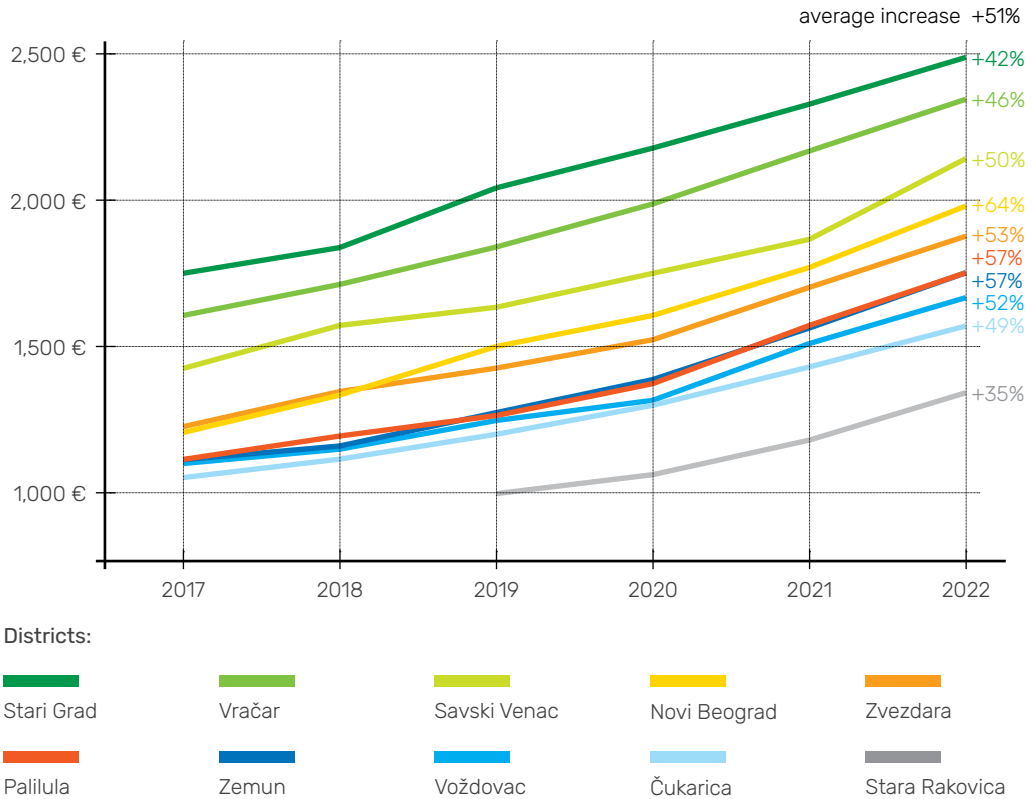
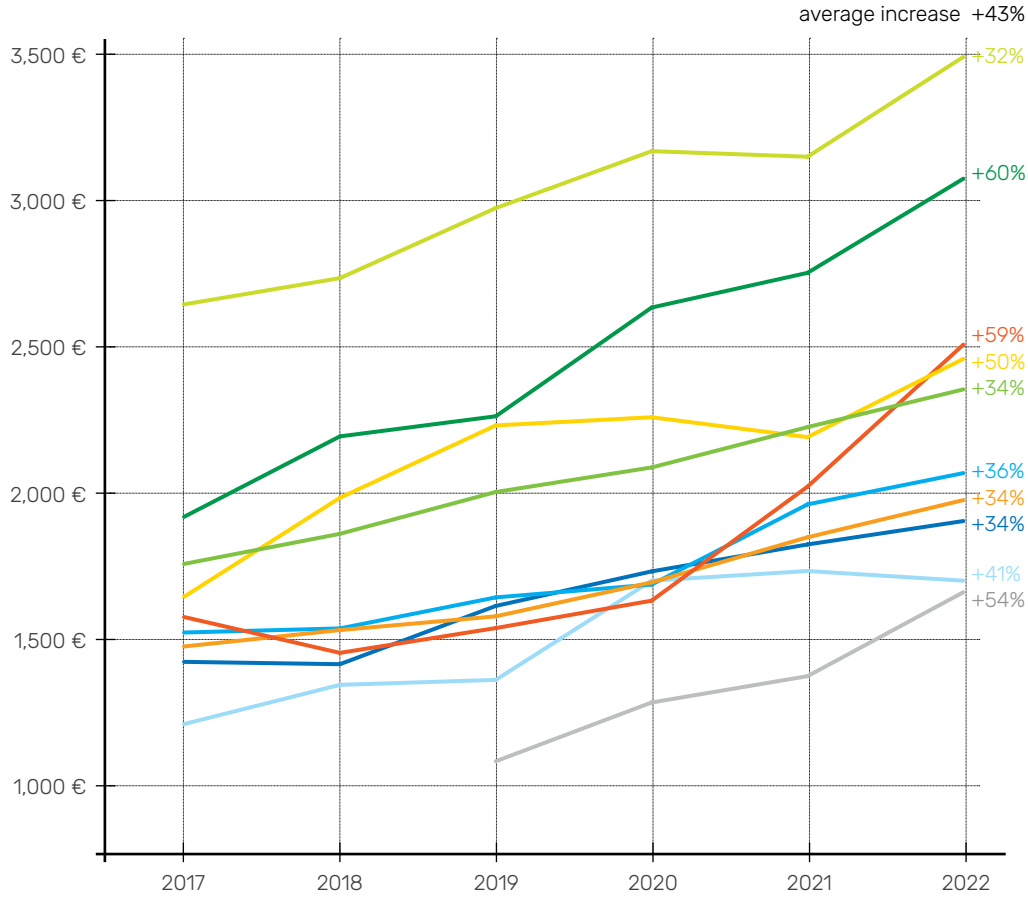
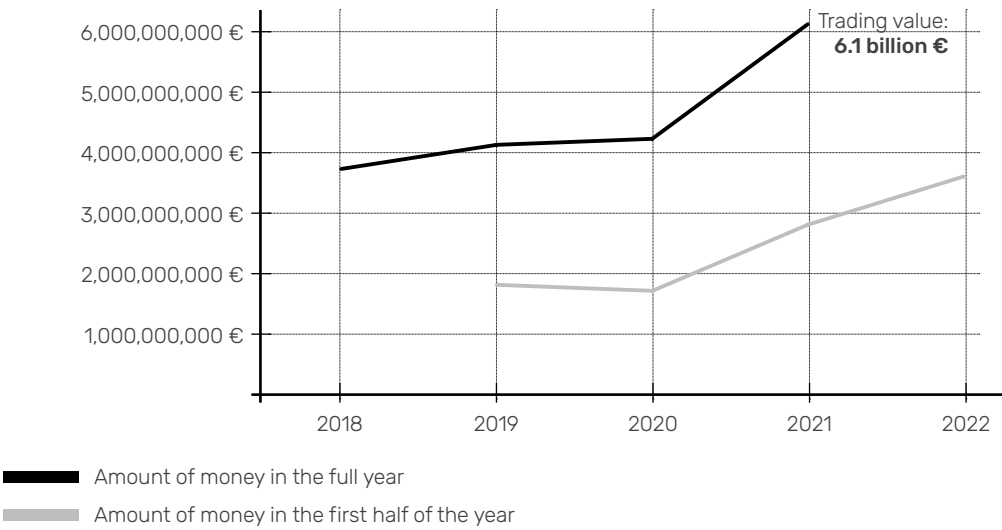


Figure 8.2 (on the right) Total amount of money in the real estate market in Serbia during the full span of the years 2018–2021 (black line) and during the first half of the years 2018–2022 (grey line). Source: National Geodetic Bureau. 2022. *Izveštaji o stanju na tržištu nepokretnosti 2017 – prvo polugodište 2022. godine* [Report on the status of the real estate market for the first half of 2022]. Republic of Serbia Republic Geodetic Authority. rgz.gov.rs/content/Vesti/2022/09/ilovepdf_merged.pdf
National Geodetic Bureau. 2021. *Izveštaj o stanju na tržištu nepokretnosti za 2021. godinu* [Report on the status of the real estate market for the first half of 2021]. Republic of Serbia Republic Geodetic Authority. rgz.gov.rs/content/Datoteke/masovna%20procena/2022/ProfGodisnji2021.pdf

Average price (EUR) per sq. m. for new constructions in Belgrade districts, 2017-2022



Total amount of money (EUR) in the real estate market in Serbia, 2018-2021



According to the annual reports from the Republic Geodetic Bureau (RGZ), in the period from 2017 to 2022 the average price per square meter in Belgrade rose continuously in all 10 urban districts for newly built as well as old constructions, with values of increase ranging between 32% to as high as 64% (see Figure 8.1, p. 258). According to the same source, the real-estate market grew from EUR 3.7 billion in 2018 to 6.1 billion in 2021 (see Figure 8.2, p. 258). Next to the housing market, which is the most developed sub-market, the market for construction land is also developing rapidly, adding to the capitalist pressure.

| Deficit in affordable housing

According to the *Proposal for the National Housing Strategy for the period 2022-2032*,⁶ in 2019 only the top 20% of Serbia's population could afford to buy an apartment on the market (either through a bank loan or with cash) or rent one (see Figure 8.3, p. 261). Only 30% could afford the necessary costs for maintenance and/or for improving the energy efficiency of their housing unit or building (under the conditions of commercial bank loans). Furthermore, subsidized rent (non-profit rent) was unavailable for half of the low-income households. This coincides with the 2020 EU-SILC survey, which found that 17.8% of all households spend over 40% of their income on housing-related costs, a figure that rose to 43.3% for households below the median income level. In addition, according to MoS's 2022 survey, 64% of Belgrade citizens think that housing costs are too high for their monthly household income.

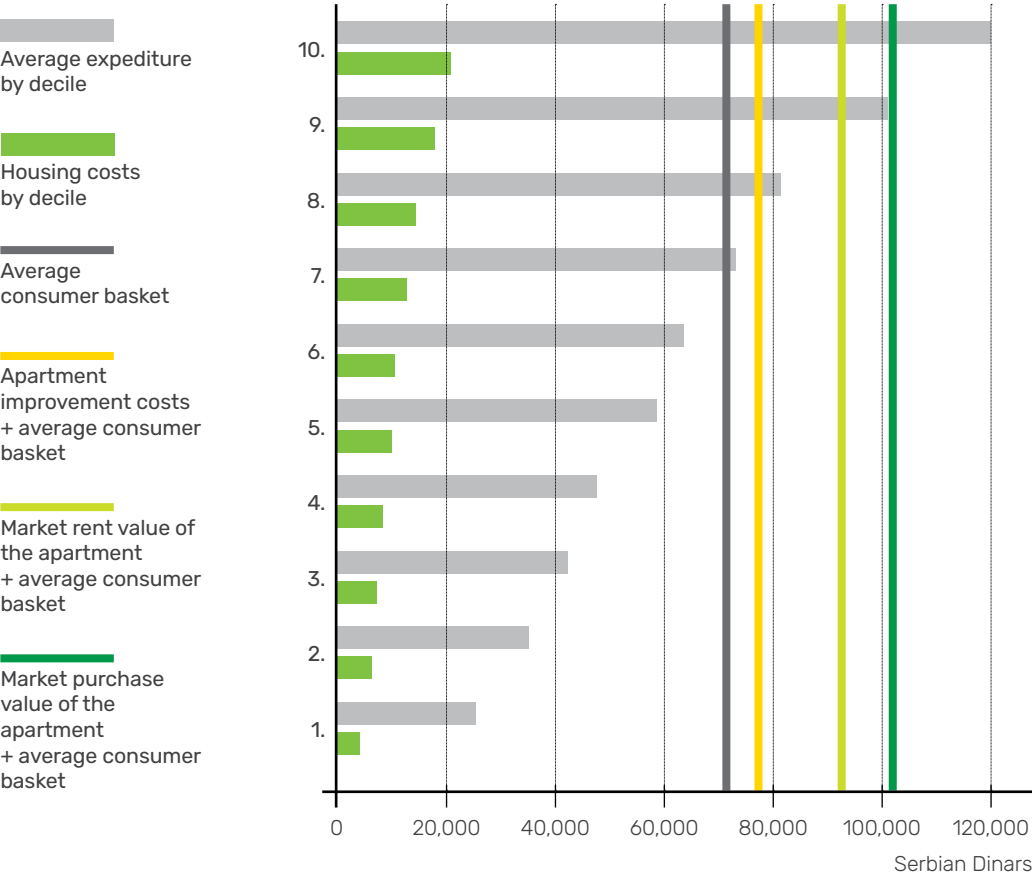
While the previous numbers clearly show that there is a tangible deficit in affordable housing for a growing number of citizens, at the same time, according to public records, there is an increasing number of available housing units in the city and the vacancy rate lies at around 14%. Even though there are ample indicators that the distribution of housing is extremely uneven, neither the national nor the local governments have attempted in any instance to regulate or intervene in the market. An employee of the Belgrade City Administration stated (on condition of anonymity): "In each open call [of state support programs], six to seven times more people are interested than there are apartments. About 85% of the citizens of Belgrade have an income below the limit according to which they are entitled to some kind of housing support."⁷ This opinion was confirmed

6 Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure. 2021. *Predlog Nacionalne stambene strategije za period od 2022. do 2032. Godine sa Akcionim planom za sprovođenje za period od 2022. do 2024. godine* [Proposal for the National Housing Strategy for the period 2022-2032 with Action Plan for its Implementation for the period 2022-2024]. Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure. mgsi.gov.rs/sites/default/files/NACIONALNA%20STAMBENA%20STRATEGIJA_17.01.22.pdf

7 Kljajić, Sanja. 2018. "Država u stambenom raskoraku" [State in Housing Discrepancy]. *Stambeno pitanje*, February 28. kogradigrad.org/2018/02/28/drzava-u-stambenom-raskoraku/

by one of the experts involved in drafting the Housing Strategy for Belgrade, who mentioned that between 2003 and 2019, there were 15 social housing programs in the city that delivered 3,506 units, for which 23,187 applications were submitted.

Housing affordability on the market by decile, 2019



Data source: State Bureau of Statistics, Ministry for Tourism and Telecommunications, National Bank of Serbia (taken from the National Housing Strategy proposal, Ministry for Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure)

Figure 8.3 A graph that compares household expenditure for solving housing needs on the market by deciles with income limits, vis-à-vis values for apartment improvement, rent and purchase, 2019. Source:

Ministry for Construction, Transport and Infrastructure. 2021. *Predlog Nacionalne stambene strategije za period od 2022. do 2032. godine sa Akcionim planom za sprovođenje za period od 2022. do 2024. godine* [Proposal for the National Housing Strategy for the period 2022-2032 with Action Plan for its Implementation for the period 2022-2024]. Republic of Serbia. mgsi.gov.rs/sites/default/files/NACIONALNA%20STAMBENA%20STRATEGIJA_17.01.22.pdf

| Inadequate housing conditions due to housing poverty

The commodification of housing has significantly increased the percentage of those facing difficulties in meeting their housing needs. These people do not form a homogeneous group. Rather, housing vulnerability affects different social groups for varying reasons and with differing (in)abilities to solve their issues independently. The manifestations of housing vulnerability are also different, ranging from insecure tenancy to overcrowded dwellings or inadequate living conditions (lack of sufficient lighting, lack of sanitary facilities, etc.). The 2020 EU-SILC survey states that over 50% of the total Serbian population lives in overcrowded units. Furthermore, about 11.4% households were living in a unit with a leaky roof, damp walls, or rotten window frames and/or floors. These conditions could also be related to the fact that as much as 76% of all illegally built structures in Belgrade are housing units according to the database of the Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure.⁸

Substandard settlements are the materialization of the precariousness that governs the lives of many residents. In Belgrade, there are as many as 98 such settlements, consisting of 2,841 housing units with 8,894 persons,⁹ which is about 0.5% of the city's population. In 2019, the **A11–Initiative for Economic and Social Rights** conducted a study titled *What Life Looks Like in Informal Collective Centers in Serbia*¹⁰ in 10 informal collective housing settlements in 7 municipalities.¹¹ The study, which included a sample of 95 households, found that most respondents live in such settlements for an average of 18 years. Half of the housing units are not built with solid materials; in informal Roma settlements, this is the case for up to 100% of the units. Furthermore, 47% of households from the sample had no access to electricity, 39% of internally displaced persons¹² in informal collective centers¹³ had no access to drinking water, 40% did not have a toilet or a bathroom, 39% had no sewage, and 37% did not have access to any of the above.

8 Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure. 2022. "baza nezakonito izgrađenih objekata" [Database of Illegally Constructed Buildings]. Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure. Accessed 17 January 2023. mgsi.gov.rs/cir/dokumenti/baza-nezakonito-izgradjenih-objekata

9 *Ibid.*

10 Aćimović, Ivana, Stefan Marić, Vujo ilić, Marko Vasiljević, and Milijana Trifković. 2020. *What Life Looks Like in Informal Collective Centers in Serbia*. Belgrade: A11 Initiative. a11initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/What-life-looks-like-in-informal-collective-centres-in-Serbia_konačna-verzija.pdf

11 The households consisted of an average of four members. Of the total household members, 36% were children under 15 years of age, 56% were 16–64 years old, and 8% were over 65 years old.

12 In Serbia, the term mainly refers to people who fled from Kosovo during the conflicts of the 1990s.

13 Informal collective centers are remains of former officially established centers for refugees and internally displaced persons from the 1990s wars. These centers were eventually closed and persons living in them were housed in social housing projects. The structures of these centers were abandoned for some time and later reused by households that otherwise could not find a shelter. As A11 explains, the difference between informal settlements and informal collective centers at present is that the former refers to informally built homes, whereas the latter refers to existing structures with squatters.

2. Precarious tenancy engendered by lack of regulations

Tenants are in an extremely insecure position because the rental market is highly unregulated and only a small percentage of leases are formalized through a contract. Since many tenants do not report their real status during the census, it is a challenge to determine their share (out of the total housing scene). However, according to the 2022 representative survey by the Ministry of Space, more than 24% of Belgrade's inhabitants are tenants.

This lack of regulation in the rental sector also makes tenants extremely vulnerable to landlords. There are no legal protections for tenants in terms of contract termination, rent increases, or the costs of essential repairs, for example. That being said, regulating the rental market is challenging due to the fact that small landlords dominate the scene. In addition, there is little motivation for tenants to unionize, which is primarily due to a strong feeling among tenants that renting is just a temporary stage until they can take out a mortgage and purchase an apartment.

3. Insufficient and inadequate responses to increasing homelessness and substandard housing conditions

The 2016 Law on Housing and Building Maintenance introduced *housing support* as a program that would integrate various forms of assistance to those who cannot solve their housing needs autonomously. In Article 89, the law lists priority users of the housing support programs, putting emphasis on the homeless, temporary homeless, victims of gender-based violence, and recipients of social benefits.

Aside from the previously mentioned statistics on households living in inadequate conditions, homelessness is a tangible problem in Belgrade—and in our view, it is the most extreme form of housing deprivation. The 2011 census stated that the number of primary homeless people (those living on the street) in Serbia is 445, including 164 in Belgrade. The number of secondary homeless people (those living in informal and temporary shelters) in Serbia was estimated at 17,842, of which 39% are in Belgrade (i.e., almost 7,000 people). In our view and from our experience on the ground, these numbers are inaccurate. Nevertheless, when comparing them with the 2019 statistics by the A11—Initiative for Economic and Social Rights, in which 8,894 people lived in informal settlements in Belgrade, one can deduce that homelessness is a growing problem.

The housing support programs have not yet clearly articulated how they plan to cater for the needs of these people, neither at the national nor at the municipal

level. The City of Belgrade is still to draft a strategic plan to organize the allocation of the insufficient and sporadic projects of social housing (mostly funded by the EU). Equally problematic is the fact that in reality, there is no designated budget to implement the promised housing support programs¹⁴ and there is a lack of political determination to strategically plan the realization of such programs. As exemplified earlier with the statistics, newly built social housing projects do not even meet the needs of just two of the most vulnerable groups in Serbia (refugees and internally displaced people from the 1990s wars and the Roma population), not to mention other social groups that are in need.

On another level, there is no clear strategy on the management of state-owned or supportive housing units. Some are rented (social rent) to (allegedly) support the construction of the public housing stock, while others are sold to tenants. Decisions on which of the two models is used are made on an *ad hoc* basis for each project, depending on the conditions of the financing party, be it the EU or another international agency (in recent years mostly the UN). In addition, with every new government there is a “continuity of discontinuity.” With each change, the priorities of public policies are reshuffled, and the objectives are often changed,¹⁵ which is accompanied by the reorganization of the national budget allocations. The housing sector needs continuous and progressive strategic planning, but in reality housing support is tied to the affinities of international donors.

14 The analysis preceding the National Housing Strategy states that at the time the current “Law on Housing and Building Maintenance” was drafted, it was recognized that there was a structural lack of resources to fulfil the housing needs through the promises of the legislated housing support program. The analysis then proposed that the state should establish and cater for a budget for housing support. However, the Ministry of Finance demanded that proposal to be erased as it claimed it would impede the consolidation of the budget. This exemplifies the positioning of the state and the various branches of government towards the housing needs of the citizens.

15 In 2018, Vučić, the President of Serbia, announced the first phase of the affordable housing construction plan with 8,000 units spread out across various cities in Serbia (Vranje, Kragujevac, Niš, Belgrade, Novi Sad). Despite the clear priorities based on housing deprivation and poverty (regardless of the employment sector), the sole target group for these units were police and military forces. This is one of the clear examples of how power is being misused and how the housing policy is inconsistently led. (See: Ministry of Defence Republic of Serbia. 2018. “President Vučić: Construction of flats for security forces personnel to begin in seven cities.” *Ministry of Defence Republic of Serbia*, October 15. mod.gov.rs/eng/13153/predsednik-vucic-krece-izgradnja-stanova-za-pripadnike-snaga-bezbednosti-u-sedam-gradova-13153). In contrast to the 1,000 units that the first phase designated for Belgrade for police and military forces, for the past ten years, there were no publicly-financed affordable housing units built in the city for any of the vulnerable groups.

4. Lack of capacities and resources in institutional infrastructures relevant to housing policy

As partially recognized in the draft version of the National Housing Strategy, there is a problem of insufficient institutional capacity at both the local and national level. This applies to the financial resources and the human resources of the specialized bodies and units that coordinate and oversee the implementation of housing policies. Housing-related policies have been fragmented through various sets of legislation, and a dispersed network of institutions is tasked with implementing the different aspects (be it social protection, economic investment, or building governance). This lack of coordination has resulted in the absence of an overall perspective on housing and a failure to develop coherent sets of measures and strategies.

At the same time, there is an equally significant yet unacknowledged problem: namely that of untransparent planning and decision-making at both the local and national governmental levels accompanied by a lack of accountability mechanisms. Moreover, there is no strategic long-term vision for urban development. Therefore, we see the following three main structural obstacles for shifting the paradigms in the housing sector to achieve more justice:

| There is no comprehensive and up-to-date information on housing needs and resources

The statistics in the field of housing are insufficient at both the national and city level. Data referenced in official documents and policies is obtained from other statistical databases such as censuses, real estate registers, etc. However, since housing is a complex area where social, political, economic, environmental, and technological parameters are relevant, it is necessary to have tailored and continuous processes for creating and monitoring statistical data sets that are linked across relevant sectors. Only then can educated and adequate policies be designed that respond to today's challenges and needs in housing. The statistics on which the policies are based must also generate visibility and be sensitive to the different social groups that are in a state of housing vulnerability as these have different needs for housing solutions and assistance programs.

In addition to statistics and in relation to the availability of information, the current Law on Housing and Building Maintenance requires local municipalities to submit annual reports to the Ministry of Construction, Transportation, and Infrastructure on existing housing needs and implemented housing programs. However, these reports are not carried out thoroughly and there are no monitoring mechanisms to ensure their delivery. For example, for 2018, only 85

of the 174 local municipalities submitted their reports,^{16,17} and these were not even made available to the public.¹⁸ Furthermore, there are no governmental programs aimed at providing citizens with information about their housing rights and options. Civil society organizations and professional associations (few of which focus on housing conditions) have no capacities to conduct representative studies. They either rely on the insufficient data from the official resources or conduct non-representative, smaller scale surveys and studies that exemplify contextualized cases for their positions and demands, rather than scientifically and concretely supporting them.

| The planning and implementation of the housing policy is non-transparent and non-participatory

In Belgrade, the processes of urban planning and the approval of development proposals have not been transparent so far, nor have they given citizens the opportunity to participate in shaping their immediate surroundings. Apart from the fact that citizens are often insufficiently informed about ways to potentially influence short- and long-term urban development plans, housing strategies, or any other decisions in the field of housing that the government articulates, the processes themselves are limited to selected officials and “experts” and public deliberation is not on the agenda.

| There is no institutional infrastructure for housing policy, strategy, and financing

Since the massive privatization in the 1990s, there has been very little effort at any governmental level to establish the necessary institutional infrastructures

16 Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government. “Lokalne samouprave u Srbiji [Local Self-Governments in Serbia].” Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government. Republic of Serbia. Accessed 17 January 2023. mduls.gov.rs/registri/lokalne-samouprave-u-srbiji/?script=lat

17 Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure. 2019. *Analiza uslova za održivi razvoj stanovništva u republici srbiji: Polazište za nacionalnu stambenu strategiju* [Analysis of Conditions for the Sustainable Development of Housing in the Republic of Serbia: Basis for the National Housing Strategy]. Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure. mgisi.gov.rs/sites/default/files/Nacionalna%20stambena%20strategija_Analitika.pdf

18 In the “[Housing Burdens and Public Land for Non-Profit Housing](#)” workshop, conducted within the framework of the CMMM project, the Ministry of Space suggested to the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (the association that represents local authorities before the National Assembly and the state government) that these annual reports should be made available. As the participants of the workshop agreed that this is relevant for the democratic process and a helpful change, we will keep working on this in the coming months.

that would focus on housing. The 2009 Law on Social Housing¹⁹ attempted to introduce local housing agencies and the central Republic Housing Agency as new instruments for coordinating and monitoring housing policy. However, things have been moving in the opposite direction as several local and national agencies were shut down in the following years as part of the austerity measures and the rationalization of the public sector. The City of Belgrade currently does not have a specialized coordinating body that oversees the formulation and implementation of housing policies. Instead, there is a housing section within the City Secretariat for Legal and Property Affairs, which employs 11 people (one for every 63,000 housing units).²⁰ The current Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Article 109) stipulates the creation of such agencies (including through the delegation of responsibilities to a housing cooperative or other legal entity), but their establishment has been neglected so far been.

What are starting points toward reforming the housing sector?

As described in other sections of this book, one of the central problems in the housing sector is the limited possibilities people have for obtaining housing, either through the unaffordable, profit-oriented market, through family strategies, or through the scarce and insufficient housing support programs. To solve the problem of unaffordability and inaccessibility, the government must first create legislative and institutional infrastructures that provide favorable conditions for the re-establishment of non-profit housing (learning from the societal housing system and creating contemporary cooperative formats²¹ that are viable under today's economic parameters). Second, the problem of underfunding for housing support programs, which include the provision of public housing, must be permanently solved.

19 In Serbian: Zakon o socijalnom stanovanju (Official Gazette, no. 72/2009). The law ceased to be valid with the adoption of the 2016 Law on Housing and Building Maintenance.

20 At the national level, the trend is very similar. Housing is included in the jurisdiction of sections that deal with communal inspection, urban planning, legal and property matters, etc. See: Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure. 2019. *Analiza uslova za održivi razvoj stanovništva u republici srbiji: Polazište za nacionalnu stambenu strategiju* [Analysis of Conditions for the Sustainable Development of Housing in the Republic of Serbia. Basis for the National Housing Strategy]. Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure, p. 166.

21 Contemporary cooperatives insist on a non-profit and non-speculative character. This means that the housing units, unlike in the previous cooperative model, are not transferred into private ownership, but rather remain under the ownership of the cooperative. The tenants have a secured *right to use* for the entire period they remain members of the cooperative. See: Ko gradi grad's project "Pametnija zgrada" (pametnijazgrada.rs/en/home/).

In conclusion, there is a need for a structural transformation in the approach to housing and for prioritizing it as a basis for ensuring the well-being of citizens and relative justice among communities in Serbia. The principal directions and politics on housing have to change from being regarded as solely an individual responsibility to the state taking responsibility again, particularly when it comes to vulnerable groups. This entails investing resources and efforts in—and forging participatory mechanisms to foresee—the creation and implementation of strategic development plans that produce secure, affordable, and adequate housing.

We see three starting points on the long road toward reforming the housing sector. First, the recognition of the right to decent housing for all citizens starts with addressing the urgent need for adequate housing for primary and secondary homeless people and reducing the burdens and debts of vulnerable households. Second, the state should permit the temporary use of the vacant private housing stock, much of which is withheld due to speculative practices, thereby exacerbating housing problems still further. Third, through incremental policies and measures that promote and support diversification of housing ownership regimes and by building up investment capacities in the maintenance and enlargement of publicly owned housing stock, the state must initiate the long-term process of decreasing the domination of market logic in the housing sector. Based on these three fields of action, we designed the two-part workshop “**Housing Burdens and Public Land for Non-Profit Housing**,” which took place on 9 November and 7 December 2020.

In order for these changes to materialize and last in the long-term, a systemic transformation of the institutional infrastructure is required. This means expanding and structuring the cooperation of the network of institutions tasked with achieving such housing-related objectives and measures. Along the same lines, a coherent system for collecting and analyzing relevant data must be established to inform policies and evaluate their impact. Finally, planning and decision-making procedures related to housing need to be opened up to the participation of citizens and civil society organizations in order to generate collective strategies and programs that truly serve the public interest. These longer-term issues are at the core of the future vision and roadmap of our recently established **Housing Equality Movement**.

Section 8 / BLN

THE AFFORDABLE BERLIN IS PASSÉ!

Since before the financial crisis of 2008/2009, Berlin has been facing a strong and growing pressure on its real-estate market. In this section, we briefly explain the trends and four of the main factors that influence the work of Berlin's initiatives and civic organizations that seek housing justice: demographics and the rent-to-income ratio, privatization, financialization, and conversions.

1. Demographics and the rent-to-income ratio

Berlin is a tenant society with about 85% of the population renting their homes.^{1,2} Availability of affordable housing units is increasingly scarce, especially for the low- and middle-income population. The two main reasons for this are Berlin's rapidly growing population (in 2021, Berlin registered around 3.68 million inhabitants,³ an increase of approximately 10% compared to one decade earlier⁴) and the fact that net incomes have not risen at rates comparable to those of

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- 1 Davies, Clementine. 2021. *Financialisation and Rental Housing: A Case Study of Berlin*. Berlin: Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin, p. 11. ipe-berlin.org/fileadmin/institut-ipe/Dokumente/Working_Papers/ipe_working_paper_153.pdf
 - 2 About 84,1% of the total housing stock are rentals. Investitionsbank Berlin. 2021. *IBB Wohnungsmarktbericht 2021: Tabellenband* [Housing Market Report 2021: Spreadsheet]. Berlin: Investitionsbank Berlin, p. 5. ibb.de/media/dokumente/publikationen/berliner-wohnungsmarkt/wohnungsmarktbericht/ibb-wmb-2021-tabellenband.pdf
 - 3 Rudnicka, J. 2022. "Einwohnerzahl in Berlin von 1960 bis 2021 [Population in Berlin from 1960 to 2021]." *Statista*, September 29. de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/154880/umfrage/entwicklung-der-bevoelkerung-von-berlin-seit-1961/
 - 4 In 2020, Berlin experienced slightly negative population growth for the first time since 2000 (-5,400 compared to 2019), mainly due to the pandemic. IBB Wohnungsmarktbericht (2021, p.8)

rents (nor to those of inflation). The first graph in Figure 8.4, p. 272, shows that between 2014 and 2018, the average rent increased by 25.2%, while the average net income per person increased by 9.9%. The second graph shows that the trend continued until 2019. The downward curve of the rent rate in 2019 can be explained by the **rent cap** that came into effect in early 2020 but **was dismissed** by the Federal Constitutional Court shortly thereafter, in 2021. Hence, one can expect higher rent rates again in 2021 and 2022.

Housing is considered an economic burden for many Berliners, especially for the lower income groups. In 2018, the average rent in the city reached 10.7 EUR/sq.m. (in 2008 it was 6.0 EUR/sq.m.), and the average purchase price almost tripled to 4,098 EUR/sq.m. (from 1,540 EUR/sq.m. a decade earlier).⁵ In that year, 48% of Berlin's households spent more than 30% of their income (which is considered the threshold) on rent and housing-related costs, and the affordable housing supply gap lay at 760,000 apartments.⁶ Following recent events (COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the Ukraine War heating up in 2022), these numbers have likely increased.

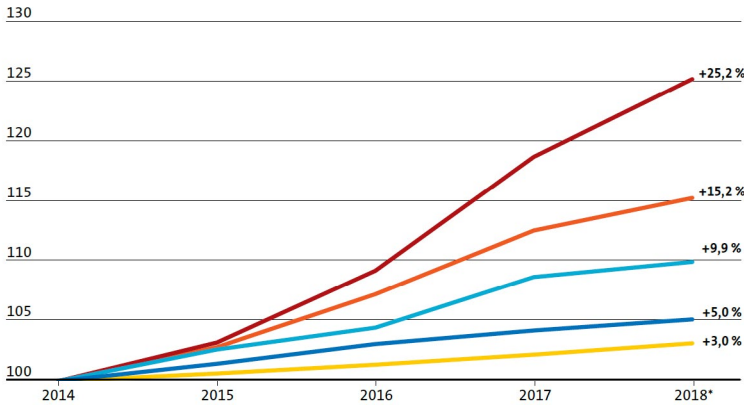
2. Privatization of the housing stock

As shown in the timeline, the reunification of Germany came hand-in-hand with harsh economic restructuring programs. With the alleged goal of resolving the financial situation of the highly indebted city, a large share of the publicly owned housing stock in Berlin was privatized between the 1990s and 2000s. As shown in Figure 8.5, p. 273, Berlin had 482,000 publicly owned housing units in 1991, which at the time represented 28% of the total housing stock. By 2006, the amount had been roughly cut in half, with 270,000 housing units in public hands, which made up only 15% of Berlin's total housing stock. While not all housing units owned by the city are social housing, it is worth noting that there were only 95,723 social housing units left by the end of 2019.⁷

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- 5 Holm, Andrej. 2019. "Wohnungskrise in Berlin: Verdrängung als Geschäftsmodell [Housing crisis in Berlin: Displacement as a business model]." In *Berlin bleibt! Stadt, Kunst, Zukunft* [Berlin stays! City, Art, Future], edited by HAU Hebbel am Ufer, 7–12. Berlin: HAU Hebbel am Ufer. hebbel-am-ufer.de/fileadmin/Hau/HAU3000/Publikationen/Berlin_Bleibt_Zeitung_WEB_ES.pdf
 - 6 Holm, Andrej. 2020. "Die Lage der sozialen Wohnraumversorgung in Berlin: Stellungnahme als Sachverständiger in der Anhörung der Expertenkommission zum Volksentscheid ‚Vergesellschaftung großer Wohnungsunternehmen‘ am 9. Juni 2022. [The Situation of Social Housing in Berlin: Statement as expert witness in the Hearing of the Expert Commission on the Referendum 'acquiring and communalizing of Large Housing Companies' on June 9, 2022]" Berlin: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/Artikel/3-22_Onl-Publ_Wohnraumversorgung.pdf
 - 7 Deutscher Bundestag. 2020. „Schriftliche Fragen: mit den in der Woche vom 24. August 2020 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung [Written inquiries: with the answers received from the federal government during the week of August 28, 2020]." Deutscher Bundestag 19. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 19/21928: 15. dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/219/1921928.pdf

Comparing selected indexed indicators 2014-2018

(index value: 2014 = 100)

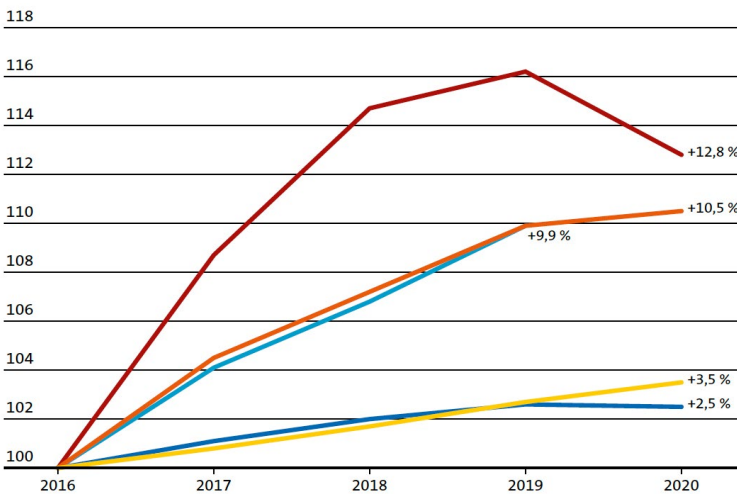


* 2018 is forecast value

Data sources: Berlin-Brandenburg Statistics Office, empirica-systeme Market Databank (powered by Value AG), own calculations by the Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing

Comparing selected indexed indicators 2016-2020

(index value: 2016 = 100)



** in 2020 data on income of households was not available yet

Data sources: Berlin-Brandenburg Statistics Office, Value Market Databank, own calculations by the RegioKontext GmbH and the Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing

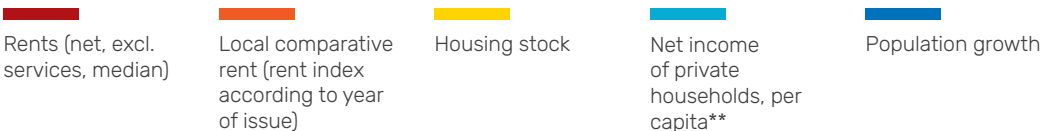


Figure 8.4 Comparison of the growth percentages of selected indexed indicators of Berlin's housing market in the period between 2014 and 2020. Translated into English from the IBB Wohnungsmarktbericht 2019 and 2021. Sources:

(top) Investitionsbank Berlin. 2019. *IBB Wohnungsmarkt Bericht 2019* [Housing Market Report 2019]. Berlin: Investitionsbank Berlin, p. 74, figure 82. ibb.de/media/dokumente/publikationen/berliner-wohnungsmarkt/wohnungsmarktbericht/ibb_wohnungsmarktbericht_2019.pdf

(below) Investitionsbank Berlin. 2021. *IBB Wohnungsmarkt Bericht 2021* [Housing Market Report 2021]. Berlin: Investitionsbank, p. 82, figure 83. ibb.de/media/dokumente/publikationen/berliner-wohnungsmarkt/wohnungsmarktbericht/ibb-wohnungsmarktbericht-2021.pdf

Year	East Berlin		West Berlin		Berlin	
	1991	2006	1991	2006	1991	2006
Number of state-owned housing units	246,000	142,000	236,000	128,000	482,000	270,000
Share of total stock	39%	22%	24%	12%	28%	15%

Figure 8.5 Comparison between the number of state-owned housing units in 1991 (when the reunification of Germany took place) and those in 2006, and the change in the share from the total housing stock. Source:

Holm, Andrej. 2006. "Die Preispolitik der Finanzinvestoren [The pricing policy of financial investors]." *Mieter Echo* no. 319. bmgev.de/mieterecho/319/08-wohnungsprivatisierung-hartz-ah.html

Following mounting pressure from civic initiatives, the *Mietenbündnis* (Rent Alliance) agreement was signed between the Berlin Senate and the six publicly owned housing companies in 2012. It stipulated that the state-owned housing companies would increase their stock to 300,000 housing units by 2016. Further agreements on various social provisions for this housing stock were made: for example, a maximum rent increase of 15% within 4 years and 55% of the stock must be allocated to socially disadvantaged tenants. The targets were met, and in 2016, the social provisions of the agreement were consolidated in the Berlin Housing Provision Act (Berliner Wohnraumversorgungsgesetz, WoVG). Based on this law, the cooperation agreement between the publicly owned housing companies and the city's administration was renewed in 2017, aiming to raise the stock to 360,000 publicly owned housing units by 2021.⁸

Berlin's successive Senates have been promising to increase the publicly owned housing stock by both building new housing units and acquiring and communalizing privately owned real estate.^{9,10,11} However, the scale of buying up

- 8 Senatsverwaltung für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz. 2015. *Gesetz und Verordnungsblatt* [Law and Regulation Gazette] 71 (25). stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/wohnen/wohnraumversorgung/download/WoVG_Gesetzblatt_05.12.15.pdf
- 9 Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen. 2022. *Kooperationsvereinbarung: Leistbare Mieten, Wohnungsneubau und soziale Wohnraumversorgung* [Cooperation agreement: affordable rents, new housing construction and social housing supply]. Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen. Accessed 23 January 2023. stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/wohnen/wohnraum/wohnungsbaugesellschaften/de/kooperationsvereinbarung.shtml
- 10 Senatsverwaltung für Finanzen and Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen. 2022. *Leistbare Mieten, Wohnungsneubau und soziale Wohnraumversorgung: Kooperationsvereinbarung mit den städtischen Wohnungsbaugesellschaften Berlins* [Affordable rents, new housing construction and social housing: Cooperation agreement with the municipal housing associations in Berlin]. Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Finanzen and Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen. stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/wohnen/wohnraum/wohnungsbaugesellschaften/download/kooperationsvereinbarung.pdf
- 11 BBU Verband Berlin-Brandenburgischer Wohnungsunternehmen e. V. 2017. *Im Einsatz für das wachsende Berlin: Jahresbericht 2016* [In Service for an expanding Berlin: Annual Report 2016]. Berlin: BBU Verband Berlin-Brandenburgischer Wohnungsunternehmen e. V. stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/wohnen/wohnungsbau/download/mietenbuenndnis/mietenbuenndnis_bericht2016.pdf

units in bulk in the city by private companies remains extremely high. In its 2022 report, the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs, and Spatial Development (BBSR, which has been tracking trade in Germany's rental housing sector¹² since the end of the 1990s) shows that more than 900,000 housing units were traded in large deals (more than 800 units at a time) in the period between 1999 and 2021. This lands the state of Berlin in second place close behind the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the largest state in Germany with almost 40 times the area and 5 times the population of Berlin, and far ahead of the two other city-states in the federal republic: Hamburg and Bremen (see Figure 8.6, p. 275).

In 2019, the largest residential real-estate owner in Berlin was Deutsche Wohnen SE, a private company listed on the German stock exchange DAX, with a total of 115,500 housing units in Berlin. It was followed by four publicly owned housing companies (each owning around 60,000 units), and Vonovia as the second largest private company, owning 44,000 housing units in Berlin (Figure 8.7, p. 275). Based on data from the *Wem gehört Berlin?* project, the Tagesspiegel developed a report with rich visual illustrations where the biggest private residential real-estate owners in Berlin are named, and where it zooms in on the ownership structures of these companies, showing a deeper consolidation of actors (e.g., BlackRock) that seem to control the market (see Figure 8.8, p. 276).

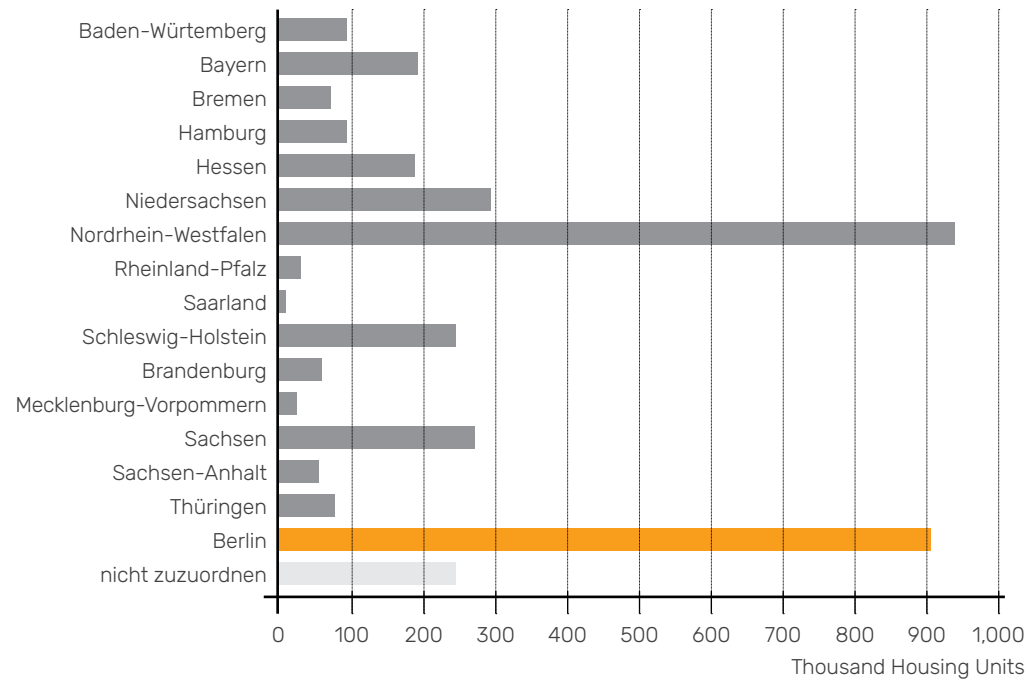
In response to the increased pressure on Berlin's housing market, in 2019, the civil initiative *Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Enteignen* (expropriate DW & Co.) formed around the demand to re-communalize the stock of large private companies owning more than 3,000 housing units. After the initiative collected the necessary signatures in the 2-step process, a referendum was held in September 2021 and 59.1% voted in favor. While the referendum delivered a clear message to politicians that residents reject the status quo, more than a year later, the next steps are still being deliberated and many proponents have little hope that the demands of the referendum will be met.

Shortly after the referendum, in October 2021, the friendly takeover of Deutsche Wohnen (DW) by Vonovia was publicly announced.¹³ The two companies were

12 Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt-, und Raumforschung BBSR-Datenbank Wohnungstransaktionen [BBSR-Database housing transactions]. Accessed 23 January 2023. bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/DE/forschung/fachbeitraege/wohnen-immobilien/wohnungswirtschaft/DatenbankWohnungstransaktionen/wohnungstransaktionen.html?pos=3

13 Deutsche Wohnen. 2021. *Joint Statement by the Management Board and the Supervisory Board of Deutsche Wohnen SE pursuant to Section 27 para. 1 WpÜG on the Voluntary Public Takeover Offer of Vonovia SE to the Shareholders of Deutsche Wohnen SE*. Berlin: Deutsche Wohnen ir.deutsche-wohnen.com/download/companies/dewohnen/takeover_information/20210831_Stellungnahme_EN.pdf

Number of traded housing units per federal state, 1999-2021



Note: includes re-sale of units, taken into account are sales of large residential portfolios of 800 units or more

Data source: BBSR Databank for transactions of housing units

Figure 8.6 Number of traded apartments (in thousands) per federal state between 1999 and 2021 in transactions that included 800 units and more (including re-sale), (c) BBSR 2022. Source:

Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung. 2022. "Zunahme des Handels mit Mietwohnungsportfolios in 2021 [Increase in trading of Rental housing portfolios in 2021]." *BBSR-Analysen Kompakt*, no. 8, p. 12, figure 7. bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/DE/veroeffentlichungen/analysen-kompakt/2022/ak-08-2022-dl.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3

Company	Housing units in Berlin	Type
Deutsche Wohnen SE	115,500	Real-estate company (DAX listed)
Stadt und Land mbH	68,000	Communal housing company
Degewo AG	67,700	Communal housing company
Gewobag AG	60,100	Communal housing company
Howoge GmbH	59,700	Communal housing company
Vonovia SE	44,000	Real-estate company (DAX listed)

Figure 8.7 The six largest residential real-estate owners of Berlin. Source:

Savills. 2019. "Eigentümerstruktur am Wohnungsmarkt [Ownership structure on the housing market]." *Spotlight*, March 1. pdf.euro.savills.co.uk/germany-research/ger-2019/spotlight-eigentuerstruktur-am-wohnungsmarkt.pdf

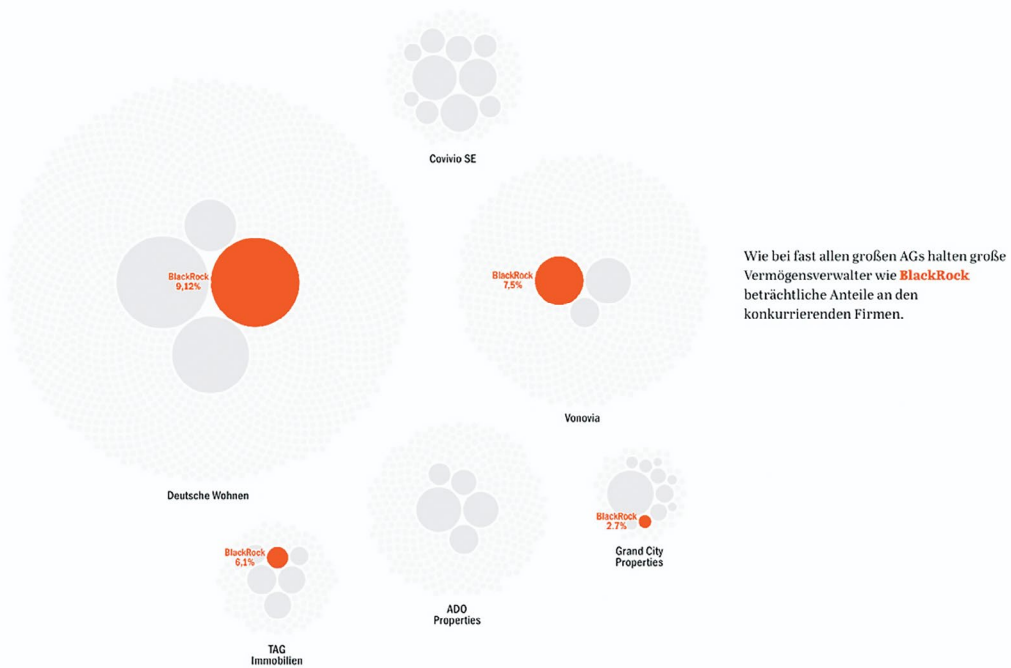


Figure 8.8 Screenshot from the interactive webpage by Tagesspiegel and Who owns Berlin? which reports on the structure and workings of the profiteers from Berlin's housing market. This illustration shows how BlackRock has acquired shares in several other companies. (c) Der Tagesspiegel. Source: Tagesspiegel. 2020. "Wer profitiert vom Berliner Mietmarkt [Who benefits from the Berlin rental market]?" Wem Gehört Berlin?. Accessed 23 January 2023. interaktiv.tagesspiegel.de/lab/mieten-und-renditen/

The Development of the Vonovia SE on the German market, 1999–2021

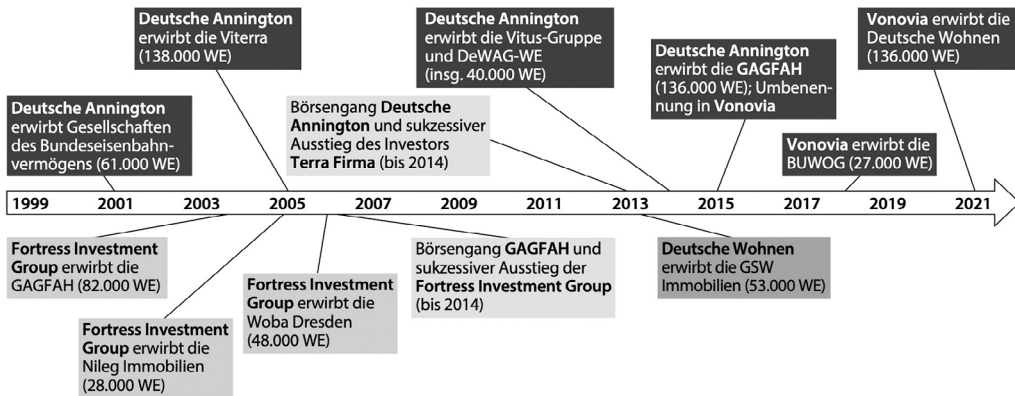


Figure 8.9 Illustration of the development of Vonovia SE based on market transactions, 1999–2021, where an operation included more than 25,000 housing units. Source: Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung. 2022. "Zunahme des Handels mit Mietwohnungsportfolios in 2021 [Increase in trading of Rental housing portfolios in 2021]." *BBSR-Analysen Kompakt*, no. 8, p. 11, figure 6. bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/DE/veroeffentlichungen/analysen-kompakt/2022/ak-08-2022-dl.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3

not merged in order to avoid real-estate-transfer related taxation.¹⁴ Vonovia was the new name of the company Deutsche Annington as of 2015, which had acquired several other larger companies since 2001 (see Figure 8.9, p. 276). Soon after the purchase of the majority of the DW stock, Vonovia sold 15,000 housing units to publicly owned real-estate companies for EUR 2.46 billion.¹⁵ Although the reacquisition of private housing units by public institutions is one of the necessary measures for the city to provide more affordable housing, this deal was met with wide criticism as the price-setting was not transparent. Noteworthy, Vonovia's expansion continues, in February 2022 it acquired 20% of the shares of the Adler Group S.A. and it is expected that another such step will follow.¹⁶ Therefore, indicators point to that the trend of amassing of housing units in the hands of large companies is likely to continue.

In 2019, in an attempt to stabilize the soaring rental prices in the city, the Berlin Senate introduced the **rent cap** (Mietendeckel), which required rents to be frozen for 5 years at the levels from June 2019. The cap value was calculated based on age, location, and characteristics of the apartment. If the rent exceeded the cap by 20%, the tenants were allowed to demand a reduction. It is estimated that 1.5 million housing units were affected by the law. Members of the conservative parties CDU and FDP filed a lawsuit at the Federal Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht), and in April 2021, the court declared the law unconstitutional and thus it was annulled. The overturning of the law had dramatic consequences on Berlin's tenants and countless became obliged to pay higher rents. Among those, many became vulnerable to debt caused by subclauses in contracts that were signed as the law was being disputed; whereby in case of an overturn of the rent cap law, the tenant would pay a higher rent (referred to as Schattenmiete in German) retrospectively.¹⁷

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- 14 Kiesel, Robert. 2021. "Vonovia zahlt keinen Cent Grunderwerbsteuer: Berlin geht bei Deal der Immobilien-Riesen leer aus [Vonovia does not pay a cent in real estate transfer tax: Berlin is left empty-handed in deal between real estate giants]." *Tagesspiegel*, July 4. [tagesspiegel.de/berlin/berlin-geht-bei-deal-der-immobilien-riesen-leer-aus-4261621.html](https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/berlin-geht-bei-deal-der-immobilien-riesen-leer-aus-4261621.html)
 - 15 Mik/Reuters. 2021. "Immobilienriesen verkaufen knapp 15.000 Wohnungen an Berlin [Real estate giants sell almost 15,000 apartments to Berlin]." *Spiegel Wirtschaft*, September 17. [spiegel.de/wirtschaft/einigung-perfekt-immobilienriesen-verkaufen-knapp-15-000-wohnungen-an-berlin-a-4b474583-9190-4ff1-8a95-6c58547e9a2e](https://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/einigung-perfekt-immobilienriesen-verkaufen-knapp-15-000-wohnungen-an-berlin-a-4b474583-9190-4ff1-8a95-6c58547e9a2e)
 - 16 Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung. 2022. „Zunahme des Handels mit Mietwohnungsportfolios in 2021 [Increase in trading of Rental housing portfolios in 2021]" *BBSR-Analysen Kompakt*, no. 8. bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/DE/veroeffentlichungen/analysen-kompakt/2022/ak-08-2022-dl.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3
 - 17 Horn, Jakob. 2021. "Mietendeckel gekippt: Wie mit Nachzahlungen umgehen [Rent cap overturned: How to deal with back payments]." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 20. [faz.net/einspruch/mietendeckel-gekippt-wie-mit-nachzahlungen-umgehen-17302686.html](https://www.faz.net/einspruch/mietendeckel-gekippt-wie-mit-nachzahlungen-umgehen-17302686.html)

3. Financialization of the housing sector

Since its reunification, Berlin has attracted increasing volumes of real-estate investments. Between 2009 and 2018, real-estate transactions (i.e., speculation) amounted to EUR 139 billion, compared to EUR 16 billion invested in new construction (Figure 8.10). After the 2008/2009 financial crisis, the ratio of first sales to re-sales significantly shifted toward re-sales, which largely contributed to the upward spiraling of property prices. According to the BBSR,¹⁸ while the total number of real-estate sales has been more or less constant in recent years, the number of apartments traded in rental housing portfolios almost doubled in 2021. This is due to several large-scale transactions, including the merger of Germany's two largest private housing companies.¹⁹ In the 2020 *Who Owns Berlin?* study, Christoph Trautvetter²⁰ calculates that nearly half of Berlin's housing stock is owned by corporations or large property owners. The large gains from speculation by such big real-estate players is illustrated by the 2012–2019 stock development of Deutsche Wohnen and Vonovia, the two biggest private residential real-estate owners in Berlin, with rates increasing far above the DAX average (Figure 8.11).

In 2022, the raised interest rates by federal banks in several countries, increasing construction costs (which started with the COVID-19 lockdowns), and higher prices for energy (aggravated by the Ukraine war) have slightly decreased the value of the biggest real-estate companies on the stock market. Deutsche Bank sees this development as an expected dent, and given the continuing massive housing shortage, it maintains that real estate continues to be a good investment.²¹ At the same time and for the same reasons, several projects for the construction of new affordable housing have been cancelled. It is likely that, especially in cities, real-estate companies will compensate for their losses by increasing rents.²² Thus,

18 Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt-, und Raumforschung BBSR-Datenbank Wohnungstransaktionen [BBSR-Database housing transactions]. Accessed 23 January 2023. bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/DE/forschung/fachbeitraege/wohnen-immobilien/wohnungswirtschaft/DatenbankWohnungstransaktionen/wohnungstransaktionen.html?pos=3

19 Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung. 2022. "Zunahme des Handels mit Mietwohnungsportfolios in 2021 [Increase in trading of Rental housing portfolios in 2021]." BBSR-Analysen Kompakt, no. 8. bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/DE/veroeffentlichungen/analysen-kompakt/2022/ak-08-2022-dl.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3

20 Trautvetter, Christoph. 2020. "Wem Gehört die Stadt [Who owns the city]?" Berlin: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, p. 9, figure 1. rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/Studien/Studien_13-20_Wem_gehoert_die_Stadt.pdf

21 Otte, Romanes. 2022. "Eher Delle als Einbruch: Deutsche Bank sieht am Immobilienmarkt weiter gute Chancen für Investoren – Weil noch mehr Wohnungen fehlen [More of a slump than a crash: Deutsche Bank continues to see good opportunities for investors on the real estate market – Because there is still a shortage of apartments]." Business Insider, August 4. businessinsider.de/bi/immobilien-wohnungsbau-deutsche-bank-erwartet-kein-ende-des-booms/

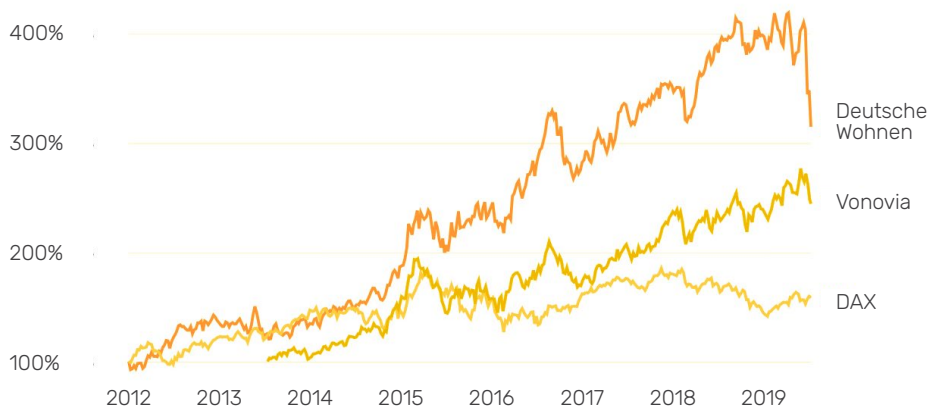
22 Weber, Reinhard. 2022. "Vom Ende des Immobilien-Booms [About the end of the real estate boom]." Tagesschau, September 22. tagesschau.de/wirtschaft/immobilien-zinsen-inflation-baukosten-101.html

Real-estate “investments” in Berlin, 2009–2018



Figure 8.10 Real-estate “investments” in Berlin, comparing expenditures on construction with revenues from sales of real estate and land, 2009–2018. Source: Holm, Andrej. 2019. “Berlin: Mietendeckel Wäre Selbst in der Light-Version Wirkungsvoll [Berlin: Rent cap would be effective even in a light version].” *Gentrification Blog*, September 3. gentrificationblog.wordpress.com/2019/09/03/berlin-mietendeckel-light/

Stock development of Deutsche Wohnen and Vonovia, 2012–2019



Data source: Frankfurt Stock Exchange (boerse-frankfurt.de), DAX share price index

Figure 8.11 Graph showing the development of the market value of Deutsche Wohnen and Vonovia on the DAX stock exchange, 2012–2019. (c) Der Tagesspiegel. Source: Tagesspiegel. 2020. “Wer profitiert vom Berliner Mietmarkt [Who benefits from the Berlin rental market]?” *Wem Gehört Berlin?*. Accessed 23 January 2023. interaktiv.tagesspiegel.de/lab/mieten-und-renditen/

the financialization of the housing sector is one of the major factors causing housing unaffordability, where low- and middle-income strata are the most negatively impacted.²³

4. Converting rental apartments into condominiums

A method for earning fast profits that is closely linked to the financialization of the housing sector is to convert rental apartments into condominiums, with 103,873 housing units being converted between 2009 and 2018.²⁴ Since 2015, this kind of conversion is highly regulated in areas with social protection status (Milieuschutzgebiete)²⁵ (Figure 8.12, p. 281), the number of which has grown in recent years in response to increasing encroachments on such attractive (e.g., socially vibrant) neighborhoods. According to the 2021 IBB Housing Market Report, around 19,400 rental apartments were converted into (owner-occupied) condominiums in 2020: the highest recorded figure in ten years. Berlin-wide, the conversion rate was 1.16%, with the largest concentration in the district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. Some observers estimate that the rent cap, which was still in effect at the time, might have been partly responsible for the sharp increase. In response, the Berlin Senate tightened the 2021 conversion ordinance, thus requiring owners to obtain permission to convert rental apartments into condominiums city-wide.

Notwithstanding, the Federal Building Code²⁶ offers several loopholes. For example, properties can be converted if the new owner guarantees that he/she/they will not sell the apartment to anyone other than the actual tenant for a period of seven years. Afterwards, the apartment can be sold freely in accordance with dismissal provisions. While most conversions are using this loophole, only 0.26% of the apartments have been sold to the existing tenants.²⁷

23 Holm, Andrej. 2019. "Wohnungskrise in Berlin: Verdrängung als Geschäftsmodell [Housing crisis in Berlin: Displacement as a business model]." In *Berlin bleibt! Stadt, Kunst, Zukunft* [Berlin stays! City, Art, Future], edited by HAU Hebbel am Ufer, 7–12. Berlin: HAU Hebbel am Ufer.

24 Investitionsbank Berlin. 2019. "IBB Wohnungsmarktbericht 2019 [IBB Housing Market Report 2019]." Berlin: Investitionsbank Berlin, p. 74. [ibb.de/media/dokumente/publikationen/berliner-wohnungsmarkt/wohnungsmarktbericht/ibb_wohnungsmarktbericht_2019.pdf](https://www.ibb.de/media/dokumente/publikationen/berliner-wohnungsmarkt/wohnungsmarktbericht/ibb_wohnungsmarktbericht_2019.pdf)

25 *Milieuschutzgebiete* are protected areas as regulated in the Federal Building Code (Baugesetzbuch). This status is meant to maintain the social structures and make-up of certain neighborhoods, and therefore different measures apply to them.

26 In German: Das deutsche Baugesetzbuch (BauGB), which replaced the Federal Building Act (Bundesbaugesetz, BbaUG).

27 RBB24. 2020. "Umwandlung von Miet- in Eigentumswohnungen schreitet in Berlin voran [Conversion of rental apartments into freehold apartments is progressing in Berlin]." RBB24, December 9. [rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2020/12/mietwohnungen-eigentumswohnungen-milieuschutzgebiete-berlin.html](https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2020/12/mietwohnungen-eigentumswohnungen-milieuschutzgebiete-berlin.html)

In order to prevent the sale of apartment buildings in areas with social protection status to capitalist investors, district administrations can apply the right of preemption (or the right of first refusal, RPE) when a sale is announced. Between 2015 and 2021, the RPE was successfully applied to 82 properties with 2,430 apartments. In 291 other cases that included 9,769 apartments, the district signed a waiver agreement with the buyer, which regulates the development of the real estate over a certain time frame to reduce negative social impacts of the sale. While the districts of Neukölln and Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg are leading in making use of the RPE, some of the other districts have not used it at all (Figure 8.13, p. 283). There is evidence of a steady increase in successful cases until 2021, when the Federal Administrative Court (Bundesverwaltungsgericht) ruled in a case on 9 November that the practice of **RPE was illegal**. Critics argue that the ruling is a very conservative and questionable interpretation of the constitution. Nonetheless, that does not change the fact that this ruling in effect stopped the application of the RPE, which represents a serious setback in the struggle against the take-over of the housing stock by profit-oriented companies.

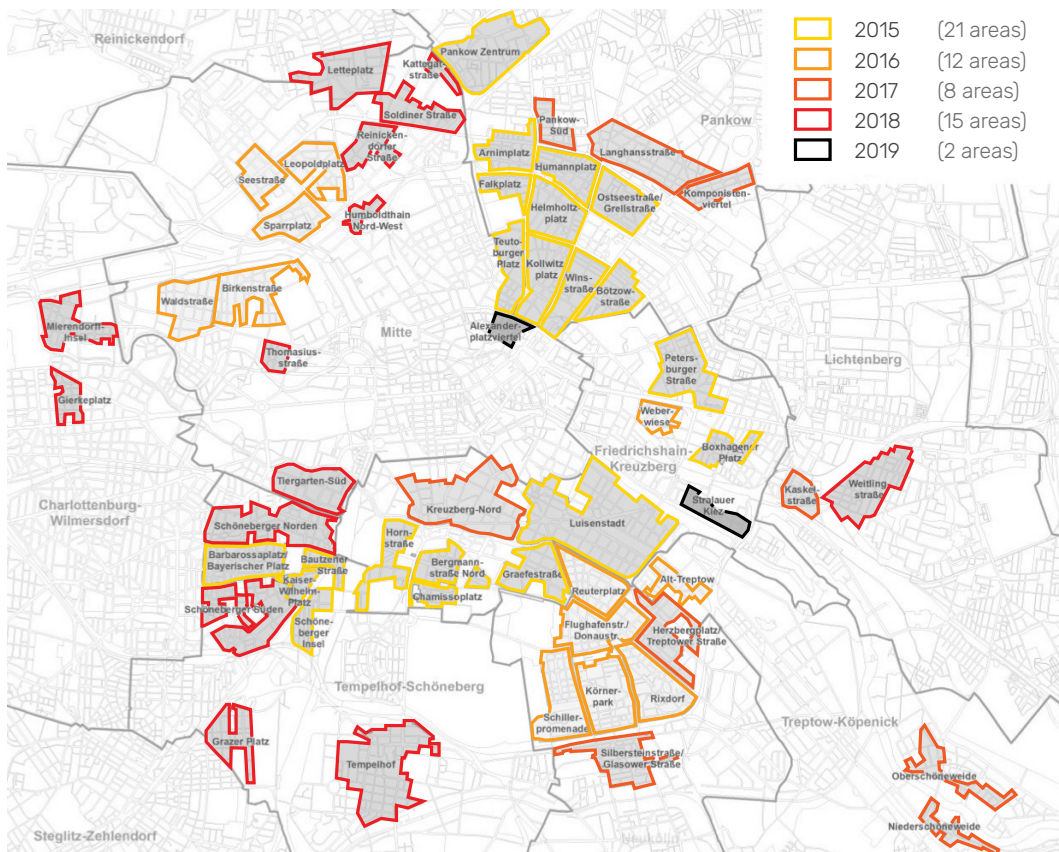


Figure 8.12 Areas with social protection statute (Milieuschutzgebiete) in Berlin. Source: Der Senat von Berlin. 2019. "Wahrnehmung von Vorkaufsrechten [Exercise of the Right of Preemption]." Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin, Drucksache 18/2400, December 12, p. 3. parlament-berlin.de/adosservice/18/Haupt/vorgang/h18-2823-v.pdf

Right of Preemption in Berlin, 2015-2020

Municipality	Year	Total	58	644	45%	13%	42%
					291	82	271
			No. of "Milieu-schutzgebiete"	RPE invoked (examined)	Waiver agreement signed	RPE applied	No action
Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf	2015	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2016	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2017	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2018	2	0	0	0	0	0
	2019	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	2	2	2	2	0	0
		2	2	2	2	0	0
					100%	0%	0%
Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg	2015	7	1	0	1	0	0
	2016	1	5	0	1	4	4
	2017	1	24	11	9	4	4
	2018	0	26	13	8	5	5
	2019	1	29	13	8	8	8
	2020	n.a.	51	26	6	19	19
		10	136	63	33	40	40
					46%	24%	29%
Lichtenberg	2015	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2016	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2017	1	0	0	0	0	0
	2018	1	3	0	0	3	3
	2019	0	8	2	1	5	5
	2020	n.a.	9	7	0	2	2
		2	20	9	1	10	10
					45%	5%	50%
Mitte	2015	1	0	0	0	0	0
	2016	4	0	0	0	0	0
	2017	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2018	6	23	13	3	7	7
	2019	1	34	12	4	18	18
	2020	n.a.	57	31	4	22	22
		12	114	56	11	47	47
					49%	10%	41%
Neukölln	2015	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2016	5	0	0	0	0	0
	2017	2	18	0	3	15	15
	2018	0	48	22	5	21	21
	2019	0	25	8	5	12	12
	2020	n.a.	56	35	5	16	16
		7	147	65	18	64	64
					44%	12%	44%

Figure 8.13 Table showing the number of cases in which the RPE was invoked and the outcome between 2015 and 2020. Data source:

Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik Berlin. 2020. "Das Vorkaufsrecht in Zahlen [The Right of Preemption in Numbers]." Accessed 11 November 2022. iniforum-berlin.de/2020/10/das-vorkaufsrecht-in-zahlen/

Municipality	Year	No. of "Milieu- schutzgebiete"	RPE invoked (examined)	Waiver agreement signed	RPE applied	No action
Pankow	2015	10	0	0	0	0
	2016	0	0	0	0	0
	2017	3	3	2	1	0
	2018	0	51	10	1	40
	2019	0	17	10	2	5
	2020	n.a.	24	11	3	10
		13	95	33	7	55
				35%	7%	58%
Reinickendorf	2015	0	0	0	0	0
	2016	0	0	0	0	0
	2017	0	0	0	0	0
	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2019	1	3	1	1	1
	2020	n.a.	3	3	0	0
		1	6	4	1	1
				67%	17%	17%
Spandau	2015	n.a.	0	0	0	0
	2016	n.a.	0	0	0	0
	2017	n.a.	0	0	0	0
	2018	n.a.	0	0	0	0
	2019	n.a.	0	0	0	0
	2020	n.a.	3	3	0	0
		0	3	3	0	0
				100%	0%	0%
Tempelhof- Schöneberg	2015	4	1	0	1	0
	2016	0	0	0	0	0
	2017	0	0	0	0	0
	2018	4	20	14	3	3
	2019	0	29	10	5	14
	2020	n.a.	34	20	0	14
		8	84	44	9	31
				52%	11%	37%
Treptow- Köpenick	2015	0	0	0	0	0
	2016	1	0	0	0	0
	2017	2	0	0	0	0
	2018	0	12	2	1	9
	2019	0	12	5	1	6
	2020	n.a.	13	5	0	8
		3	37	12	2	23
				32%	5%	62%

Section 8 / BCN

SYSTEMATIZED HOUSING BUBBLES

In Spain, since the economic and mortgage crises hit the country in 2008, evictions and a lack of affordable housing have been major problems. More than 1.5 million people were evicted between 2008 and 2019 (of which more than 20% in Catalonia),¹ demonstrating that the housing emergency was still in full swing more than a decade after the housing bubble burst—in other words, it became chronic. The Spanish Constitution (1978) does not recognize housing as a fundamental right but only sees access to housing as a guiding principle. Therefore, it is not possible to claim the violation of one's right to housing through courts. Meanwhile, government efforts to solve housing problems are very limited. Compared to the European average of 0.6% of GDP, the Spanish budget for housing is less than 0.1% of its GDP,² and the percentage of social housing in Spain remains very low (less than 3%) compared to other European countries (estimated at 17%),³ all while thousands of units remain speculatively

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- 1 The total number of evictions was 1,710,963 in Spain and 323,705 in Catalonia according to Observatori DESC, 2020. "*L'evolució dels desnonaments 2008-2019: de l'emergència a la consolidació d'una crisi habitacional*" [The evolution of evictions 2008–2019: from the emergency to consolidation of a housing crisis.] Barcelona: Observatori DESC, 9. observatoridesc.org/ca/l-evolucio-dels-desnonaments-2008-2019-l-emergencia-consolidacio-d-crisi-habitacional.
 - 2 Alloza, Mario and Júlia Brunet, Victor Forte-Campos, Enrique Moral-Benito, Javier J. Pérez. *El Gasto Público en España desde una Perspectiva Europea* [Public Spending in Spain from a European Perspective]. Madrid: Banco de España, 2022. Accessed May 5, 2023. bde.es/f/webbde/SES/Secciones/Publicaciones/PublicacionesSeriadas/DocumentosOcasionales/22/Fich/do2217.pdf
 - 3 Eurostat. *Living conditions in Europe – Housing*. Brussels: Eurostat. Accessed May 5, 2023. ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living_conditions_in_Europe_-_housing

empty.⁴ For over a decade now, a growing number of municipal and social movements in Barcelona has adopted the *right to housing* as one of the central axes of struggle in a city that is highly controlled by market forces. There are many factors that paved the way for the current reality, some nationwide and others specific to Barcelona. The main factors are outlined below.

1. Fast-track to joining the global market

After nearly four decades of relative isolation during the Franco dictatorship, Spain opened its borders and integrated itself into the global economy, with the first small steps to move the economy from autarky toward liberalization taking place in the late 1960s, shortly before Franco died. In 1978, a new democratic constitution was passed. After lengthy negotiations, Spain (together with Portugal) was incorporated into the European Economic Community in 1986 (EEC, which became the European Union in 1992 with the Maastricht Treaty). Post-Franco urban policies and governance can be divided into five phases: **1)** late 1970s to the early 1990s: learning democratic practices; **2)** 1990s: urban entrepreneurialism; **3)** 2000–2007: construction bubble and economic boom; **4)** 2008–2015: economic crisis and austerity policies; and **5)** since 2015: the emergence of new platforms (municipalist movements) entering local governments in large cities (e.g., Barcelona).^{5,6}

During the transition period that spanned from the 1970s to the 1990s, Spanish cities experienced large-scale modernization and transformation programs. These programs improved the quality of life for residents, especially in terms of public spaces, local services, and the construction of housing units. In this phase, the local civic alliances that formed between activists, intellectuals, and technicians/professionals were considered crucial in overcoming the structural shortcomings of the dictatorial regime, particularly with regard to the rapid growth of the main cities (including Barcelona) and the chaotic urban configuration that lacked comprehensive planning during the industrialization of the 1960s.⁷

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- 4 In 2018 there were more than 10,000 speculatively empty housing units in Barcelona. Observatori Metropolità de l'Habitatge de Barcelona (O-HB). 2018. *L'habitatge a la metròpoli de Barcelona* [Housing in the metropolis of Barcelona]. Barcelona: Observatori Metropolità de l'Habitatge de Barcelona, 16. ohb.cat/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Habitatge_metropolis_2018.pdf
 - 5 Urrutia Abaigar, Víctor Manuel and Gloria Areilza Eceiza. 2000. "El poder local y las nuevas políticas urbanas." *Documentación Social*, no.119: 239–257.
 - 6 Iglesias, Mariela and Marc Martí Costa. 2011. *Políticas urbanas en España. Grandes ciudades, actores y gobiernos locales* [Urban policies in Spain. Large cities, actors and local governments]. Barcelona: Icaria Akademeia
 - 7 Martí-Costa, Marc and Mariona Tomàs. 2016. "Crisis y evolución de la gobernanza urbana en España [Crisis and evolution of urban governance in Spain]." *Ciudad Y Territorio Estudios Territoriales* 48(188): 187–199.

The economic restructuring of the country brought about territorial competition as a result of its federal structure. The new neoliberal strategies reordered the urban agendas of its major cities, whereby urban policies promoted strategic projects that were considered promising to enhance a city's position in the global market. Hence, urban regeneration and redevelopment efforts were fast-tracked and advanced in all major cities throughout the country, often coupled with bids for hosting mega-events: for example, the 1992 Olympics were held in Barcelona and in the same year as the Seville Expo (Exposición Universal de Sevilla). With this discourse, Spain started attracting international real-estate investments and speculation, which ultimately paved the way for the 2008 financial (mortgage) crisis. Among other factors, the rogue real-estate speculation was encouraged by the liberalization of housing regulations, which eroded the legal protections for tenants, while expanding and promoting ownership.

2. Promotion of home ownership

The housing and construction sectors have been considered the cornerstones of the Spanish economy since the 1950s. And for decades, economic policies promoted home ownership instead of renting, thus causing a shift in the ratio between the two. Home ownership was seen as a tool for regulating the population and maintaining specific social and economic orders. The destruction brought about by the civil war worsened the already miserable living conditions for the working class, which was composed largely of people fleeing poverty in rural areas to pursue dreams of a better life in the cities where industries were located. There were around half a million new arrivals in Barcelona between the 1950s and 1960s. Due to the severe lack of housing up until the 1970s, some people built shacks as shelters, which numbered approximately 20,000 in the 1960s, and roughly 1,500 people lived in the Sabadell caves in the 1950s.⁸ Therefore, to quell the looming social unrest, several laws were passed to build housing and subdue people to mortgages. While in 1950 only 5% of Barcelona households were homeowners in comparison to the national average of 45.9%, by 2001 this figure had grown to 68.2% in Barcelona (82.2% nationwide).⁹

8 García Lamarca, Melissa. 2016. "(De)mortgaging lives: Financialisation, biopolitics and political subjectivation in the Barcelona metropolitan region." PhD diss., University of Manchester. pure.manchester.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/54585965/FULL_TEXT.PDF

9 Artola Blanco, Miguel. 2012. "La Transformación del Mercado de Alquiler de Fincas Urbanas en España (1920 – 1960) [The Transformation of the Urban Property Rental Market in Spain (1920 – 1960)]." *Revista Bibliográfica De Geografía Y Ciencias Sociales* 17 (988). ub.es/geocrit/b3w-988.htm [ISSN 1138-9796]

3. The Barcelona model

The case of Barcelona is peculiar in Spain because, unlike cities such as Madrid—which still has unplanned urban land within its administrative boundaries—the city adopted the plan drafted by Ildefons Cerdá covering all land available for expansion in 1860, and its rules have continued to apply since. In the early 1990s, urban regeneration operations commenced with the Olympic village and other selected sites for the 1992 events, which was followed by the re-branding and re-making of Barcelona's formerly industrial neighborhood of Poblenou as the **22@ digital district** (starting in 2000) and the extravagant construction of the Fòrum de les Cultures (2004) directly on the Mediterranean coast at the end of Avinguda Diagonal (one of Barcelona's main avenues). Such projects branded Barcelona as a city of innovative business and culture and furthered its position as a prime destination for international capital, events, and tourism.

The Barcelona model mixed private investments with public assets, and it was celebrated as a model of success for neoliberal urban development schemes and exported worldwide. However, this discourse of re-creating Barcelona as a modern, clean, and attractive city brought about the revalorization of many residential areas and led to the eviction and displacement of a great number of households by real-estate speculators. It was the policies of the Barcelona model that bred today's reality of social and residential exclusion,¹⁰ and therefore it was also in this context that the first critical voices against the—now well-known—gentrification processes appeared, especially around the profane commercialization of the historic center.

4. The housing bubble and returning crises

In the 5 decades after the Franco dictatorship, Spain witnessed three economic crises. The first was shortly after the establishment of democracy, in 1978–1985, when the wrecked economy pulled 58 banks into bankruptcy, which accounted for 27% of deposits and employment. Less than a decade later, in 1992–1993, a second economic crisis hit when real-estate values plummeted. This was directly linked to a housing bubble, and again banks faltered and bail-out programs were set up.¹¹ The third crisis hit in 2008 with the global financial crisis, and was again primarily due to subprime housing mortgages.

10 Delgado, Manuel. 2007. *La ciudad mentirosa: Fraude y miseria del 'Modelo Barcelona'* [The lying city: Fraud and misery of the 'Barcelona Model']. Delgado. Madrid: libros de la Catarata.

11 Steinko, Armando Fernández. 2009. "Financial Crisis and the Remaking of the Society of Labour in Spain." *Transform Europe!*, May 29. transform-network.net/de/blog/article/financial-crisis-and-the-remaking-of-the-society-of-labour-in-spain/

The easy access to credit starting around 1998, the significant volume the construction sector holds in the Spanish economy, and the expansion of tourism turned all corners of the country into construction sites. In the first decade of this millennium, Spain constructed more housing units than Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, and France combined.¹² Meanwhile, the supply and demand theory was not working. Whereas the supply of housing units continued to grow rapidly, their prices did the same. The abusive lending practices by banks were key to creating the housing bubble that burst in 2008, in turn exacerbating the already existing social and economic exclusion. Unemployment spiked, housing prices collapsed, and—after encouraging people to join the property regime as the best option to acquire middle-class status—evictions and foreclosures soared. Between 2008 and 2014, about 250,000 mortgaged families were evicted due to their inability to make their mortgage payments.¹³ Eventually, in 2013 the European Court of Justice ruled that the Spanish mortgage law was against the European consumers' law and obliged the Spanish legislation to be changed.

5. Reforms erode tenants' rights and facilitate evictions

While in the first years of the recent financial crisis evictions were primarily due to defaults on mortgage payments, since 2013, there has been a dramatic increase of evictions due to delays in or temporary inability of tenants to pay their rent.¹⁴ This is directly related to the lack of mechanisms and legislation to protect tenants. On the contrary, between 2009 and 2013, and while the mortgage crisis and massive evictions were hitting the population, a series of legal reforms (e.g., speeding evictions, reducing binding periods of contracts) were silently carried out to allow landlords to require far-reaching and intrusive guarantees from prospective tenants prior to signing a rental contract. Furthermore, with the 2013 reform of the rental law, rent stabilization was reduced from five to three years, after which the rent value could be raised as the landlords saw fit and the contract could be terminated without justification (no-fault eviction). The reform also made the process of eviction due to rent defaults or the expiration of the contract faster and reduced guarantees for tenants. In Catalonia, most evictions have taken place in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, with an average of

12 Europa Press. 2011. "España ha construido en el último decenio tantas viviendas como en Alemania, Italia, Gran Bretaña y Francia juntas [Spain has built as much housing in the last decade as Germany, Italy, Great Britain and France combined]." *20 minutos*, November 12, 2011. [20minutos.es/noticia/1217586/0/](https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/1217586/0/)

13 García Lamarca, Melissa. 2017. "Reconfiguring the Public through Housing Rights Struggles in Spain." In *City Unsilenced: Urban Resistance and Public Space in the Age of Shrinking Democracy*, edited by Hou, Jeffrey and Sabine Knierbein, 44–55. New York: Routledge.

14 Delgado, Manuel. 2007. *La ciudad mentirosa: Fraude y miseria del 'Modelo Barcelona'* [The lying city: Fraud and misery of the 'Barcelona Model']. Delgado. Madrid: libros de la Catarata.

33 evictions per day in 2019.¹⁵ Since the crisis, countless residents have been expelled from their neighborhoods into increasingly peripheral areas of the city and the metropolitan region.

6. The creation of REITs: Real Estate Investment Trusts

Before the 2008 crisis, profit-driven real-estate investors maintained the larger segments of their operations in the urban periphery, where the margin of gains to be made were higher, but this changed with the crisis. The fall of real-estate value in the central districts due to large-scale mortgage defaults yet the continued attractiveness of these neighborhoods due to tourism was exploited, resulting in increased gentrification despite the accentuating socio-economic crisis that the local population was suffering. This pattern was further encouraged by the introduction of Law 11/2009, which saw the creation of the Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs, *Sociedades Cotizadas de Inversión en el Mercado Inmobiliario* or SOCIMIs in panish), following what was considered a successful model first created in the United States of America in the 1960s and later applied in several European countries.

REITs are public-limited investment companies with stock-market listed shares whose stated purpose is to dynamize and strengthen the declining market of real-estate investments and to stimulate the rental market while reducing risks. However, in reality they are mostly intended to attract and ease access of global investors. The impact of the REITs became tangible in 2012, when the requirements for their establishment were further relaxed, regulatory protections were removed, and tax conditions were made more favorable (de-facto creating tax exemption) through the new Law 16/2012. Today, REITs are major stakeholders in Spain's real-estate sector: the two companies with the largest assets value in 2020 were Merlin Properties (EUR 12.7 billion) and Colonial (EUR 12.1 billion).¹⁶ Yet, the business practices of REITs are very controversial, and they fail to comply with human rights to the extent that in 2019 they were denounced by the UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to an Adequate Housing.¹⁷

15 Observatori DESC. 2020. *L'evolució dels Desnonaments 2008-2019: de L'emergència a la Consolidació d'una Crisi Habitacional* [The Evolution of the Disnonaments 2008-2019: from Emergence to the Consolidation of a Housing Crisis]. Barcelona: Observatori DESC: 8. observatoridesc.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/informe-desnonaments-3.pdf

16 Statista Research Department. 2022. "Real estate properties of the main Spanish SOCIMI 2020" (dataset). Statista. Accessed May 5, 2023. [statista.com/statistics/771790/volume-from-assets-from-the-sociologist-more-big-spain/](https://www.statista.com/statistics/771790/volume-from-assets-from-the-sociologist-more-big-spain/)

17 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2019. "States and real estate private equity firms questioned for compliance with human rights." *United Nations Human Rights Office of the high Commissioner*, March 26. [ohchr.org/en/news/2019/03/states-and-real-estate-private-equity-firms-questioned-compliance-human-rights?LangID=E&NewsID=24404](https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2019/03/states-and-real-estate-private-equity-firms-questioned-compliance-human-rights?LangID=E&NewsID=24404)

7. The Golden Visa

In line with the government's political goal of incentivizing international investment, the Golden Visa law was passed in 2013, making it possible to obtain a Spanish residency-permit (and thus one for the EU) by investing at least EUR 500,000 in real estate. This kind of visa, present in many other EU countries, had already raised concerns inside the European Commission in 2019¹⁸ due to risks of money laundering, corruption, and tax evasion, and member states were recently urged to terminate this practice.¹⁹ The flow of substantial investments from international players with little to no transparency regarding the source of the capital is not only questionable from a moral point of view in terms of accountability and governance, but it is also a significant driver in keeping the pressure on real-estate markets high. According to data from the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration and the Ministry of Economy Spain approved close to 11,000 Golden Visas between 2014 and 2020, with 44% of approved cases in Barcelona during the first four years of the program (see Figure Figure 8.14).²⁰

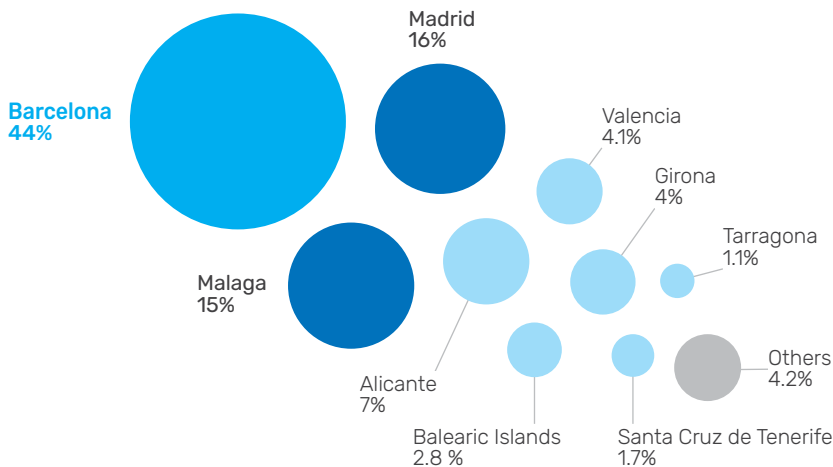


Figure 8.14 An illustration of the ratio of investments in properties for the purpose of the Golden Visa by province, in the period between September 2013 and December 2017. Data source:

IMI Daily. 2023. "Spain Golden Visa Statistics" (dataset). *IMI Daily*. Accessed May 5, 2023. imidaily.com/datacenter/spain-golden-visa-statistics/

18 European Parliament. 2019. "Report on financial crimes, tax evasion and tax avoidance: European Parliament resolution of 26 March 2019 on financial crimes, tax evasion and tax avoidance (2018/2121(INI))." *European Parliament*, 26 March. [europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0240_EN.pdf](https://europa.eu/eu-portal/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0240_EN.pdf)

19 European Commission. 2022. "Commission urges Member States to act on 'golden passports' and 'golden residence permits' schemes, and to take immediate steps in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine." *European Commission*, March 28. ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_1731

20 IMI Daily. 2023. "Spain Golden Visa Statistics" (dataset). *IMI Daily*. Accessed May 5, 2023. imidaily.com/datacenter/spain-golden-visa-statistics/

With the mounting pressure and injustices resulting from the factors mentioned above, many housing groups and tenants unions emerged. Their work is focused on solidarity and mutual support, including organizations such as the [Platform for People Affected by Mortgages \(PAH\)](#) and the [Barcelona Tenants' Union](#), among others mentioned in the [timeline](#).²¹ The high level of civic engagement gave rise to the alternative political platform [Barcelona en Comú](#), which won the local elections in 2015 with Ada Colau assuming the mayor's seat. Since then, the city council has carried out important campaigns, such as the purchase of housing blocks that posed a high risk of eviction after becoming property of a vulture fund or the creation of a municipal team tasked with deterring evictions. It is also promoting cohousing and housing cooperative models on public land (with use-rights only) to break the private-public dichotomy. Nonetheless, after decades of inadequate housing policies and in spite of the considerable spending on housing (e.g., in 2020, EUR 171 million were dedicated to housing out of the city's total budget of EUR 3 billion), the efforts are still falling short of solving the city's housing needs, the high unaffordability of living, and daily evictions. As a result, the feelings about the cooperation between the city council—many of whose members are former activists—and civil society are ambivalent.

The COVID-19 pandemic accentuated the already present socio-economic hardships and prompted the introduction of legal instruments to protect tenants at both the state level (through royal decrees) and the regional level in Catalonia.²² In the initial period, from March to June 2020, judicial proceedings were suspended and all evictions stopped. In April, through Royal Decree-Law RDL 11/2020, a moratorium of maximum 6 months (until 30 September 2020) was applied on rental evictions due to pandemic-related vulnerability, while other poverty situations not related to COVID-19 were excluded. It was later extended several times and is currently set to expire in June 2023. RDL 37/2020 expanded the possibility for the measures to apply to households in a vulnerable situation as well, regardless of whether or not the vulnerability is pandemic-related. Notwithstanding, despite having this moratorium in force, evictions in Barcelona still exceeded 80 per week in September 2020.²³ That being said, as noted earlier in this section, a year earlier evictions in Barcelona averaged 33 per day, a trend we fear will return upon termination of the emergency measures.

21 This kind of unionism is also present in other sectors, especially where social organization in modes of conventional unions is not easy due to precariousness, such as the Street Vendors Union (Sindicat de Manters) and the Delivery Riders Collective (Riders X Derechos).

22 See in the timeline: [2020 Evictions Moratorium and other COVID-19 pandemic-related measures](#).

23 Observatori DESC. 2020. *L'evolució dels Desnonaments 2008-2019: de L'emergència a la Consolidació d'una Crisi Habitacional* [The Evolution of the Disnonaments 2008-2019: from Emergence to the Consolidation of a Housing Crisis]. Barcelona: Observatori DESC: 8. observatoridesc.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/informe-desnonaments-3.pdf

Barcelona continues to attract international vulture funds, thus changing the city's property structure from atomized²⁴ to more concentrated with more invisible landlords, which is also reflected in statistics on evictions. According to the PAH registry,²⁵ big landlords were responsible for 41% of the evictions between 2018 and 2019, a figure that increased to 51% in the period of 2020–2022. While banks were the main prompters of evictions in the period after the 2008 crisis, vulture funds have taken the lead and in 2020–2021 the biggest evictees were Blackstone (11.7%), Cerberus (7.3%), and Lone Star (2.9%).²⁶ Tragically, SAREB (the bad bank), of which the Spanish government is majority stakeholder, came in second place after Blackstone.

Finally, despite recent eviction moratoriums, ongoing law reforms, and rent-control measures that attempt to alleviate the housing crises, and despite the fact that the municipality is investing a large share of its budget on housing, 42.7% of Barcelona's population dedicates nearly half of their income to rent,²⁷ highly exceeding the one-third-of-income threshold defined for balanced household expenditure. This reality makes saving for extraordinary expenses almost impossible, thus making most of the city's population vulnerable, and evictions remain a chronic problem. At the moment, a new Spanish housing law on providing protection to tenants is being deliberated. If passed, it will be the first in the history of the country.²⁸

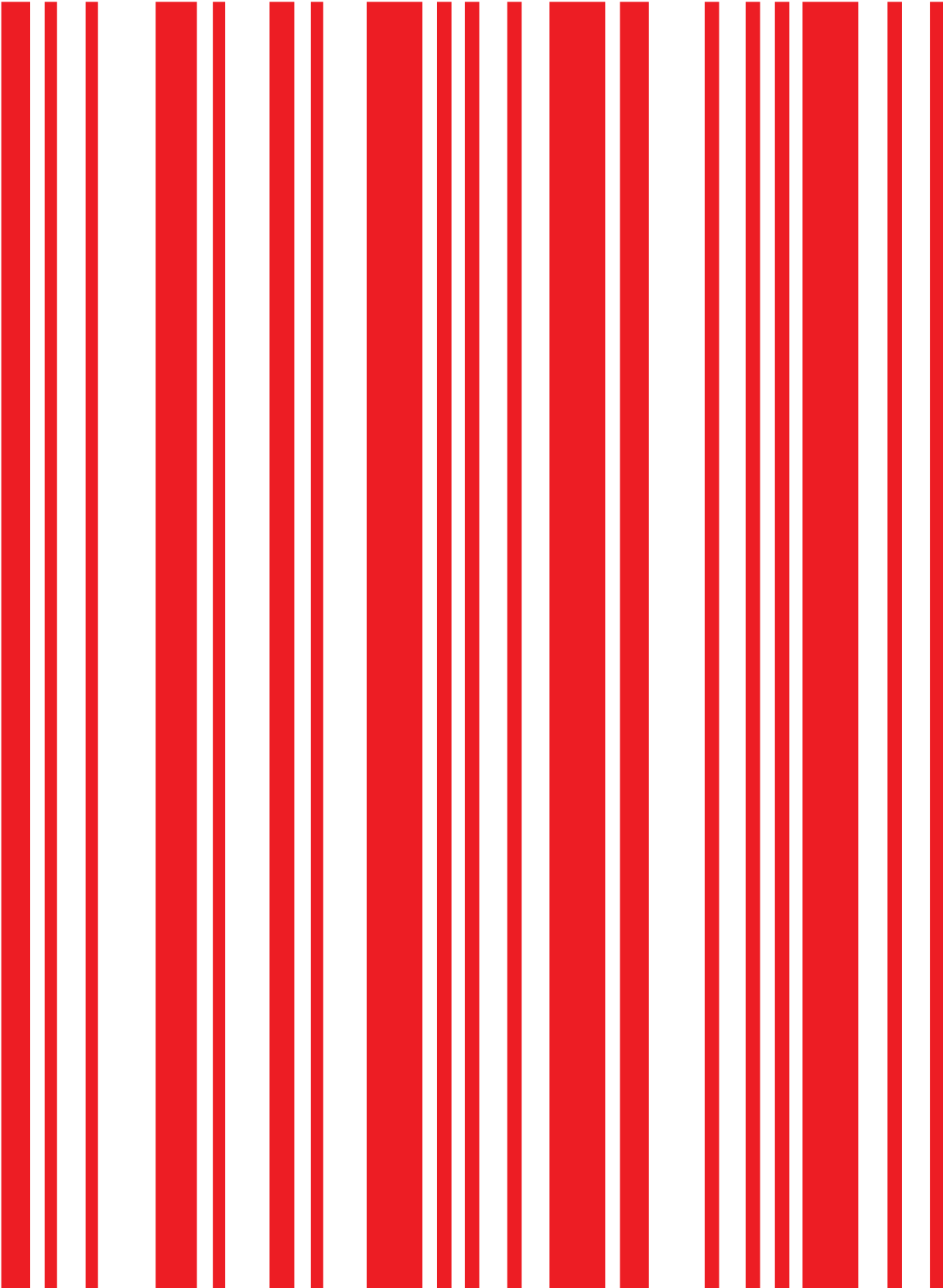
24 According to the "Structure and concentration of the home ownership in the city of Barcelona" study by the Barcelona Metropolitan Housing Observatory (O-HB), in 2019, 69% of units were owned by persons with 1 or 2 properties, and this category of owners accounted for 46% of rented housing units, while big landlords (with 10 or more units) accounted for 26% of the rented units. The report indicates that there is a growing trend of large owners, as well as ownership by corporations, and points out that properties owned by public institutions are mainly in peripheral neighborhoods, while those owned by big landlords are mainly in central neighborhoods. See: Observatori Metropolità de l'Habitatge de Barcelona (O-HB). 2020. *Estructura i concentració de la propietat d'habitatge a la Ciutat de Barcelona: 2019-2020* [Structure and concentration of homeownership in the City of Barcelona: 2019-2020]. Barcelona: Observatori Metropolità de l'Habitatge de Barcelona. ohb.cat/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Lab_Propietat_2019-2020-VF.pdf

25 Domingo, Guillem and Irene Escorihuela. 2022. *Qui Desnona a Barcelona? Anàlisi del paper dels grans propietaris privats en les expulsions de la ciutat* [Who Evicts Barcelona? Analysis of records of the big private owners involved in expulsions in the city]. Barcelona: Observatori DESC. observatoridesc.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/informe_quidesnona_web.pdf

26 *Ibid.*

27 Observatori DESC. 2020. *L'evolució dels Desnonaments 2008-2019: de L'emergència a la Consolidació d'una Crisi Habitacional* [The Evolution of the Disnonaments 2008-2019: from Emergence to the Consolidation of a Housing Crisis]. Barcelona: Observatori DESC. 9. observatoridesc.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/informe-desnonaments-3.pdf

28 Last updated: February 2023.



WORK SHOPS

how we designed
our map/ping/s

Sections 9-14

WORKSHOPS

from scoping to closing

As a practice-oriented, collaborative project that seeks to contribute to the larger scenes of municipalist activism, CMMM was designed to build on workshops and gatherings with peers and colleagues. In the various intra- and inter-city meetings, we shared our concepts and proposals, collected feedback and critiques, and brainstormed potentially better pathways and collaborations for the following phases. These meetings varied in terms of their size, format, and nature. Some served to exchange, seek advice, and stimulate, while others focused on practical tasks related to designing and operationalizing the project's three **interactive maps**. Based on the belief that the deliberated inputs and approaches that shaped the evolution of the maps could be relevant for understanding the resulting work and informing other teams pursuing similar endeavors, most of the workshops were documented. The reports include agendas, key discussion points, conclusions, and next steps, as well as the names of the participants, to whom we remain indebted for their support. In some instances, we found it sufficient to have a picture narrative of the activity. The sections of this chapter describe these twelve stepping stones, which are illustrated in Figure 1.4, p. 20, in the **CMMM Process section**.

This chapter starts with a section on the international scoping workshop “**CMMM: Setting the Grounds**,” which took place in March 2020 (just before the COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdowns swept through Europe). This was when we first came together with the three city teams and a few select peers to define the concrete goals of the research and mapping that were to follow. Based on those deliberations, the city teams organized *conceptualization workshops* (what kinds of maps are needed?) in fall 2020, in which the concrete goals were

refined; these were “Housing burdens of social housing tenants and publicly owned land for the purpose of non-profit housing” in Belgrade, “Who buys Berlin?” in Berlin, and “Mapping property structures” in Barcelona.

Half a year later, in spring 2021 and while still subject to COVID-19 social distancing rules, *design workshops* were organized by the three city teams to define the specific features and characteristics of each of the interactive maps; these were “Mapping the unaffordability of housing” in Belgrade, “Commoning Berlin – but how?” in Berlin, and “Who evicts Barcelona?” in Barcelona. Before and after these activities, we held two internal workshops with the CMMM Advisory Committee. After the COVID-19 pandemic loosened its grip, we were able to come together again as a team in Belgrade in spring 2022, where we held a scaled *international gathering* to schedule the course of the final year. That summer some of us participated in and co-organized sessions at the *Takhayali* (imagine, fem.) international workshop, which focused on the topic of wasted urban space and where experiences in forming municipalist movements in precarious contexts were discussed.

In 2023, we closed the project through three events. First was the podium discussion “MAP: Mobilizing Alternatives by and for People through Mapping and Maps,” which was held within the framework of the 4th International Festival of Social Housing, 7 to 9 June, in Barcelona. Then, in August 2023, Belgrade closed with the workshop “TBC,” which took place within the “Terrestrial Forum / Horizons of Change” summer school, 22 to 27 August 2023. Finally, in October 2023, the podium discussion “TBC” was held in Berlin.

Section 9

SCOPING WORKSHOP CMMM: SETTING THE GROUNDS

5-6 March 2020 | K LAB, Berlin

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DISCLAIMER

All figures featured in this section, which reports on the workshop, were shared by speakers as relevant examples in the course of our discussions. Herewith K LAB declares that it has no claims to any of these figures. Accordingly, all sources of figures are indicated at the end of this section. All pictures featured in this report were captured by K LAB team members during the workshop.

Participants

Alphabetically, bearing in mind that the majority have several affiliations and engagements

Ana Méndez de Andés, Madrid 129 / University of Sheffield

Andreas Brück, K LAB

Angela Million, Chair of Urban Design & Urban Development, TUB

Bertie Russell, University of Sheffield / MINIM / Red Pepper

Clancy Wilmott, UC Berkeley, US

Edouard Barthen, Stadt1000, Berlin

Iva Čukić, Institute for Urban Politics, Belgrade

Iva Marčetić, Right to the City, Zagreb

Julia Förster, Gemeinwohlorientierte Stadtentwicklung e.V., Berlin

Julian Zwicker, AKS Gemeinwohl, Berlin

Katleen De Flander, K LAB

Laura Roth, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya / Minim / Barcelona en Comú

Lýdia Grešáková, Spolka collective Košice / K LAB

Natasha Aruri, K LAB

Nija-Maria Linke, Raumstation, Berlin / K LAB

Severin Halder, kollektiv orangotango, Berlin



Introduction

This scoping workshop with the title “CMMM: Setting the Grounds” was the first face-to-face meeting of all members of the newly formed CMMM team. It also featured seven guests, who later became the members of the project’s Advisory Committee. The workshop took place over two days at K LAB, combining short presentations, roundtable discussions, working group sessions, a short walk in Berlin-Kreuzberg, and informal mingling.

The purpose of the workshop was to establish a better understanding of the broader spectrum surrounding municipalist movements today, including points of strength and weaknesses, achievements and shortcomings. In particular, we aimed to obtain better information on how such movements have been using mapping tools and what they identify as challenging or lacking in these processes in order to learn from them and pinpoint some of the issues that should be addressed in the course of our CMMM project. In this process, we discussed the overall timeline of our project with a focus on the ways we would like to implement the first phase of the project and explored our initial working definitions for the terms critical mapping (CM) and municipalist movements (MM), that make up the name of the project. We also discussed the thematic approach (see below) and brainstormed the ways in which it translates in each of the three cities.

In online meetings preceding this workshop, the team exchanged views on some of the central struggles in Barcelona, Belgrade, and Berlin and their related activities on the ground. In early February, we concluded that “housing” is a good starting point to consider as the central theme as it currently has the momentum to mobilize people in a political struggle (some years ago, this was more the case with “public space”). We understand housing as a broad term that goes beyond having a shelter and encompasses concerns about sustenance for everyday people. As a framework, it combines aspects of infrastructure, education, access to non-monetized and non-commercialized spaces of socialization (which is as central to mental health as water and clean air), and thus spaces that facilitate just and secure social production and reproduction. We also discussed that, by extension, the term could also include spaces of work and production. However, we will continue studying whether that would be compatible with existing approaches to the term, as well as our own, and with our discourses on the ground.

Within this central theme, the CMMM team decided that some of the comparative lines could be the issue of “housing burdens” (how much of a person’s income is spent on housing), the issue of evictions (active and passive models), the issue of touristification of the city, and the issue of how the growing challenges related

to housing have triggered and shaped the collectives and initiatives working on alternatives in the three cities. In doing so, we hope to make a global comparison and discuss the links between events in Barcelona, Belgrade, and Berlin and the issue of the international financialization of housing markets (real estate having become a prime object of speculation by international corporations). This includes interconnected global patterns, kinds of investments made by average people, how struggles and emerging networks of socio-political movements are connected, etc. As we proceed, we will try to examine what is missing in this picture and think of ways to address particular aspects through our activities within the CMMM project and with our network of collaborators.

Approaches of the CMMM City Teams: BGD / BLN / BCN

In the morning of the first day of the workshop, the three city teams briefly presented some information about the challenge of housing in Berlin, Belgrade, and Barcelona and the ways they are engaged with the topic.

For the **BELGRADE** (BGD) city team, some of the key issues are the near absence of public housing after the privatization legislation waves that have swept through the country since the 1990s, the unaffordability of housing due to the stark gap between market values and income levels, the housing supply shortage, and the land grabbing by international real-estate companies and money-laundering projects. Touristification is exacerbating the trends of unaffordability and unavailability. The scandal of the Belgrade Waterfront project in 2014 triggered mass protests that in effect lead to the abolishment of the planning system and associated legislative laws, which in turn started a phase of speculative by-laws that further facilitated privatization. In addition, eviction rates have risen around desired areas and with them counter initiatives that are trying to halt them. This brought about a new law that criminalizes solidarity. Some of the initiatives collaborated in pushing for an alternative national strategy, which was widely accepted (with doubts on whether that would mean implementation), and are currently working on an alternative master plan for Belgrade.

For the **BERLIN** (BLN) city team, some of the key issues were the large increase in rent values since the turn of the millennium (while income did not increase at a comparative rate) and the accelerating rates of privatization and gentrification that are severely impacting and weakening Berlin's socio-spatial mix (Berliner

Mischung). Currently there are many community-based collectives challenging these trends in different ways, but they are not well connected and some are making progress while others are not. The focus of the BLN team is how to foster collaboration between local administration bodies and initiatives so as to enable initiatives to influence and be part of decision-making levels. Several different mapping projects exist, varying from testimonials and narratives to ones focusing on technical issues such as planning laws and displacement data. Yet, a recurring problem in these mapping projects is that of maintenance. Some of the online mapping sites have not been updated for years, limiting the accuracy and employability of these extensive works for stakeholders today.

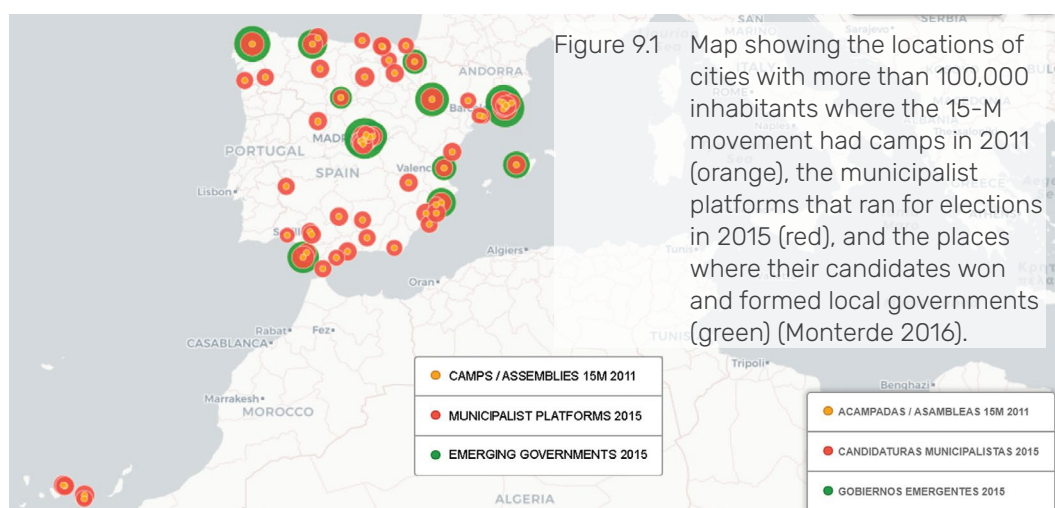
For the **BARCELONA** (BCN) city team, some of the key issues resonate with those mentioned by the BLN and BGD teams. While public housing is not a strong sector, there is a strong housing purchase culture (as opposed to Berlin where 85% of residents live under rental contracts). This ran hand-in-hand with weakly governed mortgages that accentuated the impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent large-scale evictions (without offering alternatives to the evicted). Many apartments and houses that are owned by banks and companies are still empty and remain objects of speculation. In this regard, there is a rising rate of real-estate purchases by large inter- or multi-national companies, which is also a trend paralleled in Berlin and Belgrade along with the problem of dramatic rises in rent and purchase values. This is having serious social impacts, including on emancipation and the ability of young people to leave the parental nest. These problems are linked to legislative measures such as tax exemptions (e.g., to private equity a.k.a. vulture funds), the shorter period of protection for rental contracts, and the phenomenon of the golden visas that grant Spanish nationality to foreign investors spending more than half a million euro. These visas have become a trajectory for money laundering.

In the “**Status Quo**” sections, you can find more detailed descriptions of some of the information the city teams presented at the workshop, as well as elaborations that were added in following months.

Key points of discussion

Talking about contemporary urban struggles in Madrid, **Ana Méndez de Andés** explained how the most successful mobilizations have been based on issues that affected people directly and, at the same time, connected with structural questions. Following Silvia Federici, she argued that the decision on whether to pursue a struggle should not be based on the “best of aims” but on their capacity to politicize. Furthermore, she explained how the militant research collective Observatorio Metropolitano,¹ 2005–2015, contributed to the formation of the municipalist platform Ganemos Madrid in 2014 (later renamed Ahora Madrid) through the production of publications that combined theory, strategies, data, and maps to inform and politicize.

The mobilizing power of the “new politics” represented by Ahora Madrid, Podemos, and others built on the solidarities and imaginaries created by the May 15 Indignados movement. The modes in which time and space were used in the camps (see Figure 9.1, p. 303) were able to inspire new imaginaries (e.g., the slogan “It is not a crisis, it is the system”) and to show the links between the various struggles, thus fostering solidarity (e.g., supporting the public health and education struggles against privatization). In the course of the Spanish municipalist movement, mapping has been used for more than documentation and analysis. It has been an important tool for showing stakeholders, connections, networks, and the size of the movement and its extensions on a national scale (see Figure 9.2, p. 304).



1 Observatorio Metropolitano. 2020. Observatorio Metropolitano in English [online]. Accessed 14 April 2020. observatoriometropolitano.org/in-english/

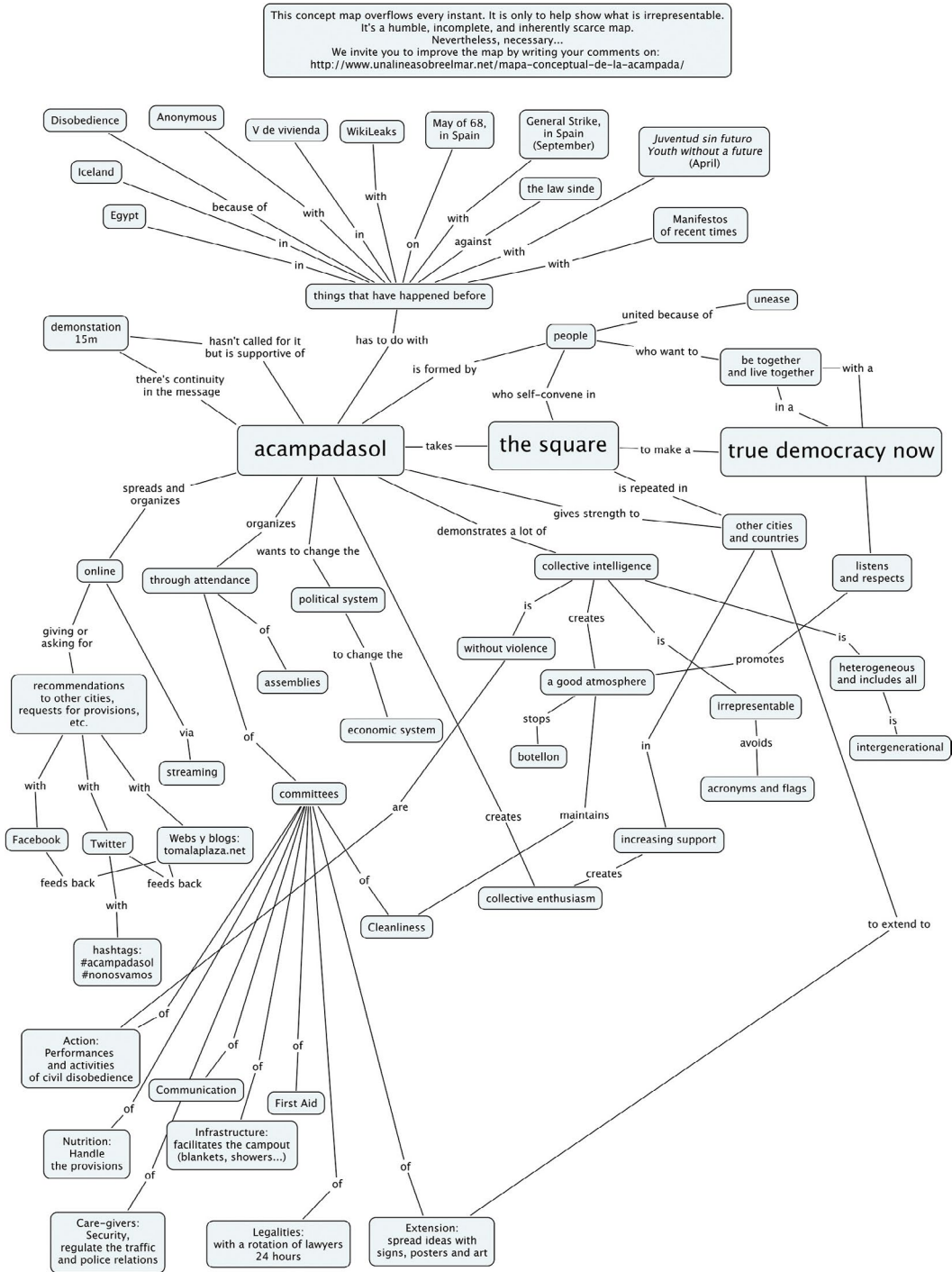


Figure 9.2 Conceptual map of Acampada Sol, the camp site in Madrid's square Puerta del Sol during the 2011 protests (Una línea sobre el mar 2020).

From revisiting the municipalist experience in Madrid with Ana and the accompanying discussions, we have noted the following questions for us as the CMMM team to keep in mind in the next phase of our project:

- What are the existing and potential legal frameworks and possibilities in BGD/BLN/BCN around which movements can politicize people?
- What is your specific aim? And how do you plan to achieve it?
- How autonomous are the decisions at the municipal level in relation to the national level and overall landscape?
- What kinds of tactical cartographies are being used and/or are needed by the movements in BGD/BLN/BCN?
- How can contiguity be created between the spheres of institutional municipalism and social municipalism?
- What narrative maps and landscapes exist, and what kinds of new imaginaries can be created?
- How are time and space being (re)articulated and employed by the movements in conjunction with the points above?

Iva Marčetić spoke about the mechanisms of privatization of housing stock in the ex-socialist country, the commercialization of urban life, and the consequences of those processes for housing and urban rights today. She is a part of Right to the City organization in Zagreb that was established in 2006 out of a grassroots movement against the commercialization and privatization of the central part of the city. Activism, organizing, and knowledge that has been produced through the work of Right to the City shaped principles by which the municipalist platform Zagreb is OURS! (Zagreb je NAŠ!) was created in 2017. Iva is a co-founder of the platform.

Iva stressed that a key part of the problem was the dangerous “cultural narrative” propagating that for Croatians being a “house owner is in their DNA,”² which resonates with several Eastern and Southern European countries, such as Spain. This narrative is enforced through media, public strategies, and the general political discourse (90% of households in Croatia are home owners). It is worth noting that, in Germany, economic and governmental discourses in

2 In Belgium there is the saying: all Belgians are born with a brick in their stomach.

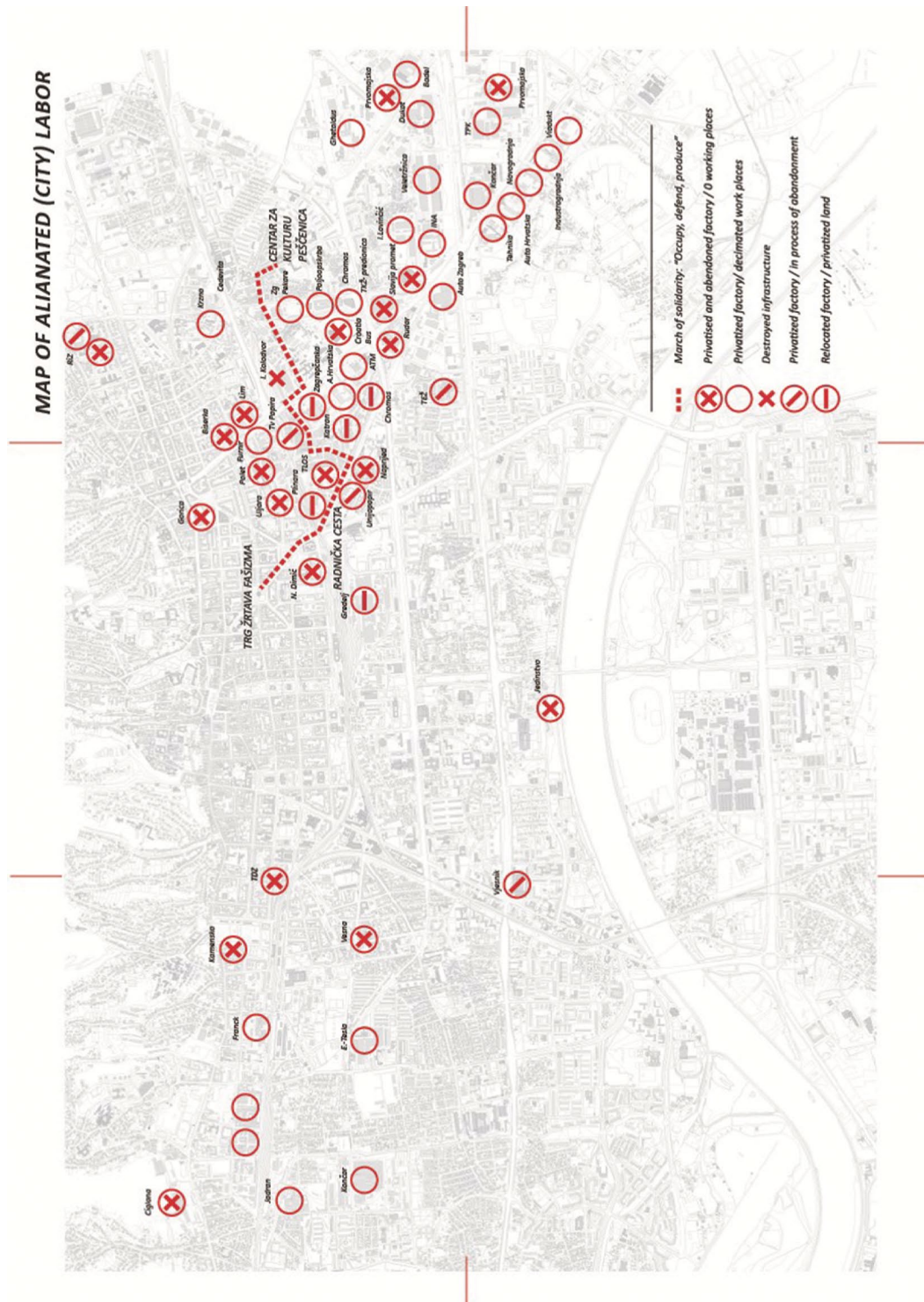


Figure 9.3 “Map of Alienated (City) Labor” showing privatized, relocated, and abandoned factories and thus the decimation of work places in Zagreb (Marcetic 2012).

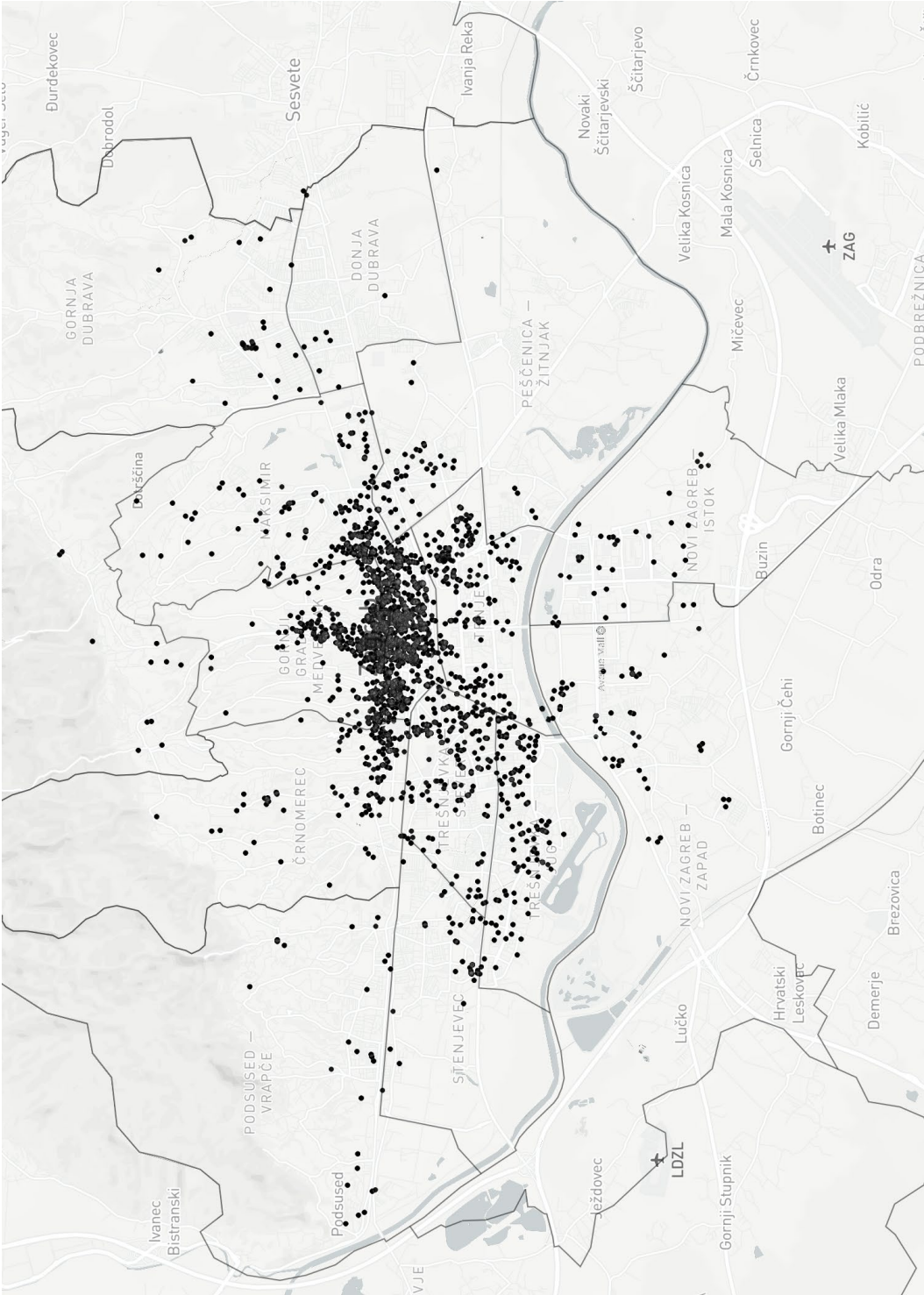


Figure 9.4 Map showing locations of properties that are available for rent on Airbnb in Zagreb (Marcetic and Sevšek 2017).

the past decade have also increasingly advocated for purchasing one's own property, albeit as the ultimate and best financial security. This discourse in Croatia perpetuates the status quo of almost no public housing (estimated at 2%) and the growing problem of debt. The privatization of banks since the 1990s, which were mostly purchased by banks from Western European countries, has led to a high increase in debt, particularly in relation to housing. One key cause is that banks considerably raised interest rates on the pretext of Croatia being a high-risk market (200% annual increase in debt in the 4 years preceding the financial crisis).

The inflation of the values in the housing market in Zagreb and other factors such as the lack of protections for rental contracts (a large percentage of them is short-term) have impacted the ability of people to acquire housing. This has contributed to increased emigration and is one of the reasons why 80% of young people still live with their parents, often up to the age of 40 (which was a problem that was also voiced by the BCN team). The housing problem, like in BGD/BLN/BCN, is accentuated by touristification, mushrooming AirBnbs, and the absence of any regulations to control these phenomena. Meanwhile, public lands are offered to private investors, who also negotiate the terms and exceptional bylaws for ventures. Practically, there has been no institutional response to the housing crisis and business is running as usual with growing numbers of new, large, satellite public and social housing projects, which are changing the urban territory and producing certain kinds of ghettos.

From revisiting the municipalist experience in Zagreb with Iva and the accompanying discussions, we have noted the following questions for us as the CMMM team to keep in mind in the next phase of our project:

- How has debt increased in BGD/BLN/BCN since (before) 2010?
- How do cities incentivize touristification? What is the status of resistance to AirBnb and similar platforms?
- What is the state of availability and access to data, especially from the public sector? What alternative data sources exist in BGD/BLN/BCN? And are there any maps of what is owned by the city today?
- What cultural narratives exist in BGD/BLN/BCN? What are the racial and gendered dimensions? (keyword: "white babies")

While Ana and Iva spoke about the movements in which they were involved from the perspective of challenges and lessons learned, **Bertie Russell** spoke as an observer about the municipalist experience in Preston, UK. He chose this example because he believed it illustrated the significant challenges involved in attempting to define municipalism in quite different contexts. He referred to a recent paper by Matt Thompson that describes Preston as a case of “managerial municipalism.”³ The course of the city has been influenced by the US think-tank: Democracy Collaborative, a fellow of which is Matthew Brown (Council Leader). This think tank is involved in what is called the making of democratic economies, where systems are “inclusive, just, and ecologically sustainable.”⁴

Another influential voice in the Preston process is the Centre for Local Economic strategies (CLES), which according to Russell seeks to “carry on the flame” of the municipalist socialist movements in the UK. One of its foci is what it calls “community wealth building,”⁵ which is an approach to economic development that is based on downsizing extractive capital by localizing and diversifying expenditures: in other words, anchor institutions (e.g., universities, public offices, etc.) purchase their materials from local and regional sources rather than through global networks of supply and demand (reference of Cleveland, US as model).

The process in Preston is captured in Figure 9.5, p. 310, and the CLES report *How we built community wealth in Preston*.⁶ In terms of visual mapping, Russell was not aware of it having played a role, although he thought a spatial map may exist (and if not, could be useful) for issues of procurement and “influenceable expenditure.” While this sounds like a valid approach to creating a more just system, reviews of the processes revealed that while the commentariat and intellectual class are aware of the “inspiring example” of Preston, for the people living there it is not a reality and most do not even know about it.

According to Russell’s analysis, Preston is an example of managerial municipalism that sought to cope with the austerity politics and its policies but does not mirror the social depth or dimensions that have been main pillars

3 Thompson, Matt. 2020. What’s so new about New Municipalism? *Progress in Human Geography*: 1–26. DOI:10.1177/0309132520909480.

4 Democracy Collaborative. 2020. About the Democracy Collaborative [online]. Accessed 14 April 2020. democracycollaborative.org/about

5 CLES definition of CWB according to Russel: “Plural ownership of the economy; Making financial power work for local places; Fair employment and just labour markets; Progressive procurement of goods and services; Socially productive use of land and property”. Russel, B. (2020). Preston, Community Wealth Building, and the New Municipalism? [PowerPoint presentation] *CMMM: Setting the Grounds – Scoping Workshop*, KLAB, Berlin, 5 March 2020.

6 CLES and Preston City Council. 2019. *How we built community wealth in Preston: Achievements and lessons* [online]. Accessed 14 April 2020. cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CLES_Preston-Documents_WEB-AW.pdf

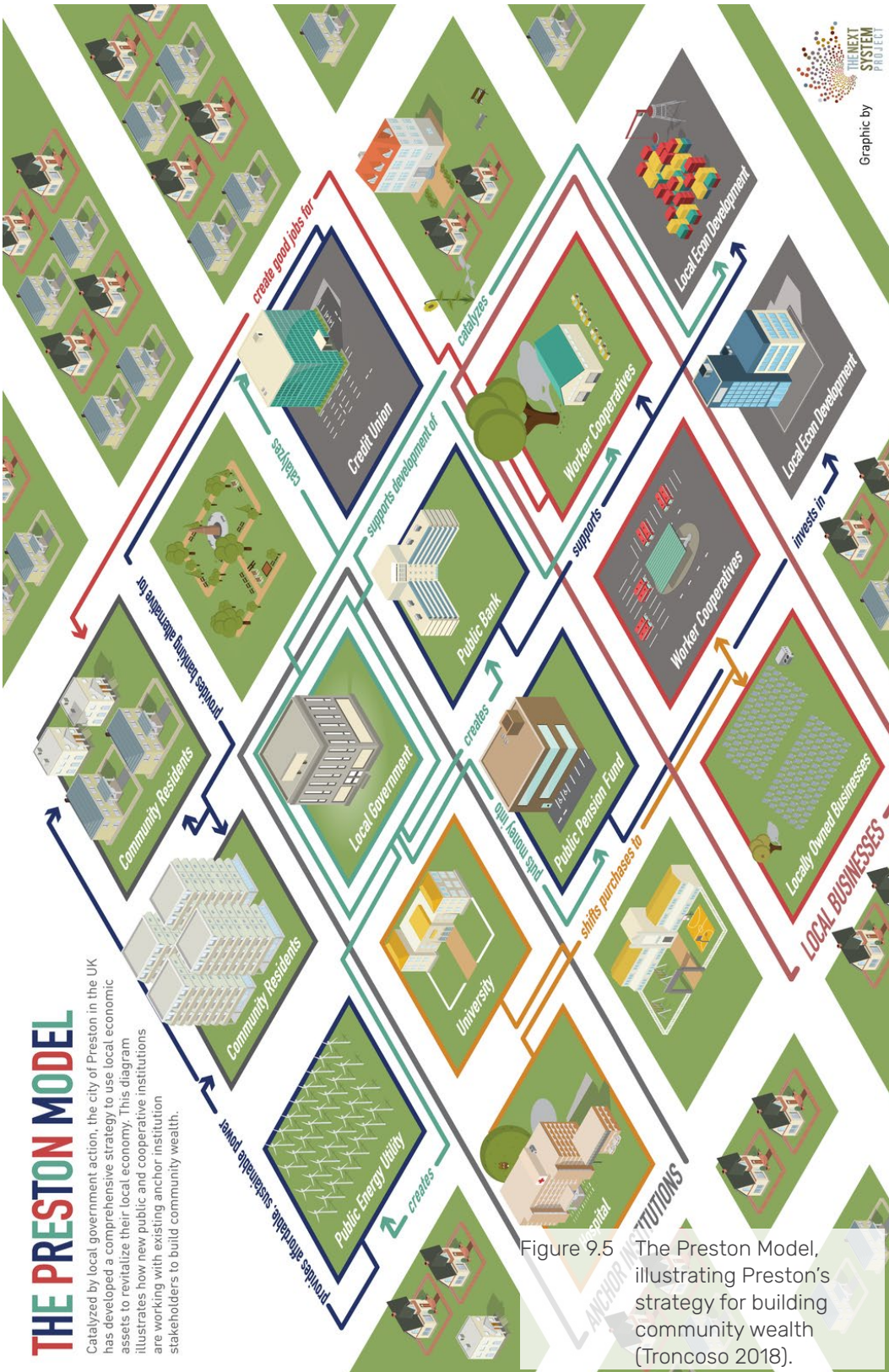


Figure 9.5 The Preston Model, illustrating Preston's strategy for building community wealth (Troncoso 2018).

in municipalist movements elsewhere in Europe.⁷ At the same time, Russell recalled that there is a need to problematize the language around municipalist movements and what constitutes them. Building on Ana's mention of "militant research," Russell⁸ mentioned a paper he published on this issue where he writes this definition by Colectivo Situaciones (2003):

Militant research is concerned with the capacity for struggles to read themselves and, consequently, to recapture and disseminate the advances and productions of other social practices.

From revisiting the municipalist experience in Preston with Bertie and the accompanying discussions, we have noted the following questions for us as the CMMM team to keep in mind in the next phase of our project:

- How are we problematizing the language around MMs? (while working on the landscapes of definitions, the CMMM Glossary)
- How is what we are doing useful to social movements? How is this established? Which social movements are included in CMMM activities (beyond the ones with which we are collaborating by association with the city teams)? Which parts of social movements are incorporated? What do the activities enable or disable?
- In BGD/BLN/BCN, what anchor institutions exist that could be of relevance to the kinds of activities the city teams decide to undertake? Where are they spending their money? How much of it stays in the community?
- Which sets of tools do the particular municipalist endeavors in BGD/BLN/BCN use? Which groups are included by these tools?
- Do municipalist activities in BGD/BLN/BCN resemble managerial municipalism?

Severin Halder, a member of *kollektiv orangotango*, spoke of his experience in the urban agriculture/community garden movement in Berlin. Having tried new forms of cooperation between activists and politicians in both the Senate and districts (which is what several housing initiatives in Berlin are doing at the moment), he sees the results of ten years of hard work to be very tiny successes.

7 Russell, Bertie. 2019. Beyond the Local Trap: New Municipalism and the Rise of the Fearless Cities. *Antipode* 51(3): 989–1010. DOI:10.1111/anti.12520.

8 Russell, Bertie. 2015. Beyond activism/academia: Militant research and the radical climate and climate justice movement(s). *Area* 47(3): 222–229. DOI:10.1111/area.12086.

One example is Tempelhofer Feld (former airfield in central Berlin), where after a self-organized campaign and referendum, the space was reclaimed for communal use against the extensive neo-liberal development plans for the area. Yet, it is exactly this “re-claimed space” image of Tempelhofer Feld that is now being co-opted by the government, Google, urban planners, etc. for inducing further neo-liberal transformation and touristification of Berlin.

Maps had been part of the tools they used in the urban agriculture movement (e.g., map of community gardens in Berlin, Figure 9.6, p. 313). However, they are just one tool among many needed by movements. In the case of the urban agriculture/community garden movement, a manifesto resulting from a two-year collective process proved much more useful than a map. He noted that what is lacking is not being an activist at the university, but rather being a researcher in the activist scene, having analytical and critical persons in the movement. Severin argued that mapping should be seen as a form of self-reflection and noted the importance of introducing processes of self-reflection in contexts that are not very open to questioning their own aims and tools.

Severin also presented the book *This Is Not an Atlas*,⁹ which he co-produced: a collection of counter-cartographies from all over the world. He shared some of its maps on:

- “596 acres,” which made free public land accessible in Brooklyn, NY, by combining online mapping with real-space mapping (Figure 9.7, p. 314)
- Networks of struggles, which could lead to networks of solidarities
- Future urban imaginaries
- The gentrification process in Valparaíso, which became a very popular map, created political pressure and helped push for a change in the local government

From revisiting the municipalist experience in Berlin with Severin and the insights from discussing his practical experience in critical mapping, we have noted the following questions for us as the CMMM team to keep in mind in the next phase of our project:

- What were previous processes in BGD/BLN/BCN that were similar to the ones the city teams are planning, and what can we learn from their shortcomings or failures?

⁹ Kollektiv Orangotango+, eds. 2019. *This is Not an Atlas*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. Open access: notanatlas.org



Figure 9.6 The “Gartenkarte” map of community gardens and urban agriculture in Berlin, collectively created with Berlin activists (kollektiv orangotango and Georilla 2013).

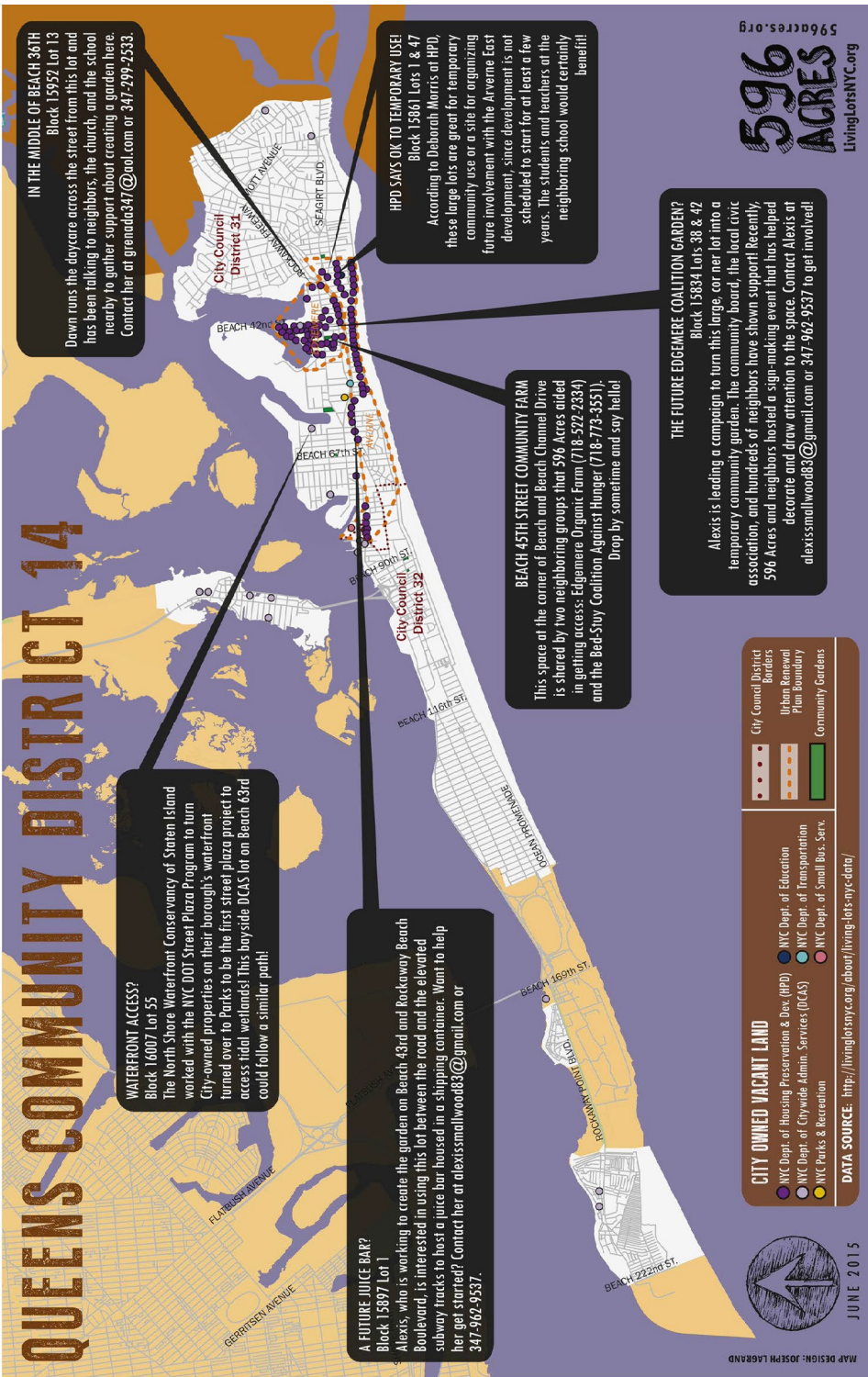


Figure 9.7 Map showing city-owned vacant land in Queens Community District 14 (596 Acres 2015).

- What are existing “how to map” tools that we can employ in the project (to avoid reinventing the wheel: e.g., *Iconoclastas manual*¹⁰ on how to do collective mapping)?
- What can negative experiences teach us, particularly in relation to when “not to map” (e.g., section in *This is Not an Atlas* book)
- How does “mapping as a tactical tool” translate into the realities and activities of the city teams?

The fifth speaker at this workshop was **Clancy Wilmott**. In her work, she questions what happens when the tools themselves are already troubled. What if the map is a problem in itself? Are the problems of the tools worth the outcomes, or do the tools make the problem worse? She reminded us that cartography represents a particular way of knowing space and place, which is very inherent in Eurocentric epistemes and the ways these understand and employ space. The map is not neutral. It is a tool of the master’s house,¹¹ one that was designed to displace and dispossess people across the world: formerly in colonial eras and today in neocolonialism. Hence the central question is: How do we reclaim the map and find better systems of representation?

By showing multiple examples of Australian indigenous cultures in the area of Sydney and the discordance between their spatial memories and practices on one hand and the available maps and represented spatial features on the other, the terms of non-mapping and un-mapping came to the forefront (e.g., secret knowledge that is not allowed to be shared). The discussions around Clancy’s narrations highlighted that visibility does not always lend power and that in some cultural landscapes and political contexts, invisibility can be powerful. By looking at the example of the Marshall Islands reed maps (Figure 9.8, p. 316), we asked whether CMMM should explore the possibility of creating a mapping language that shares information in a less visible, readable way: in a sense, an exclusive language.

Within the discussion, Bertie Russell shared the example of the District Six Museum in Cape Town (Figure 9.9, p. 316), where mapping was indeed used as an act of visibility for existing power structures. Black and colored residents in the area who were displaced under the apartheid regime and saw their houses flattened to make space for a new white neighborhood perceive this museum

10 iconoclastas. 2016. *Manual of Collective Mapping. Critical cartographic resources for territorial processes of collaborative creation* [online]. Accessed 14 April 2020. [issuu.com/iconoclastas/docs/manual_mapping_ingles](https://issuu.com/iconoclastas/docs/manual_mappingingles)

11 “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” – Audre Lorde

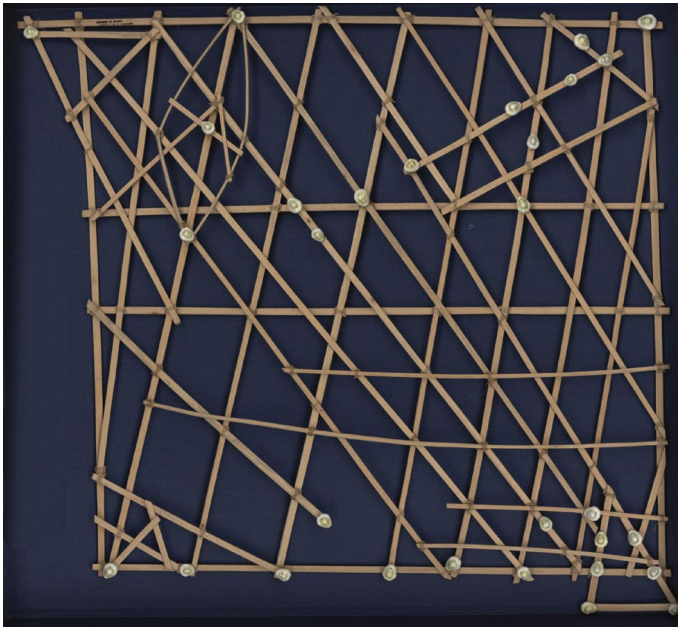


Figure 9.8 An example of a Marshall Islands stick chart used to navigate the Pacific Ocean. The sticks are arranged to represent the pattern of swells caused by the wind, and the shells mark the positions of the islands (Majuro 1920).



Figure 9.9 A picture from inside the District Six Museum in Cape Town, rebuilding the collective memory of its displaced residents claiming their right to the city (Grendon 2013).

not as a passive gaze on the past, but rather as an active claim for their right to the city and to return by rebuilding the collective memory in the form of artifacts, stories, and maps.

From the input and discussions with Clancy, we have noted the following questions for us as the CMMM team to keep in mind in the next phase of our project:

- Who decides to make things visible, and how is this done? Who is mapping, who is reading, who are we targeting, who is benefiting, and what are the underlying subjectivities? (Should keep in mind the questions highlighted by the principles of feminist data visualization.¹²)
- In BGD/BLN/BCN, who/what do we want to make visible and who/what do we want to be invisible in our maps?
- Can we create a mapping language outside of the system that is cannot be read by the system but only by the actors and networks with whom we are working?
- How do we balance the right to be forgotten with the right to access to information?
- Since CMMM is dealing with multiple movements with different actors, how will the mapping methodologies of the city teams help combine the different literacies and subjectivities and lead them in a particular collective direction? What is CMMM's specific direction?
- In CMMM, are we going to address, speak out, or position ourselves vis-a-vis the colonialities written into the morphologies of our cities today (chosen street names, spatializations of communities and infrastructures, access, etc.)?

12 See "feminist data visualisation' principles" in D'Ignazio, Catherine and Lauren Klein. 2020. *Data Feminism*. London and Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Further points of discussion

With regard to terminology, while Severin used the term “counter-mapping” and CMMM uses “critical mapping,” Ana argued for the term “tactical mapping.” She explained that as counter cartographies translate to “counterpower,” meaning that a movement positions itself on the same vector of existing power but in the exact opposite direction. This is problematic as it does not allow the movement to change direction or the coordinates in which it operates at a time when this is exactly what municipalist movements are attempting to do (e.g., take power differently). An anecdotal example that was shared is that of the squatting movement in Berlin, where in the last years the only two success stories were a group of elderly people and a group of migrants. So, if the aim is squatting, would it not be tactical to enlist the elderly and/or vulnerable to squat for the community? What we typically map today are the small islands of resistance (e.g., Kreuzberg community garden map). Is that in a sense dwelling on the illusion that we can change something through the tiny successes at a time when the scale of the crisis is much larger? Would it not be much more empowering and powerful to map “the enemy” and make tactical decisions based on such maps? This example points to the importance of mapping the system to explore the unusual suspects: the factors and actors that have to be involved in order to create systemic and substantial change. As the terminology we use and the concepts they express are relevant to where we position ourselves, this discussion will continue throughout the CMMM project.¹³

We also discussed how the term “commons” (#realestatecommons) is re-emerging in discussions on housing challenges at a time when some see housing as the most complicated urbanization field in which commons can be implemented because it is “exclusive, private by design.” It was noted that commons have very specific parameters and regulations, and are not a synonym for “the good of the community.” That being said, in many geographies with a socialist history (e.g., Serbia, Croatia, Palestine), until the collapse of the Soviet Union, a widespread housing model was that of collectively owned projects (in former Yugoslavia, the term “societal ownership” is used) that were implemented through legal clauses resembling what we refer to today as commons. The proliferation of neoliberalism, banking loans, and private logic stopped the model, and remaining collectives are being broken up into privately owned units. This example reminds us that commons are not a “happy ending” because this framework does not provide long-term guarantees against privatization and related speculation.

13 See the following section “Defining CM + MM,” p. 321.

In line with these thoughts and focusing on our central question of housing, we discussed the necessity to think-through and communicate potential policies and legal regulations that would reduce the spaces currently owned by “shark investors.” Talking about the controversial *Deutsche Wohnen enteignen!* initiative in Berlin, which has been working toward a referendum for the appropriation and nationalization of housing units owned by large-scale companies, it was noted that while successes have yet to be seen, the community mobilization around this campaign has brought owners to the negotiations table, which is a step they were not willing to take before. This example goes hand-in-hand with the need to keep in mind that referendums are not a legal measure to pressure governments in most countries and that we need to find new rules for what governing public housing means.

With regard to data and maps, there is the question of availability, credibility, access, and coverage (e.g., most data is on large cities, while small and medium-sized cities and towns are ignored). In addition to the non-mapping and un-mapping mentioned above, we should consider the potential of hacking maps.

Be it in terms of mapping projects or municipalist movements, it is important to examine and learn from failed experiences, as well as from opposites (scales, dynamics, etc.), and to remain attentive to the changing roles of actors during the process. Furthermore, we agreed that for us, as the CMMM team and the participants in this workshop, the term “municipalism” does not apply to all initiators and initiatives in the urban environment but only to those that aim to build power and change the current equations.

Further questions and points for us as the CMMM team to keep in mind in the next phase of our project:

- What are the particular gendered dimensions of the housing crisis?
- Besides the issue of availability and affordability of housing in BGD/BLN/BCN, what are the broader challenges and what are the conditions of, for example, access to and affordability of energy and everyday services?
- What narratives are the city teams propagating through their chosen trajectories? What are the needed frameworks and kinds of activities by the teams to challenge existing dominant narratives and to reveal possible alternative policies?
- Looking at the experiences of contemporary European municipalist platforms and movements that have dissolved or changed shape, what are the lessons for the CMMM city teams with regard to what they are aiming to do/achieve?

- Are we as CMMM operating only among our “clubs” and with intellectuals? Or are we operating on the ground with everyday people who know about and are involved in the chosen discourse? How do we ensure continued, critical deliberation in our CMMM process?
- Which monitoring and feedback systems do we use in the course of the project to evaluate how much we are (if at all) advancing toward the set horizon for the chosen struggles?
- Are there legal instruments to legitimize and promote communal ownership (or societal ownership, which is neither public nor private ownership, not commons) and to secure non-privatization for an extended period of time?
- How much of the CMMM work is for the particular three cities and which parts are for the general body of knowledge?
- Militaristic approach: What can we learn without having to perform a detailed examination of the full stories?



Defining CM + MM

As part of the CMMM project, we plan to research relevant terms and define the vocabulary we use (a glossary is to be published on our website). We will start with the following terms: municipalist movements, critical mapping, and housing. From there, we will include other vocabulary that is used in association with those terms. We are investigating how terms are defined by multiple actors, namely: our city teams and their networks, in published scholarly literature, by institutions, by selected interviewed experts, and through crowdsourcing.

As part of a brief, spontaneous exercise, the participants of this workshop defined the terms municipalist movement (MM) and critical mapping (CM) as shown in Figure 9.10, p. 322 and Figure 9.11, p. 324.¹⁴ Due to time constraints, we did not discuss similarities, differences, and the wider contexts from which these definitions were chosen, although earlier discussions provide some indications. In this report, we are re-arranging the definitions in accordance with what we regard as comparative thoughts and central features. In doing so, we found that in the case of MMs the main terms can be captured in the phrase “a collective **AGENCY** striving for a **POLITICS** of **GEMEINWOHL**.”¹⁵ Here, Bertie Russell noted:

To argue for a municipalist politics is to argue for place-based strategies that transform our relationship to our territories and how they are governed. It is less about seizing institutions, and more about coordinating and manipulating those that currently exist whilst building new ones. It is less about sharing or dispersing power, and more about making power emerge. And it is not instead of a national and international perspective, but rather the development of new ways to act on these perspectives.¹⁶

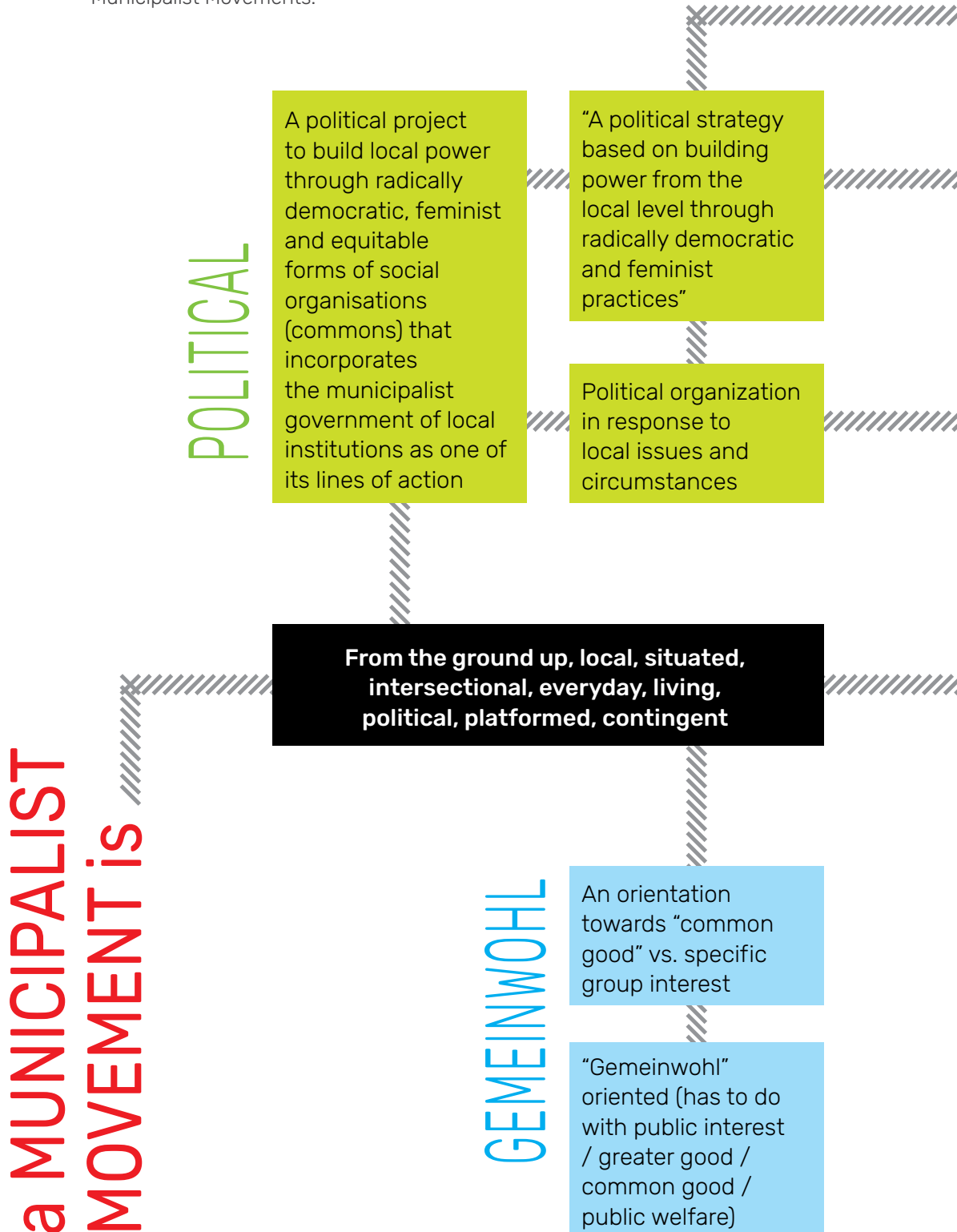
In the case of CM, four key descriptions emerged: **REFLECTIVE, SITUATED, ACTION, POWER**.

¹⁴ Some of the participants noted one phrase on a card, others several phrases, and others submitted more than one card.

¹⁵ *Gemeinwohl* is a specific German term that is difficult to translate. It is a combination of public interest, greater good, common well-being, and public welfare.

¹⁶ Provided by Russell during the workshop, from his recently published paper: Russell, Bertie. 2020. Making power emerge: Municipalism and the right to the city. *Soundings*. 74: 95-111. DOI:10.3898/SOUN.74.07.2020.

Figure 9.10 A diagram illustrating the spontaneous definitions workshop participants drafted for the term Municipalist Movements.



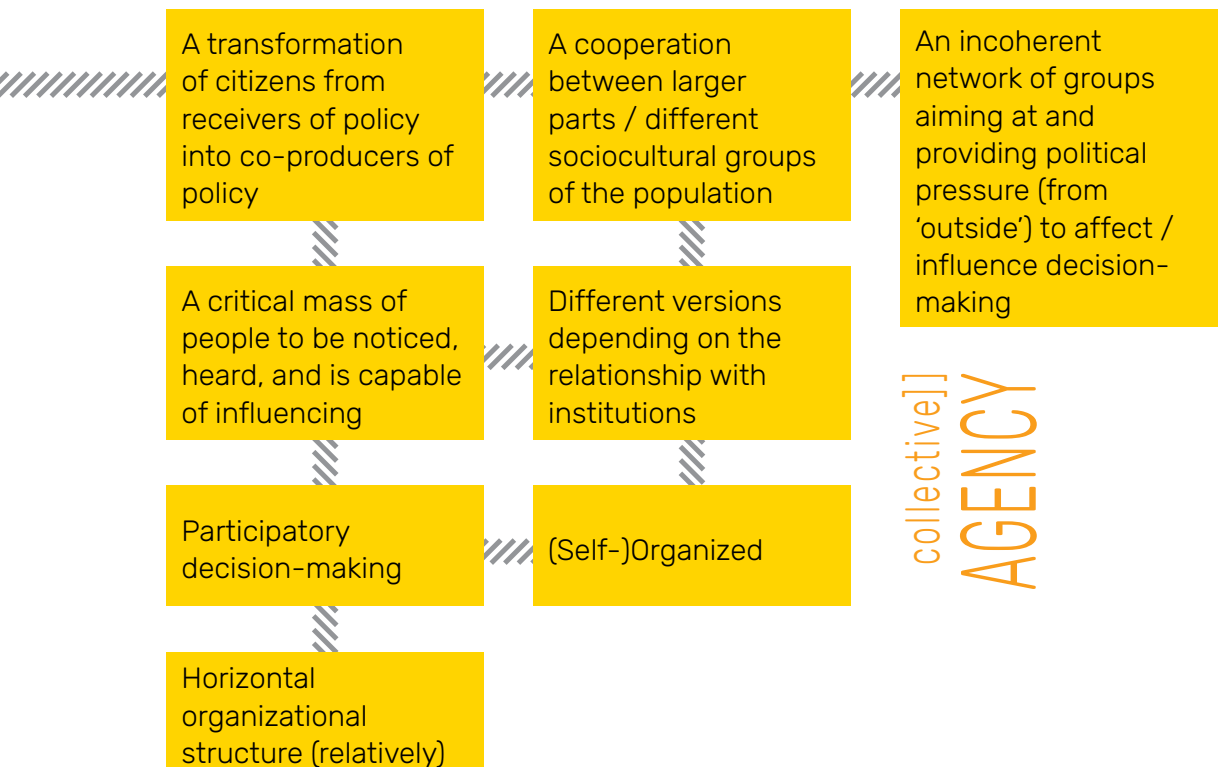
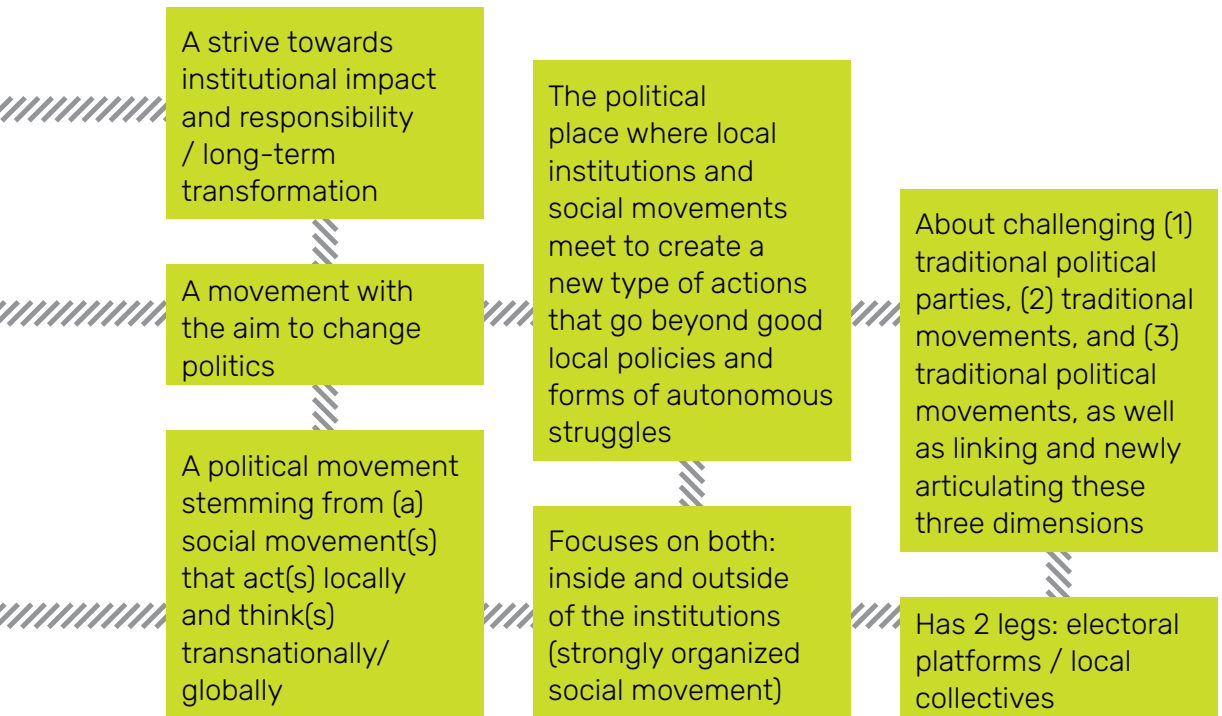
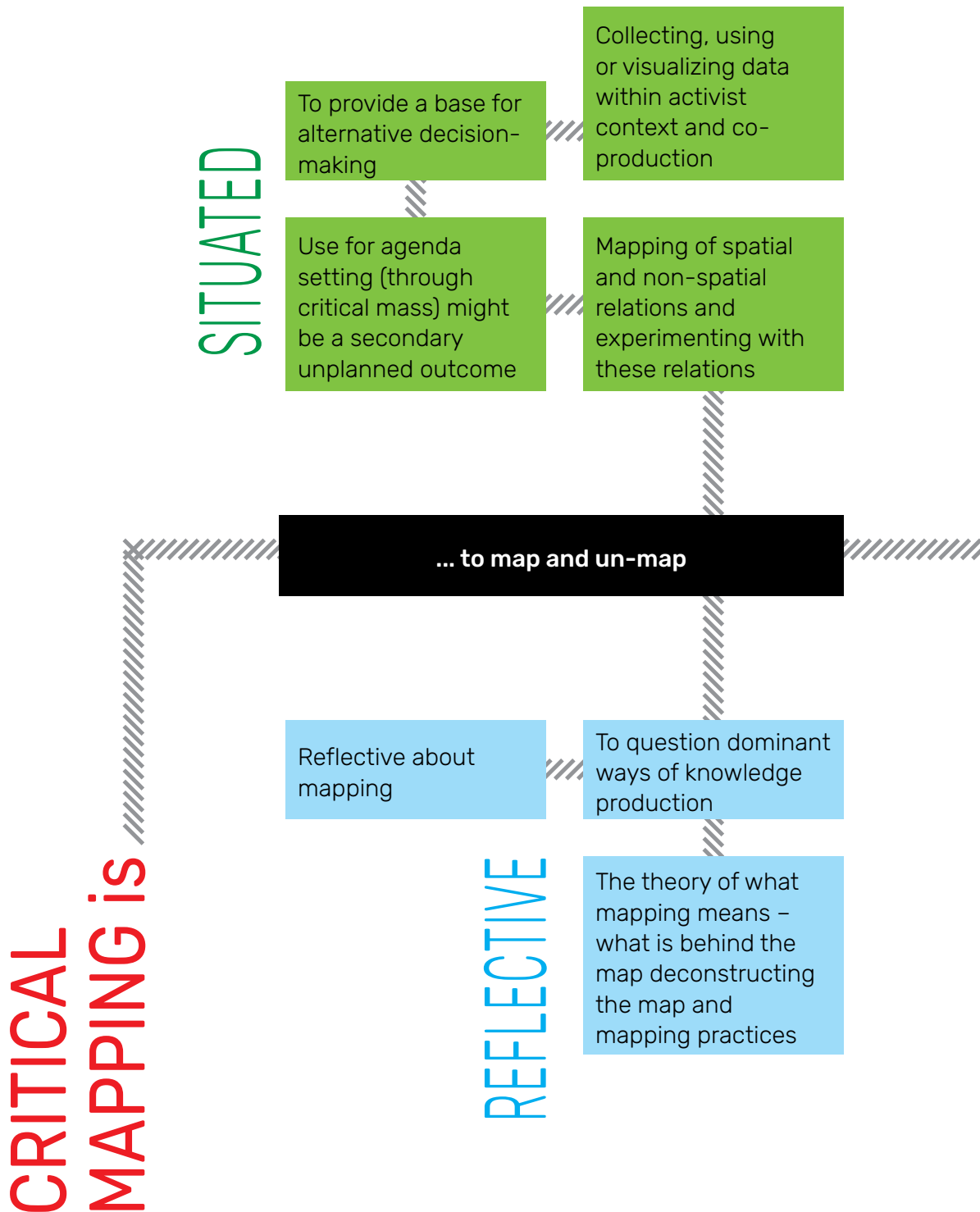


Figure 9.11 A diagram illustrating the spontaneous definitions workshop participants drafted for the term Critical Mapping.



To criticise power
in visualizing the
invisibilized / ignored

Reflect & perpetuate
power (structures)

(verb)
Communicating
spatial relations or
relations spatially, in
a way that undoes,
rearranges or resists
power

To empower groups
to make themselves
visible

The practice of
mapping that
tackles hegemonies,
performs critique
to power structures
and as an act of
empowerment

POWER

A call for action

Tactical cartographies
are a way to organise,
generate new
connections and
ways of thinking that
are able to transform
the material and
immaterial conditions
of a territory.

Mapping done by
people (civil society)
in order to visualize
and structure their
critical claims, needs
and losses

The act of producing
a political technology
with which to
fight with. A tool -
weapon - for telling
/ producing certain
"truths" about the
world

Mapping with
a certain aim:
transforming reality,
through a particular
process, engaging
people, learning,
and building trust
between people
(participants)

ACTION

Moving to the next phase of CMMM

On the second day of the workshop, we focused on the practical dimension of our project: the “how to.” Participants split up into 3 working groups composed of the BGD/BLN/BCN city teams, each accompanied by two guests and a K LAB team member. Each group revised the steps we had planned to undertake in phase 1 of the project and brainstormed detailed activities and timelines for the following months, as well as how the central theme of housing translates into their particular settings.

While the earlier discussions gave us plenty of food for thought, these working sessions were very helpful for us as the CMMM team to check potential ideas for translating our theoretical frameworks into actions on the ground. Over the following weeks, the city teams will refine their ideas to decide on the exact way they wish to move forward. In parallel, K LAB team will be retuning its tasks to best support the plans defined by the city teams.



Sources of figures

Figure 9.1 Monterde, Arnau. "Mapa de las acampadas del 15M, candidaturas municipalistas y gobiernos emergentes en las ciudades de más de 100.000 habitantes." CARTO, 2016. Accessed 14 April 2020. arnaumonty.carto.com/viz/8c267792-5cf4-11e6-af92-0e8c56e2ffdb/public_map

Figure 9.2 Una línea sobre el mar. "Conceptual Map Spanish Revolution. Acampada Madrid Puerta del Sol." Accessed 14 April 2020. unalineasobreelmar.net/mapa-conceptual-de-la-acampada/conceptual-map-acampada-sol/

Figure 9.3 Marcetic, Iva. 2012. "Map of Alienated (City) Labor." Zagreb: Zagreb Anti-Fascist Network.

Figure 9.4 Marcetic, Iva and Sevšek Antun. 2017. "Map of Airbnb Saturation in Zagreb." Zagreb: Right to the city.

Figure 9.5 Troncoso, Stacco. "The Preston Model and the Eight Basic Principles of Community Wealth Building." P2P Foundation, March 30, 2018. blog.p2pfoundation.net/the-preston-model-and-the-eight-basic-principles-of-community-wealth-building/2018/04/03.

Figure 9.6 Kollektiv Orangotango and Georilla. "Berliner Gartenkarte," 2013. gartenkarte.de/#lindex.md

Figure 9.7 596 Acres. "New York City Neighborhood Maps: Map of projects and opportunities on vacant lots in Queens Community District 14," 2015. 596acres.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/queens14_2015_front_and_back.pdf

Figure 9.8 Majuro. "Marshall Islands stick chart, Rebbelib type," 1920. landsat.gsfc.nasa.gov/geographia-from-antiquity-to-the-space-age/

Figure 9.9 Grendon, Paul. "District Six Museum," 2013. districtsix.co.za/about-the-district-six-museum/

Figure 9.10 and Figure 9.11 were produced for this publication by the K LAB team.



CONCEPTS

what kinds of
maps are needed?

Section 10 / BGD

HOUSING BURDENS AND PUBLIC LAND FOR NON-PROFIT HOUSING

9 November and 7 December 2020 | online

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Participants

Alphabetically, bearing in mind that the majority have several affiliations and engagements

Session 1 – 9 November 2020, online

The housing [utility service] burdens of social housing tenants

Ana Dzokic, Who Builds the City

Ana Vilenica, Joint Action Roof Over Head

Branislava Zarkovic, Housing Center

Danilo Curcic, A11—Initiative for Economic and Social Rights

Ivana Andjelkovic, Joint Action Roof Over Head

Ivan Zlatic, Joint Action Roof Over Head

Jovan Ristic, Association of consumers Efektiva

Jovana Timotijevic, Ministry of Space

Marko Aksentijevic, Ministry of Space

Marko Vasiljevic, A11—Initiative for Economic and Social Rights

Session 2 – 7 December 2020, online

How to obtain publicly-owned land for the purpose of non-profit housing?

Ana Dzokic, Who Builds the City

Boris Zerjav, independent housing expert

Danilo Curcic, A11—Initiative for Economic and Social Rights

Igor Miscevic, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (consultant for urban and spatial planning)

Jovana Timotijevic, Ministry of Space

Klara Danilovic, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (Director of the Committee for Urban and Spatial Planning and Housing)

Marko Aksentijevic, Ministry of Space

Marko Crnobrnja, Joint Action Roof Over Head

Marko Tesic, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (consultant for urban public property)

Sara Devic, Housing Justice Laboratory, The New School, New York

Introduction

The kick-off workshops in Belgrade took place at a time when the recently established **Housing Equality Movement** (HEM, consisting of five activist organizations) was in the process of planning the next steps in its collective struggle for adequate, safe, and affordable housing for all and for the institutionalization of housing as a right. The alternative roadmap with objectives and measures for Belgrade's Housing Strategy 2019–2029 articulates what HEM is fighting for and defines a mutually agreed direction and vision for local housing policy.¹ This document was presented to the city authorities to be integrated into the Housing Strategy, but whether that will happen or not is still unclear. As this future vision captured in the roadmap still needs further development for it to fully address the current situation and urgencies in Belgrade's housing sector, we saw the need to develop specific steps that could already be taken in the following months by HEM. The kick-off workshop, in which all five organizations were represented, offered the opportunity to develop some of these incremental steps. We decided to focus on two pressing issues:

1. The issue of indebtedness of social housing tenants—particularly related to utility costs—in the case of Kamendin, a large social housing complex in Belgrade.
2. The possibility of public land being leased or transferred to non-profit cooperatives for the purpose of building affordable housing.

The agenda of the workshop had three objectives: to exchange and supplement existing knowledge, to discuss how to extend the conversation beyond the current HEM member-organizations to other interested and engaged professionals and activists, and to outline the short-term plan of action for the movement and the precise steps to be taken. The workshop in Belgrade took place online² in two sessions on 9 November and 7 December 2020, each of which was divided into two parts:

1 See: Housing Equality Movement. 2022. "Towards housing equality." Housing Equality Movement. Accessed 17 January 2023. stambenipokret.rs/en/towards-housing-equality/

2 The initial plan was to use the space of the socio-cultural center GRAD in Belgrade, but the COVID-19 pandemic measures did not allow for groups to gather in person. Therefore, both workshop sessions took place using an online platform.

Part I: After a presentation by some of the invited participants providing a perspective from outside of HEM, we conducted a group discussion to gather relevant experiences and observations from all participants. Among other things, we discussed relevant legislation, institutional jurisdiction, experienced challenges, and possible scope of change within the current regulation.

Part II: Based on the discussion in Part I, the participants reflected on possible and realistic goals, as well as on the steps to be taken by the HEM and other interested participants to achieve those goals. Aspects to be determined included the type of demand, action and strategy, targeted institution(s) or groups/individuals, and possible timeframe.



Figure 11.1 One of the buildings in Kamendin, Belgrade (picture provided by A11 Initiative for Economic and Social Rights)

Key points of discussions

PART I THE HOUSING [UTILITY SERVICE] BURDENS OF SOCIAL HOUSING TENANTS

Session 1 – 9 November 2020, online

Kamendin: an exemplary settlement

In order to ground the exchanges and deliberations of the workshop and to ensure that they deliver on the goal of defining strategic and practical fields of action, we decided to base the discussions on the case of the Kamendin settlement as it represents a paradigmatic example of social housing policy and its results. Located on the outskirts of Belgrade, it includes around 80% of the social housing units built by the City of Belgrade. Upon completion of the construction work, the Secretariat for Property and Legal Affairs became responsible for the management and maintenance of the complex, although it lacks resources to properly carry out the task.

The Kamendin tenants, a socially vulnerable population, face several burdens, including accumulating indebtedness, threats of and actual evictions, and problems with renewing their housing contracts. These are caused by the fact that the monthly housing costs often exceed their monthly income. For example, one of the conditions to be granted an apartment in this settlement (social rent) is to have a monthly income below RSD 23,000 (approximately EUR 195). However, the monthly costs for utilities³ and rent (collectively charged) can reach up to RSD 21,000 (approximately EUR 179),⁴ excluding the electricity bill. In fact, around 65 of the Kamendin households (approximately 10% of the total) have been cut off from the electricity grid due to indebtedness. Furthermore, subsidized rent in social housing includes a property tax, although there is no basis for such a cost as tenants do not own the apartments. The problems that the Kamendin tenants are facing are exemplary for vulnerable populations in

³ In Belgrade, next to the rent value, there are two basic bills charged in relation to housing: utility costs (water, building maintenance, waste management, heating, etc.) and electricity (in some cases also used for heating).

⁴ Vilenica, Ana. 2020. "Socijalno stanovanje: Umesto pomoći – dužničko ropstvo" [Social Housing: Instead of Support—Debt Slavery]. Krov Nad Glavom. nova.rs/vesti/drustvo/socijalno-stanovanje-umesto-pomoci-duznicko-ropstvo/

many neighborhoods around Belgrade. The *EU-SILC 2016*⁵ study states that over 50% of the households in risk of poverty carried debts related to utility costs, which demonstrates the urgency of the issue.

Some of the members of the Housing Equality Movement had been closely involved in the struggle of the Kamendin tenants: especially the **A11—Initiative for Economic and Social Rights**. However, it is still necessary to better understand the legal frameworks engendering the problem and those that can serve as springboards toward solutions. Therefore, this session asked: **What are the options within the existing legislation for both tenants and the movement to change the situation in a more systematic way?** To answer this question, it is important to understand the nature of the communal service debts.

The nature of debts related to utility services

Jovan Ristic is a legal expert, member of the consumers association Efektiva, and author of the 2020 publication *Invisible Law: Failure to Apply Legal Acts on Protection of Consumers of Services of General Economic Interest in Courts in Belgrade and Pancevo*.⁶ He provided a valuable overview of the various origins of indebtedness and its consequences. He did this from the perspective of the consumer, the service provider, and the local/state authorities (as founders of the service providers), focusing on debts that were related to the so-called “services of general economic interest,” which are the utility services, electricity, and telecommunications. Ristic highlighted that debts related to utility services, such as those of the Kamendin households, have three components:

1. The actual cost of the provided service
2. The interest that is charged for delayed or defaulted payments
3. The costs of the legal proceedings for the forced collection of debts (including fees for the court and bailiffs)

Regarding the costs of the services provided, it was noted that there is a need to question the prices charged in relation to the financial capacities of the consumers, as well as the tendencies of public service providers to become more “financially sustainable.” The latter means putting pressure on authorities

5 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. 2017. “Poverty and Social Inequality in Republic of Serbia in 2016.” *Survey on Income and Living Conditions* 87: 1-5. Belgrade: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2017/PdfE/G20171087.pdf

6 Ristic, Jovan. 2020. *Nevidljivi zakon: Neprimenjivanje propisa o zaštiti potrošača usluga od opšteg ekonomskog interesa pred sudovima u Beogradu i Pančevu* [Invisible law: Non-application of regulations on the protection of consumers of services of general economic interest before the courts in Belgrade and Pancevo]. Belgrade: Udruženje potrošača i bankarskih Klijenata Efektiva.

to differentiate between a universal price for the underprivileged and a commercial price for the capable.

Debt accumulates due to a range of factors that stem from the different actors involved: the consumer, the provider, and the city or state authorities. The major ones are summarized in Figure 11.2, p. 337, based on the presentation by Jovan Ristic. Here we would like to note that, since the 1990s, the Law on Obligations (In Serbian: *Zakon o obligacionim odnosima*) was amended and the previously prescribed maximum ratio between debt and interest was erased. This resulted in a disproportional part of the debt forming from interest in comparison to the original debt value incurred from the actual service provision.

Relevant legislative frameworks

Some countries with similar issues regarding accumulating debts related to utility services (including the very similar neighbor Croatia), attempted to resolve these problems by adopting a law on writing off debt⁷ as a one-time measure. Therefore, the first workshop session discussed the possibilities for pushing for such a process in Serbia. However, as such a move relies on political will, and since currently there are no indications that this path might be considered by the government in the near future, this session also explored long-term measures that could be promoted in order to prevent and/or limit indebtedness among precarious populations. Quintessential to this exercise of strategy building was the comprehension of the available maneuvering room within the existing legislative frameworks.

Based on the experience from the case of the Franak association in Croatia, we found that the main legal frame that can be used in the institutional fight against indebtedness (with the goal of writing off debt) is the Law on Consumer Protection.⁸ Article 83 stipulates a “fair” value for all services of public interest, which includes utility services and electricity. Although the law does not define the criteria for the term “fair,” it represents a good basis to, **first**, demand a more precise definition of the term and, **second**, advocate for a differentiation between prices of housing-related costs for vulnerable groups *vis-à-vis* prices for other more financially able social groups. To achieve the second objective, the HEM can invoke the concept of the “endangered/vulnerable consumer” (*ugroženi potrošač*) mentioned in the law. This is defined as “a person who uses the service in question under difficult conditions due to her/his economic or

7 Croatian Parliament. 2018. “Odluka: O proglašenju zakona o otpisu dugova fizičkim osobama [Decision on adoption of the Law on write-off of debts for natural persons]” *Narodne Novine* 1284. narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2018_07_62_1284.html

8 In Serbian: *Zakon o zaštiti potrošača* [Official Gazette, no. 62/2014, 6/2016, 44/2018].

INTENDED REASONS

- Consumer is intentionally avoiding paying the bills.
- Consumer is not paying the bills regularly out of negligence.
- Consumer is intentionally postponing the collection of debt in the execution procedure.

Indebted consumer

- Provider is manipulating the service costs or interest to turn a profit.
- Provider is charging for unprovided services or for services that were forced upon the consumer (a case of corruption or malpractice, common when a service provider has a monopoly).

Service provider

- Authorities are not conducting continuous and thorough monitoring of the work of public enterprises and bailiffs.
- Authorities are not implementing the existing regulations (particularly with regard to social protection measures, including prescribed subsidies).
- Authorities prescribe high fees for courts and bailiffs, which are added to the overall debt of the consumer.

State/City Authorities

UNINTENDED REASONS

- Consumer is unable to pay the bills due to personal circumstances (e.g., insufficient income, tragic event).
- The service costs and/or debt interests increased significantly, making it impossible for the consumer to pay the debt.
- Bailiff is unfoundedly increasing the fees for his/her service of forced collection of debt (a case of corruption or malpractice).
- Debt interests are amplifying because the court is not processing the case.
- The service provider orders debt accumulation for a certain period to prevent a social uprising; however, the debt is eventually collected.
- Provider is transitioning from one legal entity to another; meanwhile, debt accumulates.

Figure 11.2 An illustration of the intended and unintended reasons behind the occurrence and size of debts related to utility services.

social status, living conditions, special needs, or other personal circumstances.” Typically, the national government sets detailed criteria for this status as it implies receiving additional benefits. However, so far, we have been unable to find a list of such criteria. At the local level, the City of Belgrade adopted the regulation *Intervention Measures to Protect the Most Endangered Citizens*,⁹ which defines criteria for various social support measures: from social benefits and one-time financial support to benefits and subsidies for utility services and rent. The criteria and percentages are revised annually and change year to year. While under austerity politics this dynamic setup produces uncertainty and insecurity, seen from the perspective of seeking to improve existing mechanisms, it could create possibilities to influence change.

On another level, Article 86 of the Law on Consumer Protection states that it is forbidden for a service provider to suspend the provision of heating during cold seasons if the household includes an “endangered/vulnerable consumer.” Although this article does not clarify whether this applies to indebted people, it represents another possible legal basis for demanding the uninterrupted supply of electricity and other utility services to the Kamendin tenants and other similar cases.

Furthermore, the Energy Law¹⁰ includes the status of the “endangered energy customer” (energetski ugroženi kupac), which is defined in Article 10 and further elaborated in a separate document titled *Regulation on the Endangered Energy Customer*.¹¹ In this regulation, the criteria clearly include social aspects, as well as the household income, size, and property. The regulation also elaborates on the extent of subsidies for electricity and natural gas.

Finally, Article 29 of the Law on Utility Services¹² also provides a possibility for the subsidized provision of services for “certain categories of consumers,” where the categories are to be determined by local governments. Unlike electricity, which is regulated and provided at the national level, communal services are provided at the local level. In other words, each municipality distributes communal service responsibilities to local utility service providers, which vary according to the local system.

9 In Serbian: Interventne mere za zaštitu najugroženijih građana (Grad Beograd). beoelektrane.rs/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Interventne-mere-zastite-najugrozenijih-gradjana.pdf

10 In Serbian: Zakon o energetici (Official Gazette, no. 145/2014, 95/2018).

11 In Serbian: Uredba o energetski ugroženom kupcu (Official Gazette, no. 113/2015, 48/2016, 88/2016, 49/2017, 104/2017, 36/2018, 59/2018, 88/2018, 34/2019, 82/2019, 76/2020, 144/2020).

12 In Serbian: Zakon o komunalnim delatnostima (Official Gazette no. 88/2011, 104/2016, 95/2018)

Programmed continued indebtedness: Kamendin within the current legal framework

Kamendin's tenants receive subsidies for communal services from the City of Belgrade: rent and utility services (electricity is not considered a communal service). Besides the fact that these subsidies were reduced from 50% to 30% under the austerity measures introduced in 2014, current regulations stipulate that they can only be applied to services (i.e., excluding rent) not exceeding RSD 8,000 (approximately EUR 68), regardless of the size of the household. Yet in reality, the often comparatively large units in Kamendin house multi-generational households, and it is extremely difficult to keep costs below this prescribed threshold, where bills for communal services reach up to RSD 15,000 (approximately EUR 127). As a result, the subsidies they receive amount to only about 15% of their monthly bills.

Even though the residents of Kamendin meet the criteria for the status of an "endangered energy customer" under the Energy Law, they do not receive a preferential price for electricity. In addition, only households in which electricity has not been cut off can apply for the status. However, in Kamendin about 10% of the households have been living without electricity for years. In these cases, the electricity provider (the national enterprise Elektroprivreda Srbije) is refusing to reschedule payments and demanding that they pay off the entire debt at once, together with the costs of reconnection to the grid.

Another problem arises from the fact that the social protection program does not provide benefits for the entire year, but only for 9 months. When tenants in the program are unable to cover their bills during the three-month gap in social benefits, they lose their status and the subsidies are seized.

In conclusion, the shortcomings of the legal framework make it extremely difficult for many families to break the cycle of indebtedness and poor housing conditions.

Strategic demands and potential fields of action

After explaining the dynamics and legal frameworks affecting housing indebtedness, we discussed potential fields of action in relation to the different instances involved and within the existing regulations. Here we summarize the initial pool of possibilities that the HEM could pursue:

Indebted consumer

- Help affected people initiate **legal proceedings**, arguing on different grounds that the debt (or a part of it) has been unfairly or illegally incurred.
- Help affected people submit a **request** to the service provider or its founder (state/city authority) **to write off or postpone the debt**.
- Help affected people connect with other indebted consumers and **put public pressure** on the service provider or the state/city authorities (this could also be strengthened by seeking the help of the Ombudsman¹³).

Service provider/public company

- Advocate through pressure groups and/or create public pressure for providers to **reprogram debt payments** at rates that are manageable by vulnerable groups (although this will probably remain problematic for those with insufficient income).
- Seek to **write off debts**, fully or partially (e.g., the basic debt or the interest), either through a court ruling or through advocacy and public pressure so that the owners of the provider, the state or city authorities, pass a specific law or adopt measures.¹⁴

State/city authorities

- Advocate through pressure groups and/or create public pressure for state or local authorities to establish **mechanisms to keep debts at controllable levels** in the case of vulnerable groups. One mechanism that already exists in the current legislation is the status of the “endangered/vulnerable consumer.” Other possibilities include, for instance, the scaled charging of services according to income.
- Advocate through pressure groups and/or create public pressure for state or local authorities to introduce **mechanisms to protect the consumer from economic devastation**. This can be operationalized through institutes

13 Ristic shared an example of the City of Pančevo (near Belgrade), where the local city Ombudsman succeeded in pressuring the communal enterprises to write off *obsolete debts*. These are debts that had become obsolete by court rulings or that have exceeded the statute of limitation of ten years without starting a legal process.

14 Service providers can decide to write off debts on their own only in cases where it is obvious that the debt cannot be collected, either because the consumer has died and there are no heirs or because she/he has no property and prospects of income through which a forced collection can be exercised.

of personal bankruptcy,¹⁵ property census,¹⁶ and the definition of “secure income,” where if a household falls under a certain threshold, debt is frozen.

- Advocate through pressure groups and/or create public pressure for state or local authorities to **order service provider to write off or postpone debts** at rates that are manageable by vulnerable groups.

Realistic fields of action

Keeping in mind the previously elaborated situation on the ground and the opportunities that are available within the existing legal frameworks, it was agreed NOT to address the **service providers** as they have little or no power over decision-making, but rather to concentrate our capacities on targeting their owners (e.g., the City of Belgrade or the national government), to involve the State Ombudsman, and to mobilize the tenants of Kamendin. Here we explain these four fields of action.

First: the authorities of the City of Belgrade are to be targeted with three demands:

1. Order, as the owning party, the utility service company to write off the existing debts of the Kamendin tenants due to the fact that at no time in the foreseeable future will they be able to pay them off, and they have the right to adequate living conditions.

NOTE: Since, if successful, this is bound to be a one-time measure, it is important to also work on other more substantial changes that will prevent the re-accumulation of debts in the long run. Along the way, we will share explanations with the general public to clarify that it is not about “debt-forgiveness,” and that this measure is due to the injustice that befell these households as a result of the shortcomings of the local and national policies and systems. To achieve this, we will explore how to gather more precise information on the number of indebted households and the amount of debt. This is necessary in order to strengthen our argumentation and to illustrate the discrepancy between the financial possibilities and burdens of the Kamendin tenants compared to other citizens, whose support we seek.

15 “Personal bankruptcy” is analogue to business bankruptcy, allowing individual indebted citizens who cannot pay their debts the option to seek relief from some or all of their debts. Current Serbian legislation allows businesses but not individuals to seek bankruptcy.

16 “Property census” is a mechanism by which the state can ensure that personally used housing units (or other types of property, such as vehicles) required for basic survival are protected against processes of debt collection by bailiffs. This mechanism builds on the current legal framework, which proscribes that debt can be subtracted from one’s monthly income at the value of one half to one quarter, depending on the total debt and whether there are other claims on the income.

2. Adopt a regulation that separates the (currently merged) payments of rent and utility costs for social housing units.

NOTE: This is important because some of the leasing contracts include a clause stating that, as signatories, the tenants agree to be evicted in case of failure to pay their rent. Such a regulation would further enable tenants to protect themselves against eviction.

3. Change the criteria related to subsidized utility services for social housing tenants to break the vicious cycle that engenders indebtedness.

NOTE: This includes the RSD 8,000 threshold and the insensitivity to the household size, among other criteria.

Second: national authorities are to be targeted with four demands (some are immediate steps to be taken, while others require more time and effort):

1. Seek written clarifications (as an official document) of the definition of the terms “affordable price” and “fair price” from the Ministry of Mining and Energy and from the Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure (their understandings of the stipulations of the Law on Consumer Protection and other laws that govern their fields of work).

NOTE: According to our knowledge about and understandings of the terms, we believe that the current definitions fall short of setting clear parameters that ensure the rights and goals declared in the constitution and public governmental policies. Therefore, we believe that, in the long run, we are looking at an extensive process to have these terms more thoroughly and precisely defined in the relevant laws. Yet, obtaining these clarifications would shed light on what is present and what is missing. This requires very little time in comparison to the definition-amendment process, and the definitions would be useful in advocacy work.

2. Demand the amendment of the Law on Taxes from the Ministry of Finance to exempt social housing units from the currently applied, yet unjustified, property tax charges.
3. Demand the reintroduction of restrictions on the ratio between interest and debt from the Ministry of Finances, following the example of Slovenia (that the interest cannot exceed the value of the basic debt).
4. Request the revision and reduction (or annulment) of the values of the fees for the court and the bailiffs from the Ministry of Justice.

Third: the State Ombudsman would be approached with two requests:

1. A complaint that requests his opinion and support in the Kamendin case as it proves that the current paradigms of social housing make it unaffordable, which contradicts what legislation stipulates. Learning from examples that were discussed in this session, if he accepts the complaint, his voice would provide valuable support for the demands addressed to the state and local authorities.
2. A request to use the rights that the position of the Ombudsman grants: namely, to propose amendments to the laws and regulations engendering indebtedness among vulnerable populations.

Fourth: the tenants of Kamendin will be approached with two offers:

1. Offer those who wish to be (more) informed access to what we know with regard to their rights on housing-related costs and services and other information about the relevant legal framework.
2. Inquire as to whether they would like, or even need, the HEM to support them in their efforts for self-organization.

NOTE: HEM members are fully aware of their privileged position and not being immune to power relations that often govern attempts of external parties to represent others' rights. This is why, on the one hand, the HEM will offer its support with their remaining self-organization to claim their rights, instead of leading or coordinating them. On the other hand, the HEM will articulate demands to work toward and advocate systemic solutions that would give rise to just housing policies and better housing conditions for all.

In the concluding round of this workshop session, participants acknowledged that these steps are quite uncertain and complex and that it would be better if they were undertaken simultaneously. However, as this would also require sufficient resources—dedicated members and budgets over an extended period of time—as well as clarifying structural issues, the workshop closed on the note that the member organizations of the Housing Equality Movement would collectively deliberate and strategize based on the findings of this working session.

PART II | HOW TO OBTAIN PUBLICLY-OWNED LAND FOR THE PURPOSE OF NON-PROFIT HOUSING?

Session 2 – 7 December 2020, online

Context

Since the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, existing housing cooperatives have to function just like other profit-driven developers. They are not discussed in detail in today's housing regulations and strategies, nor are there any mechanisms to promote and operationalize them. In order to reduce the domination of the market on the supply and pricing of the housing sector, one set of measures that our Housing Equality Movement (HEM) has proposed to the Secretariat for Property and Legal Affairs within the process of drafting **Belgrade's Housing Strategy** in summer 2019 aims to shift the ratio privately owned housing units to other forms of ownership. This includes a mechanism by which investors of non-profit cooperative housing projects would be able to obtain land from the local government for that purpose.

In 2013, **Who Builds the City**¹⁷ started working on a new cooperative model as part of a project named "Smarter Building,"¹⁸ which has paved the way for a contemporary model for housing cooperatives in Serbia.¹⁹ The model operates based on two key principles, the first being "collective ownership," whereby the housing units remain under joint ownership of the cooperative. This principle was inspired by practices during the socialist era and differs from standard contemporary models in which the units become private property of the cooperative members. The second principle is "non-speculation," whereby units built by the cooperative cannot be sold under market conditions, that is, to generate profit. Thus, this model allows for the accumulation of a housing stock that remains affordable in the long run.

17 One of the five member organizations of our Movement for Housing Equality. URL: kogradigrad.org/o-nama/who-builds-the-city/

18 See: Ko Gradi Grad. 2022. „Pametnija zgrada.“ Ko Gradi Grad. Accessed 17 January 2023. kogradigrad.org/pametnija-zgrada/

19 In 2019, the collective Who Builds the City collaborated with a group of legal experts to create the study "Zadružni stanovi u zajedničkom vlasništvu u Srbiji" (Cooperative housing under collective ownership in Serbia). It serves as a kind of feasibility study and explores the possibilities of introducing a cooperative housing model in Serbia that is based on the principle of collective ownership. See: Učajev, Petar, Gortan Joksimović, Miloš Veselinović, Milan Laković, Ivana Tomić, and Jelena Filipović. 2019. *Zadružni stanovi u zajedničkom vlasništvu u Srbiji* [Cooperative housing under collective ownership in Serbia]. Belgrade: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH. kogradigrad.org/wp-content/uploads/MHO-SRB-WEB.pdf

Housing cooperatives as a state-supported practice operate in many countries around Europe (Switzerland, Spain, Germany, etc.) and are perceived as one of the more promising policy mechanisms for countering the global crisis of the financialization of housing.²⁰ Therefore, to explore the possibilities of a civic-public partnership in Serbia, where the national and local governments would contribute to the non-profit cooperative housing model as a co-investor by subsidizing the land, we invited members of the **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities**²¹ (SCTM) to the second session of our workshop. As an intermediary between local and national governments, they have comprehensive knowledge on how local governments function and what mechanisms are available for improving their governance.

Relevant legislative framework

Marko Tesic, a leading expert in the field, gave an introduction about the relevant regulations concerning different models of utilizing public properties for the needs of local communities. Tesic explained that despite its name, public property is not easily accessible to everyone as there are several conditions that make it difficult to access by the public. The Law on Public Property,²² the most relevant legal framework, regulates the acquisition of publicly owned real estate, be it through the market, through public procurement procedures, or through the collection of written offers. A fourth possibility for the acquisition of public properties can take place through “direct negotiation” (with or without compensation), which represents a legal exception and follows a procedure that is defined in detail by a Decree on Acquisition, Leasing and Procurement.²³ In addition to this law, some local governments have more detailed regulations that govern procedures for obtaining public property. However, the Law on Public Property is not applied in practice because it is, in a sense, trumped by the Law on Planning and Construction²⁴ and another decree that lays out the

20 In some countries, housing cooperatives are supported more than in others. This includes, among other things, tax exemption, preferential treatment in allocation of public lands designated for the construction of housing, and subsidized loan options.

21 euintegracije.skgo.org/en

22 In Serbian: Zakon o javnoj svojini (Official Gazette, no. 72/2011, 88/2013, 105/2014, 104/2016, 108/2016, 113/2017, 95/18, 153/20).

23 “Decree on the conditions for the acquisition of real estate under public ownership and the leasing of publicly owned items, the acquisition and exploitation of other property rights, as well as public procurement and written offers.” In Serbian: Uredba o uslovima pribavljanja i otuđenja nepokretnosti u javnoj svojini i davanja u zakup stvari u javnoj svojini, odnosno pribavljanja i ustupanja i iskorišćavanja drugih imovinskih prava, kao i postupcima javnog nadmetanja i prikupljanja pisanih ponuda (Sl. glasnik, broj 16/18).

24 In Serbian: Zakon o planiranju i izgradnji (Official Gazette, no. 72/2009, 81/2009, 64/2010, 24/2011, 121/2012, 42/2013, 50/2013, 98/2013, 132/2014, 145/2014, 83/2018, 31/2019, 37/2019, 9/2020).

procedure for the acquisition of public land under conditions other than those of the market.²⁵

Article 99 of the Law on Planning and Construction explicitly prioritizes market conditions when it comes to the sale of public construction land (through a public procurement process where the only criterion is the highest bid offered). Yet, Articles 99 and 100 also allow for an exception to this rule: namely, in certain cases, acquisition through a direct settlement with the (local) government. These cases include expropriation, restitution, direct exchange between two public entities, public-private partnership, or investment projects that improve local economic development (the latter being conditioned by the previous consent from the national government). Through these exceptions, the land can be purchased at market value or even without compensation. Along the same lines, the decree²⁶ opens the possibility of acquiring undeveloped construction land below market value or without compensation. Article 5 names the State Property Directorate as the institution responsible for state-owned land, but it bestows the power to decide on the use of these lands to the local governments.

As a result, non-market-regulated transactions are usually framed within the wording of “local economic development” (where emphasis lies on job creation) and “social protection,” although in practice this is rarely the case. Nevertheless, Article 7 of the decree²⁷ states that land can be acquired or rented at a rate below market value (or without compensation) if the designation is the construction of “social housing” or other purposes of public interest. From this we concluded that it is necessary to provide evidence for the relation between affordable housing (for which housing cooperatives are a model) and social housing or public interest. It should be noted that the term “social housing” has been erased from the relevant legislation, where the currently valid **2016 Law on Housing and Building Maintenance** recognizes different forms of “housing support.”

25 “Decree on the conditions, manner, and procedure under which construction land under public ownership can be acquired at a price lower than market value, or leased with or without compensation, as well as on the conditions, manner, and procedure for exchanging real estate,” passed in 2015. In Serbian: Uredba o uslovima, načinu i postupku pod kojima se građevinsko zemljište u javnoj svojini može otuđiti ili dati u zakup po ceni manjoj od tržišne cene, odnosno zakupnine sa ili bez naknade, kao i uslove, način i postupak razmenenepokretnosti. (Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure. 2020. “Uredba o uslovima, načinu i postupku pod kojima se građevinsko zemljište u javnoj svojini može otuđiti ili dati u zakup po ceni manjoj od tržišne cene, odnosno zakupnine sa ili bez naknade, kao i uslove, način i postupak razmenenepokretnosti [Decree on the conditions, manner, and procedure under which construction land under public ownership can be acquired at a price lower than market value, or leased with or without compensation, as well as on the conditions, manner, and procedure for exchanging real estate].” Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure. mgsi.gov.rs/cir/dokumenti/uredba-o-uslovima-nachinu-i-postupku-pod-kojima-se-gradjevinisko-zemljishte-u-javnoj)

26 *ibid.*

27 *ibid.*

Among other key points of our discussions, the SCTM representatives emphasized that under the current circumstances of high demand for land (especially in city centers), and given the immune constellation of private investors and the investor-oriented politics in Serbia, subsidized leasing of construction land is a difficult and unlikely option. The strategy of acquiring public lands for non-profit housing is further limited by the Law on Planning and Construction, which stipulates that the lease of publicly owned land is either capped to five years in the case of a temporary building license (and is therefore conditioned to temporary facilities that serve the needs of state authorities) or is provisioned through contracted public-private partnerships that can vary in duration.

Given these circumstances, it was deliberated on how to obtain land for the purpose of constructing non-profit housing through the civic-public partnership mechanism by making use of Articles 109–111 of the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance. These articles allow non-profit housing organizations²⁸ to become licensed and authorized by the Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure to “provide, acquire, manage, and lease housing units intended for social housing, as well as to manage the construction of social housing.” According to the SCTM participants at our workshop, such organizations could potentially be a partner to the local government in our planned cooperative model.

A potential risk in such a scenario where the co-investor is the local government is that it would insist on keeping the units under public rather than cooperative ownership. In turn, this would bring us back to the predicament of overlapping and fragmented responsibilities among the various departments, which are currently reproducing precarious housing conditions and vulnerability to indebtedness, and it would not solve the problem of the lack of diversity regarding housing ownership forms. With this in mind, the workshop participants explored potential solutions and found a possibility in proposing a combined model of ownership and governance. A model for this is the Community Land Trust (CLT),²⁹ which allows collective decision-making and the division of ownership over land and building(s). The SCTM guests encouraged continued cooperation to further the legal analysis of such a scenario, to study the grounds, to advocate for its institutionalization, as well as to execute a pilot with one of the municipalities in Serbia.

28 Non-profit housing organizations do not have to be established by the local government and can be registered as another legal entity, such as a civil society organization. As stated in the timeline, the [Housing Center](#), a member of the Housing Equality Movement, is one such organization.

29 Under the Community Land Trust (CLT) model, ownership over land is public, ownership of the building is entrusted to the housing cooperative, and management of the project involves all stakeholders: tenants, local civil society organizations, and local government representatives. This constellation prevents the possibility of speculation in housing. As a model, CLT exists, for example, in Belgium, France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands.

Challenges and obstacles

In this workshop session, participants also discussed some of the dominant narratives that pose a challenge to advocating for our goal to operationalize existing laws to obtain public land for the purpose of non-profit housing in general and to our cooperative pilot model in particular. Three of these narratives are:

1. There are more apartments than households

In larger cities such as Belgrade, there is a discrepancy between the number of housing units and the number of households. According to the 2011 census, there are around 14% fewer households compared to housing units. This argument is often used against new construction for the purpose of affordable housing, instead the unused existing housing stock is promoted and recognized by the institutions (as is currently the case in the draft of Belgrade's Housing Strategy). However, the reality today is that the legal frameworks and policies neither foresee the conversion of ownership of existing housing units nor enable temporary use. The state would have to infringe on property rights, which we commend, but this is very difficult to execute. This is particularly the case in the current context of the strongly fragmented private ownership of the housing stock and the dominant political ideology that does not recognize housing as a right and a collective responsibility, but instead regards it as an individual responsibility. Therefore, seeking the allocation of a portion of the urban public lands for new affordable housing is a more feasible scenario.

2. Local governments do not have the funds to invest in affordable housing

It must be highlighted that leasing, donating, or selling public land below market value is not as much an immediate expense for local governments as it is a decision to waive future profits. At the same time, local governments not having resources at their disposal is not always the problem. Rather they often do not have a clear strategy for provisioning affordable housing. Therefore, different local governments need to be explored and addressed individually in order to define the most suitable one to conduct our cooperative pilot model. Here, SCTM represents a valuable source of information and could support our movement in communicating with different local governments.

3. Land is expensive and scarce

Since the official position of the state is to create favorable conditions for investments, and since the passing of the **Law on Planning and Construction in 2009** opened the door for the transfer of ownership of current publicly owned

land, there is a great deal of pressure on empty plots, especially in urban centers. With the pressure of the continuously growing investments in the construction and real-estate sectors, the limited resource of land is rapidly increasing in value. Unfortunately, under the dominant market-oriented economic and political logics at present, commercial arguments usually overpower social ones. This points to the importance of finding a highly motivated local government that wants to embark on a pioneering endeavor to host our pilot for a non-profit cooperative housing model. The fact that this pilot aims to serve the “public interest”—a term that is often, at least theoretically, stated in domestic regulations as a rationale for various exceptions to the market-based rule—is a clear argument for its adoption. Specifically, it should be argued that not only economic indicators (e.g., number of jobs or GDP) are needed to measure the wellbeing of the community, but also the quality of and accessibility to housing.

Strategic demands and potential fields of action

Unlike the first session of the workshop, where more concrete steps could be formulated, this session produced more general conclusions. Before deciding on any specific steps, we agreed that it is necessary to first formulate more precisely what modality of public-civic partnership we want to advocate for providing affordable housing. To do this, SCTM has explicitly confirmed its support and provided its position in the power network, as well as its extensive knowledge on the topic. This partnership could have multiple benefits for the housing issue.

Given the available possibilities within current legislative frameworks, we agreed that the first model to be analyzed in more detail would be the one that involves a non-profit housing organization as a counterpart to the local government, especially since one of the HEM’s member-organizations already has this status (the **Housing Center**). However, based on previous experiences, both SCTM and HEM members believe that a smaller municipality in Serbia would be more inclined to experimenting with an innovative model than Belgrade’s authorities, particularly given the high pressure on land in the capital city.

As a second strand for further analysis, again with the support of SCTM, we decided to focus on the legal options for using empty residential buildings (finalized or not entirely) for the purpose of non-profit housing. As there are many such cases in Belgrade, there is a high potential for this course of action, especially given the previously explained argument against “new” construction.

Even though it was not the focus of our workshop, another issue came up during the conversation with SCTM’s representatives that is worth noting. Considering

the lack of reliable data regarding housing needs and conditions (which we mapped as one of the crucial problems in the current housing sector³⁰), we also discussed the monitoring of housing support programs by local governments (prescribed by the [2016 Law on Housing and Building Maintenance](#)). Aside from the fact that many local municipalities claim to have insufficient resources (both financial and wo/manpower) to provide their annual reports to the Ministry of Construction, Transportation, and Infrastructure, we agreed that not having these reports publicly available is a problem. While SCTM, especially its Committee for Urban and Spatial Planning and Housing, is working hard to strengthen local governments to both provide these reports and to strategically plan and implement their housing support programs,³¹ the movement will focus more on demanding that these reports be made available to the public.

30 For more details see [Section 7: Who decides on what?](#)

31 SCTM has recently published the Manual for Local Governments on the Provision of Housing Support: Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities. 2020. "Priručnik za pružanje stambene podrške u jedinicama lokalne samouprave [Manual for Local Governments on the Provision of Housing Support]." Belgrade: Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities. skgo.org/storage/app/uploads/public/160/888/732/1608887327_Priru%C4%8Dnik%20za%20pru%C5%BEanje%20stambene%20podr%C5%A1ke%20u%20JLS%2023122020%20web.pdf

Next steps

The purpose of the workshop was to explore the legal possibilities for advocating changes in the housing regulations and practices to materialize the HEM's aim of a new housing paradigm: secure, adequate, and affordable housing for all. The workshop itself represented an opportunity for the newly established HEM to investigate and plan the next steps in our struggle and to establish connections with non-activist professionals that could become important allies.

The main challenge remains that both state and local governments are persistent in regarding housing as an economic sector that should follow market logics, in supporting private investment, and in creating a favorable "business environment" through legislation, urban planning, and land management modalities. Therefore, in this initial phase, the main focus of the HEM's political strategy is expanding the front that demands a radical shift in the approach to housing. By strengthening connections with and cooperation between activists, citizens, professionals, and academia, we might be able to create the necessary critical mass to generate the necessary public pressure on governments and institutions and to define and implement alternative policies, models, and measures for housing.

Accordingly, the HEM will use the public inquiry for the new Master Plan for Belgrade 2041 and the announced changes to the **2016 Law on Housing and Building Maintenance** to push for public debate and mobilization on the housing conditions in Serbia and in Belgrade. In addition, the upcoming 2022 local elections represent a horizon for possible transformations. In this context, the movement will seek to bring the leftist political movements on board and will push for housing to be one of the priority issues in their electoral programs.³²

³² This text was written shortly after the workshop. The 2022 local government elections, which took place on 3 April 2022, brought about a paradigm shift as explained in the [timeline](#).

Section 10 / BLN

WHO BUYS BERLIN?

29 August 2020 | Werkstatt Haus der Statistik

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Introduction

The kick-off workshop, titled “Who buys Berlin? A democratic city needs power to act and data availability when it comes to real estate transactions,” took place on 29 August 2020 at Werkstatt Haus der Statistik. This was the first activity organized by the Berlin City team within the framework of the CMMM project. The workshop brought together experts and activists who are engaged in the housing struggles in Berlin and who have experience with the municipal right of preemption (right of first refusal, RPE), the focal point of our team.

The purpose of this workshop was to examine our political target and develop a strategy for achieving it: namely, find out what political and legal steps are needed for tenants to be informed about and partake in real-estate purchases. To stimulate a debate, we started from the following short-term vision:

After the 2021 elections, the new administration of Berlin will make it obligatory for all sales and transactions involving housing properties in areas with social protection status (Milieuschutzgebiete) to be communicated to the affected tenants in time¹ for them to take action.

To operationalize this vision, we discussed issues of accessibility, availability, and legal parameters regarding data and information on real-estate transactions in Berlin. We also zoomed in on challenges and potentials of local housing struggles through three inputs:

- The research project “Wem gehört Berlin?” (Who owns Berlin?) by Stefan Thimmel (Senior Fellow for Housing and Urban Policy, Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung)
- The case of fighting for the application of the right of preemption 23 Häuser Sagen Nein (23 Houses Say No) by Lorena Jonas
- The roles that civic structures can play through the experiences of **Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik** (City Politics Initiative Forum) by Fabian Steinecke

Afterward, we split up into two working groups, which approached the question of how civil society in general, and affected tenants in particular, can intervene to protect the rights of tenants in Berlin from two different angles. The **first group** focused on the **current legislation and administrative regulations**

¹ Sufficient time before the completion of the sales operation to an investor or developer to enable tenants to make a purchasing bid or pursue the right of preemption.

in Germany and in Berlin, mapping laws and institutions that could function as entry points for forging a new and just paradigm for real-estate transactions. The **second group** focused on the **needs of tenants** and what conditions would have to be created to enable them to act and influence the process of a particular real-estate transaction. In doing so, we sought to reflect on our political strategies and time planning, on how to link research, activism, and administrative and support structures, on technical issues relating to implementation, on issues related to the visualization of information, and on how to leverage existing support structures.

Based on lessons learned from recent cases, campaigns, and scientific works, the participants put together ideas for a political program and conceptualized implementation scenarios in the closing session. The goal was to support actors that are pursuing transparency and the right to information with regard to housing real-estate transactions in Berlin, as well as to enable the affected tenants to influence and co-determine the outcomes of a sales operation.

Key points of discussions

The demand of tenants and *Gemeinwohl*-oriented cooperatives and companies to secure non-profit rental housing units with a long-term perspective has existed for decades. The question remains: What is missing to make this a reality?

There is a mishmash of instruments, laws, and authorities that collect information about transactions, structures, and details related to the housing market (mainly real-estate property and transactions, less on rentals). Authorities use this data to calculate property values, collect taxes, and control the legality of contracts, legacies, or forced sales. This is a good thing; however, public transparency and participation are non-existent. This benefits large private companies by keeping their strategies and activities a secret, while at the same time preventing the people affected by profit-oriented real-estate transactions from taking action.

What citizens need is a **registry for rental apartments and real-estate management and transactions**. This would make all procedures and activities of large private companies visible to the public. It would also open possibilities for tenants and *Gemeinwohl*-oriented companies to act on the housing market in time, meaning before the transactions are already closed deals. For the next electoral program, the green and left party, in cooperation with Christoph Trautvetter (a scientist affiliated with the Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation) and other experts, are currently working on a proposal for a new law to introduce a centralized housing and rent registry (Wohnungs- und Mietenkataster) for Berlin. This would provide a better overview of the housing market and make it possible for the public administration and politicians to monitor the market. But it would be even more important to open this database, at least in part, to the public and scholarly communities invested in combating the marketization of the city.

The expropriation campaign **Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Enteignen** has a rather radical approach to end speculative real-estate investment and management. To legitimize this approach to the public and make it applicable for politics and administration, it must be thoroughly examined and discussed. Most initiatives and *Gemeinwohl*-oriented activists have already given their support for a plan of radical measures published by the campaign. Notwithstanding, there are still other issues that need changing. We believe that radical approaches should be accompanied by more conservative ones to instigate change in small steps.

Another progressive instrument to challenge the toxic increase of land purchase prices could be a **price cap on real-estate purchases**, or at least on the value of land. This would require the renewal of the Real-Estate Value Regulation (Immobilienwert-Verordnung), which is the legislative basis and reference for consultant committees appointed by the German federal states for appraising land values.

GROUP 1

CURRENT LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS, FOCAL POINTS TO INFLUENCE DISCOURSES ON HOUSING REAL-ESTATE TRANSACTIONS IN BERLIN

Overview of legislative and administrative powers relevant to the housing sector

The legislative and administrative powers relevant to the housing sector (e.g., registries, classifications, financing) do not always lie at the same governance level in Germany's federal system, in which Berlin is one of 16 federal states. To determine the political level and entry points on which our endeavors should focus, during the first part of this working group session we created an overview of the distribution of power and access to relevant information. This allowed us to see more clearly what is already there and what is needed for the benefit of tenants and *Gemeinwohl*-oriented cooperatives concerning transparency and accessibility to Berlin's real-estate market data.

At the **federal level**, there are a handful of regulations that affect or legitimize the collection of data on real-estate transactions or companies on the one hand and the application of instruments like the municipal right of preemption (right of first refusal, in German *Vorkaufsrecht*, RPE) for communal authorities to influence real-estate markets on the other. These regulations provide a limited resource for tenants and *Gemeinwohl*-oriented cooperatives to influence market transactions.

- The Land Registry Law (Grundbuchordnung) orders the municipal level to log all information on land ownership and its transformation through purchase in a registry.
- The Transparency Registry (Transparenzregister), introduced in 2017, requires companies to register each of their beneficial owners and executive officers. This registry has a paywall and thus is not public. Open

data associations, such as Netzpolitik.org, have criticized the Transparency Registry for its incompleteness and poor accessibility.

- The Federal Building Code (Baugesetzbuch) defines three key instruments that are relevant for local authorities to influence the real-estate market and housing sector:
 - › Paragraph 24 provides a right of preemption to local authorities
 - › Paragraph 172 allows local authorities to propose preservation statutes (Erhaltungssatzungen) for parts of their territory to protect the housing sector. Such a designation is a precondition (one out of seven) for the application of the RPE.
 - › Paragraph 192 rules that in every federal state, a consultant committee for land value must be installed to calculate reference values in accordance with the actual real-estate transactions. Here we would like to note that because these calculations refer to the current market prices, this instrument is a key driver of increases in land prices.

At the **state level**, each state has its own real-estate cadaster containing the geographic and ownership data of all land parcels. This cadaster is mainly used for purposes of spatial planning and large building projects. The data can be accessed online but is limited to authorities and people with legitimate interest. As it has a paywall and excludes information on purchase proceedings, leasing, trust or rent, and prices, it is not a suitable source for making real-estate transactions transparent for tenants and *Gemeinwohl*-oriented cooperatives.

At the **municipal or city district level**, the above-mentioned instruments and registries are implemented and administered. Local governments and administrative bodies also apply the above-mentioned instruments, such as the RPE and the allocation of preservation statutes, on their territories.

The **municipal land registry** (kommunale Grundbuchamt) contains information about each individual parcel within its territory to validate the connected rights and liabilities, including records of ownership and the details of its transformation over time. The land registry offices are allowed to hand out this information to persons with legitimate interest, such as courts, notaries, local authorities, tenants, and landlords of the particular real-estate, as well as purchase agents. Accessibility to the information is therefore limited. Furthermore, the landownership data only contains a “first layer” and does not contain information, for instance, on the beneficial owners of companies.

Strategic demands and potential fields of action

Based on the overview above, the three key groups of actors who can take action are 1) public authorities and state organs, 2) actors from the fields of academia and science, and 3) tenants and housing activists. Since the last group is the focus of the second working group, we focused on possible fields of action and strategic demands in the first group and suggested a task for the second.

Possible fields of action and strategic demands toward **public authorities**:

- **Optimize collaboration** – The various public authorities must increase and optimize their collaboration, especially between the Berlin Senate and the district authorities.² Institutions that have access to land and property registries should define processes that make use of this data to create a Gemeinwohl-oriented paradigm in the housing sector. For this reason, local authorities should generally extend collaboration with intermediate support structures that are financed through public funds (e.g., [Initiativen Forum Stadtpolitik](#) and [AKS Gemeinwohl](#)), housing cooperatives (e.g., [Berliner Genossenschaftsforum](#)³), the [Mietshäuser Syndikat](#),⁴ and others.
- **Ensure early notification of sales activities** – District authorities and the land registry office need to re-calibrate their collaboration and systems of capturing information and create a procedure that ensures affected tenants are notified at early stages of a real-estate transaction. This issue is related to the following point.
- **Enable collaborative anticipation** – In order to execute the legal instruments that are currently in place, such as Berlin's rent cap and the right to preemption,⁵ and develop new strategies and mechanisms (such as a preventive buying⁶ on the free market), authorities and publicly-owned companies require access to a detailed database containing the full records of properties (spatial information, uses, ownership, second and third layer of business ownership beneficiaries, record of transactions, rent, etc.). Furthermore, the database should feature filters and search engines that correspond to the different kinds of captured data to allow for the proper analysis of the various dimensions at play. This is a fundamental

2 The two-tier administrative structure is explained in [Section 7: Who decides on what?](#)

3 berliner-genossenschaftsforum.de

4 syndikat.org

5 This workshop took place in August 2020. In June and November of the following year, both indicated instruments were made futile by court rulings, see [2021: Berlin Rent Cap overturned by the Federal Constitutional Court](#), and [2021: The Federal Administrative Court overturns an RPE case](#).

6 Preventive buying means brokering real estate to responsible, *Gemeinwohl*-oriented buyers.

condition to enable the involved actors (authorities, *Gemeinwohl*-oriented cooperatives, tenants) to make anticipatory decisions and collaborate on specific actions that gradually re-direct the real-estate market toward *Gemeinwohl*-oriented principles.

- **Make it legally binding** – Given the reality that the sale of a property often has grave consequences for tenants, and based on the right to be informed, the responsible Berlin executive or legislative institution should make it legally binding for the departing owner to inform the tenants of her/his/their building as soon as it is put up for sale. In parallel, the district authorities should commit to providing information to the affected tenants about the processes and potentials for pursuing the RPE.

Based on these demands, we formulated the following **MISSION**:

To encourage and support the application of the municipal right of preemption (right of first refusal, RPE), together with our network of housing initiatives and collectives, we will push for the establishment of a publicly accessible and user-friendly **real-estate registry** that contains comprehensive data on Berlin's land and housing properties so as to facilitate educated *Gemeinwohl*-oriented analyses and anticipatory actions. Therefore, the database should include information on:

- **Landlord:** name, type (e.g., private, for-profit company, non-profit association), organizational structure, and economic/executive beneficiaries (in the case of a company).
- **Purchase history:** year, sales value, change in classification if applicable, encumbrances⁷ such as easements,⁸ and other rights and obligations affecting the property.
- **Current use:** number, rent, and size of apartments on the property, as well as the characteristics of commercial premises if applicable.

7 An encumbrance is a claim against an asset by an entity that is not the owner. Common types of encumbrances against real-estate property include liens, easements, leases, mortgages, or restrictive covenants. Encumbrances impact the transferability and/or use of the properties in question.

8 For example, the right to use the land of a neighbor to access one's own property (Belastungsrechte).

At the workshop, participants projected that the mission outlined above would overlap (in part or in full) with an ongoing negotiation between the government coalition on the introduction of a new housing and rent registry. Whether any legal and administrative amendments will be enacted by the September 2021 elections is unsure.

To help the housing justice movement create the necessary conditions for the effective application of the RPE, scientists and researchers could utilize the existing legal clauses/instruments pertaining to the right of access to information and demand public authorities to release registry data for research purposes (even though it might contain private data).

In conclusion, we agreed that a political strategy will be drafted by the CMMM BLN team, IniForum, and interested tenants' initiatives. In parallel, two political papers will be prepared by the members of AKS *Gemeinwohl* members demanding more collaboration and financial support for *Gemeinwohl*-oriented housing practices. One will target the local authorities, the other *Gemeinwohl*-oriented housing cooperatives.

GROUP 2 | NEEDS OF TENANTS AND KEY CHALLENGES TO ACCESSING INFORMATION IN ORDER TO APPLY RPE

The major obstacles facing tenants in supporting the application of the RPE are directly related to having timely access to information, be it regarding a sales process or legal frameworks. Therefore, this working group started by defining legal and administrative measures that are necessary to create an environment of information accessibility, formulating them into **SPECIFIC DEMANDS AND STRATEGIES**⁹ to prevent the sellout of the city:

- **Standardize triggers** – Currently, the decision to apply the RPE relies heavily on political will and networks. Therefore, its application is rather arbitrary. The administration of Berlin needs to define and ratify clear criteria, automatized triggers, and the necessary funding mechanisms to create a standard procedure.

⁹ These will serve as a basis in preparation for the planned **fourth IniForum Hearing** titled "What's next for the preemptive buying right? On the urgency to sharpen rental policy instruments," which is planned for 25 November 2020.

- **Establish a State Office for Preemption** (Landesanstalt für Vorkauf) – Given the above-mentioned arbitrariness, there is a need to establish an institutional unit with the following responsibilities: overseeing the availability and accessibility of information for decision-making public servants and affected tenants alike; coordinating the necessary agendas, strategies, and agreements among the relevant state organs; and monitoring, evaluating, and improving the application of the right of preemption across districts. This *Gemeinwohl*-oriented unit of experts should have leverage in the district councils and have access to the real-estate and transparency registries, as well as to the database of Investitionsbank Berlin (IBB, Berlin Investment Bank).
- **Make “informing” legally binding** – Currently, most tenants only find out about the sale of their building after it is a done deal, when they receive notice from the new owner. This prevents them from taking any action and can result in violence. Therefore, informing the tenants at the beginning of a sales process should be obligatory. We suggest a clearly defined information flow: the landlord must inform the responsible unit at the relevant city district office about her/his/their intention to sell,¹⁰ and the latter should inform the tenants that an operation is underway.
- **Incentivize *Gemeinwohl*** – The government should provide subsidies and tax incentives to encourage the process of tenants supporting the use of preemption and choosing non-profit formats that could help vulnerable groups “capture wealth.” This means defining what *Gemeinwohl* constitutes and obliging the district building councils (Baustadträte) to develop strategies and mechanisms that apply the concept to housing.
- **Allow price-limited preemptive purchases** – If the price agreed in the purchase contract significantly exceeds the fair market value,¹¹ it should be possible to reduce the preemptive purchase price for the new buyer of the object.
- **Ensure opportunity** – Re-design the processes and mechanisms of preemption, considering the often-limited capacities of the citizenry. It is fundamental to ensure that the tool is also available and effective if the tenants are not able to enter the process with their full resources

¹⁰ In the future, this should become the *State Office for Preemption*, see second point in this list.

¹¹ The fair market value is defined as the value determined by the price that could be obtained in the ordinary course of business in accordance with the legal circumstances, actual characteristics, other features, and location of the property, without taking into account any unusual or personal circumstances.

(time, emotion, strength). It is equally important to solve the hurdles of accessibility and applicability, particularly for vulnerable groups.

- **Beyond areas with social protection status** (Milieuschutzgebiete) – Given that the number of real-estate transactions is rising across the city, the authorities should extend the validity of the RPE beyond the current framework for areas with social protection status.
- **Apply direct democracy** – Authorities should grant tenants the right to veto a sales operation. This demand goes beyond “our” framework and prioritizes the rights of tenants in general.
- **Strengthen neighborhood** structures, facilitate social networking, and encourage politicization.

With the above strategic demands in mind, the following **TYPES OF INFORMATION** are necessary to enable tenants to support the application of the RPE:

- **Information on non-profit buyers** – Who are they? What different types and formats are there? How can they be contacted?
- **Who to approach and when** – What competences do the different political and administrative institutions have? Which units or offices can be addressed with what kind of concerns?
- **Legal rights and possibilities for tenants** – What are tenants’ constitutional rights in a sales process, and what potential scenarios are there? Is the building located in a preservation area or not? What does this statute mean in relation to housing situations and the application of the right of preemption? One idea is that when the district designates a new preservation area (or a tenant moves into a new apartment in such an area), tenants should automatically be informed about the area’s (new) statute and what this entails.

An issue that remains open is which actors should and could be responsible for providing any of the above-listed information to tenants. As timing is crucial, the “ideal” list below captures the workshop exercise, where we sought to specify what kind of communication is needed at what point in a sales process:

Upon signing a rental contract:

- Who is the current owner (behind the façade of the management company)?
- Is the property located in an area with social protection status (Milieuschutzgebiet) or not, and what does this mean?
- Is there an existing waiver agreement (Abwendungsvereinbarung) with the current owner, and what does this specify until when?
- What is the market value of the property?
- Who were the previous tenants? What was the previous rent? (Keyword: rent control)¹²

At the moment the owner decides to sell:

- The owner should be obliged to notify the respective district authorities about her/his/their intention to sell: a sort of declaration of intent to sell. This should include information on whether the sale involves the full property or only part of it, among other relevant details.
- As soon as the district authorities receive the intent to sell from the owner, they should:
 1. Automatically provide this information to the registered tenants of the respective building(s)
 2. Automatically provide this information to a registered list of housing cooperatives, state-owned housing associations, and the like, so that they can consider supporting the tenants if the need arises
 3. Inform the existing owner on possible alternative buyers. This could be an automatic confirmation-of-receipt letter that includes information about the process and different options or paths. It should explain the local housing situation and list names of housing cooperatives, state-

12 It is possible that the rent in the new lease may violate the *Mietpreisbremse* (rent control law, which sets the maximum permissible amount of rent at the start of the lease). As the landlord could argue that the previous tenant had already paid an increased rent, information about the previous tenant and rental price are useful. See: Pro Mietrecht. 2022. "Mietpreisbremse – Überprüfung, Ermittlung der Miethöhe des Vormieters [Rent control law: review, determination of the previous tenant's rent level]." *Pro Mietrecht*. Accessed 23 January 2023. promietrecht.de/Miete/Mietgrenzen/angespannter-Wohnungsmarkt/Neuvermietung/Mietpreisbremse-Miethoehe-des-Vormieters-ermitteln-ueberpruefen-E2802.htm

owned housing associations, or tenants that could be interested in purchasing the respective property. This could reduce the chances of a sale to speculators.

- The district authorities should identify the affected parties (e.g., current tenants) and determine whether they include vulnerable groups and/or whether there are any language or other barriers. Mechanisms should be in place to support vulnerable and disadvantaged groups involved in such a process.
- Authorities should have mechanisms in place that ensure tenants are aware of different parties that could provide them with support in case they decide to make a bid to purchase the property in which they live. This should cover information about past experiences, possible organization models, legal support infrastructures, civic initiatives, etc.

At the moment someone is interested in buying:

- To establish mechanisms of anticipation and alerts that give early indicators about the direction of the market, the authorities should be informed about the intent to buy. This should include information about the identity of the bidding party, its legal statute, current property portfolio, and, if applicable/verifiable, the rental history of those properties.
- To ensure that preemption is possible, as well as other legislation relevant to dealing with the housing crisis, the intent to buy should include information about the agreed price and whether it is legally compliant.
- Authorities should set predictable and operable timeframes for purchase processes, with channels that allow tenants and/or alternative buyers to take action.

In general:

- It should be made clear at an early stage whether the buyer will sign a waiver agreement.
- Communication (e.g., roundtables) between the landlord, the district, and the tenants should be encouraged throughout the process.

Next steps

At the end of this workshop, we find ourselves in a somewhat ambivalent position. On one hand, the need for action to encourage and increase the enactment of the RPE was clearly confirmed by the participants of the workshop and the initiatives with which we work. This means that our endeavors are legitimate and helpful for the broader spectrum of struggles in the pursuit of dignified housing conditions in Berlin. On the other hand, the political target we proposed—“after the 2021 elections, the new administration of Berlin will make legally binding the communication and information of all sales and transactions of housing properties in areas with social protection status (*Milieuschutzgebiete*) to the affected tenants in sufficient time to take action”—is only a stepping stone toward the larger strategy required to tackle the problem of the financialization of housing in Berlin and the resulting vulnerability of tenants.

Initially, we wanted to focus on normalizing and formalizing the publication of data on real-estate transactions connected to exercising the RPE. Yet, some initiatives pointed out that some district authorities are already doing this, which means that our objective does not really shift any paradigms. In addition, the RPE is under considerable pressure and its implementation is increasingly limited due to the reality of rocketing real-estate prices, which is rendering acquisitions through public budgets increasingly difficult. Therefore, our network considers it essential to add further demands to our agenda: first, a limit on the increase of real-estate prices (*Bodenpreisdeckel*: a cap on land price) and second, the introduction of new legislation that incentivizes the development of *Gemeinwohl*-oriented properties more.

In view of this, we decided to amend our political target beyond *Milieuschutzgebiete* and thus **demand transparency regarding all real-estate sales and transactions in Berlin**. In addition, we are studying whether it would be possible and strategic to incorporate the other two demands into our work toward enhancing the discourses around and the application of the RPE. Keeping in mind the upcoming elections of the Berlin house of representatives in the fall of 2021, we are currently assessing how to proceed from here. Together with our network of initiatives, we are studying the implementation of a campaign under the overarching topic of the right to housing that builds on the discussions at the [IniForum's hearing on the RPE](#), which took place on 25 November 2020.

From the current standpoint, we believe critical mapping is needed to visualize data related to the RPE in order to inform the citizens of Berlin about the procedure and mobilize them in this election season to pressure the next

administration to make effective use of the right. Specifically, we think the following critical maps could be helpful:

- A map, visualization, or infographic that shows how the districts of Berlin handle the right of preemption differently: for example, the timeframe in which tenants are informed
- A map, visualization, or infographic that documents the sales of housing properties in Berlin within the last legislative period (2016–2021), marking where the RPE was implemented, suspended, or not applied.

That being said, as the summaries of both working groups demonstrated, the discussions highlighted the overarching problem of the financialization of housing and the need for regulatory tools that create an environment where the RPE can be applied. It was also clearly pointed out that there is a need to make this demand valid Berlin-wide and not just limited to areas with social protection status. Thus, the immediate strategic elements for action in the short term include:

- Make the arbitrariness in the current handling of the RPE by the different districts transparent (who? how?)
- Draw up a catalog of requirements from the results of our kick-off workshop for the upcoming Ini-Forum hearing about the RPE on 25 November 2020
- Develop a concise argumentation for a housing and rent register, and discuss this topic with several political parties in the run-up to the Berlin state elections that will take place on 26 November 2021
- Visualize potential structures of a Gemeinwohl-oriented real-estate market (who? how?)
- Initiate a campaign to cap purchase prices in order to block the speculation trend (who? how?)

Section 10 / BCN

THE POSSIBILITIES OF CRITICAL MAPPING TO DEFEND THE RIGHT TO HOUSING

30 September 2020 | online

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Introduction

The conceptualization workshop in Barcelona was the first local convening of the Barcelona City team organized within the framework of the CMMM project. The workshop brought together experts and activists who are active in the Barcelona housing scene and have been involved in mapping exercises in the past.

The purpose of the workshop was to gain a better understanding of the main difficulties local housing activists in Barcelona face when using mapping as a tool, as well as to identify their needs concerning potential future critical mapping processes.

As a warm-up for the discussion, Ana Méndez de Andés reflected in a short introductory presentation on the reasons why social movements have used the tool of mapping to advance their agendas and support their struggles. She argued that this is fundamentally related to the possibilities mapping offers as a tool to not only compile information and represent it in an accessible way, but also as a collective process of creating common territories through ascribing importance to elements of political actions. She illustrated this concept of “tactical cartographies” using various examples: from John Snow’s map¹ of the 1854 cholera outbreak in London to “[What is the Forum really about?](#)”,² a critical map that was made as a critique of the 2004 Forum of Cultures and distributed as part of the Another Malaga ’04 social forum (Otra Málaga ’04). She also referred to the work of [Madrid’s Metropolitan Observatory](#),^{3,4} [Iconoclasistas](#),⁵ [Orangotango](#)⁶ (with their counter-cartography collection [This Is Not an Atlas](#)⁷) and the [Anti-Eviction Mapping Project](#).⁸

1 Yalmaps. 2015. “John Snow’s Investigation of the 1854 Soho Cholera Outbreak.” ArcGIS. Accessed May 5, 2023. arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=4b8616f29eef4e6683f1f14a1345a5ed

2 What is Forum 2004 really about?. 2004. “Map.” Sindominio. Accessed May 5, 2023. sindominio.net/mapas/ing/mapa_ing.htm

3 observatoriometropolitano.org

4 Observatorio Metropolitano. 2009. “Manifiesto por Madrid. Crítica y crisis del modelo metropolitano [Manifesto for Madrid. Criticism and crisis of the metropolitan model].” Observatorio Metropolitano. Accessed May 5, 2023. observatoriometropolitano.org/publicacion/manifiesto-por-madrid/

5 iconoclasistas.net

6 orangotango.info/de/

7 kollektiv orangotango+ (ed.). 2019. *This Is Not An Atlas: A Global Collection of Counter-Cartographies*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. notanatlas.org

8 antievictionmap.com

The discussion that followed was based on the following questions:

- What has been your experience with mapping in your work related to the housing struggle in Barcelona?
- Have you encountered difficulties with using mapping as a tool in your work? What were the most significant challenges?
- Do you intend to use this tool in future campaigns?
- For which particular housing struggles do you think mapping could be a useful tool to exert pressure and diffuse information?

Key points of discussions

Elisa and **Martí** were involved in a mapping project on touristification called **Tourist Apartments** – The Map of Shame: how the neighborhood is expelled from a neighborhood,⁹ which aimed to show the distribution of tourist apartments in the Sant Antoni neighborhood. For them, an interesting follow-up project would be to map the replacement of residential housing units by tourist accommodation to account for the expulsions caused by touristification.

Elisa participated in the organization of an exhibition in 2017 to inform neighbors about the problems of speculation, tourism and abusive rentals.¹⁰ Combining infographics and maps, the exhibit was intended to highlight invisible evictions and the disappearance of local commerce as two of the main consequences of gentrification derived from the remodeling of Sant Antoni's market.

Eduard is involved in mapping eviction cases and uses visualizations in his academic papers: for example, Geographic Analysis of the Mortgage Crisis:

9 Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya. 2018. "Sant Antoni: Allotjaments turístics." GoogleMaps. Accessed May 5, 2023. [google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1f9y8fWZHdzgVkBHOHjqXha_3REc&ll=41.380506251636774%2C2.1587920000000116&z=15](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1f9y8fWZHdzgVkBHOHjqXha_3REc&ll=41.380506251636774%2C2.1587920000000116&z=15)

10 Fem Sant Antoni. 2017. "Especulació, turisme i lloguers abusius [Speculation, tourism and abusive rentals]." Fem Sant Antoni. Accessed May 5, 2023. femsantantoni.wordpress.com/especulacio-turisme-i-lloguers-abusius/

Unequal Distribution at Different Scales.¹¹ He has created a database from the information published on the DesnonamentsBCN telegram channel and based on data from the people who have participated in the PAH's assemblies since 2016. He classifies and analyzes this information by address, homeownership type (big or small), and result of each case (suspended, stopped, or executed), sometimes combined with their geolocation. To a large extent, his work has been inspired by [Col·lectivaT](#),¹² a non-profit cooperative doing similar work.

Jaume has worked on mapping land use transformations to point out the accelerated transformation of residential units to tourist accommodations. For example, the map "Urban transformations and conflicts in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona"¹³ includes layers with sites affected by the presence of a heritage asset, by road infrastructures, or by the tourism and gentrification business in certain neighborhoods, as well as buildings that were purchased by investors and have changed their use.

Albert, with his technical and computer knowledge, has experience with developing software for data scraping from real-estate portals to extract advertised homes that are owned by big landlords.

Gemma has been involved in mapping vertical property cases¹⁴ in Barcelona, especially those that have been the focus of social movements. In this regard, she has written several news articles about the map "[Buildings affected by the new rental bubble](#)."¹⁵ She has also conducted research on the ownership distribution of empty flats owned by banks, such as the report: Banks, SAREB and investment funds are hoarding thousands of vacant apartments.¹⁶

11 Sala, Eduard. "Análisis Geográfico de la Crisis Hipotecaria: la Distribución Desigual a Diferentes Escalas [Geographical Analysis of the Mortgage Crisis: Unequal Distribution at Different Scales]." *Biblio3W Revista Bibliográfica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales* Universitat de Barcelona 23, no. 1.256 (December 2018): 1–24. revistes.ub.edu/index.php/b3w/article/view/27249/28249

12 collectivat.cat

13 Taula d'Urbanisme. 2019. "Transformaciones urbanas i conflictes a AMB [Urban transformations and conflicts in AMB]." Taula d'Urbanisme. Accessed May 5, 2023. taulaurbanisme.org/maps/

14 Buildings where all the units belong to the same owner.

15 Directa. 2017. "Edificis afectats per la nova bombolla del lloguer [Buildings affected by the new rental bubble]." Carto. Accessed May 5, 2023. directa.carto.com/viz/71281206-286a-11e7-b643-0e3ff518bd15/public_map

16 Garcia, Gemma. "Bancs, SAREB i fons d'inversió acaparen milers de pisos buits [Banks, SAREB and investment funds are hoarding thousands of vacant apartments]" *Directa*. September 29, 2020. directa.cat/bancs-sareb-i-fons-dinversio-acaparen-milers-de-pisos-buits/

Vanessa shared the main findings of a report she prepared on the distribution of the property structures in Barcelona and on legal strategies for dealing with insolvency of families and foreclosures.¹⁷

In addition, the participants reported several recurring problems and challenges: a lack of technical and computer skills needed for the design of interactive databases that would allow for the map to be updated on an ongoing basis, the existing restrictions and costs for accessing real-estate data from the cadaster, and the lack of coordination between the various social movements and the media regarding the use and diffusion of publicly available data.

Next steps

Due to the repeated reference to the need access the cadaster in order to conduct research on the property structure or start a critical mapping initiative, we would like to design a strategy to obtain access to the cadaster. We would like to invite Christoph Trautvetter to a meeting to gain insights on how and what he has achieved in Berlin in this regard. In addition, we would like to organize a training workshop on computer-based research skills with Albert Trelis.

We concluded that it is necessary to direct our efforts toward achieving concrete policies and political objectives in the short to medium term. Several of the participants expressed their intentions to expand their use of critical mapping as a tool to communicate information related to the right to housing and the right to the city from a local perspective. We agreed that there is a lack of information regarding the property structure in Barcelona and that it would be very useful for social movements to visualize this on an interactive map. This would also make the organization of many campaigns considerably easier.

¹⁷ Valiño, Vanesa. *Ejecuciones hipotecarias y derecho a la vivienda: estrategias jurídicas frente a la insolvencia familiar* [Foreclosures and the right to housing: legal strategies for dealing with family insolvency]. Barcelona: Observatori DESC, 2009. observatoridesc.org/sites/default/files/Execucions_Hipotecaries_observatori_desc2009.pdf



PROTOTYPES

what are the
features of
the maps?

CRITICAL MAPPING OF THE UNAFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING IN BELGRADE

13-14 April 2021 | Ministry of Space and online

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Participants

Alphabetically, bearing in mind that the majority have several affiliations and engagements

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Antonije Catic, Ministry of Space

Bozena Stojic, Ministry of Space

Danilo Curcic, A11—Initiative for Economic and Social Rights

Dusan Rajic, independent artist

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Introduction

The CMMM-BGD kick-off workshop “**Housing Burdens and Public Land for Non-Profit Housing**,” which focused on planning our continued course of action to push for more affordable housing, brought back to the forefront of the agendas of both the **Ministry of Space** and the newly established **Housing Equality Movement** the need for wider public mobilization around housing issues to increase the pressure on institutions and decision-makers for a housing policy transformation in Serbia.

We are currently facing a situation in which housing in Serbia has, for decades, been depoliticized and pushed into the economic realm through a process of massive privatization and a dominant paradigm of homeownership, as well as a lack of strategic housing policies and housing programs. In addition, citizens are discouraged from being involved in decision-making processes due to the high level of corruption, very low transparency, and few opportunities for participation.¹ At the same time, they do not consider housing to be a collective responsibility anymore,² but rather an individual matter and responsibility as this has been the narrative accompanying the privatization process for the last several decades. Hence, there is very little motivation at the moment for large-scale civic engagement in topics related to housing (e.g., evictions, housing segregation, housing-related indebtedness, etc.) and, as a result, the initial effort to politicize the right to housing in Belgrade and Serbia has remained at a very rudimentary level.

To change this situation, we believe that housing must first be brought back to the attention of the wider public as a topic of public interest and collective responsibility. This should be done through an engaging presentation of the problem, one that refers to a material reality of housing inequalities that are produced by the market-led orientation of public housing policies. One of the aspects we believe the wider public can most relate to is the question of

1 The Ministry of Space, together with an outsourced agency, is conducting ongoing qualitative and quantitative research on the attitudes and motivation of the public to participate in decision-making processes that concern the development of Belgrade, as well as their positions on major problems and desired priorities in the future development of the city. This is being done primarily for the purpose of the Master Plan Belgrade 2041. However, since we have included questions on housing for the focus groups and in the survey, the results will be relevant for the CMMM Belgrade activities as well. For the moment, we have facilitated five focus groups with citizens from different local municipalities, genders, and age groups. Although the sample was not representative, all five groups unanimously claimed that they see no point in participation under the current government, given the widespread corruption.

2 In continuation of the previous footnote, the participants of the focus groups clearly recognized the unaffordable square meter prices of Belgrade's apartments. However, they did not perceive a clear link between tenants, state policies, and the market.

(un)affordability: in other words, the relation between costs of housing and household income. We see here the role of critical mapping both as a tool to collect and cross-reference data on (un)affordability, as well as to visualize this data in an understandable and convincing manner.

We envision the critical mapping pilot of housing unaffordability in Belgrade in three phases:

1. A two-day workshop to jointly devise ways in which we can collect data and visually represent the unaffordability of housing
2. A testing phase of the pilot mapping model of housing unaffordability, also in relation to different housing situations and to their spatial imprint on the City of Belgrade
3. A feedback meeting to evaluate the results of the previous two phases

In this section we report on the outcomes of the first phase and part of the second phase, which is still in progress. The key questions we aimed to answer in our two-day workshop were:

- What data and correlations are relevant and available for illustrating different aspects of housing unaffordability in Belgrade? Which data formats would be most suitable (personal testimonies, statistics, etc.)? What are the sources of such data and to what extent are they available to the public?
- What are the possible formats, approaches, tools for the mapping or visual representation of this data?
- Which data and means of visual representation would be the most effective for our local context and target groups, bearing in mind the two upcoming key political events: the adoption of the GUP for Belgrade 2021–2041 and the election campaign for the City of Belgrade (April 2022)?

To answer these questions, the Ministry of Space team gathered members of the Housing Equality Movements (Ana Dzokic, Sara Devic, Danilo Curcic), as well as experts on particular aspects: research and data cross-reference (Vujo Ilic), data visualization (Uros Krcadinac), and housing (Iva Marcetic).

Key points of discussions

Data-related challenges

First, there is a lack of relevant and up-to-date data on housing due to the absence of systematic and regular collection. As mentioned in [Section 8](#), the only available data is general demographic data, mainly collected during the last census in 2011³ (every 10 years), and more frequently collected data from economy-related surveys on income, poverty risk rate, working conditions, etc. Unfortunately, the housing activist collectives do not have the capacity or the resources to regularly conduct representative research studies that could complement the existing public data. In that sense, the main sources that we can use are the State Bureau of Statistics,⁴ the State Geodetic Bureau,⁵ and EUROSTAT (which offers only selective and inconsistent data, since Serbia is not yet an EU member state). In addition, we can make use of a legal instrument called *Request to Obtain Information of Public Importance from Institutions* (e.g., from Belgrade's Secretariat for Property and Legal Affairs or from the Ministry of Construction, Transportation, and Infrastructure). However, from previous experience, the institutions often avoid giving out the requested data, even after appealing to the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection.

Second, there is a mismatch between the available data and the territorial units, making it difficult to cross-reference different types of data. Some of the issues include:

- The data available for Belgrade is usually disaggregated for the 17 city district municipalities, which vary greatly in terms of size and structure.
- Larger districts, such as Palilula or Vozdovac, are heterogeneous in their structure, including both rural and urban settlements, while the data is mostly given as an average for the whole district.

3 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 census has been postponed until October 2022, which further delayed the availability of up-to-date data (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. 2020. "Postponed Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2021." Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. October 16. stat.gov.rs/sr-Latn/oblasti/popis/popis-2021). On a positive note, the housing census data will be geo-referenced (unlike the 2011 census), which will allow for more possibilities to map the housing situation in both Serbia and Belgrade.

4 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. 2022. *Website*. Accessed 17 January 2023. stat.gov.rs/

5 Republic of Serbia Republic Geodetic Authority. 2022. *Website*. Accessed 17 January 2023. rgz.gov.rs/

- Rental and purchase prices from commercial real-estate websites often offer a more specific territorial division within the district, while data on income or demographics (which could be compared with prices) is not available for the same territorial units.

After deliberating on these data-related challenges, we collectively concluded that the general data, although not up to date, could still be relevant to represent the current trends and thus generate strong narratives regarding the unaffordability of housing. Iva Marcetic exemplified this possibility from her experience in Zagreb, where, with similar data availability and challenges, the Right to the City movement succeeded in generating maps that have assisted their campaigns with pressing housing issues. After an initial brainstorming session, the following tasks were set for the following weeks:

- The Ministry of Space will finish the list with the possible data and its sources that could be collected for Belgrade, as well as interesting correlations (e.g., rental and purchase prices vs. median income,⁶ growth rate of real-estate prices vs. average income growth, spatial distribution of short-term rentals, spatial distribution of social housing, ratio between the number of households applying for social housing and the number of social housing units available, etc.).
- Robin Coenen (KLAB) will support MoS in scraping the data from one of the biggest commercial real-estate websites (www.nekretnine.rs) in order to obtain comprehensive data on rental prices in relation to the location and unit structure.

Target groups

We agreed on two main target groups for our critical mapping pilot project. First, as initially envisioned, the general public, with the goal of moving the topic of housing back into the political sphere and public debates. Our second target group is activist housing collectives, with the goal of providing them with better data and systematic knowledge that they can use for stronger arguments in their struggles. Our workshop has proven this to be necessary, as Ana Dzokic from Who Builds the City exemplified: even though we built our 2015 “**Welcome to Housing Hell**” campaign around strong images, narratives, and slogans, and even though it had a significant impact on the wider public, it lacked concrete data. Iva Marcetic (Right to the City) confirmed a similar situation in Zagreb.

⁶ Unlike in Croatia, where there is only data on average monthly incomes (which can offer non-representative data, especially in highly unequal societies), in Serbia, the State Statistical Bureau offers information on the median salary for each month and year.



Figure 11.1 A slide from Iva Marcetic's presentation showing the spatial distribution and location of public housing estates. The data for Zagreb is also only available for each local district municipality, some of which are also very large and heterogenous.

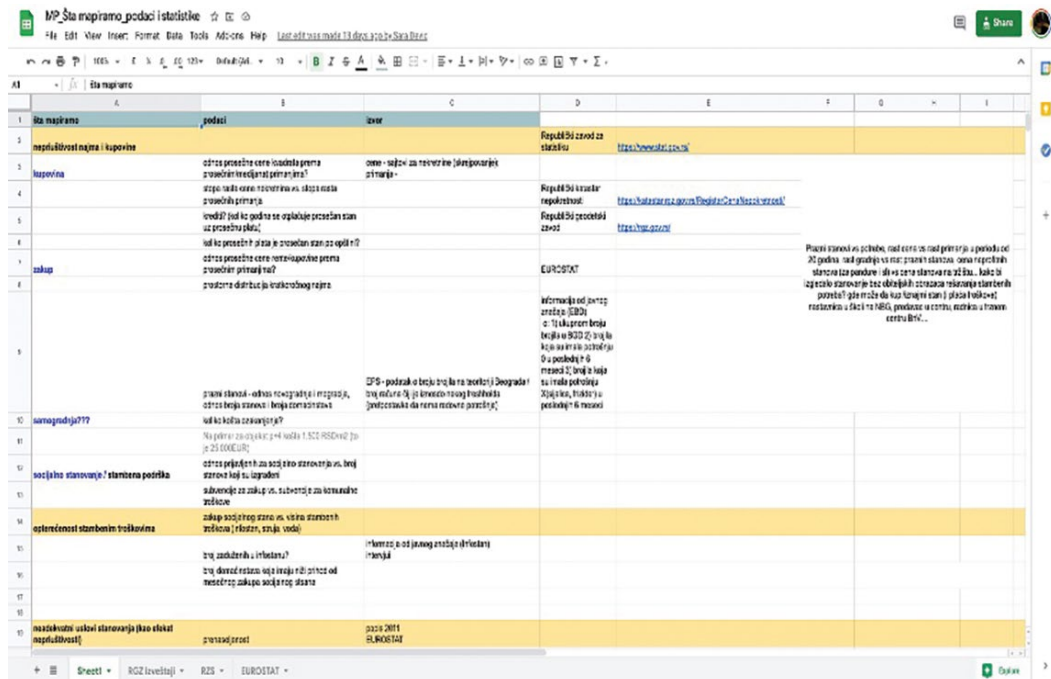


Figure 11.2 Screenshot of our initial Excel sheet illustrating the process of collecting the available data and its sources that are relevant for representing housing unaffordability.

Mapping and visualization strategies

We defined three strategic priorities for the mapping and visualization of housing unaffordability in Belgrade to prove that *the market does not work* as a regulator of the housing sector:

- Correlate our visualizations with the different housing statuses (tenancy, private ownership via loan, subsidized rent/social housing tenancy) so people can personally relate to the data.
- Correlate our visualizations to different professional profiles to attract wider public attention for the insufficient salaries of structural state employees, especially given the current narrative on “frontline workers” during the COVID-19 crisis. Also, for decades prior to the pandemic, teachers, medical staff, and public employees (e.g., post office) were persistently on strike in Serbia. Updated statistics on income in the different economic sectors are available, and we would like to complement this information by collecting and presenting personal testimonies.
- Express the values of public spending as a ratio between different project spending regimes (rather than in absolute sums of money as these large sums are too abstract for most of the public) to show the irrationality of public budget decisions. This was inspired by the convincing example from Uros Krcadinac (See Figure 11.3, p. 384).

Pilot phase (in progress)

Following the “Critical Mapping of the Unaffordability of Housing in Belgrade” workshop, Uros Krcadinac prepared a selection of over twenty relevant visualizations and maps, some city-based and others showing how housing unaffordability is a growing global condition. In the meantime, the Ministry of Space entered the phase of data collection and exploration of the proposed communication strategies. We published several posts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts, testing the potential of the collectively considered communication strategies.

One of the posts (Figure 11.4, p. 384) shows the ratio between, on one hand, the cost of yet another public stadium in Belgrade (which was announced by President Vucic as a priority public investment although it is not a real necessity



Figure 11.3 Excerpt from Uros Krcadinac's presentation showing a project he did with his students. The visualization presents the irrationality of budget spending using the well-known shameful decision of the state to pay one million euro of public money to bail out Serbian bully Miladin Kovacevic (who committed the crime of physically assaulting a fellow student in the US), in comparison to three examples of public infrastructure projects that are highly needed in Serbia: (1) the reconstruction of a trade fair building in Zrenjanin, (2) the construction of a school, and (3) the construction of a cardiovascular hospital.



Figure 11.4 Facebook posts pointing to different causes and manifestations of housing unaffordability. On the left, the post states that the "National Stadium" with the projected cost of 150 million Serbian Lira (unnecessary proposed investment by the president), equals, 4,200 social housing units in the housing support program (necessary, not budgeted for). On the right, the post states that "In Serbia, every fifth person lives in a household that spends more than 40% of its income on housing costs," which illustrates the high share of burdened households with precarious living conditions. See: facebook.com/MinistarstvoProstora/photos/a.274129332683598/3867854846644344/?type=3&theater

for people's livelihoods), and on the other hand, the number of public housing units that could be built in the city for the same value. The latter exceeds the total number of social housing units built since the year 2000 until today.⁷ Even though the post was not published within the context of a large campaign, it attracted more attention than expected. Not only was the number of people supporting the message greater than many of the MoS posts in general, but the lines of discussions that it sparked were encouraging as it demonstrated that many people relate to the situation and that the majority does recognize the responsibility of the state and local authorities. The main structural cause mapped among those comments was without a doubt corruption of the current party in power. Nevertheless, we are fully aware that, even though the posts were boosted and have targeted groups outside the usual echo chamber, we still need to think of a means of communication that reach out to more diverse clusters of the public.

Another set of activities organized after the workshop was focused on exploring mapping tools that could enable us to visualize geographically the distribution of housing unaffordability on the territory of Belgrade. After scraping the data (Figure 11.5, p. 386) from two real-estate websites (nekretnine.rs and Halo oglasi), we used QGIS Open Source, with Open Street Map as a base, to distribute the rental apartments on district municipalities in Belgrade (Figure 11.6, p. 386). This method makes it possible not only to create static maps that support different messages related to housing unaffordability, but also to touch on the connected topic of inaccessibility or spatial segregation that is structurally embedded in the housing situation in Serbia. There are few challenges to the process that we acknowledge:

- The data we have is based on advertisements that are not equally distributed across the territory of Belgrade (more ads are for offers at the city center, compared to few at the outskirts of Belgrade), which may distort the interpretation.
- When choosing the price ranges in order to present which parts of Belgrade are accessible to which income groups/sectors, we will need to come up with a formula that includes the 30-40% housing burden limit and average income, which hides to a great extent the polarized inequality between wages. This, too, could distort the data interpretation.

In the upcoming weeks, we plan to work on these challenges, as well as on other presentation strategies in order to understand which are more potent for the political targets we are up against.

7 According to the Secretariat for Property and Legal Affairs during a meeting held with them, in the period between the year 2000 and 2020 a total of 3,513 social housing units were built.

A1

grad

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	grad	opstina	deo_grada	ulica	cena	kvadratura	struktura			
2	Beograd	Opstina cukarica	zeleznik	Radnih akcija 93a	140		13 0.5 Broj soba			
3	Beograd	Opstina Rakovica	Kanarevo brdo	Borska	120		16 0.5 Broj soba			
4	Beograd	Opstina Savski venac	Sajam	Bulevar Vojvode Misica 27	200		16 0.5 Broj soba			
5	Beograd	Opstina Zemun	Gornji grad	Dobrovoljacka 13	190		18 1.0 Broj soba			
6	Beograd	Opstina Vracar	Crveni krst	Metohijska 25	170		18 0.5 Broj soba			
7	Beograd	Opstina Novi Beograd	Fontana	Otona Zupancica	245		18 1.0 Broj soba			
8	Beograd	Opstina Palilula	Borca	PUT ZA OVCU 81	120		18 1.0 Broj soba			
9	Beograd	Opstina cukarica	zeleznik	Radnih akcija	120		18 0.5 Broj soba			
0	Beograd	Opstina Vracar	Krunska	KRUNSKA	200		19 0.5 Broj soba			
1	Beograd	Opstina Vracar	Bulevar kralja Aleksandra	Bulevar kralja Aleksandra	270		20 0.5 Broj soba			
2	Beograd	Opstina Zemun	Centar	Cetinjska	180		20 0.5 Broj soba			
3	Beograd	Opstina Zvezdara	Lion	Djevdjelijska	125		20 0.5 Broj soba			
4	Beograd	Opstina Savski venac	Centar	Durmitorska	230		20 0.5 Broj soba			
5	Beograd	Opstina Rakovica	Skojevsko naselje	Kosmajskog odreda 6	150		20 0.5 Broj soba			
6	Beograd	Opstina Vozdovac	Kumodraska	Kraljevska ulica	140		20 0.5 Broj soba			
7	Beograd	Opstina Rakovica	Skojevsko naselje	Luke Vojvodica 18g/5	150		20 0.5 Broj soba			
8	Beograd	Opstina Palilula	Karaburma	Mirijevski bulevar	200		20 1.0 Broj soba			
9	Beograd	Opstina Zvezdara	Vukov Spomenik	Ruzveltova	220		20 1.0 Broj soba			
0	Beograd	Opstina Palilula	Cvijiceva	Ruzveltova	220		20 1.0 Broj soba			
1	Beograd	Opstina Palilula	Borca	Save Mrkalja 28	150		20 0.5 Broj soba			
2	Beograd	Opstina Rakovica	Knezevac	Slavka rodica 17	130		20 0.5 Broj soba			
3	Beograd	Opstina Vozdovac	Dusanovac	Vitanovacka	200		20 0.5 Broj soba			
4	Beograd	Opstina Zemun	zeleznicka kolonija	zeleznicka kolonija 28/6	280		20 0.5 Broj soba			
5	Beograd	Opstina Vracar	Kalenic piljaca	A umatovacka	200		21 1.0 Broj soba			
6	Beograd	Opstina Novi Beograd	Bezanjska kosa 2	Ljubinke Bobic 18	150		21 1.0 Broj soba			
7	Beograd	Opstina Stari grad	Obilicev venac	Marsala Birjuzova	250		21 0.5 Broj soba			
8	Beograd	Opstina Rakovica	Kanarevo brdo	Srpskih udarnih brigada	180		21 0.5 Broj soba			
9	Beograd	Opstina Palilula	27. marta	Stanoje glavasa 13	200		21 0.5 Broj soba			
0	Beograd	Opstina Palilula	Centar	Sterijina	260		21 1.0 Broj soba			

16062021_prvih200str_sredjen.sa

Figure 11.5 Screenshot from a table of over 3,000 ads for renting apartments, consisting of the location, unit structure, and price.

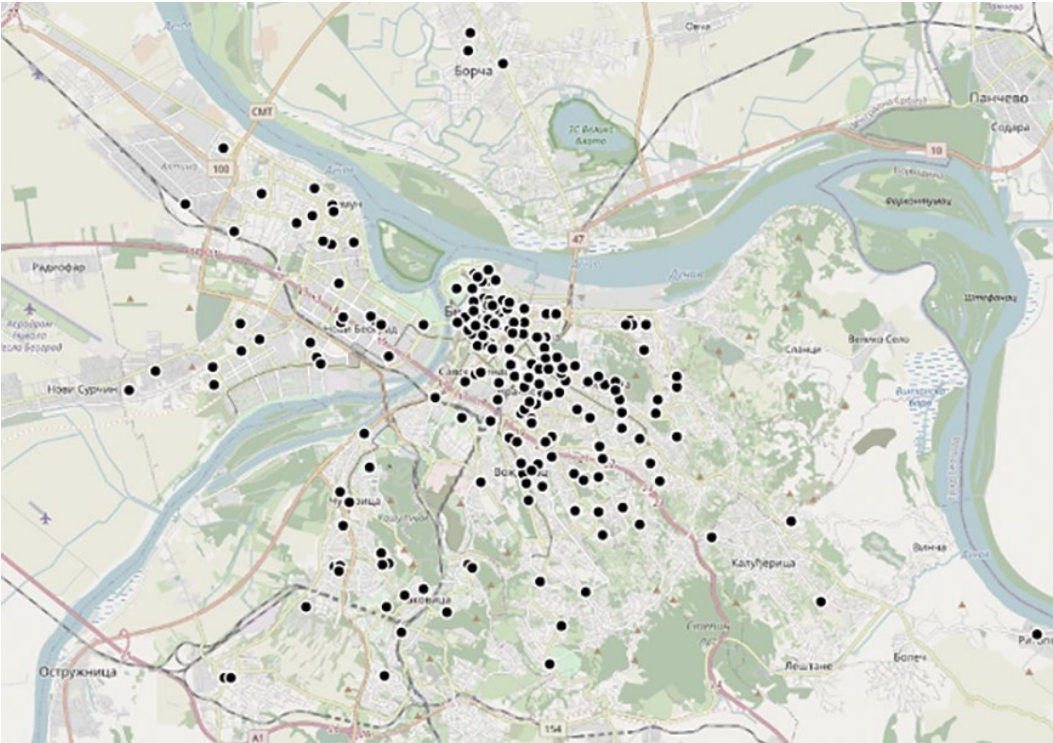


Figure 11.6 Display of the basic map with the data from the ads (Figure 11.5). It is possible to manipulate the map in such a way to present particular set of data: for example, housing units in one district, housing units with rent of EUR 200–400, etc.

Next steps

Our workshop strove to develop a critical mapping strategy to initiate wider mobilization around housing, and to provide activist housing collectives with better data and systematic knowledge to assist them in their everyday struggles. This was contextualized within two relevant events that will take place in the near future:

- **Public inquiry for the 2041 Belgrade Master Plan** (expected by the end of 2021) – maps that present the problem of housing inequalities and their spatial imprint could strengthen the argumentation around the new Master Plan proposal in two ways:
 - › By arguing that planning as a socially-responsible practice has the potential to intervene against the spatial inequalities that market-led urban development creates and perpetuates.
 - › By allowing us to analyze the proposed Master Plan once it is presented to the public in terms of whether it maintains or changes current inequalities.
- **2022 elections for the City of Belgrade** – by providing accessible and relatable representations of housing unaffordability in Belgrade, we hope to motivate the municipalist platform **Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own** to promote housing as a priority issue in their electoral campaign. We would also like to offer our maps and visualizations as campaign material.

The interdisciplinary team from the workshop has explicitly expressed the will to continue our collective critical mapping process on the unaffordability of housing in Belgrade under the coordination by the Ministry of Space.

Section 11 / BLN

COMMONING BERLIN - BUT HOW?

9-10 April 2021 | online

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Alphabetically, bearing in mind that the majority have several affiliations and engagements

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Introduction

Building on our kick-off workshop “**Who Buys Berlin?**” about seven months earlier¹ and the work that followed, the purpose of this two-day hands-on workshop was twofold: first, to discuss, further develop, and experiment with the map prototype ideas we had collaboratively developed; and second, to strengthen existing allies and find more who can advance the map prototype together with us. The workshop participants were activists and professionals from different backgrounds, including actors involved with housing (particularly those working in realms relevant to the municipal right of preemption (Vorkaufsrecht) or right of first refusal, RPE, data experts and programmers, NGO members, and people working in the local administration. On the first day, we mainly focused on available data sets and maps of Berlin on which our prototype could or should be built. On the second day, we focused on questions of usability, presentation, visualization, and structure.

Our kick-off workshop concluded that Berlin’s tenants need faster and better access to information on transactions concerning the properties in which they live. The mishmash of instruments, laws, and authorities that collect information about transactions, structures, and details related to the housing market often leaves tenants without the information necessary to act when the need arises. As a result, tenants are mostly facing done deals. In addition, existing legal instruments are not effective enough to bring about actual change in the current discourses on the local housing market. We agreed that transformative and social housing policies must include a stronger emphasis on both transparency and collaboration. A new centralized housing and rent registry (Wohnungs- und Mietenkataster), as proposed by the left and green parties in their run for the 2021 elections, was one of several stepping stones.² The RPE was seen as a key instrument to collaboratively change the discriminative power structures of the real-estate market in Berlin. As a regulative tool, the RPE can strengthen local authorities in their mandate to serve the *Gemeinwohl*. However, to fulfill its promise and potentials, its application needs to be more rigorous on a city-wide scale and the results need to be made more visible (keyword: communication).

Recently, several events by Berlin’s housing movement brought the discussion about the RPE to the fore. The most relevant to our work were:

-
- 1 The workshop “Who Buys Berlin?” took place on 29 August 2020 at Werkstatt Haus der Statistik. Details can be found in [Section 10 / BLN](#).
 - 2 Following the last elections in September 2021 (five months after this workshop), the coalition contract between Berlin’s governing parties (SPD, Bündnis90/die Grünen, and Die Linke) included *Prüfaufträge*: inspection orders for the proposal for an Apartments and Rent Register (Wohnungs- und Mietenkataster). To our knowledge, nothing concrete has materialized yet.

- July 2020: The FragDenStaat initiative (Ask the State)³ published a map that complements their “Spekulation Abwenden!” campaign⁴ to show the ongoing and closed procedures of information requests on RPE-related waiver agreements by tenants. As the map was not serving the target well, it was later replaced by a database table with filter options.
- September 2020: The tenants’ initiative **23HäuserSagenNein**, the neighborhood initiative **Bizim Kiez**, and the Berliner Mieterverein (Berlin Tenants’ Association) published a petition⁵ calling on the German government to change the legislation (in the next legislative period) to strengthen the RPE instrument. Their demands were: 1) set fair purchase prices for local authorities (not following the market logic), 2) extend the RPE procedural window from 2 to 6 months so that local authorities and tenants have the time necessary to identify *Gemeinwohl*-oriented buyers, and 3) expand the operational spaces and possibilities for the RPE, for example, make it applicable beyond areas with a preservation statute (Milieuschutzgebiete). Sadly, the petition remains at about 45,000 of the necessary 50,000 signatures to bring the matter to the floor of the Bundestag (national parliament) for deliberation.⁶
- November 2020: **Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik** organized a public hearing on “**How to strengthen the RPE**.”⁷ The discussion between Berlin parliament members, housing administrative servants, and tenants’ initiatives pointed out that tenants should be proactively and thoroughly informed about the application of the RPE and that the collaboration between district authorities and the Berlin Senate should be intensified and harmonized. The results of

3 Utilizing the citizens’ constitutional right to information stipulated by the Informationsfreiheitsgesetz (Freedom of Information Act, IFG), FragDenStaat provides a digital platform for affected people to submit requests to respective authorities for access to records.

4 FragDenStaat. 2022. “Abwendungsvereinbarungen veröffentlichen, Mieterschutz durchsetzen [Publish averting agreements, enforce tenant protections]!” *FragDenStaat*. Accessed 23 January 2023. fragdenstaat.de/kampagnen/abwendungsvereinbarungen/

5 23 Häuser sagen nein. 2020. “Für faire Mieten: Das kommunale Vorkaufsrecht jetzt stärken [For fair rents: Strengthen the municipal right of the RPE]!” WeAct. Accessed 23 January 2023. weact.campact.de/petitions/fur-faire-mieten-das-kommunale-vorkaufsrecht-jetzt-starken

6 Last updated: November 2022

7 Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik Berlin. 2020. “Hearing #4: Wie weiter mit dem Vorkaufsrecht [How to strengthen the RPE]?” *Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik Berlin*, October 29. iniforum-berlin.de/2020/10/hearing-4-des-initiativenforums-stadtpolitik-berlin-am-25-november-2020/

the hearing were published in December 2020,⁸ and the Berlin Senate for Housing and Development confirmed that they would be incorporated into their new guidelines for RPE application. Although these guidelines were to be published in March 2021, this has not happened yet.⁹

- December 2020: the Germany-wide Mietshäuser Syndikat (Tenement Housing Syndicate) published a paper of demands for changes to the RPE instrument that included the introduction of a purchase price limit for *Gemeinwohl*-oriented housing cooperatives, a time extension for the administrative procedures, and better access to information for tenants, and opportunities to participate.

Key points of discussions

Cornerstones

Building on the events taking place in the wider scene and on the discussions within the CMMM network, we suggested *information*, *solidarity*, and *action* as three cornerstones for the transformation we envision and seek in the briefing that enclosed in the invitation to this workshop. The rationale and resulting guiding questions were as follows:

Information

Rationale: We see a tangible increase in demands by tenants' initiatives for transparency and participation in the management of the housing sector and spatial distribution. Yet, few tenants know about the existing support structures and the legal mechanisms that are constitutionally at their disposal to help hinder the selling of their buildings to profit-oriented parties.

Guiding question: How can we make such information "common knowledge" that is easily accessible and readable by differently-abled members of our society?

8 Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik Berlin. 2020. "Erste Ergebnisse aus dem Hearing zum Vorkaufsrecht: Ein Erfolg der Initiativen [First results from the hearing on the RPE: A success for the initiatives]." *Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik Berlin*, December 21. iniforum-berlin.de/2020/12/erste-ergebnisse-aus-dem-hearing-zum-vorkaufsrecht/

9 Last updated: November 2022

Action

Rationale: We see a growing desire and need for tenants and *Gemeinwohl*-oriented cooperatives to protect properties through long-term and socially inclusive perspectives: for example, through (self)organized purchase or the application of the RPE in collaboration with local authorities. However, their maneuvering space is very limited due to the absence of protections in terms of being informed within adequate timeframes (to make a counter-motion is possible) and due to bureaucratic hurdles (selectiveness?) in terms of access to needed capital.

Guiding question: How can we resolve the systemic problems of “finding out too late” and “all set, but unable to secure the required financing”?

Solidarity

Rationale: We see the coordination of actions by tenants’ initiatives, engaged (self)organized communities, and *Gemeinwohl*-oriented cooperatives as the key to shifting the power dynamics in the housing and real-estate sectors to benefit (protecting) tenants over the long term. Even though Berlin has the luxury of abundant activists, it still suffers from a lack of infrastructures to coalesce efforts and increase momentum.

Guiding question: How can we move from “comradery” (we are all in the same boat) to being a decentralized yet well-coordinated “team” (we are navigating the boat together), meaning from empathy and sympathy to practiced solidarity?

Solidarity

Rationale: We see only a few local authorities and politicians seeking collaboration with tenants and *Gemeinwohl*-oriented cooperatives. There is a need to create methods to attract and/or pressure politicians to take a moral stance on re-establishing *housing as a right* rather than the status-quo of a speculative commodity.

Guiding question: How can we shift the attitudes of politicians and local authorities from lip-service solidarity to actual practice-driven solidarity for the cause of housing as a right?

Map prototype concept

As the workshop participants endorsed the proposal of the three cornerstones, we worked on defining the features of the “Commoning Berlin” map prototype as a collective online tool that fulfills the following purposes:

- Echo and build on ongoing debates and demands of initiatives to increase pressure for specific targeted political actions related to housing property sales and the municipal RPE (e.g., 23HäuserSagenNein, Initiativenforum, Mietshäuser Syndikat)
- Build on or combine existing approaches, projects, and maps (instead of reinventing the wheel), such as “Leerstandsmelder,” “Karte der Verdrängung,” or “Wem gehört die Stadt?” with new layers (see [Section 6 / BLN](#))
- Provide tenants with helpful easy-to-read information and connections to support networks in case they want to invoke the RPE with local authorities or self-organize to purchase the property in which they reside

As shown in Figure 11.7, p. 395, we envision the map with two complementary components:

1. The **INFORMATIVE** component will spatially localize and exhibit information on cases where the application of the RPE was pursued (Where did it succeed and how? Which cases are still open? Where did it fail and why?), and it will give visitors of the website the option to add entries to the database. The format and visualization style of the resulting map should facilitate the readability and comprehension of the data displayed. By organizing information in different layers that can be switched on and off over an underlying base map, we believe visitors will be able to explore correlations between RPE application and other characteristics of a particular district. Ultimately, the goal of the map is to encourage people to find out what is going on in their *Kiez* (neighborhood) and to provide a basic toolkit for self-mobilization.
2. The **INTERACTIVE** component will prompt the viewer to engage with the topic so as to gain a better understanding of the broader housing context in Berlin. The idea is to walk visitors through fundamental facts, which are displayed upon answering questions, clicking on points, or other possible web-based interactive co-learning and awareness-raising activities.

Which existing maps and datasets should be used as a basis?

Berlin does not lack creative initiators or initiatives struggling to provide information and inspire motions toward more justice in the housing sector. Over the past decade, several collectives and platforms have conducted valuable work, on which we aim to expand. Since we want to avoid an information overload on the site and to account for our own capacities and those of our partners, we used the workshop to reflect on past experiences, including conceptual and technical hurdles. We discussed aspects that could serve as inspiration or starting points to address our central questions and the options for designing and building the interface between the new RPE map we are developing and existing projects and registries. The projects that serve as the main reference points are summarized in Figure 11.8, p. 398.

The discussions on trials and errors, shortcomings, and potential ways forward were rich, and participants were open to combining the individual activities. For example, one of the shared ideas was attempting to capture the complex property structures and relevant conditionalities through a multilayered map that involves some initiatives (e.g., 200Häuser, Leerstandsmelder) and individuals. In response, we are exploring ways to design the interface of our prototype so that the map can be used from other sites and such that it could be incorporated into a broader context.

The discussions also revisited debates on the usefulness, key message, name, and target group(s) of our map. We questioned whether a geographic base-map would be the most appropriate, how to ensure readability for all, and how to avoid data overload without detracting from or watering down fundamental aspects. Currently, this is our stance on these issues:

Main target groups: Tenants and housing initiatives in Berlin and other German cities as they are the base for driving any change to RPE policies in municipal and parliamentary hallways.

Aim: Given the absence of a platform that provides the necessary A–Z on RPE, our online map aims to provide the necessary basic legal information, tools, and links to hotlines for tenants to protect themselves against vulture capital.

Existing structures: Currently, only a small group of people has access to data on RPE cases, and we do not want to narrow the map to only visualizing these cases. Rather, we also want to show existing support structures

for tenants, especially outside of the well-represented and connected Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district.

Gemeinwohl-oriented purchase: Along the same lines as the previous point, we want the map to provide visitors with information about Gemeinwohl-oriented purchase possibilities, without necessarily locating them on a map.

Scale: The “Commoning Berlin” prototype will be tested on a small scale with the aim of upscaling and linking it to similar endeavors.

Base map: We found the use of a geographic base map to be a well-suited choice for the sake of easy navigation.

Data combination: A major open question remains regarding the visualization and design of the online map in terms of how to include and connect quantitative data (easy to handle) with qualitative data such as storytelling (to outline potential scenarios using concrete tips for action).

Capturing multidimensionality: The questions regarding legibility and how to capture the multidimensionality of the housing challenge are still under deliberation.

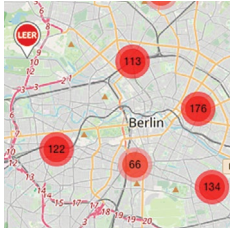
Catch phrase: Still undecided.

Rating feature: We considered whether the map should include a rating feature (e.g., “good example” label) to push districts to make use of the available RPE tool and decided to revisit this thought later on down the line.

Polls and surveys: Although we agreed that conducting polls and surveys on the website would be helpful in terms of both data sourcing and advocacy, the option of visitors entering direct data complicates the programming and requires a verification and authorization mechanism, which would probably entail considerable labor. Therefore, there is a need to mobilize more tech-savvy people in the housing movement and to find ways to tackle the classic challenge of ensuring technical and editorial maintenance over the long run.

Other challenges: These include attracting and maintaining the interest of individuals and active groups within the housing scene to contribute to the database of documented cases and to design a framework for the website that frees it from the back-breaking burdens of centralized data updates.

Figure 11.8 A summary of the key issues that were highlighted during the review of existing projects and registries.

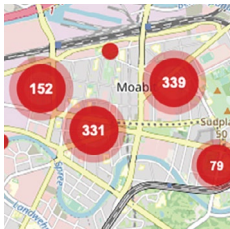


Leerstandsmelder

The **Leerstandsmelder map** aims to admonish vacancy and is used for political campaigning to reduce speculation and increase accessibility.

Crowdsourced data entries and inputs require authorization before they are displayed on the publicly accessible website.

The verification and tracking of false or expired entries is very time-consuming.



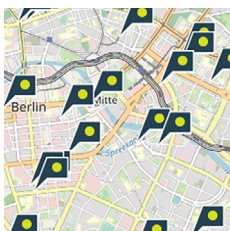
Moabit Gentrifizierung

The **Moabit Gentrification map** is part of MoabitOnline, a platform for community involvement and activist support, including information about properties in Berlin's Moabit district. The information originates from:

- Direct entries on the website
- Conversations with neighbors
- Inquiries to the district parliament (Bezirksverordnetenversammlung or BVV), including those related to RPE cases by the urban development committee
- Monthly published construction applications and issued permits

On this website, tenants can obtain information on how they can defend themselves. However, so far, most affected tenants became active too late. Some identified shortcomings for the platform are:

- It is not well-known
- It is not very user-friendly
- Its content management is very time-consuming



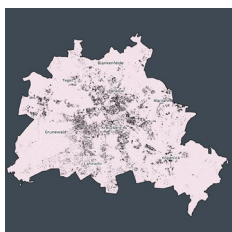
Wem gehört Berlin?

The **Wem gehört Berlin?** website shows Berlin's ownership structure based on crowdsourced data, as well as research that includes inquiries in the Company and Transparency Register, for information behind the front façade of individual company names.

Due to data protection regulations and for pragmatic reasons, it was decided against showing the information on an actual map and one can only search by address. If data is available for a certain address, the site displays the ownership status classified by type and with information on the overall practices of the owning party in terms of return on investment, speculation, rent, finances, and ethics. The names of private persons and small landlords are withheld.

Wohnungs- und Mietenkatasters

The proposed Housing and Rent Registry for Berlin is meant to add rental data, as well as quantitative and qualitative information about buildings and apartments, to the real-estate registry. Feasibility studies (unpublished to date) have revealed likely complications and challenges and recommended a deviation toward creating a publicly accessible real-estate register at the national level and not just for the city-state of Berlin. The exact course of action and next steps are still to be seen.



Mietenwatch

The **Mietenwatch** research and data collection project analyzes the conditions of the rental market in Berlin. It is funded by the "Prototype Fund" of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). It uses data-scraping of rental advertisements from several major online real-estate portals, harnessing the data once a day over a certain period and providing helpful insights through these "snapshots."



FragDenStaat (Ask the State) – Transparency of waiver agreements

The **FragDenStaat** platform enables citizens to make use of their constitutional right to information. The access to state documents and files is regulated in the Freedom of Information Act (Informationsfreiheitsgesetz or IFG).

FragDenStaat has been using parliamentary inquiries in the House of Representatives as a data source to gain access to the content of waiver agreements that are signed between the district administrations (Bezirksämter) and property buyers, among other things. These agreements allegedly include clauses to hinder the displacement of tenants and the bypassing of an invoked RPE. Yet, the details of these agreements and how residents are protected remain mostly a secret.

The website explains what is at stake and how citizens can use their constitutional right to information. It features pre-prepared inquiries that one can send off with a click.

JustFix – Who Owns What?

The **Who owns what in nyc?** project by **JustFix** served as a model for the **"Wem gehört die Stadt?"** (Who Owns the City?) project. Their methods and tools regarding transparency in the housing market are inspiring, and we should strive for a similar kind of accessibility to data in Berlin.

Structure of the BLN-RPE map prototype

We envision three layers of information in the BLN-RPE prototype:

- Layer 1: Past/Ongoing RPE cases and their outcomes
- Layer 2: Demands of tenants
- Layer 3: Support initiatives and institutions

LAYER 1: PAST/ONGOING RPE CASES AND THEIR OUTCOMES

The first layer (Figure 11.9, p. 401) will localize the cases in which RPE was invoked and whether the motion was successful or failed. The goal is to raise awareness about this under- and unevenly employed (district-wise) legislative instrument and ultimately to push for more (pro)active collaboration between tenants, cooperatives, and local authorities.

What types of data?

The three possible categories are:

1. **Preemptive buying** – This category shows cases in which the RPE was invoked, and it could include information on who the new owner is (under certain conditions, this data could be obtained from the district administrations).
2. **Waiver agreement** – This category shows cases in which a waiver agreement was signed between the municipality and the buyer, whether the agreement was made public, and, if not, a direct link to the “Abwendungsvereinbarungen veröffentlichen” campaign¹⁰ and website of **FragDenStaat**.¹¹
3. **Other** – This category shows cases in which the municipality could not invoke its RPE and no waiver agreement was signed.

Drawing on real experiences and collected stories, we would like to show additional qualitative information about the socio-political dimensions that are relevant for the application of the RPE instrument (e.g., collaborating, organizing, commoning, municipalizing, protesting).

¹⁰ FragDenStaat. 2022. “Abwendungsvereinbarungen veröffentlichen, Mieterschutz durchsetzen [Publish averting agreements, enforce tenant protections]!” *FragDenStaat*. Accessed 23 January 2023. fragdenstaat.de/kampagnen/abwendungsvereinbarungen/

¹¹ fragdenstaat.de

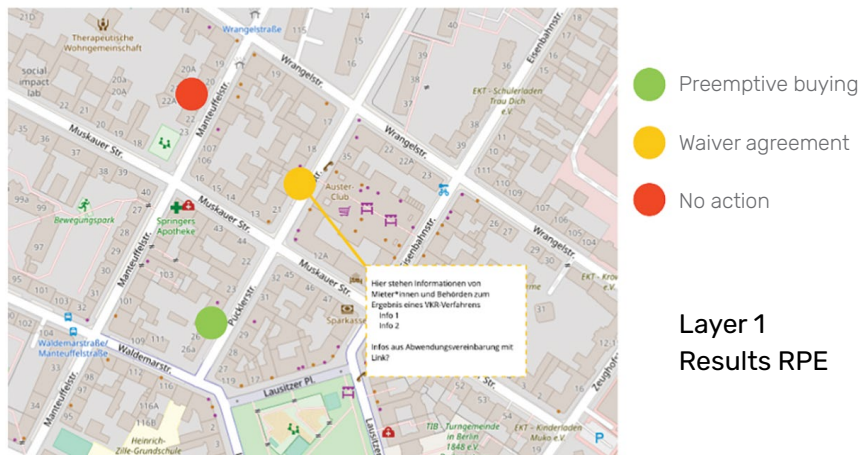


Figure 11.9 Layer 1 in the BLN-RPE map, localizing existing RPE cases and their outcome.

Data sources?

We identified four possible sources for the data we need:

1. **District office records:** Customarily, each district office (Bezirksamt) keeps records of cases in which the RPE was examined and/or applied. However, such data records are not harmonized or synced across districts, which implies that this data would have to be accessed on an individual basis for each district in Berlin. In addition, this data is not publicly accessible, hence gaining access would require a special agreement or partnership with district authorities. As it is probable that such agreements would result in a one-time data-sharing, this source should be pursued for the upscaling phase of our BLN-RPE map (following the prototype).
2. **Written inquiry** (schriftliche Anfrage): An instrument that can be used by parliamentarians is their right request a written inquiry¹² into certain procedures. Initially, our prototype map could be based on the dataset of RPE procedures that was openly published in 2019 as a result of such an inquiry.
3. **Affected tenants:** To verify and expand our understanding of the nuances and hurdles in the execution of the RPE procedure, we could approach affected tenants to acquire data entries comparable to the ones from the two sources above. Tenants are also the source for obtaining qualitative

¹² Every member of Parliament (House of Representatives) has the right to request information from the Berlin Senate about certain procedures in the form of a written inquiry. Such inquiries cover a range of issues and are published to inform and allow debates.

data on individual experiences and the stories behind the official reports and aggregated statistics. However, interview-based data collection is a mammoth task, which requires a great deal of capacities and resources.

4. **Crowdsourcing:** For example, by using an online questionnaire that collects quantitative and qualitative (stories, experiences) data entries from affected tenants and initiatives. While crowdsourcing could produce data that is not on any other radar yet, its reach remains bound to networks of interest. Furthermore, reviewing and verifying the collected materials requires a great deal of effort (as with interviews).

LAYER 2: DEMANDS OF TENANTS

The second layer (Figure 11.10, p. 403) will visualize demands of tenants for more transparent information, for instance, or for the reform of procedural frameworks that would enable them to practice their constitutional bidding right (in the case of a property transaction that directly affects them). It builds on the methods and work of [Wem Gehört die Stadt?](http://wemgehoertdiestadt.de/berlin)¹³ and [FragDenStaat](http://fragdenstaat.de/),¹⁴ and aims to contribute to their momentum. Ideally, visitors would also have to possibility to add their demands.

The goal is to produce a strong visual statement as evidence to support political claims for more transparency in the real-estate market. At the same time, it could encourage tenants in their self-organization and empowerment endeavors and better link valuable resources and *Gemeinwohl*-oriented support structures, in addition to promoting direct contact between landlords and cooperatives to encourage the capturing of wealth locally and the socializing of that wealth.

What types of data?

Visitors can sign on to pre-formulated demands such as:

- The right to being notified/informed: “I as a tenant demand to be informed about anything related to the sale/purchase of the building in which I reside.”

¹³ wemgehoertdiestadt.de/berlin

¹⁴ fragdenstaat.de/



Figure 11.10 Layer 2 in the BLN-RP map, visualizing the demands of tenants.

- The reform of timeframes: "I as a tenant demand a six-month window to be able to prepare and place a (counter) bid for the purchase of the building in which I reside."
- Seeking support/collaboration: "I would like to get in touch with organizations and cooperatives to promote a self-organized or *Gemeinwohl*-oriented acquisition of the building in which I live."

Data sources?

The main data source for this layer is a questionnaire that prompts the visitors of the BLN-RPE website to answer a few Yes/No questions that correspond to the pre-formulated demands and to provide basic information about their location and personal circumstances. Naturally, the disclosure of information will comply with privacy regulations.

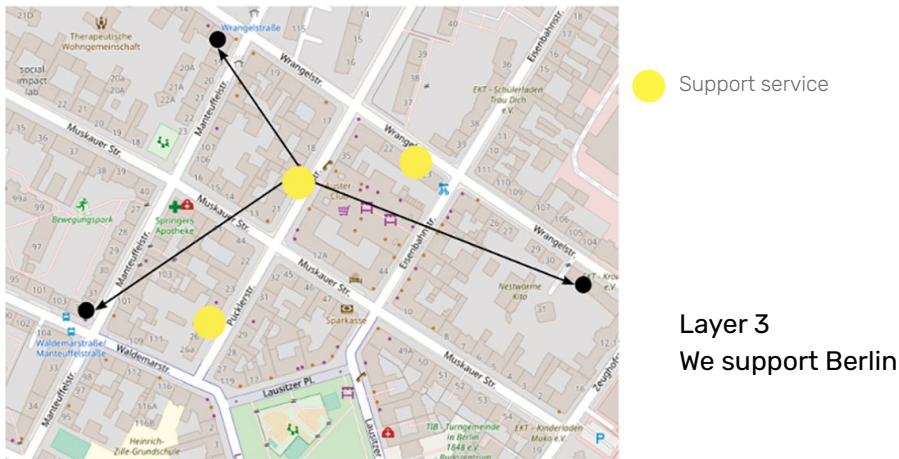


Figure 11.11 Layer 3 in the BLN-RP map, showing initiatives and institutions that can offer support.

LAYER 3: SUPPORT INITIATIVES AND INSTITUTIONS

This third layer (Figure 11.11, above) will map existing initiatives and institutions that offer support to those involved with creating healthier cities, be it tenants, landlords, local authorities, or others.

What types of data?

The data in this layer includes the location, contact information, and necessary links for each of the featured initiatives, organizations and institutions.

Data sources?

We identified two possible data sources:

- Research by the team creating the BLN-RPE map
- Online submissions from the support initiatives/institutions, for example, through a form that can be filled out on the website.

Visual features of the prototype

We discussed several options for the visual layout of the web interface:

- Option A: The webpage layout combines different fields (e.g., Who owns what in nyc?)
- Option B: A geographic map serves as the basis on which entries (elements and text) are displayed in a sidebar or as a tooltip (e.g., Google Maps)
- Option C: A geographic map is embedded in a webpage that displays information by scrolling (e.g., Mietenwatch)
- Option D: A combination of the above approaches.

We discussed further ideas such as:

- The visitor can select her/his/their "role" when entering the site, and this choice determines the way the website offers information. For example, if the visitor defines her/him/themselves as an "affected tenant," she/he/they would be provided with support options first. Another role could be "interested person." Technically, this could be solved by a kind of "sales assistant." The roles could be presented visually (e.g., icons/avatar), and it should be possible to switch roles.
- The RPE procedure could be made visible in a "parkour" with obstacles and branches. The surface could be in a tree format that provides an overview of the level on which the visitor is moving in comparison to others. It should be possible to skip to the next question on such an interface.

Next steps

With Berlin's active housing justice scene and socio-political dynamics, we believe that the proposed BLN-RPE map could contribute to the wider efforts toward commoning Berlin and strengthening affected tenants through directed support and information. This workshop focused on how the prototype could most effectively support the demands of tenants for both transparency of information and collaboration with local authorities and Gemeinwohl-oriented housing cooperatives. It helped us gain more clarity in terms of our focus and best practices. Regarding the three cornerstones we suggested at the onset of the workshop, we agreed that:

- Visualizing INFORMATION and the quest for information in the formats suggested in the earlier subsection could help active initiatives in their efforts to flesh out what is "going wrong" (e.g., lack of information, no access to data, arbitrary use of the RPE) and in admonishing the current situation, while at the same time serving as a helpful tool for citizens' self-empowerment, mobilization, and ACTION.
- Visualizing INFORMATION on experiences of invoking the RPE and the methods and channels employed in each case could help newly affected tenants in planning their moves in terms of reaching out for SOLIDARITY and support from experienced professional structures, as well as other tenants facing similar challenges. Such networking of solidarity could increase the momentum and pressure toward transformative ACTIONS at the political level.

Our next step as the CMMM Berlin team is to further develop the prototype, whereby we will focus on Layer 1 with past and ongoing RPE cases and their consequences for the respective houses/tenants (in both qualitative and quantitative formats), and on Layer 3, which will link the website's visitors to existing sources of information and support structures. Later, we will work on obtaining more data on the application of RPE by utilizing the Freedom of Information Act via FragDenStaat.

Based on the insights gained thus far, we will aim to develop the individual components and the overall programming framework of the BLN-RPE map so that it can be operated and updated without expert technical knowledge in the future. One crucial issue that remains to be determined and will probably accompany us until the end is what information may and may not be made public.

Section 11 / BCN

WHO EVICTS BARCELONA?

11, 12 and 26 March 2021 | online

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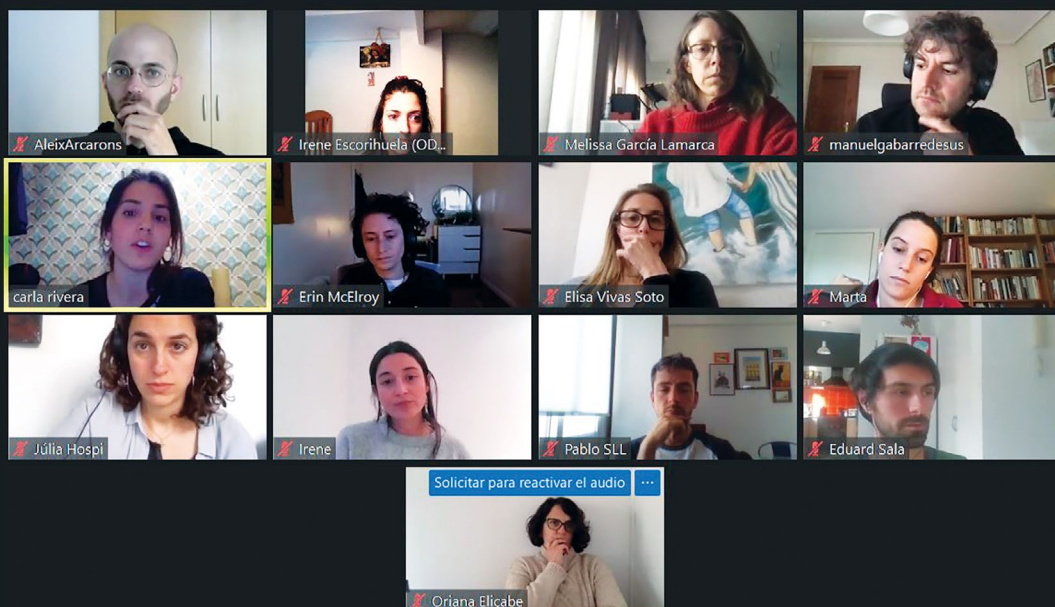
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Pablo Castellano, Sindicat de Llogateres (SLL)



Session 2: Conceptualizing the prototype

The second session took place on 12 March 2021 and gathered viewpoints, experiences, and proposals on how to create our prototype. It was structured around four central working topics: objectives and politization, data collection and transparency, visualization, and participation. Each working track started with a brief observation by Erin on her experience from the [Anti-Eviction Mapping Project](#)¹ (AEMP). The key points we noted include:

Objectives and politization: AEMP was initiated by a small team who wanted to map evictions in the San Francisco Bay Area. Since then, the project has expanded to San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles. In addition to mapping evictions, AEMP also identifies the main evictors in the city (both the legal entities and some of the natural persons behind them and their corporate networks) and includes qualitative stories about the evictees. The project has also visualized the evictions that took place due to the Ellis Act.²

Data collection and transparency: The AEMP Evictorbook,³ which contains the raw data of the mapping tool, is currently only accessible to other housing initiatives via a login username and password. As a result, the data are available in a controlled way so that they cannot be appropriated by landlords and used against tenants.

Visualization: When clicking on some of the eviction sites on the AEMP oral history maps, you can view the narratives of displacement and resistance of evictees.⁴ The dots on the map are color-coded, representing the eviction classification (as explained in the legend). In addition, the maps allow the viewer to select the evictions for a specific timeframe.

1 antievictionmap.com

2 Anti Eviction Mapping Project. 2020. "Ellis Act Evictions." Anti Eviction Mapping Project. Accessed May 5, 2023. antievictionmappingproject.net/ellis.html

3 Anti Eviction Mapping Project. 2020. "Evictorbook." Website. Accessed May 5, 2023. oakland.evictorbook.com

4 Anti Eviction Mapping Project. 2020. "Narratives of Displacement and Resistance - Oral History Maps for SF Bay Area, LA, and NYC." Anti Eviction Mapping Project. Accessed May 5, 2023. antievictionmap.com/narratives-of-displacement-oral-history-map/

Participation: To draw attention and increase participation, AEMP has produced documentaries⁵ on evictees' stories, promoted artistic murals narrating the fights of evictees, and organized theatrical performances about eviction processes (impersonating landlords, etc.).

The main outcomes of our discussions can be summarized as follows:

OBJECTIVES AND POLITIZATION

The main objectives of our CM project are to help create collective strategies against evictions by mapping past and ongoing eviction processes in Barcelona (where do evictions occur?) and to share knowledge about the ownership structure of the respective properties (who are the main evictors?) and about the affected households (who are the evictees?). To achieve this, the mapping process should be collaborative, thus making sure the map stays dynamic, up to date, and in use.

Our main target groups are the local housing collectives (to help them in their daily struggles), researchers (to enable further investigation), and the general public (to raise awareness).

In the longer term, the map could include invisible evictions (these are displacements that result from the impossibility of assuming the increase in rent imposed at the end of a contract) and show the broader complexity (beyond evictions) of the fight for the right to adequate housing.

DATA COLLECTION AND TRANSPARENCY

- There is a lack of official data on evictions. The only available data have been collected by the housing initiatives. Since there is a risk that these data are not representative, we should be cautious about drawing any general conclusions.
- One of the parallel objectives of the project is to denounce the information gap on evictions and to emphasize the public responsibility to close that gap. The public administration must be pressured to standardize data on evictions and to make data transparent and accessible.

5 Anti Eviction Mapping Project. 2020. "Tenants Rise Up!" Anti Eviction Mapping Project. Accessed May 5, 2023. antievictionmap.com/tenants-rise-up

- While there is no problem in publishing the names of legal entities, legal action could be taken against the publication of names of (large) owners who are natural persons because of data protection laws.
- Different types of information (location, owner/evictor, date of eviction order, eviction process result, and socio-demographic data) can be shown in different layers of the map.

VISUALIZATION

- We discussed the positive and negative aspects of several visualization tools, some of which are paid services (CartoDB, Mapbox, ArcGIS), while others are open-source and free to use software (Leaflet, OpenLayers, QGIS, Instamaps). In addition, some tools offer more possibilities but are more complex and require previous know-how, while others are more user-friendly. For instance:
 - › Instamaps is an open-access tool that is easy to use but has limited options
 - › QGIS is an open-access tool with more options and good data visualization for mobile devices, but it is more complicated to set up
 - › ArcGIS requires previous knowledge to be set up
 - › StoryMaps is integrated into ArcGIS and shows maps and histories in a very interactive way, but it is not free of charge
 - › Other tools to investigate are Flourish Data, Infogram, Tableau, and Piktochart
- A negative aspect of some of these tools (e.g., Flourish Data) is that the raw data can be downloaded. Hence, there is no data or privacy control and all information can be appropriated and used for other purposes.
- Displaying qualitative data, and not only quantitative data, would help humanize the phenomenon of evictions.
- The choice of the visualization method/tool depends on whether there is someone on the team who knows how to use it. It is therefore important to bring someone with programming skills on board to develop the web platform.

- We considered the idea of using some pictograms from [Iconoclasistas](#)⁶ to represent the eviction process result (executed, stopped, or suspended), as well as cards to summarize the socio-demographic information. The cards are inspired by the work of the [Domestic Data Streamers](#)⁷ studio.

PARTICIPATION

- The housing collectives would be the ones inputting data into the database.
- To control the data and keep data from being appropriated for unwanted causes, the database needs to be protected with a password.
- To keep the map updated and dynamic, some form of commitment from the housing collectives needs to be established (e.g., designate someone to update and maintain the database once per month).
- The templates that the collectives use for data collection on evictions usually do not include a slot for entering information on the property owner—the same is true for the DesonamentsBCN Telegram group, a newsgroup where Barcelona’s eviction notices are published. This could be changed in the future.
- Inspiration can be drawn from various examples of collaborative data visualization such as [Datos Contra El Ruido](#)⁸ or [Edificis Ferits](#).⁹
- One possibility to engage the audience is through probabilistic data models. For instance, what is the probability of suffering from housing problems (struggling to pay your housing bills at the end of the month) in a certain district or neighborhood, and how does this increase/decrease vary according to your socio-demographic characteristics?

In-Between: detailing and testing the prototype’s options

In the two weeks between Session 2 and Session 3 our team worked out the details of the prototype based on the outcomes of Session 2. We tested the Instamaps and QGIS programs for our pilot visualizations. We also edited the “life story” cards and collected some pictograms for the different results of the evictions.

⁶ [iconoclasistas.net](#)

⁷ [domesticstreamers.com](#)

⁸ [datoscontraelruido.org](#)

⁹ [edificisferits.cat](#)

Session 3: Feedback on the proposed prototype

The third session on 26 March 2023 was planned to obtain feedback on two pilot visualizations that we generated with Instamaps and QGIS, as well as on the other materials we produced. Our goal was to come out with a clearer idea of what program to use and of the most suitable form of illustrating details of evictions.

INSTAMAPS

Instamaps¹⁰ is a free online platform developed by the Cartographic and Geological Institute of Catalonia. After creating a profile, the map can be linked to a drive in which the georeferenced evictions are entered with the different categories of information we agreed on in Session 2. When a new eviction is entered into the database, the map automatically updates and shows the new location. Images can be entered for each eviction point to include the “life story” cards of the tenants/evictees. In addition, for each point, a detailed file can be consulted with all the database entries on location (geo-coordinates of the address), owner/evictor (in the case of a big landlord or a corporation, such as a vulture fund or bank), date of eviction order, eviction process result (stopped at the door, stopped in the previous days by negotiation, or executed), socio-demographic data, storytelling (narrative, through a video or audio), and a written description and the social movement organizing the “Stop the Eviction” campaign.

We encountered several drawbacks during the pilot phase. The main one is the fact that the program does not allow for pictograms or personalized icons to represent different categories (e.g., for the different results of the evictions). It only allows the color to be changed (see legend of Figure 11.13, p. 416). In short, the editing options are limited to the pre-set parameters of the Instamaps platform, which makes it a useful tool for quick visual renderings, but another program might be a better option in case more editing freedom is desired.

In response to our first pilot visualization, the following three main concerns and questions were raised by the participants:

1. Unfortunately it is impossible to incorporate pictograms
2. Is there a way to make the neighborhood files (that is, the background layers in addition to the districts) appear directly on the map?
3. Are the “life story” cards visible enough?

¹⁰ instamaps.cat/

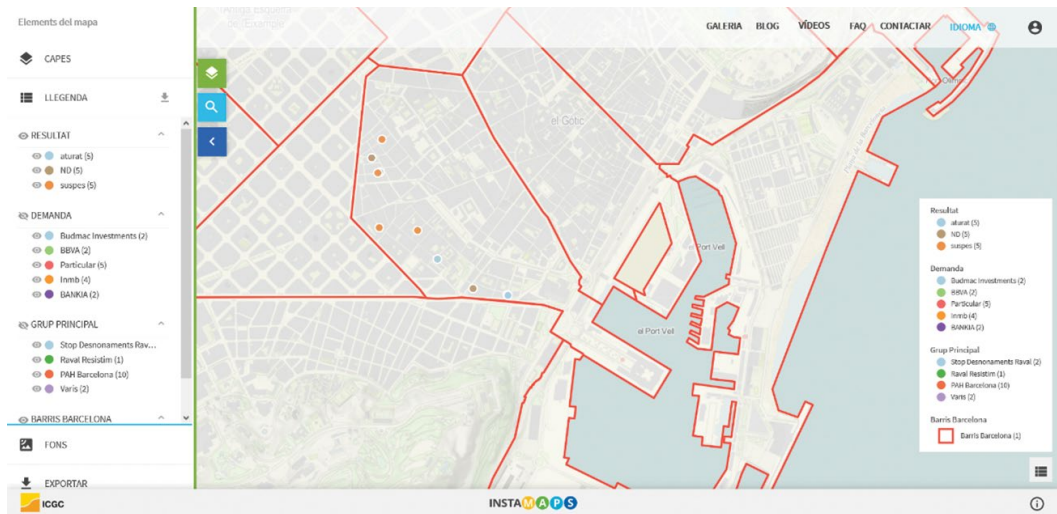


Figure 11.13 A screenshot of the Instamap we created to test possibilities for illustrating evictions.

QGIS

The open-source program QGIS offers more options (e.g., pictograms can be used), but is more complicated to set up and requires previous programming skills. We found the visualizations to be not as attractive or fast as in Instamaps (e.g., inserting images requires a lot of steps and a bit of programming, and even then, it is still difficult to adjust), although this downside could be overcome with greater dedication and skills (see Figure 11.14, p. 417).

The open-source QGIS Cloud extension can be used to share the map online. Another offline option that allows for collaborative mapping by the different housing collectives is to save and share the different layers of the QGIS Desktop generated files in a compatible format (e.g., “shape”) so they can be edited by other users who then also own the files.

In response to our second pilot visualization, the workshop participants found that QGIS has several positive features such as the possibility to host the map on any website while allowing for a better integration of the “life story” cards, which would make Barcelona’s property structure of evicted homes easier to understand. They also pointed out that it is possible to update the data through a shared CSV file using File Transfer Protocol (which was a doubt we had while testing our pilot) and certified that it is easy to use with some basic knowledge.



Figure 11.14 A screenshot of the QGIS map we created to test possibilities for illustrating evictions.

An interesting example using QGIS is the hypothetical map of spatial distribution called “The future of commerce in Barcelona.”¹¹

There are of course other alternatives to Instamaps and QGIS, such as Mindmaps and Story Maps (from ArcGis). Mindmaps is easy to use and it is possible to collaborate via a connected drive. Yet, it is unclear if the program offers the option of adding personalized pictograms or the “life story” cards on the map.

In conclusion, both Instamaps and QGIS were found to be useful tools for our CM project. Although Instamaps allows for a quick preview, it is easy to update and share but rather limited in terms of visualization options. Therefore, QGIS (Figure 5) was considered the better choice in the long term as it allows for greater freedom with regard to data visualization and sharing, despite requiring some basic programming knowledge. However, we could solve this problem by bringing someone with programming skills on board to develop the web platform.

¹¹ Arcarons Camps, Aleix and Rodríguez Vara, Irene. 2019. “The future of commerce in Barcelona.” Aleixarcarons. Accessed May 5, 2023. aleixarcarons.com/pr/commerce/

PROPERTY NETWORK

In addition to discussing the pros and cons of different programs, Manuel Gabarre presented his research on the property ownership network in Barcelona and showed how corporations operate under different names despite being the same company, while also pointing out existing links between different vulture funds. This raised the following questions for our map on evictions:

How can we disseminate and visualize this information to facilitate a better understanding of this network?

The Onodo program is an interesting option for visualizing the property ownership network as it would make it easy to see all the existing relationships between companies, banks, vulture funds, etc.

How can we link the mapping of evictions with this property ownership network and thus draw attention to “who evicts”?

We did not find an answer to this question yet but will take this up in the future.

How do we deal with the data protection law in the case of evictions where the owner is a natural person?

In the case of large real-estate companies, investment funds, or banks, there is problem with publishing their names. In the case of natural persons, there is a risk of being sued. However, it is important for the housing collectives to know how many properties some individuals accumulate and which properties/evictions are connected to each other. Therefore, we agreed on using pseudonyms or aliases for this category of owners.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

- An exact geo-referencing of the evictions to match the cadastral parcels is important to be able to link them with the cadastral reference, which contains information on the average rental price (of the apartments on that parcel), for instance. An eviction that is not properly geo-referenced, even if only slightly, may appear on another parcel and blur reality.
- The “life story” cards need to be linked with the exact eviction location, instead of linking them to a neighborhood. The cards can pop up when hovering over the eviction points on the map.

Next steps

We decided that in the following months we will focus on the design and first implementation of the prototype, and we intend to create a webpage (probably in WordPress) that will serve as a platform to host different maps and information in the future. We will start designing an initial map based on the evictions databases from the PAH and Col•lectiva't. In the next project phase, when we have more resources and (wo)manpower, we will create an online form so that other social movements can introduce new evictions on the map.

Section 12

INTERNATIONAL GATHERING

22-24 May 2022 | Belgrade

In the project's initial plan, the international gathering was foreseen as a medium sized workshop (30-35 persons) that would bring together our team with peers and partners to collect feedback on our work. However, having spent the lifespan of the project under COVID-19 distancing regulations and with view of the fact that some of our team members had still not met in person; when it became possible to convene, we decided to scale back and organize an inwardly-focused gathering for the team and the advisory committee. The two-day gathering combined guided-walks to learn about the spatial and housing realities of Belgrade with working sessions at the unique **Magacin Cultural Center**, as well as a public podium discussion. The days were infiltrated with delicious meals at varying locations and we were spoiled with the hospitality of the Ministry of Space team.

NOTE: Pictures in this section are taken by K LAB. Exceptions are credited.



Day 0

Upon arrival, we went on a walk and listened to anecdotes of the socio-spatial transformation of several corners in Belgrade's Stari Grad district, guided by Vladimir Dulović.

Day 1

We kick-started our workshop with visiting the Belgrade Water Front development...



... and learning about this example of classical play of speculation crimes, on public land, and in collaboration with the men in power.



That evening, the Ministry of Space organized a public podium discussion about struggles for housing justice in Belgrade, Berlin, Barcelona and The Netherlands.





Day 2

This day was spent at Magacin, discussing the path of our project hitherto and the next steps until the finish line.



The structures and social contracts operating the places we congregated at were inspiring examples of co-creation of de-comm-ercialized space – a boost of hope!



As we finished the last session, we remembered to take a group picture, sadly missing a few of us who were already on their heels.

Belgrade...

... is full of visual messages. This says "gradonačelnica," Serbo-Croatian for "mayor" but feminized, and depicting other professions to flag the gender division of labor and need for sensitive language (currently hot political topics). This mural combines the greed of real estate investors, match-box-like housing developments, and environmental degradation on a busy street at the center of the city.



picture by
Ivana Boltvinik



The banal and iconic examples of socialist architecture all around the city are fascinating, still, in spite of the fact that it is draped in neoliberalism. They remind of times when, a.o., housing was in social policy spheres.



Section 13

THE *TAKHAYALI* WORKSHOP

5–9 September 2022 | Ramallah, Jerusalem North

How do we define *wasted space* in contemporary urban morphologies? And how do municipalist aspirations and endeavors of indigenous populations in neocolonial, apartheid geographies sustain, operate, and how can they advance? These were the two guiding questions for the *Takhayali* (imagine, feminine) international workshop that took place from 5 to 9 September 2022, in and around Ramallah, one of the segregated northern districts of Jerusalem, Israel/Palestine. The workshop was organized by Sakiya art academy, UR°BANA interdisciplinary research and design studio, and Masna' Al Rusoum (Cartoon Factory). The five-day workshop combined field trips, exercises, film screenings and working sessions at multiple venues. Ilana Boltvinik, CMMM Advisory Committee member, with her co-founding partner Rodrigo Viñas of the TRES art collective, lead the sessions related to exploring the notion of wasted space which included (field) exercises and discussions. Iva Čukić and Jovana Timotijević contributed with presenting the inspiring story and some of the experiences of the Ministry of Space, and discussed the main lessons they collected along their twelve-year journey.



Day 0

Upon arrival, we attended the opening of the “Takhayali Ein Qiniya” exhibition of 20 imagined master plans, by women from the village and the workshop’s organizers.

Day 1

We kick-started the workshop with a tour of several parts of Ramallah, its peripheries, and the notorious Rawabi mega development.



Day 2,3,4

Over several sessions, we explored the notion of *wasted space*, mapped examples of it, and deliberated how it can serve as an entry point to change urban planning policies and discourses.



Day 5

As a close, after giving feedback on an advocacy short film that the organizers are developing to alter urbanization trajectories in Ramallah, MoS shared their story, and we reflected on future options.



Section 14

CLOSING THE CIRCLE IN BCN / BGD / BLN

June / August / October 2023 | Barcelona / Belgrade / Berlin

This section will be added after the events have taken place.



MAPS + POSTERS

instruments
for action

Section 15

INSTRUMENTS FOR ACTION: *interactive maps and posters*

From the onset, CMMM was designed such that the research, analyses, and maps could be used to create nuanced¹ critical maps and visualizations with the potential to serve and contribute to the endeavors of our city team members and the broader scenes of municipalist activists in which they are embedded. When developing the initial ideas into programable proposals, the teams weighed the informative and interactive aspects and deliberated on how these activities could engage communities in the broader mobilizations toward tangible political change regarding housing justice and the promotion of housing as a right. The three maps were created based on the discussions in the conceptualization and design workshops described in [Section 10](#) and [Section 11](#), as well as numerous informal bi- and multi-lateral conversations between 2020 and 2022. By spring 2023, we concluded the fine-tuning and testing phases.

Each of the maps required customized programming and a data management system, which was a complex task that was completed by the visual intelligence (VI) team. The Belgrade map “[How \(un\)affordable is housing in Belgrade?](#)” helps visitors understand the scope of the problem. It is based on data scraping of housing rental and purchase offers in Belgrade (conducted by the VI in May

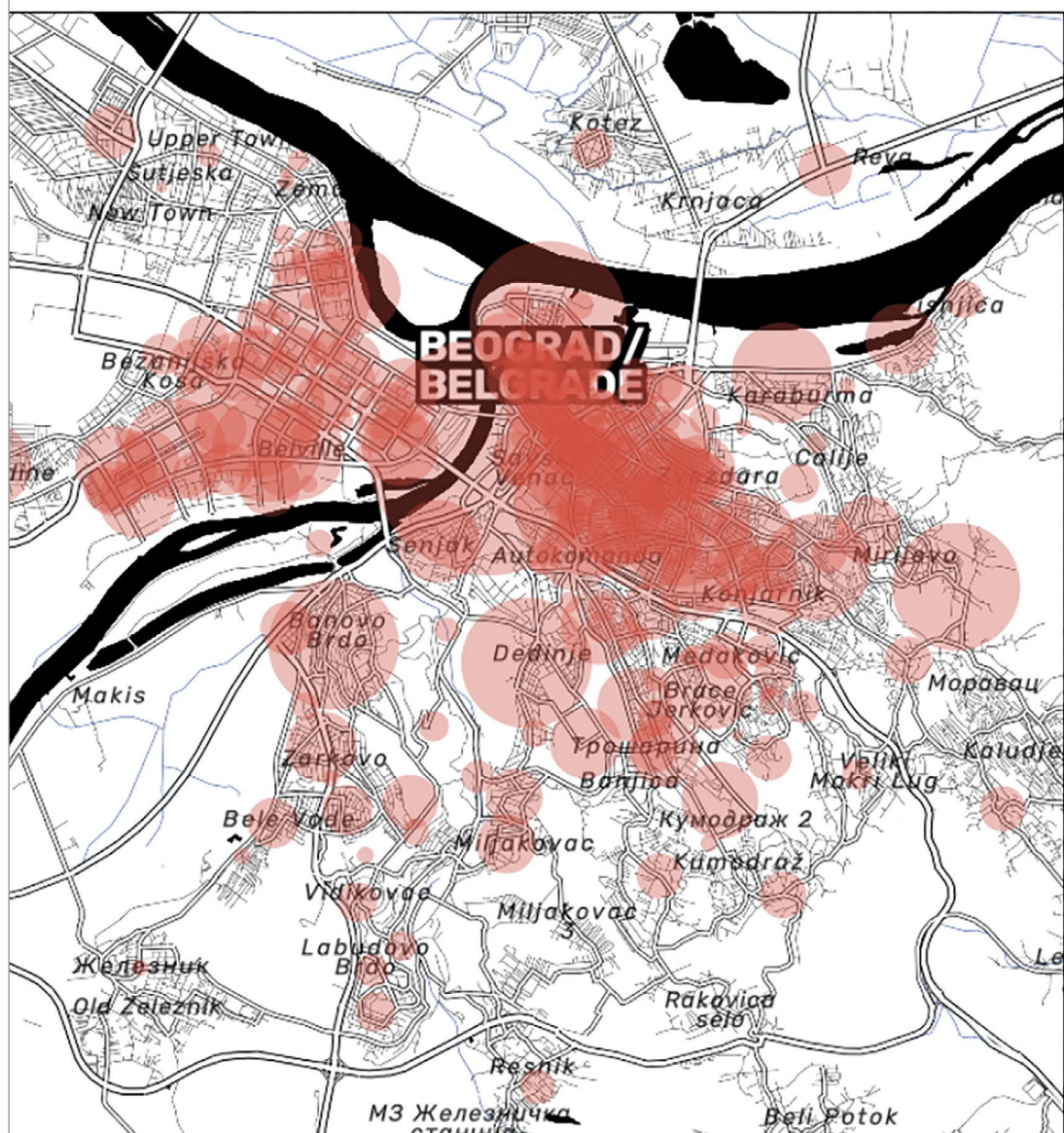
¹ K. Melchor Quick Hall argues for “nuanced mapping” to disentangle from hegemonic perspectives and ways of seeing our lifeworlds. By employing any feasible set of techniques and mediums, *nuanced mapping* involves bringing (non-/inter-)connected happenings into conversation with each other and tracing human actions and behaviors and portraying the building up of (transborder) momentum, paths of progression, and/or signs of regression. See: Quick Hall, K. Melchor. “Darkness All Around Me: Black Waters, Land, Animals, and Sky.” In *Mapping Gendered Ecologies: Engaging with and beyond Ecowomanism and Ecofeminism*, edited by K. Melchor Quick Hall and Gwyn Kirk, 17–32. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021.

2022 and again in March 2023) and is designed such that it is easy to personalize and use the visual results in social media campaigns on the topic. The Berlin map “**Commoning Berlin**” and the Barcelona map “**Stop Evictions!**” are based on acquired datasets and include crowdsourcing options, with structures that allow them to function as informative platforms for civic initiatives to resist capitalist dispossession by pushing for the application of the right of preemption in Berlin (in the three layers of Need Information?, Take Action!, and Offer Support) or by fighting evictions in Barcelona (via one map that serves as an alert system feeding from activists in real time and a second map providing an archive of recorded cases and revealing the magnitude of dispossession). While the Berlin map is in English, the Barcelona map is in Catalan and the Belgrade map is bilingual in Serbian and English. Each map includes an information section, which outlines the concept behind the prototype, the dataset, and the contributors in various languages. These three maps were designed and budgeted so as to serve as active tools of communication and mobilization for the movements in the short run and as archival sources in the long run. That said, the programming of the Berlin and Barcelona maps allows for collaborative work and is such that it would be possible for them to remain active tools for several years with minimal effort.

Each map features a direct link to a complementary poster that was developed in conjunction with the respective map to explain one of the legislative procedures or instruments of focus for each team, as well as an index of selected involved actors that were mapped as part of the analysis activities. The posters were designed as advocacy and communication tools that connect to the interactive online maps through a different medium, in real spaces beyond the virtual. The poster for Belgrade is titled “**Law Proposal: Rent Control**,” which is a motion that the **Ministry of Space** is assisting the political platform **Don’t Let Belgrade D(r)own** in pursuing. For Berlin, the poster is titled “**Right of Preemption**” and is intended to support debates and efforts to reform the existing legislation so that it is effective again after being repealed by the **2021 court ruling**. As for Barcelona, the poster has the same title as the map, “**Stop Evictions!**” and was designed to clarify the processes, involved parties, and potential trajectories in the case of an eviction order.

cmmm-maps.eu/belgrade

i How (un)affordable is housing in Belgrade?



How many offers are presented in Belgrade?



5219

existing offers in
Belgrade



Choose Language: [Srpski](#) | [English](#)

Select the situation you would like to explore:

I am interested in ► [rental](#) offers in Belgrade

1

I have a household of ► [select size](#)
with a total monthly income of
 ► [select closest value](#)

2

3

or,

For a household of
 ► **[select preset scenario](#)**

4

[Show offers](#)

5

The information you are entering serves to illustrate the number of affordable offers and their spatial distribution in accordance with the situation you would like to explore. It considers the minimal legal standards for apartment size per household size, as well as housing affordability, which stipulates that the rent or mortgage does not exceed more than one third of the household's monthly income (see Info section).

1

Choose Language: [Srpski](#) | [English](#)

Rental

This option shows the offers for apartment rentals that are affordable under the selected scenario (based on May 2022 data).

Purchase

This option shows the offers for apartments on sale that are affordable under the selected scenario (based on May 2022 data). We used an average interest rate of 2.55% and assumed that the household is eligible for a 30-year loan and is able to immediately make a down payment of 20% of the price of the apartment.

2

Choose Language: [Srpski](#) | [English](#)

1 person

2 people

3 people

4 people

5 people

6 people

3

Choose Language: [Srpski](#) | [English](#)

200 euro/month

250 euro/month

300 euro/month

350 euro/month

400 euro/month

450 euro/month

500 euro/month

550 euro/month

600 euro/month

650 euro/month

700 euro/month

750 euro/month

800 euro/month

850 euro/month

900 euro/month

950 euro/month

1000 euro/month

1050 euro/month

1100 euro/month

1150 euro/month

1200 euro/month

1250 euro/month

1300 euro/month

1350 euro/month

1400 euro/month

1450 euro/month

1500 euro/month

1550 euro/month

1600 euro/month

1650 euro/month

1700 euro/month

1750 euro/month

1800 euro/month

1850 euro/month

1900 euro/month

1950 euro/month

2000 euro/month

2100 euro/month

2200 euro/month

2300 euro/month

2400 euro/month

2500 euro/month

2600 euro/month

2700 euro/month

2800 euro/month

2900 euro/month

3000 euro/month

3100 euro/month

3200 euro/month

3300 euro/month

3400 euro/month

3500 euro/month

3600 euro/month

3700 euro/month

3800 euro/month

3900 euro/month

4000 euro/month

4500 euro/month

4

Choose Language: [Srpski](#) | [English](#)

An elementary school teacher living alone (1 person, 700 euro/month)

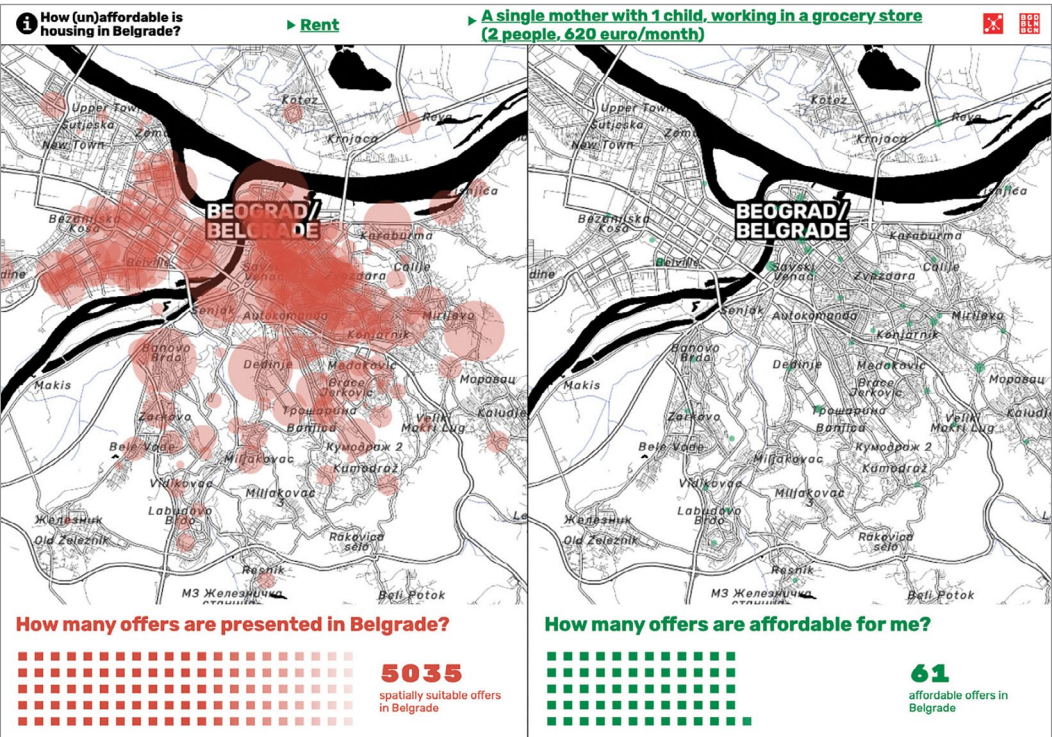
A couple with no children, working in high school education
(2 people, 1400 euro/month)

A couple with 3 children and average salaries (5 people, 1700 euro/month)

A single mother with 1 child, working in a grocery store
(2 people, 620 euro/month)

A retired firefighter, living alone (1 person, 500 euro/month)

5





PROTOTYPE CONCEPT

Even though housing is a basic right, it has become unaffordable for approx. 80% of the inhabitants of Serbia because apartments are now commodities that can be exchanged on the market for profit. This high degree of housing unaffordability produces overcrowded and inadequate living situations and increases the risk of indebtedness. It engenders spatial inequalities and segregation in our cities.

Our map clearly shows the scope of housing unaffordability in Belgrade, as well as its socially segregationist spatial consequences. By exploring our own situation and that of our neighbors and friends, we can see to what extent apartments are generally available on the market and in which parts of the city we can or cannot afford to live. Understanding this problem, which many of us share, is the first step toward changing the situation systematically, through wider mobilization to make housing unaffordability a higher priority on the political agenda.

The design of this map is the result of various exchanges within our local networks, including the findings from the three workshops: “The Housing [Utility Service] Burdens of Social Housing Tenants” (Nov ‘20), “How to Obtain Publicly-Owned Land for the Purpose of Non-Profit Housing?” (Dec ‘20), and “Critical Mapping of the Unaffordability of Housing in Belgrade” (April ‘21), which featured guests from various backgrounds.¹

To map affordable housing offers for the specific scenarios, we use **TWO VARIABLES**: the size of the household (number of members), and the self-assessed monthly household income. The algorithm behind this map relies on international and domestic standards in calculating the number of units on offer that are considered adequate in terms of size and price per scenario, as well as their locations. The results shown for both renting and buying are filtered as follows:

1. Spatial suitability: According to the “adequate apartment” standard, which is defined by the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Article 90), the relation between the number of residents and the minimum total area of an apartment is as follows:

¹ The names of the participants and more information about these two workshops can be found in the two corresponding sections, which can be accessed by clicking on the title.

- Single-member household: 22 m² or more
- Two-member household: 30 m² or more
- Three-member household: 40 m² or more
- Four-member household: 50 m² or more
- Five-member household: 56 m² or more
- Six-member household or larger: 64 m² or more

This means that the result of the search displays all “spatially suitable” apartments that correspond to the legal minimum, as well as those that are larger.

2. AFFORDABILITY: The internationally adopted upper limit for the housing burden is 40% of the monthly household income. This value includes costs other than rent or mortgage payments, such as utilities and heating.² Therefore, the algorithm here sets a threshold of 30%. This means, in the case of renting, the displayed affordable offers are those where the monthly rent is equal to or less than one third of the household’s indicated monthly income. Additionally, in the case of purchasing, it is assumed that one can meet the following conditions:

- The household’s credit is good enough to apply for a 30-year loan
- The household can make a down payment of 20% of the price of the apartment at the time of purchase
- The household can cover the 2.55% average interest rate of commercial mortgages in Serbia

DATASET

Unfortunately, due to the complex process of downloading data that are normally not available to the public as databases and scraping them, it is not possible to use real-time data for our map. The data that is currently being used was downloaded on 8 and 10 March 2023.

CONTRIBUTOR

Marina Živaljević

² While this percentage is 40% at the EU level, in the documents of the United Nations this threshold is 30%, which means an even smaller range of offers would be available as a result.



Law Proposal: Rent Control Predlog zakona: Kontrolisana zakupnina

This illustration shows the standard procedure any law proposal—such as the one on rent control currently being proposed by the „Don't let Belgrade d(r)own” movement—goes through, from the moment it is drafted to its adoption or rejection. We illustrate the actors that are involved along the way, as well as the strategic moments of influencing the process (by both supporters and opponents of the proposal). This illustration was prepared together with the “How (un)affordable is housing in Belgrade?” online map, which shows the current situation on the market.

Even though housing is a basic right, it has become unaffordable for approx. 80 % of the inhabitants of Serbia. The high degree of housing unaffordability produces overcrowded and inadequate living conditions, increases the risk of indebtedness, and has socially segregationist spatial consequences. The main obstacle to systematically changing this situation is the fact that the free market is the dominant regulator of the housing sector, with almost no alternatives and in the absence of any protections. There is a need to move from an approach to housing as an investment market to that of housing as a right.

In Nov. 2022, the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own movement publicly announced a proposition to introduce a rent control law. Aside from being one of the rare concrete proposals to address the housing unaffordability at governmental levels in recent years, it has sparked a long-needed public debate on problems and possible solutions regarding the steep rise in housing costs. It addresses two important aspects: first, it stipulates a legally binding rental contract (at the moment rarely signed) to decrease the precarious position of tenants by offering them the opportunity to defend their rights; second, it proposes to have the rent and (annual) increases set through formulas that account for the annual average income, in addition to other more typical factors such as the location, quality of the apartment, and its energy efficiency level. Even though this proposal touches on only one of the larger sets of policies that are needed for the long-term improvement of the housing situation in Serbia, it represents a noteworthy motion by political actors regarding the housing crisis.

The back of this poster features an index with the main actors involved in Belgrade's housing sector, some of which are mentioned in the illustration on the right. The index includes basic information about each actor and is organized according to the type (see key of categories) and the level of operation (e.g., national or local).

This poster was developed within the framework of the CMMM research project that has accompanied the initiative of the Ministry of Space (MSP) since March 2020. It is part of MoS's wider efforts to provide evidence and push for reforms in policies and procedures related to urban planning and participation. In addition to an array of topics related to the right to the city, it advocates for housing justice.

For more information, visit ministarstvoprostora.org or cmmm.eu

Cmmm

CMMM – Critical Mapping in Municipalist Movements is a 3.5-year research project that brings together an international team from Belgrade, Berlin, and Barcelona. It is hosted at K LAB, TU Berlin, supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, and implemented in collaboration with Observatori DESC, AKS Gemeinwohl, Kollektiv Raumstation, and Ministarstvo Prostora.

In parallel to the Belgrade-focused “How (un) affordable is housing in Belgrade?” online map and this accompanying poster, the Berlin team developed the “Commoning Berlin” online map and the accompanying “Right of Preemption” poster, and the Barcelona team developed the “Stop Eviction!” online map and the accompanying poster with the same name. To view the maps and posters online, scan the QR code at the top.

Ova ilustracija pokazuje standardnu proceduru kroz koju prolazi svaki predlog zakona – kao što je onaj o kontrolisanoj zakupnini, koji je predložio pokret „Ne da(vi)m Beograd” – od trenutka izrade dosuovanja ili odbijanja. Ilustracija predstavlja aktere koji su uključeni na tom putu zakonskog predloga, kao i mogućnosti njihovog uticaja na proces (i pristalica i protivnika predloga). Ova ilustracija je pripremljena zajedno sa onlajn mapom „Koliko je (ne)priuštivo stanovanje u Beogradu?”, koja prikazuje trenutno stanje ponude stambenih jedinica i potražnje za domom na tržištu nekretnosti.

Iako je stanovanje osnovno ljudsko pravo, postalo je nedostupno za oko 80% stanovnika Srbije. Visok stepen nepriuštivosti stanovanja rezultira prenatrpanim stanovima i neadekvatnim uslovima za život, povećava rizik od zaduživanja i dodatno pojačava prostornu segregaciju. Ključna prepreka za strukturnu promenu ovakve situacije je činjenica da je slobodno tržište dominantni regulator stambenog sektora, bez skoro ikakvih alternativa i dodatne intervencije države. Stoga je neophodno da se pristup stanovanju kao problema i procedurama koje se odnose na razvoj grada i učešće građana u njemu. Pored niza tema vezanih za sâmo pravo na grad i participaciju u urbanističkom planiranju, kolektiv Ministarstvo prostora se zalaže i za stambenu pravdu, sa čim je i učešće u CMMM projektu direktno povezano.

U novembru 2022. godine, pokret „Ne da(vi)m Beograd” objavio je predlog zakona o uvođenju kontrolisane zakupnine. Osim što predstavlja jedan od retkih konkretnih predloga za smanjenje problema nepriuštivosti stanovanja poslednjih godina, on je inicirao i preko potrebnu javnu debatu o problemima i mogućim rešenjima u vezi sa naglim porastom troškova stanovanja. Ovaj predlog adresira dva važna aspekta: prvo, predviđa pravno obavezujući ugovor o zakupu (trenutno retko potpisan i overen) kako bi se smanjio prekam položaj podstanara, nudeći im priliku da pregovaraju i brane svoja prava; drugo, predlaže da se zakupnina i njena (godišnja) uvećanja utvrde kroz formule koje uzimaju u obzir prosečni prihod stanovnika, lokaciju i kvalitet stambenog prostora, kao i nivo njegove energetske efikasnosti. Iako se ovaj predlog dotiče samo jednog dela politika koje su neophodne za dugoročno unapređenje stambene situacije u Srbiji, on predstavlja značajan gest, posebno među političkim akterima, koji se direktno odnosi prema stambenoj krizi.

Na poleđini ovog plakata nalazi se i pregled glavnih aktera relevantnih za stambeni sektor u Beogradu, od kojih su neki pomenuti na ilustraciji desno. Pregled sadrži osnovne informacije o svakom akteru i organizovan je prema sektoru (pogledajte ključne kategorije) i nivou nadležnosti (npr. nacionalni ili lokalni).

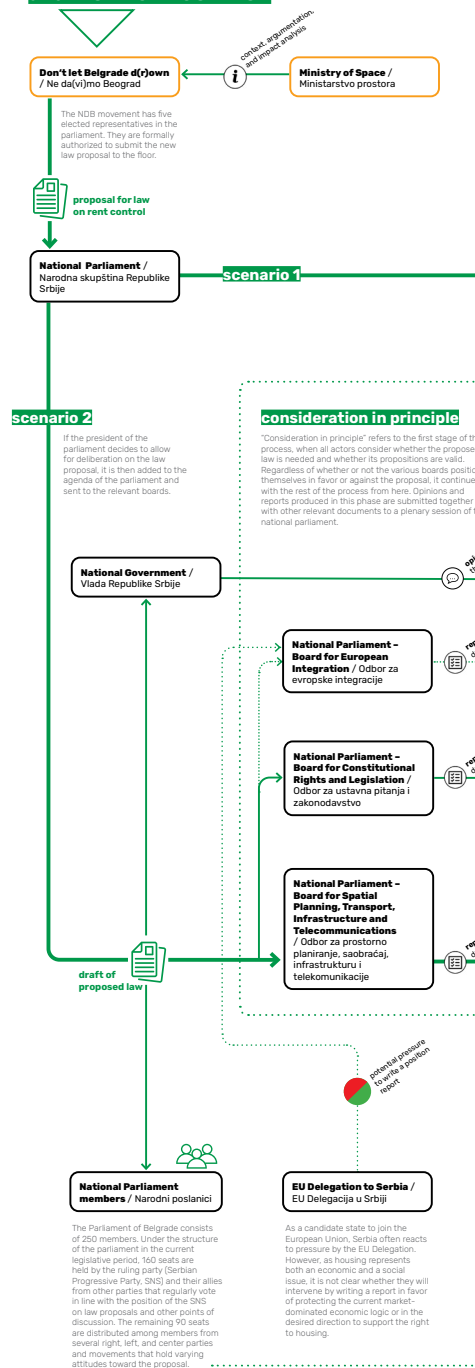
Ovaj plakat je kreiran u okviru CMMM istraživačkog projekta koji je deo aktivnosti kolektiva Ministarstvo prostora od marta 2020. godine. Projekat predstavlja deo širih napora kolektiva da podstakne promene u politikama i procedurama koje se odnose na razvoj grada i učešće građana u njemu. Pored niza tema vezanih za sâmo pravo na grad i participaciju u urbanističkom planiranju, kolektiv Ministarstvo prostora se zalaže i za stambenu pravdu, sa čim je i učešće u CMMM projektu direktno povezano.

Za više informacija posetite ministarstvoprostora.org ili cmmm.eu

“CMMM – Kritičko mapiranje u municipalističkim pokretima” je troipogodišnji istraživački projekat koji okuplja međunarodni tim iz Beograda, Berlina i Barcelone. Njegov inicijator je K LAB sa Tehničkog univerziteta u Berlinu, a realizuje se uz podršku Robert Bosch fondacije i sprovodi u saradnji inicijativa Observatori DESC, AKS Gemeinwohl, Kollektiv Raumstation i Ministarstvo prostora.

Paralelno sa radom na mapi „Koliko je (ne) priuštivo stanovanje u Beogradu?” i ovom pratećem plakatu, tim iz Berlina je razvio onlajn mapu „Commoning Berlin” i plakat „Pravo preče kupovine”, a tim iz Barcelone mapu „Stop prinudnom iseljavanju” i plakat sa istim nazivom. Kako biste pregledali mape i plakate svih timova, skenirajte QR kod na vrhu.

The process of proposing a law on rent control:





The „BLACK HOLE“ of the law proposals by the opposition MPs

Upon submission of the law proposal to the national parliament, the president decides whether or not to send it to the government. As there is no obligation to inform the parliament of every law proposal or to submit every proposal for deliberation, some may fall into the "black hole" of the parliamentary archives. According to an analysis of the work of the national parliament in the first five months following the 2022 elections by the initiative Open Parliament (Otvoreni Parlament), 35 out of the 36 adopted laws were proposed by the government and only one was proposed by members of parliament (MPs) who are part of the ruling coalition. At the same time, all 440 amendments submitted by MPs – be it from the ruling coalition or the opposition – were rejected.

Source: Otvoreni Parlament, 2023. "Negledrsko skupštine tokom prvih pet meseci 13. saziva [Overview of the work of the assembly during the first five months of the 13th electoral period]." Accessed 25 February 2023. <https://otvoreniparlament.rs/dokumenta/255>

draft of proposed law

The amendments put forth by the various boards that are accepted by the members of parliament (MPs) proposing the law become an integral part of the proposal. The amendments that are rejected by the MPs proposing the law are returned to the assembly for further discussion.

Through its members, the Housing Equality Movement (HEM) can organize a campaign to provide information about and promote the benefits of a certain law proposal. The HEM may succeed in mobilizing some civil society actors that are engaged in the areas of economic and social rights, as well as left-leaning political initiatives, to exert pressure on MPs to support the proposed new law.

Depending on the inclination of each media station toward the ruling party, their reporting on the matter and the campaigns they choose to adopt can be oriented either way: in favor of or against the proposed new law. That being said, it should be noted that the media outlets with wide national reach are loyal to the regime.

Since the proposed law would reduce their gains, it is expected that the landlord association and real-estate agencies (who collect fees as percentages of rents) in Serbia will exert pressure on members of the parliament (MPs) to reject it. They will likely target MPs sitting on both sides, the ruling coalition and the opposition.

consideration in details

"Consideration in details" refers to the second stage of the process, when all actors consider the law proposal and the submitted amendments in detail.

National Parliament – Board for spatial planning, transport, infrastructure and telecommunications / Odbor za prostorno planiranje, saobraćaj, infrastrukturu i telekomunikacije

National Parliament members / Narodni poslanici

Don't Let Belgrade Drown / Ne da(vi)mo Beograd

National Government / Vlada Republike Srbije

National Parliament members / Narodni poslanici

National Parliament – Board for constitutional rights and legislation / Odbor za ustavna pitanja i zakonodavstvo*

National Parliament – Board for spatial planning, transport, infrastructure and telecommunications / Odbor za prostorno planiranje, saobraćaj, infrastrukturu i telekomunikacije

amendments to the law proposal

law proposal with amendments

President of the National Parliament / Predsednik Narodne skupštine

Housing Equality Movement

Ministry of Space / Ministarstvo prostora

Housing Center / Housing center

Who Builds the City

A11 – Initiative for Economic and Social Rights / A11 – Inicijativa za ekonomska i socijalna prava

The Roof / Zdrvena akcija „Krov nad glavom“

media

Real-estate agencies / Agencije za nekretnine

Association of the Landlords of Serbia / Udruženje stanodavaca Srbije

campaign to support the proposal

pressure to support through reports or campaigns

pressure to reject the proposed law

National Parliament – assembly sessions

no

yes

proposed law is rejected

President of the Republic of Serbia / Predsednik Republike Srbije

yes

suspensive veto
The president of the Republic of Serbia has the right to declare the law illegitimate and return it to the national parliament for reconsideration, but only once. Afterward, if the parliament votes in favor for a second time, then the law is considered valid and must be adopted.

law is passed by decree of the president

An "opinion" is a document that presents an analysis of the contents of the proposed law.

These reports present the position of the boards on the law proposal, whether they vote in favor or against it, and the rationale behind their positions.

* This board can reject amendments that it deems redundant or inappropriate.

or collective

Community-based property holder

Private property holder or entity

ACTORS

International level National level – Serbia

Actors named on the front side of this poster are briefly described here, as well as others that we find relevant to the illustrated process and the housing justice struggles in general.

EU Delegation to Serbia / EU Delegacija u Srbiji *2009, Serbia

The mission of the Delegation of the European Union (EU) to the Republic of Serbia is to ensure the proper representation of the EU in Serbia, promoting and defending the values and interests of the EU and its Member States, and monitoring and supporting Serbia's accession, which includes the successful implementation of EU assistance programs. It also provides financial resources from EU accession funds and monitors spending. A large share of these funds provide housing for vulnerable groups.

ADRA *1990, Serbia

Global humanitarian organization with an office in Serbia. Among other areas of work, their role in addressing homelessness is valuable as they regularly support 500-1000 individuals through mobile shower and laundry services (Vehicle Drumodrom), health care, psychosocial support, and support in social integration. They also work with decision-makers to ensure the proper implementation of relevant policies and new ways to prevent homelessness.

UNHCR - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees / Visoki komesarijat UN za izbeglice *1978, Serbia

This agency provides assistance to the refugees and migrants that come to Serbia from all over the world, but also refugees and those who were internally displaced as a result of the 1990s wars in Yugoslavia. They have been partnering with different international organizations and domestic civil society organizations to carry out social housing projects in Serbia.

UNOPS - UN Office for Project Services / UNOPS kancelarija u Srbiji *2001, Serbia

UN agency that serves as a service provider, technical advisor, and implementer of projects. In Serbia, among other infrastructure projects, they have already implemented several projects on housing for Roma, refugees, and internally displaced, while they are currently working with local self-governments to provide social housing for a wider target group, including women survivors of gender-based violence, people with disabilities, and youth leaving institutional care.

Ministry of Finance / Ministarstvo finansija *2020, Serbia

Regulated through the Law on Ministries from 2020, the Ministry of Finance proposes and monitors law policies, approves finance-related documents, regulates public property rights, property rights, and other real-estate rights, and regulates the banking system – all of which are relevant for the housing sector.

Ministry of Construction and Infrastructure - Department for Housing, Architectural Policies, Public Utilities and Energy Efficiency / Ministarstvo građevinarstva, saobraćaja i infrastrukture - Sektor za stambenu i arhitektonsku politiku, komunalne elastičnosti i energetske elastičnosti *2020, Serbia

Regulated through the Law on Ministries from 2020, this ministry and its department for housing are responsible mainly for proposing and monitoring the National Housing Strategy and accompanying Action Plan, reviewing the conditions and implementation of the housing support programs, and systematizing the data collected on housing needs and programs from the local governments.

Ministry for Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs / Ministarstvo za rad, zapošljavanje, boračka i socijalna pitanja *2020, Serbia

Regulated through the Law on Ministries from 2020, the Ministry for Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs is responsible for the system of social protection, rights of the immigrants and internally displaced persons, as well as returns upon readmission, the Roma population, and other socially vulnerable groups. As housing is one of the services within the system of social protection, this ministry is relevant for the national housing policy.

Republic Geodetic Authority / Republički geodetski zavod *1992, Serbia

This institution is in charge of establishing, updating, and maintaining the cadaster, maintaining public registers (including the housing association register, register of addresses, etc.), and managing values of real-estate in all municipalities.

Agency for Restitution of the Republic of Serbia / Agencija za restituciju Republike Srbije *2011, Serbia

This agency was established for the purpose of conducting proceedings and deciding on requests for restitution of property (including land and buildings), for example, compensation, providing professional assistance to applicants and taxpayers, keeping records of transactions.

Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia / Komisarijat za izbeglice i migracije Republike Srbije *1992, Serbia

As a separate organization within the public system, the Commissariat for Refugees was established by the Law on Migration but was assigned additional responsibilities with the adoption of the Law on Migration Management in 2012, including social housing, the migrant works on accommodation of refugees and migrants and their geographical distribution among specialized centers.

Social and Economic Council / Socijalno-ekonomski savet *2004, Serbia

The 2004 Law on the Social and Economic Council regulates this body, which consists of representatives from the Serbian Government, business associations, and unions. It has 18 members, and its main goal is to establish and maintain social dialogue on topics relevant for ensuring the economic and social freedoms and rights of citizens. Housing is one such topic. The council also issues opinions on all relevant law proposals.

State Bureau for Social Protection / Republički zavod za socijalnu zaštitu *2015, Serbia

This institution is in charge of regulating the system of social protection, collecting data on social protection to inform related public policies, establishing and developing professional capacity building systems for all institutions in the social protection system, monitoring the work of the centers for social work, and informing professionals and the wider public on relevant issues within the system of social protection.

State Ombudsman / Zaštitnik građana *2007, Serbia

This institution ensures citizens' rights and oversees the work of government and public institutions with respect to those rights. Although the recommendations that come from this instance are not obligatory for the government and institutions, they do support and strengthen the cases for the citizens. In addition, the State Ombudsman is granted the right to submit initiatives to the National Assembly for amendments on legal acts and is responsible for providing opinions during the drafting and adoption of legal acts from the perspective of human rights, including the right to adequate housing.

State Property Directorate / Republički direktorij za imovinu *1996, Serbia

This institution is in charge of establishing, updating, and maintaining the register of publicly owned property (including land and housing units). Its jurisdiction also includes the management, leasing, purchasing, and selling of public property.

Unit for Project Implementation in Public Sector / Jedinica za upravljanje projektima u javnom sektoru *2016, Serbia

This unit evolved to become a public enterprise (limited liability enterprise) and is relevant because it manages the Regional Housing Programme (RHP), the largest public housing project, implemented in the region (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro), but also manages and implements publicly subsidized housing projects targeted at young scientists. The goal of the RHP is to contribute to solving the problem of long-term displacement of the most vulnerable refugees and persons, which arose from the regional 1991-1995 wars, providing them with durable and sustainable housing solutions.

Chamber of Public Executors / Komora javnih izvršitelja *2011, Serbia

According to the Law on Execution and Seizure from 2011, "public" executors were introduced as legal entrepreneurs licensed by the Ministry of Justice to take over the obligations from the state government, profiting from the successful execution of court decisions regarding housing-related debt, property-related conflict, etc.). These processes can result in the expropriation of property or eviction when it comes to housing matters.

National Corporation for Securement of Housing Credits / Nacionalna korporacija za osiguravanje stambenih kredita (NKOSK) *2014, Serbia

Formed by the Law on National Corporation for Securement of Housing Credits, NKOSK works together with the Serbian Government to secure the credits banks issue to purchase, adapt, or build of real-estate, secured by mortgage. Through signed agreements with banks in Serbia, banks offer each contract for securement to the NKOSK, while NKOSK takes over part of the risk in case the credit is not paid. In doing so, NKOSK lowers the risk of the bank, which in turn lowers the interest rate of the credit, which is beneficial for the debtor. In addition, NKOSK participates in governmental programs in the area of subsidizing housing credits from the state budget. This is financed from a combination of its profit and the public budget.

Association of Protected Tenants / Udruženje zaštićenih stanara *2008, Serbia

The association consists of about 140 tenants in endowments, as well as about 40 families of tenants. The main goals of the association is to solve the problems of tenants who were unable to exercise the right to purchase an apartment during the massive privatization process from 1990 onward.

Effektiva consumer protection association / Udruženje za zaštitu potrošača "Efektiva" *2011, Serbia

The consumer protection association "Efektiva" aims to facilitate its members' relationship with banks, the National Bank of Serbia, and other financial organizations. Since August 2016, in accordance with the program approved by the Ministry of Trade, Efektiva is also more actively involved in the protection of citizens' rights, especially in relation to financial products. The association emerged from the struggle for the rights of indebted citizens due to the housing loans in Serbia and has been particularly active in collective complaints filed to courts.

Center for the Protection of Users of Banking Services / CHF Serbia / Centar za zaštitu korisnika bankarskih usluga CHF Srbija *2016, Serbia

CHF Serbia is an association of citizen consumers of housing loans in Swiss Francs who have been significantly burdened by the volatile currency rate of CHF. It works to protect consumers of bank services by offering information, advocacy, and legal aid to the citizens.

Association of the Landlords of Serbia / Udruženje stambodavaca Srbije *2014, Serbia

The Association of the Landlords of Serbia acts on behalf of the landlords to protect their interests. It frequently appears in the media in relation to various emerging housing issues (such as rent not) or new regulations and changes.

National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED) / Nacionalna alijansa za lokalni ekonomski razvoj *2006, Serbia

NALED is an independent association that has positioned itself as a recognized partner to the government and parliament to help define the regulatory priorities and legislative documents within public policies, as well as to monitor their implementation. Even though housing is not the focus of their work, their influence in other policies (such as public finance or property and investment) shape the conditions for developing housing policies as well.

Urban Development / Program za urbanu obnovu *2009, Serbia

UDP was established by a group of experts from the public sector and international organizations. It is engaged in the area of development and focuses on urban planning, local development and housing through research, analysis, advocacy, and education. It also provides technical assistance and legislative documents to housing.

Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) / Stalna konferencija gradova i opština (SKG) *1953, Serbia

SCTM was founded as an association of towns and municipalities. It has been accepted as a domestic and international representative of the local self-government. It represents the interests of authorities in Serbia before the assembly, the government, the Republic of Serbia, ministries, authorities, and other common institutions and organizations. SCTM also works to support the process of decentralization of the local self-government. It strengthens capacities, who still hold tenants' rights from the socialist period, to housing policies and development. The SCTM is funded by international and domestic government and non-governmental institutional organizations.

Commercial banks / Komercijalne banke

Commercial banks are responsible for establishing and implementing loan credits programs and debt collection procedures, among other things.

Real-estate agencies / Agencije za nekretnosti

Real-estate agencies are the intermediaries between investors and landlords and tenants. Also, long-term apartment rental also platforms for short-term rental. If there is a lack of available data on housing, some agencies develop their own data collection, systematization tools, though, despite trends in the housing market.

Residential for-profit building private investors / Investitori u profitabilne stambogradnje

Whether they are private domestic or foreign real-estate private investors in housing, considered contributors to economic growth of the country, they are thus given numerous incentives through regulations to housing and urban planning in Serbia.

Public institution

Civil society organization or institution

Civic initiative or collective

Community-based property holder

Private property holders or entity

This is an interactive poster. Links to the websites of the actors are embedded in the names. Click to visit them.

City level - Belgrade

Municipal level*

Don't Let Belgrade Drown / Ne da(vi)mo Beograd

*2018, Serbia

The Don't Let Belgrade Drown municipalist political movement emerged from the massive urban development project Belgrade Waterfront, implemented through the legitimate process of using public resources for private interest.

The movement entered the local elections in 2018 but did not win sufficient support. In the 2022 elections, as part of the larger MORAMO coalition, this movement won 15 seats in both the Belgrade City assembly and national parliament.

The transformation of housing policies has been part of their political program at both the city and national level, with a set of concrete proposals to make housing affordable and more secure for all.

Belgrade Land Development Agency / Direkcija za građevinsko zemljište i izgradnju Beograda

*1956, Serbia

The City of Belgrade has delegated to this agency the responsibility for managing the land owned by the city, including records of all assets (including housing buildings and units) owned by the City of Belgrade and their management and use; activities related to solving housing needs in accordance with regulations and special programs at the local level; proposing and monitoring the local housing strategy; and other duties specified by the law, city statute, and other regulations.

City Center for Social Work / Gradski centar za socijalni rad

*1991, Serbia

The City Center for Social Work in Belgrade is one of the institutions from the social protection system whose role is to provide help and support (legal, social, material, psychological counseling, mediation, and psychotherapy) to vulnerable households and individuals. The activities of the City Center include social protection, social work, and family-legal protection, overseeing the 17 municipal departments for social work that are most directly serving the citizens.

City Housing Enterprise / JP Gradsko stambeno

*1966, Serbia

This enterprise is part of the communal infrastructure for the City of Belgrade (on the territory of 10 out of 17 of its local municipalities) and is responsible for maintaining common spaces and infrastructure in residential buildings.

Chief Urban Planner for the City of Belgrade / Glavni urbanista Grada Beograda

*2000, Serbia

The Chief Urban Planner is responsible for coordinating the production of planning documents, as well as interfacing between the Secretariat for Urban Planning, those who produce urban plans, and public institutions included in the process of creating and adopting urban plans. The Chief Urban Planner is also active in the sector for capital projects, involved in development and strategic policies in the construction sector and their execution, improving the business environment in the construction industry, and promoting strategic development projects.

Secretariat for Finance / Sekretarijat za finansije

*2016, Serbia

This secretariat is responsible for balancing public revenue and public expenditure from the city budget and the budgets of local municipalities; preparing resolutions for raising direct public revenue and monitoring their implementation; determining the scope and criteria for financing city municipalities; planning and preparing the city budget; treasury-related matters, specifically financial planning, cash management, monitoring budgetary expenditure, budgetary accounting, and reporting at the top treasury level; managing debt and financial assets; investing city funds; matters related to construction, reconstruction, adaptation, and repair of buildings financed from the city budget, as well as property right transactions related to those investments; and other matters in accordance with the law, the city statutes, and other regulations.

Secretariat for Investment / Sekretarijat za investicije

*2016, Serbia

This secretariat performs all activities related to carrying out investments: providing information on construction sites and issuing construction permits; recording work and usage permits. The secretariat also performs activities related to the professional management of construction projects for the purpose of ensuring fundamental living conditions in the event of natural disasters or technical and technological accidents that endanger lives, people's health, or the environment.

Secretariat for Legal and Property Affairs - Sector for Housing / Sekretarijat za imovinsko-pravne poslove - Sektor za stanovanje

*2016, Serbia

The official jurisdiction of this secretariat, with regard to the housing sector, includes records of all assets (including housing buildings and units) owned by the City of Belgrade and their management and use; activities related to solving housing needs in accordance with regulations and special programs at the local level; proposing and monitoring the local housing strategy; and other duties specified by the law, city statute, and other regulations.

Sector for Housing has four departments: a) Department for housing; b) Department for controlling the use of publicly owned apartments; c) Department for maintenance of publicly owned apartments; d) Department for indefinite lease of apartments owned by citizens, endowments, and foundations (related to the protected tenants' rights from the socialist period).

Secretariat for Social Welfare / Sekretarijat za socijalnu zaštitu

*2016, Serbia

The secretariat performs tasks related to the provision of rights and social welfare services; drafting acts and undertaking activities related to the establishment of social welfare institutions and exercising founding rights over social welfare institutions founded by the city; determining the form of financial support; supporting the implementation of programs of the public interest; supporting aid programs for refugees and internally displaced persons; participating in and monitoring the treatment of persons from informal settlements; participating in the development of strategic city documents to improve the situation of the Roma and related action plans; and supporting of the implementation of social housing programs.

Secretariat for Urban Planning and Construction / Sekretarijat za urbanizam i građevinske poslove

*2016, Serbia

The official jurisdiction of this secretariat, with regard to the housing sector includes preparing, adopting, documenting, and storing planning documents and urban plans; participating in preparing regulations and other acts passed by the city authorities within the competency of the secretariat; issuing construction permits for building facilities that exceed 600 m² in gross floor area, as well as issuing the usage permit required for such facilities; initiating proceedings to exercise the rights to construction and facility usage.

Secretariat for Utilities and Housing Services / Sekretarijat za komunalne poslove i stanovanje

*2016, Serbia

The official jurisdiction of this secretariat includes organizing and ensuring material and other conditions for communal services and their development; maintaining residential buildings and ensuring their safe usage; and reconstructing facades of buildings with recognized cultural value.

Urban Planning Bureau of Belgrade / Urbanistički zavod Beograda

*1947, Serbia

The Urban Planning Bureau of Belgrade is an enterprise founded (but not continually funded) by the Assembly of the City of Belgrade for the purpose of drafting planning documents, development strategies, and urban plans of various scales and carrying out related analyses and projects. It is funded through commissions made by the City of Belgrade, as well as other private and legal entities.

A11 - Initiative for Economic and Social Rights / A11 - Inicijativa za ekonomska i socijalna prava

*2017, Serbia

The A11 initiative promotes and protects the rights of individuals from vulnerable, marginalized, and discriminated groups, with a particular focus on economic and social rights. Beside monitoring the implementation of public policies and national and international regulations, they advocate for the advancement and full compliance with fundamental human rights, including the right to adequate, secure housing.

A11 Initiative is a co-founder of the Informal Housing Equality Movement network.

Housing Center / Stanovni centar

*2004, Serbia

Housing Center was established with the objective to improve the living conditions of socially vulnerable groups and support their social integration and independence. With most of the team engaged in architecture, they have vast experience in building social housing in different parts of Serbia, as well as cooperating with institutions of social protection. Thanks to this experience, Housing Center has acquired a license as a "non-profit housing organization" from the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, which authorizes it to "provide, acquire, manage, and lease apartments intended for social housing, as well as to manage the construction of apartments for social housing."

Housing Center is a co-founder of the Informal Housing Equality Movement network.

Ministry of Space / Ministarstvo prostora

*2011, Serbia

Ministry of Space is a collective established in 2010 that aims to achieve more democratized urban development. Within this aim, it focuses on participatory urban planning, housing justice, public land management, and a more just energy transition.

Within the area of housing, Ministry of Space has been involved in educational and research activities and has produced proposals to increase housing affordability and promote socially responsible housing policies.

Ministry of Space is a co-founder of the Informal Housing Equality Movement network.

Who Builds the City / Ko gradi grad

*2016, Serbia

Who Builds the City was established in 2010 (registered in 2016) in response to urban developments in Belgrade, creating a wider platform for dialogue concerning the democratization and commodification of space. One of their most prominent projects – "Smarter building" – represents an initiative to build the first contemporary non-profit, non-speculative housing cooperative in Belgrade. In broadening this endeavor, Who Builds the City initiated the establishment of the regional network of housing cooperatives MOBA (including initiatives from Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, and Czech Republic).

Who Builds the City is a co-founder of the Informal Housing Equality Movement network.

The Roof / Zdržena akcija „Krov nad glavom“

*2017, Serbia

Roof Over Head was established as an informal umbrella entity that brings together groups and individuals united in the struggle for the right to housing. In their actions and campaigns, the mostly fight against forced evictions that leave people homeless (often forced through untransparent and sometimes even illegal procedures) and also address the inadequate conditions of housing for increasing numbers of people without sufficient income.

Roof Over Head is a co-founder of the Informal Housing Equality Movement network.

Local municipality departments for urban planning, construction, housing and communal services, legal and property affairs / Opština - Odeljenje za urbanističko planiranje, građevinske poslove, komunalno-stambene poslove, imovinsko-pravne poslove

The urban municipalities of Belgrade have departments within the administration, although they are not consistently structured or grouped. Housing in particular, is never the sole responsibility of one department, but rather it is grouped with either communal/utility services, inspection services, or legal and property affairs.

Municipalities in general decide on their own local budget, offer their opinion on the urban plans adopted for their territory, and have the possibility to lease land for small construction sites (up to 800m² gross area), regulate temporary buildings, and carry out eviction procedures against illegal tenants.

Semi-urban municipalities (7 in total) have several additional jurisdictions that allow them to adopt some urban plans themselves, regulate and manage larger construction sites, and establish municipal communal/utility service enterprises (production and delivery of water, gas, thermal, and thermoelectric energy, maintenance of cemeteries and funeral services, maintenance of public green areas, etc.).

Center for Social Work / Opštinski centar za socijalni rad

Each municipality has its own center for social work that directly works with citizens in the social protection system, including those who need some form of housing support and those who live in inadequate housing conditions.

Municipal Cadastre Service / Opštinska služba za katastar

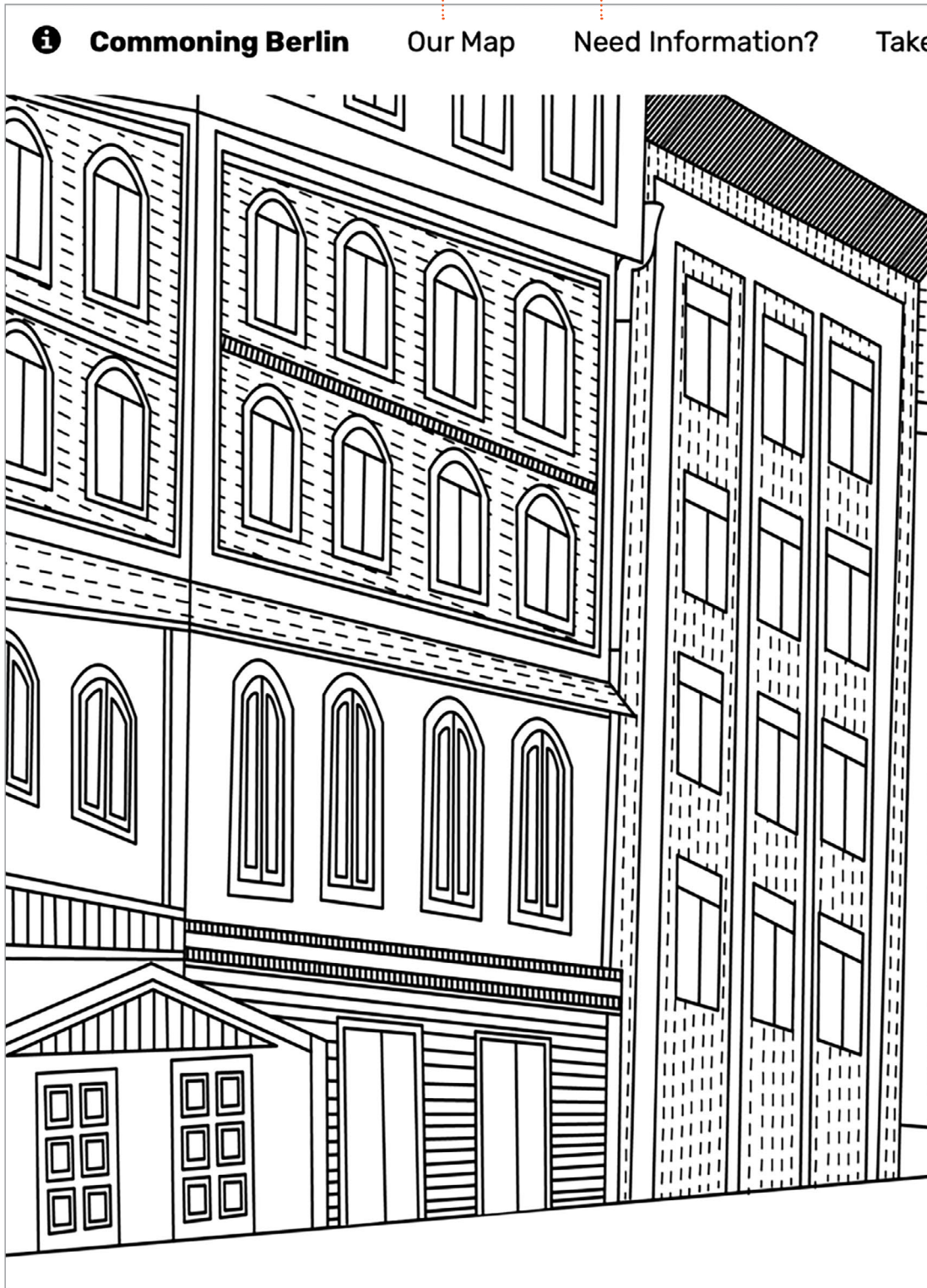
State Geodetic Bureau branches all the ways to each of Belgrade's municipalities. Municipal branches are responsible for working with citizens on issues related to their particular municipal territory.

* The city municipalities are part of the territory of the City of Belgrade, in which certain local self-government activities determined by the city statutes are carried out. The affairs of the city municipalities are governed by various bodies, one of which is the administration with its different departments. Belgrade has 17 municipal - cities in total 10 urban and 7 semi-urban municipalities).

cmmm-maps.eu/berlin

1

2



3

4

e Action!

Offer Support



BGD
BLN
BCN

**HOUSING ~ is about
feelings**



1

Commoning Berlin
Our Map
Need Information?
Take Action!
Offer Support

COMMONING BERLIN – is a map that was made to voice our need for information, to encourage taking action, and to network sites of solidarity with one another. Until a court decision in November 2021, the municipal right of preemption (right of first refusal) was an instrument municipalities could use, together with tenants and socially responsible real-estate companies, to intervene against hyper-marketization, albeit a weak one. Our goal is to use real cases to inspire and mobilize people to find ways of preventing their houses from being sold to profitable corporates and instead help pass properties into safe hands (e.g., cooperatives, foundations, state-owned enterprises). In addition, we aim to push for new policies regarding the right of access to information and bring back the right of preemption (in a stronger format).

Until 26.09.2019, the right of preemption (RPE) was successfully applied to 62 properties with 1780 apartments. During that same time, the failure to apply the right of preemption led to waiver agreements for 132 properties with 3,456 apartments. Thus far, there is no data showing how many of these cases where reversed or undermined by the court decision in 2021. There is evidence of a steady increase in successful cases until 2021 but no geo-marked data with reference to street addresses.

Supporting community
[\[Show\]](#) [\[Don't show\]](#)

Tenants who want to take action
[\[Show\]](#) [\[Don't show\]](#)

Tenants who need information
[\[Show\]](#) [\[Don't show\]](#)

RPE houses
[\[Show\]](#) [\[Don't show\]](#)

2

Commoning Berlin

Our Map

Need Information?

Take Action!

Offer Support

This map is us saying we need information. We are providing evidence to support our demand for better policies and rules for the right to access information. We need to know who owns the buildings we live in to be able to confront and stop the hyper-marketization and the violation of our right to housing.

If you already have the information you need, go to [Take Action!](#) or [Offer Support](#)

1) Select the location of your house on the map

Click and drag to find your exact location
Latitude:
Longitude:

2) We need information

About the landlord
☒ Yes ☐ No
About his/her/their potential sale interest
☒ Yes ☐ No

By clicking below, the information you entered above will become part of our [map!](#)

Submit

After clicking the “Submit” button, a list with names of communities and organizations that can help appears.

3

Commoning Berlin Our Map Need Information? **Take Action** Offer Support

This map is us saying we have taken or want to take action to change our inaccessibility to dignified homes caused by the marketization of housing. Bring the house you live in into safe hands. There are plenty of organizations and communities to support you.

If you are already 'in action' and want to share your skills, let us know how you want to **Offer Support** to others!

1) Select the location of your house on the map

Click and drag to find your exact location

Latitude:

Longitude:

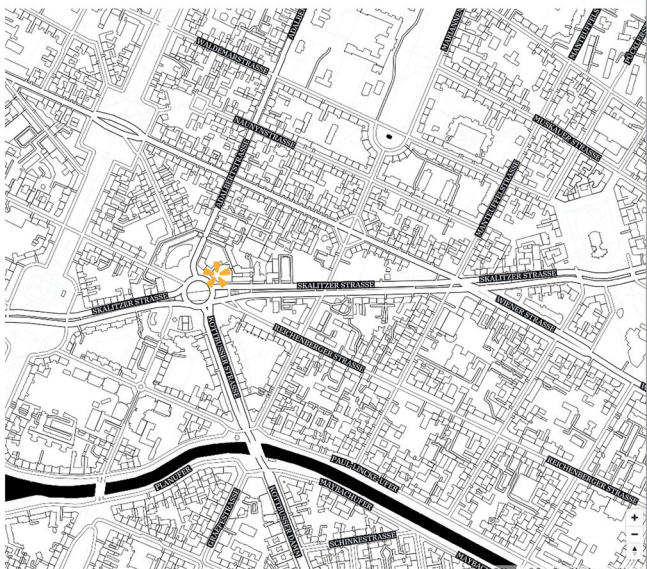
2) We want to take action

Contact the landlord
☐ Yes ☐ No

Bring our house into safe hands
☐ Yes ☐ No

By clicking below, the information you entered above will become part of our map!

Submit



After clicking the "Submit" button, a list with names of communities and organizations that can help appears.

4

Commoning Berlin Our Map Need Information? **Take Action** **Offer Support**

This map shows where and how people are sharing knowledge, skills, and more. Offer support to others who **Need Information?** or want to **Take Action!** to bring a house into safe hands.

1) Select your location on the map

Latitude:

Longitude:

2) Who are you and how do you want to offer support (select one)

We _____ (your Community Name) are a

- ☐ Community, coalition, initiative
- ☐ Non-profit organization
- ☐ Verein (association)
- ☐ Cooperative
- ☐ Foundation
- ☐ Research project
- ☐ Other

We want to support others by

sharing knowledge, skills and contacts
☐ Yes ☐ No

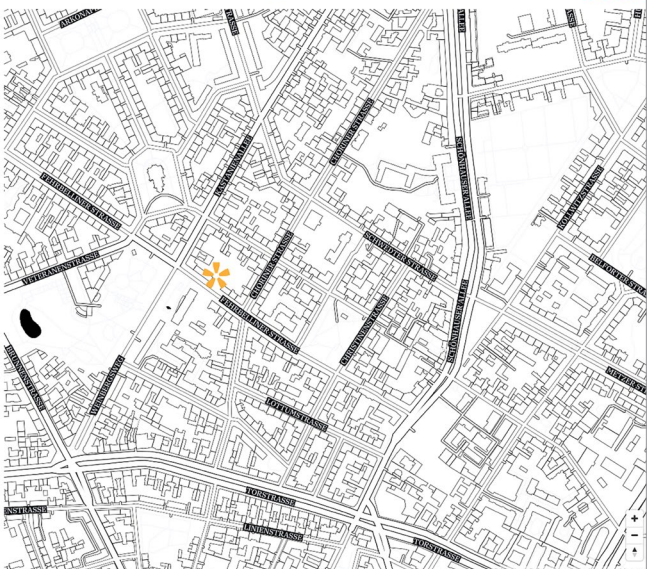
Empowering or assisting self-organization
☐ Yes ☐ No

Supporting press or social media related communication
☐ Yes ☐ No

Mediation
☐ Yes ☐ No

Research
☐ Yes ☐ No

Consulting (e.g., legal, procedural, organizational)
☐ Yes ☐ No



After clicking the "Submit" button, the entered data is added to "Our Map". An administrator proofs made entries.



PROTOTYPE CONCEPT

As explained in the “Our Map” subsection, Commoning Berlin focuses on the RPE instrument, the municipal right of preemption (right of first refusal), which was abolished by a court order in November 2021. Our map builds on a process of various exchanges within our local networks, including the two workshops “Who Buys Berlin?” (Sept 2020) and “Commoning Berlin – But How?” (April 2021) with guests from various backgrounds. The concept and structure of this map are based on the three **CORNERSTONES**: information, solidarity, and action, which represent the kind of change we imagine and seek. In addition, Commoning Berlin is a mapping process and collective online tool that:

- Echoes and builds on ongoing debates and demands of initiatives to increase pressure for specific, targeted political action related to housing property sales and RPE (e.g., 23HäuserSagenNein, Initiativenforum, Mietshäuser Syndikat)
- Builds on or combines existing approaches, projects, and maps (instead of reinventing the wheel), such as Leerstandsmelder, Karte der Verdrängung, or Wem gehört die Stadt? with new layers
- Provides tenants with helpful, easy-to-read information and connections to supportive networks in case they want to employ the RPE in collaboration with local authorities or self-organize to purchase the property in which they reside.

Therefore, the map consists of two complementary components. One component contains information on (un)successful RPE cases. The other is interactive and allows you to voice your own need for information, communicate intended actions, or offer support to others.

DATASET

In July 2023, we opened this map to the public to add entries to the geo-marked database in the four layers of the map: Need Information? (icon: house with “?” mark), Take Action! (icon: house with “!” mark), Offer Support (icon: orange asterisk), and the RPE Properties (icon: key; includes starting entries that were acquired from the ‘Schriftliche Anfrage Drucksache’ Nr. 18/ 21194 of 26.09.2019).

Our map is intended to serve as a tool to help you find out what is going on in your *Kiez* (neighborhood) and in others and to help you self-mobilize. We hope that in the years to come the map and all its layers will continue to grow and that it can be used to exert pressure on the relevant authorities and help reclaim the RPE in a stronger format to combat the commercialization of our cities and homes.

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 Zossener48 e.V.



Right of preemption Das Vorkaufsrecht

This illustration shows the standard procedure for exercising the municipal right of preemption (right of first refusal, RPE) and the possible outcomes from the moment a purchase contract is signed. We illustrate the procedure as it is customarily practiced, and based on experiences from Berlin's district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, we propose potential improvements to this instrument (in terms of time and scope) to make it stronger. This illustration was designed together with the "Commoning Berlin" online map.

Until a court decision in November 2021, the RPE was an instrument, albeit a rather limited one, that municipalities could use, together with tenants and socially responsible real-estate companies, to counteract hyper-marketization. Our "Commoning Berlin" map shows where the RPE was successfully applied since 2019 (bringing houses into safe hands) and where waiver agreements were signed between the municipality and the original buyer (a limited protection in the form of an agreement up to twenty years that specifies restrictions concerning the management of the building). As the data shows, the instrument was being increasingly used by district municipalities until late 2021.

In November 2021 a court ruling overturned one case of RPE. This set a legal precedent and rendered the RPE inapplicable in most cases, which has in turn made the waiver agreements (intended to protect tenants) practically void. This represents a serious set-back in the struggle against the take-over of the housing stock by profit-oriented companies and for the Berlin housing movement's ability to fight back.

The RPE serves to apply and protect the first article of our constitution: people's dignity. It ensures our right to be informed about and to have a say in what happens to our homes. We are continuing the fight to bring it back as an instrument, and in a stronger form.

The back of this poster features an index with the main actors involved in Berlin's housing scene, some of which are mentioned in the illustration on the right. The index includes basic information about each actor and is organized according to the type (see key of categories) and the level of operation (e.g., national or municipal).

This poster was developed within the framework of the CMMU research project that has accompanied the activities of AKS Gemeinwohl und Kollektiv Raumstation since March 2020. It is part of their wider efforts to push for housing justice and the Gemeinwohl-oriented development of Berlin.

For more information, visit baustelle-gemeinwohl.de or cmmu.eu



CMMU – Critical Mapping in Municipalist Movements is a 3.5-year research project that brings together an international team from Belgrade, Berlin, and Barcelona. It is hosted at K LAB, TU Berlin, supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, and implemented in collaboration with Ministarstvo Prostora, Observatori DESC, AKS Gemeinwohl, and Kollektiv Raumstation.

In parallel to the Berlin-focused "Commoning Berlin" online map and this accompanying poster, the Belgrade team developed the "How (un)affordable is housing in Belgrade?" online map and accompanying poster "Law Proposal: Rent Control", and the Barcelona team developed the "Stop Evictions" online map and the accompanying poster with the same name. To view the maps and posters online, scan the QR code at the top.

Diese Abbildung zeigt den üblichen Ablauf für die Ausübung des kommunalen Vorkaufsrechts (VKR) und die möglichen Folgen ab dem Zeitpunkt des Abschlusses eines Kaufvertrags. Wir veranschaulichen das Verfahren so, wie es üblicherweise praktiziert wird und schlagen auf der Grundlage von Erfahrungen aus dem Berliner Bezirk Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg mögliche Verbesserungen dieses Instruments (in Bezug auf Zeit und Umfang) vor, um es zu stärken. Diese Illustration wurde zusammen mit der Online-Karte „Commoning Berlin“ entworfen.

Bis zum Gerichtsurteil im November 2021 war das kommunale VKR ein – wenn auch begrenztes – Instrument, das Kommunen gemeinsam mit Mieter*innen und sozial verantwortlichen Immobilienunternehmen nutzen konnten, um der profitorientierten Vermarktung von Häusern entgegenzuwirken. Unsere Karte „Commoning Berlin“ zeigt, wo das Instrument seit 2019 erfolgreich angewandt wurde (also Häuser in sichere Hände gebracht wurden) und wo Abwendungsvereinbarungen zwischen dem Bezirk und dem ursprünglichen Käufer unterschrieben wurden (ein begrenzter Schutz in Form eines Vertrags mit einer Laufzeit von bis zu zwanzig Jahren, in dem Beschränkungen für den städtebauliche Umgang mit dem Gebäude festgelegt sind). Wie die Daten zeigen, wurde dieses Instrument bis Ende 2021 zunehmend von den Bezirken in Berlin genutzt.

Im November 2021 urteilte das Bundesverwaltungsgericht über einen Fall im Bezirk Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. Damit wurde ein juristischer Präzedenzfall geschaffen und die Anwendung des kommunalen VKR nahezu vollständig ausgeschlossen. Außerdem führte diese neue Rechtsprechung zu Rechtsunsicherheiten und Angreifbarkeit der bisher geschlossenen Abwendungsvereinbarungen. Dies bedeutet einen schweren Rückschlag im Kampf gegen die Bewirtschaftung von Wohnungsbeständen durch profitorientierte Unternehmen und für die Gestaltungsmöglichkeiten der Berliner Mieterbewegung.

Das kommunale VKR dient der Anwendung und dem Schutz des ersten Artikels unseres Grundgesetzes: der Würde des Menschen. Er sichert unser Recht auf Information und Mitsprache darüber, was mit unseren Wohnungen geschieht. Wir kämpfen weiter dafür, dass es als Instrument wieder eingeführt wird, und zwar in einer stärkeren Form.

Auf der Rückseite des Plakats befindet sich ein Index mit einigen wichtigen Akteuren aus Zivilgesellschaft, Politik, Verwaltung und Wirtschaft in Verbindung zur Immobilien- und Wohnungsförderung, von denen einige in der Abbildung rechts genannt sind. Das Verzeichnis enthält grundlegende Informationen zu jedem Akteur und ist nach Art (siehe Kategorienschlüssel) und Handlungsebene (z.B. national oder kommunal) geordnet.

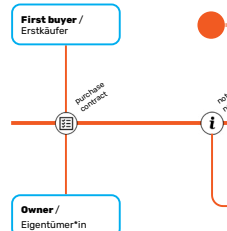
Dieses Poster wurde im Rahmen des CMMU-Forschungsprojekts entwickelt, das die Aktivitäten der AKS Gemeinwohl und Kollektiv Raumstation seit März 2020 begleitet. Es ist Teil ihrer Bemühungen, sich für Gerechtigkeit, Selbstbestimmung und eine gemeinwohlorientierte Entwicklung beim Zugang zu Wohnungs- und Gewerbeflächen in Berlin einzusetzen.

Weitere Informationen finden Sie unter baustelle-gemeinwohl.de oder cmmu.eu

CMMU – Critical Mapping in Municipalist Movements ist ein 3,5-jähriges Forschungsprojekt, das ein internationales Team aus Belgrad, Berlin und Barcelona zusammenbringt. Es ist am K LAB der TU Berlin angesiedelt, wird von der Robert Bosch Stiftung unterstützt und in Zusammenarbeit mit Ministarstvo Prostora, Observatori DESC, AKS Gemeinwohl und Kollektiv Raumstation durchgeführt.

Neben der Berliner Online-Karte „Commoning Berlin“ und dem dazugehörigen Poster entwickelte das Belgrader Team die Online-Karte „How (un)affordable is housing in Belgrade?“ und das dazugehörige Poster „Law Proposal: Rent Control“. Das Barcelona-Team entwickelte die Online-Karte „Stop Evictions“ und das dazugehörige Poster mit dem gleichen Namen. Um die Karten und Poster online zu sehen, scannen Sie den QR-Code oben.

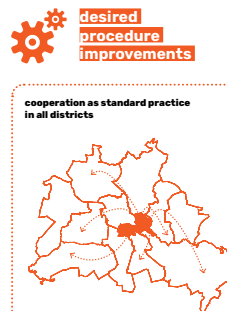
standard
procedure



demanded
procedure
improvement



further
desired
improvements



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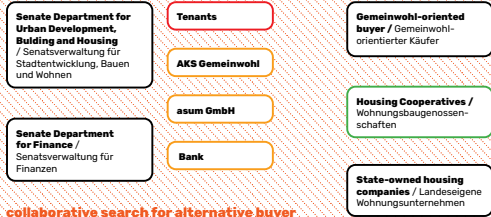
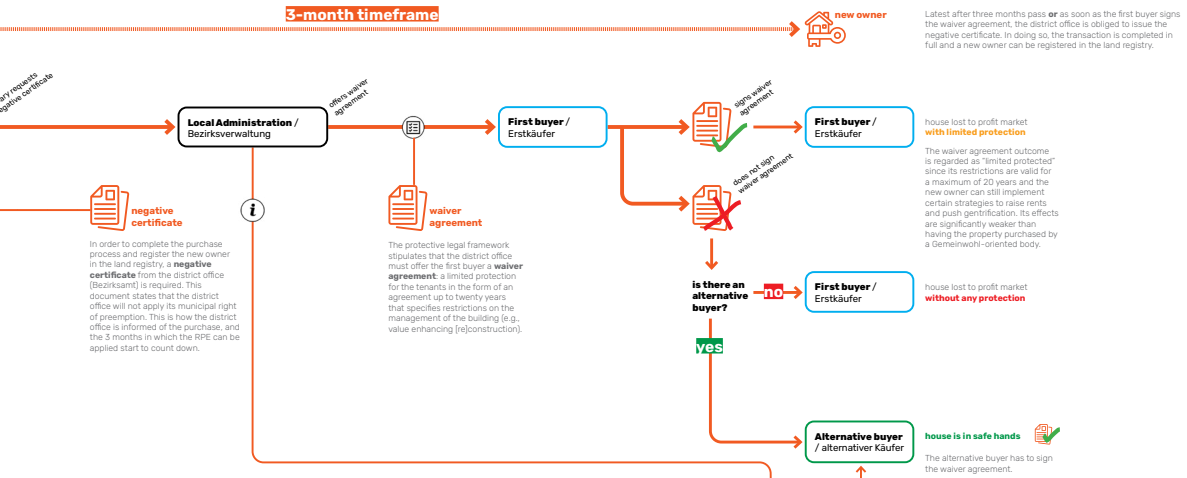


Robert Bosch
Stiftung

Public institution

Civil society organization or institution

Civic initiative



desired legal improvements



limited purchase prices for alternative Gemeinwohli-oriented buyers



without the obligation to negotiate a waiver agreement

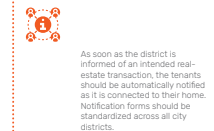


desired improvements regarding access

enhance organizational and financial resources



sharing information to empower the people who want to be engaged



ACTORS

Actors named on the front side of this poster are briefly described here, as well as others that we find relevant to the illustrated process and the housing justice struggles in general.

National level- Germany

Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development / Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung (BBSR)
*2009, Germany

Part of the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (BBSR), acts as a departmental research institution and advises the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI) and other ministries.

Federal Ministry of Housing, City Development and Building / Bundesministerium für Wohnen, Stadtentwicklung und Bauwesen (BMWSB)
*1949, Germany

Until 2021:
Federal Ministry of Interior, Building and Community (BMI)

Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning / Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung (BBR)
*1998, Germany

The Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning is the highest authority responsible for federal construction in the area of responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building. It is organized into a construction and a research division. The main task of the BBR's construction divisions is to oversee the Federal Republic of Germany's construction projects in Berlin, Bonn, and abroad. The BBR's research department is organized as the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR).

Institute for Federal Real-estate / Bundesanstalt für Immobilienaufgaben (BImA)
*2005, Germany

BImA was founded in 2005 by law as a successor of the Federal Property Administration in order to manage and develop the Federal Republic's real-estate stock according to modern commercial business principles. The BImA is being highly criticized for market-oriented business plans and operations, especially by initiatives and communes that have to buy land for market prices or that are not taken into account when federal real estate is purchased or leased.

Parliament of the governments in the federal states / Bundesrat
*1949, Germany

Organ through which the federal states participate in the legislation and administration of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Parliament of Germany / Deutscher Bundestag
*1949, Germany

Elected by German citizens. Tasks are the legislative process, parliamentary scrutiny of the government and federal spending.

Campaigning Initiative of Housing Cooperatives Berlin / Marketinginitiative der Wohnungsbau-genossenschaften Deutschland
*2017, Berlin

"Marketing association" made up of rather conservative cooperatives in Berlin and Germany. Among other things, they are working with an advertising campaign against the rent cap. In Berlin, there are currently 27 cooperatives with over 95,000 apartments and around 160,000 members (02/2021).

Federal Association for Housing and Urban Development (vhw) / Bundesverband für Wohnen und Stadtentwicklung e. V. (vhw)
*1942, Germany

In the postwar decades, vhw was concerned with overcoming the housing shortage through home ownership, especially in private homes. Since the late 1990s, the association has increasingly focused on civil society and governance processes in cities. Through professional training and research in the fields of housing and urban development, it is committed to the performance of municipalities, a diverse civil society, and the strengthening of local democracy.

Foundations / Stiftungen
Tinas Foundation
Edith Mayron Foundation
Montagsstiftung Urbane Räume

German Association of Cities / Deutscher Städtetag
*1905, Germany

The German Association of Cities represents the interests of all cities, meets with the federal government, Bundestag, Bundesrat, European Union, and numerous organizations to discuss relevant issues, exerts influence on legislation, and pays attention to municipal self-government, which is guaranteed in the Basic Law. Numerous representatives of the cities are involved in the committees of the German Association of Cities.

German Institute of Urban Affairs / Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik gGmbH (diU)
*1973, Germany

As the largest urban research institute (think-tank) in the German-speaking world, it provides a wide range of services for municipalities and has locations in Berlin and Cologne. diU is a solidarity institution of the cities and is supported by more than 300 municipalities, as well as by institutional sponsors, the federal government, and the State of Berlin. In addition, diU attracts project-related research funding. The sole shareholder of the non-profit institute is the Verein für Kommunalwissenschaften (VfK).

GLS Bank
*1974, Germany

Sustainable bank that invests in social and ecological projects. Supports the financing of real-estate purchases in BRR processes with credits.

The Immobilienien network ("real estate for the many")
*2018, Berlin

Lobbying for better terms and conditions for real estate and urban development oriented toward the common good (gemeinwohl-orientiert). The Immobilienien network is an alliance of actors from civil society, the public sector, and business. They support initiatives that develop self-organized and cooperative real estate from many for many.

The Ask the State platform / Frag den Staat
*2017, Germany

A project of the Open Knowledge Foundation. The aim is to enable or facilitate citizens to make enquiries on the basis of the Freedom of Information Act and to document and share the answers. They also carry out research and campaigns on specific topics, such as to prevent speculation for a transparent Berlin housing policy, and campaigns to publish waiver agreements (Abwendungsvereinbarungen).

Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation
*1990, Berlin

The Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation is one of the six major political foundations in the Federal Republic of Germany, tasked primarily with conducting political education both at home and abroad. The foundation is closely linked to Die Linke, the German Left Party.

The Tax Justice network / Netzwerk Steuergerechtigkeit
*2017, Berlin

The Tax Justice Network is involved in various fields to promote a tax and financial policy oriented toward the common good. Trade unions, religious and development organizations, social movements, environmental and human rights associations, scientific institutions, other civil society organizations, and active individuals all work together. Part of a worldwide movement working together under the umbrella of the Global Alliance for Tax Justice.

The Right to the City forum / Recht der Stadt Forum
*2015, Hamburg

Every year, the Right to the City forum brings together housing and urban policy activists from all over Germany and sometimes beyond – in relating cities. Small tenant and neighborhood initiatives are invited, as well as large housing policy campaigns, house projects and squatters, representatives from the community and youth culture, feminists, anti-racists, activists for climate justice or decolonization, and all those who fight for solidarity perspectives in their neighborhoods and search for alternatives to the capitalist city.

Tenement Syndicate / Mietshäuser Syndikat
*1999, Freiburg

Mietshäuser Syndikat is a cooperative and non-commercial investment company in Germany for the collective acquisition of houses that are transferred to collective ownership in order to create long-term affordable housing and space for initiatives.

German Property Federation (ZIA) / Zentraler Immobilien Ausschuss (ZIA)
*2004, Germany

ZIA is the central association and stakeholder group of the real-estate industry. It brings together and advocates the interests of its members in the decision-making process in public, politics, and administration.

The House and Property federation of homeowners / Haus und Grund
*1911, Germany and Berlin

Lobby for homeowners, organized into numerous associations at the local, regional, and federal level as a conservative representation and commercial network for home and landowners throughout Germany. Represents "private property as a foundation for freedom and prosperity."

City level

Berlin Property Market / BIM - Berliner Immobilien Management
*2016, Berlin

A real-estate service provider of the State of Berlin, responsible for 6,000 state-owned properties. BIM takes care of the leasing, optimization, and redevelopment of properties in the city. BIM is a subsidiary of the State of Berlin, established in 2016 from the original BIM. The original BIM was founded in 2003 as a fully-owned subsidiary of the State of Berlin to support the consolidation of the budget.

Evaluation Committee for Property Values / Gutachterausschuss Grundstückerwerte
*1960, Berlin

The Evaluation Committee Values was created in Germany under the then Federal Act. The value-relevant data of all purchase contracts of land are kept in the purchase price collection (Kaufpreissammlung) and are analyzed and published in summarized form. They serve as a basis for market value appraisals (Verkehrswertgutachten) by experts or mortgage lending agencies by banks. There is an individual committee in each federal state.

Berlin House of Representatives / Abgeordnetenhaus B
*2021, Berlin

The Berlin House of Representatives is called the Landtag in the states (Länderparlamente) and the state parliament of the federal states. As a city-state, Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen, has its own state and municipal tasks. The territorial states (Länder) have their own state and municipal tasks.

Housing Supply Berlin / Wohnungsversorgung (WVB)
*2016, Berlin

The task of this institution is to review, update the rules and guidelines concerning the supply of the state-owned companies.

IBB Investitionsbank
*1942, Berlin

On behalf of the State of Berlin, it promotes and finances urban projects in the business and economic development, urban development.

Land Registry / Grundbuchamt (in Amtsgerichten)
Berlin

There are eight land registries in Berlin.

Portfolio Committee / Portfolioausschuss
*2016, Berlin

Makes decisions regarding assignment of state-owned properties. BIM is responsible for the technical management of the cluster process. The first meeting of the newly established Portfolio Committee was held in July 2019. On 31 December 2019, the Committee had passed a resolution for 6,000 (BIM) of the approx. 6,700 cluster properties. It consists of representatives of the state administration, districts, and financial administration.

Senate Department Finance / Senatsverwaltung für Finanzen
*2021, Berlin

The work of the Senate Department Finance is crucial for the development of Berlin as it is responsible for financing and planning projects central to the city's development and infrastructure and the budget of the State of Berlin.

Public institution

Civil society organization or institution

Civic initiative or collective

Community-based property holder

Private property holders or entity

This is an interactive poster. Links to the websites of the actors are embedded in the names. Click to visit them.

- Berlin

Municipal level - District*

Management
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Urban Development,
Building and Housing

*2021, Berlin

The Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing develops overarching urban planning schemes for the city and coordinates urban development regarding issues such as housing and traffic planning, environmental protection and social infrastructure.

State-owned housing
companies / Landesegene
Wohnungsunternehmen (LWU)

*Berlin

There are around 323,000 state-owned apartments in Berlin. They are managed and rented by six companies: degewo, GEOSBAU, Gewobag, KfWBO, STADT UND LAND, and WBM. Their owner and shareholder is the state of Berlin. The six companies operate as independent limited companies (GmbH) and public limited companies (Aktiengesellschaft).

Coalition of Young
Cooperatives / Bündnis Junge
Genossenschaften Berlin

*2017, Berlin

Alliance of Berlin housing cooperatives that want to make a significant contribution to a sustainable, mixed, and solidary city. There were 25 cooperatives at the end of 2020.

Forum for Initiatives /
Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik
Berlin

*2019, Berlin

A project that supports and strengthens the development, networking, and public voice of urban and housing policy initiatives and projects in Berlin. The goal is to improve the visibility of the diverse initiative landscape and to provide an interface between the structures of Berlin's politics and administration. Four times a year, members of Berlin's rent and urban policy initiatives meet in so-called forums in the House of Representatives. Each time, they present a key topic, identify problems, and raise demands. In this way, impulses from civil society are to be brought into parliament as effectively as possible. In addition, opportunities for cooperation between the members of parliament, the parliamentary groups, and the senate administrations are actively sought and cultivated.

The Rethinking the
City Initiative / Initiative
Stadtneudenken

*2011, Berlin

Association of people from the fields of urban planning and architecture, science, art, culture, business, and social affairs who are interested in urban policy and who work in Berlin within the framework of various initiatives and organizations for self-determined, cooperative, and socially equal urban development.

Roundtable on Real-Estate
Policy / Runder Tisch
Liebenschaftspolitik

*2012, Berlin

The Stadt Neudenken initiative and all parliamentary groups of the Berlin House of Representatives invite representatives from civil society, politics, administration, and science to discuss Berlin's real-estate policy. The Round Table is an instrument for civil society participation in the realignment and implementation of Berlin's real-estate policy.

Stadtbodenstiftung

*2020, Berlin

A foundation in the making, based on a community land trust.

Action coalition against
displacement and rent
madness / Aktionsbündnis
gegen Verdrängung und
Mietenwahnsinn

*2019, Germany

A nationwide coalition of tenants' initiatives and right to the city groups. They work outside of parliament and without the participation of political parties. The goal is to bundle, strengthen, and coordinate the supraparliamentary cooperation of all local initiatives and groups and to fight together for a fundamental change in housing policy.

Alliance to prevent
forced eviction / Bündnis
Zwangsräumung verhindern

*2012, Berlin

Stop Evictions Berlin fights against the eviction of families and individuals through large- and small-scale actions, press work, civil disobedience, collective negotiation with landlords and state entities, and support at court proceedings.

Coalition KusWo - communal
& self-administrated
living / Bündnis Kommunal
und Selbstverwaltet wohnen
(KusWo)

*2017, Berlin

The aim of the project/initiative is to create a municipal housing sector that is secure in the long term and in which tenant participation plays a central role. In addition, it strives to integrate co-determination and self-governance into the state-owned housing through self-governance.

Expropriate Deutsche
Wohnen & co. / Deutsche
Wohnen & co. enteignen

*2018, Berlin

Through a referendum, they want to call on the Berlin Senate to pass a law that regulates the socialization (inaccurately: expropriation) of the apartments of private housing companies with more than 3000 Berlin apartments (e.g., Deutsche Wohnen) and their transfer to an institution under public law.

Initiative for a tenants
union / Initiative für eine
Mieter*innengewerkschaft

*2019, Berlin

An initiative to build a union for tenants in Berlin, a relatively unknown concept in Germany, to fight collectively for their rights and interests and stand together against profit-oriented landlords and skyrocketing rent increases. A tenants union can create the structures needed to safeguard collective tenancy rights, to network as tenants in the long term, and to fight for more self-determination in housing.

Kotti & co

*2011, Berlin Kreuzberg 36

Founded in 2011 in a heterogeneous neighborhood in Berlin Kreuzberg (around Kottbusser Tor or "Kotti"), Kotti & Co fights against high rents (including in social housing) and racism. In 2012, they occupied the space in front of their social housing at Kottbusser Tor with a self-built wooden house (Beckenhaus) and have been protesting since then against the ousting of tenants with low incomes from the inner city.

The "Who owns Berlin?"
project / Projekt „Wem gehört
Berlin“

*2018, Berlin

Research project on ownership structures in the real-estate market in Berlin. From Tages-spiegel newspaper, Correctiv, Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation, and Christoph Trautvetter.

The "Who owns the city?"
project / Projekt „Wem gehört
die Stadt“

*2019, Berlin

Research project on ownership structures in the real-estate market in Berlin. Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation and Christoph Trautvetter (Netzwerk Steuergerechtigkeit).

The Reclaim Your City
platform

*2003, Berlin

Reclaim Your City (RYC) is a platform and archive for protest communication, urban appropriation, and artistic interventions in public space. It is involved in mapping displacement and right to the city movement in Berlin (with Orange Tangle). It was part of a multi-initiative process to rescue the Dräger Area. It was dissolved in 2016.

The Tempelhofer Feld
referendum / Volksentscheid
Tempelhofer Feld

*2014, Berlin

Result: Tempelhofer Conservation Act (TH-Gesetz)

Referendum on
Transparency Act /
Volksentscheid
Transparenzgesetz

*2019, Berlin

They advocate a new transparency act that regulates which information on Berlin politics and administration, as well as on the companies of the state of Berlin, must be actively published. They are currently waiting for the senate to review the bill. If the chamber of deputies does not accept the proposal, they will enter the referendum in early 2021.

The Sink Mediapreel
referendum / Mediapreel
versenken, Bürgerscheid
„Spreuer für alle“

*2018, Berlin

Mediapreel is an enormous investment project to develop the broadfields where the strip of the Berlin wall and to renew the urban surroundings. This plan, which started in the 1990s, was met with great resistance. Around 2008, the same time when more local tenants initiatives started to connect, the campaign against Mediapreel got a boost by the media and mobilized a lot of people. The "Mediapreel versenken" campaign can be considered the first big thing that successfully united the various initiatives. They won a referendum. This referendum, however, was not considered binding by the Berlin Senate. Nevertheless, the campaign continued to drive the tenant movement and the politicization of many people concerned about housing issues.

The Rent Referendum /
Mietenvollentscheid

*2017, Berlin

Result: Because the draft law prepared by the Rental Referendum had no chance to achieve legal advisability due to a legal error, an agreement was sought and reached with the parliamentary party leadership of the SPD in the form of the Housing Supply Act (WoStG), which has been in force since 1 January 2016.

Right to the City Working
Group of the Interventionist
Left in Berlin / AG Recht auf
Stadt der IL Berlin

*2014, Berlin

With different forms of protest and politics, they stand up against rising rents, gentrification, and displacement and for the socialization of housing. In different places and alliances, they fight against the sellout of the city. Among other things, they are currently involved in the "Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen and Co." initiative.

Roundtable on the
Gentrification of Moabit - Who
owns Moabit / Runder Tisch
Gentrifizierung Moabit - Wem
gehört Moabit

*2011, Berlin

The roundtable is intended to serve as a starting point for those affected and to provide assistance. Exemplary case studies are to be documented to generate publicity. On the other hand, the intention is to contribute to building up a lobby for Moabit tenants and to exert influence on political decisions in matters of tenancy law, property allocation, etc. Actions together with Berlin tenants' organizations and tenants' associations from other districts are planned for the future.

The City from Below
Initiative / Stadt von unten
Initiative

*2014, Berlin Kreuzberg

Work on basic and concrete models that can create and secure affordable living space in the long term and at the same time open up new possibilities. Originally together with others in the fight against the privatization of Dräger Area, which is now the redevelopment area Rathausblock. The initiative was dissolved in 2021.

The 200 Houses network /
„200 Häuser“

*2019, Berlin

Berlin-wide network for people affected by the conversion of rental flats into condominiums and the resulting displacement and termination of their lease agreement because of the owner's needs (Eigenwohnung). To bring tenants together and transform anonymous affiliation into a joint force for action.

23 Houses Say No / „23
Häuser sagen Nein“

*2020, Berlin

A group of organized tenants' from 23 houses that were to be sold to DW at once. Commitment to municipalization in cases where pre-emptive rights apply. Started Petition with demands for improving the right of preemption (together with Bism Kiez).

ExKotraprint GmbH

*2017, Berlin

A tenant initiative (in actuality "professionals") in the field of architecture, project management, and art that prevented the sellout of the area from by the state of Berlin to a private hedge fund and took over the area by acquiring "heritable building rights" (erbschaftlich Erbbaurecht) with two tenants' unions buying the land.

Housing Cooperatives /
Wohnungsgenossenschaften

*2017, Berlin

One of the partners to the "Haus der Statistik" model project, an example of a new cooperative planning process with the Berlin Senate, municipality (Bezirk Mitte), communal housing association (WBG), and Berlin Property Management (BPM).

The Zusammenkunft
cooperative / Zusammenkunft
eG

*2017, Berlin

Provides advice to district administration and politics, studies areas with social protection status, advises tenants.

City Councillor (District
Level) / Bezirksstadträt*in

*2017, Berlin

At the municipal level, the city councillor is involved in politics and heads a certain department of administration such as urban development, social affairs, or sports.

District Council / Bezirksver-
ordnetenversammlung BVV

*2017, Berlin

The BVV is an organ of the district self-government. It controls the administration of the district, adopts the district budget, and decides on matters assigned to it. Unlike the Bundestag or the House of Representatives, the BVV is not a "real" parliament that has the power to pass laws and ordinances, but rather "the administration." It is tasked with initiating the administrative action of the district office (Bezirksamt) by introducing appropriate resolutions and with supervising it. In addition, it can demand information on all matters from the district office at any time. It elects the district mayor and the city councillors and can also remove them if necessary.

Local Administration /
Bezirksverwaltung

*2017, Berlin

In Germany, urban land use planning is formally the responsibility of the municipality (local self-government). In the special case of Berlin, planning sovereignty is divided between the senate and the districts, in cases of "Berlin-wide interest," the senate administration can take over. But certain areas of the BaUG remain in district hands.

AKS Gemeinwohl

*2018, Friedrichshagen-Kreuzberg

The "Gemeinwohlorientierte Stadtentwicklung" working and coordination structure (AKS Gemeinwohl) is an intermediary between administration, civil society, and politics for common-good-oriented urban development in Friedrichshagen-Kreuzberg. Here, new forms of cooperation for co-produced urban development are tested. The aim of AKS is to support community-oriented projects and spaces, as well as to promote a sustainable land policy in order to secure a diverse urban society.

asum (applied urban
research and tenant
advisory services) /
asum GmbH - Angewandte
Stadtforschung und
Mietberatung

*1981, Berlin

Provides advice to district administration and politics, studies areas with social protection status, advises tenants.

Locally Built Platform /
LokalBau Plattform

*2018, Friedrichshagen-Kreuzberg

Dedicated, for example, to the question: How can new construction succeed in creating affordable space for uses that are actually needed? To organize this, the LokalBau platform's integrative development strategy brings people together to formulate their needs and develop solutions.

The Bism Kiez Initiative (Our
neighborhood)

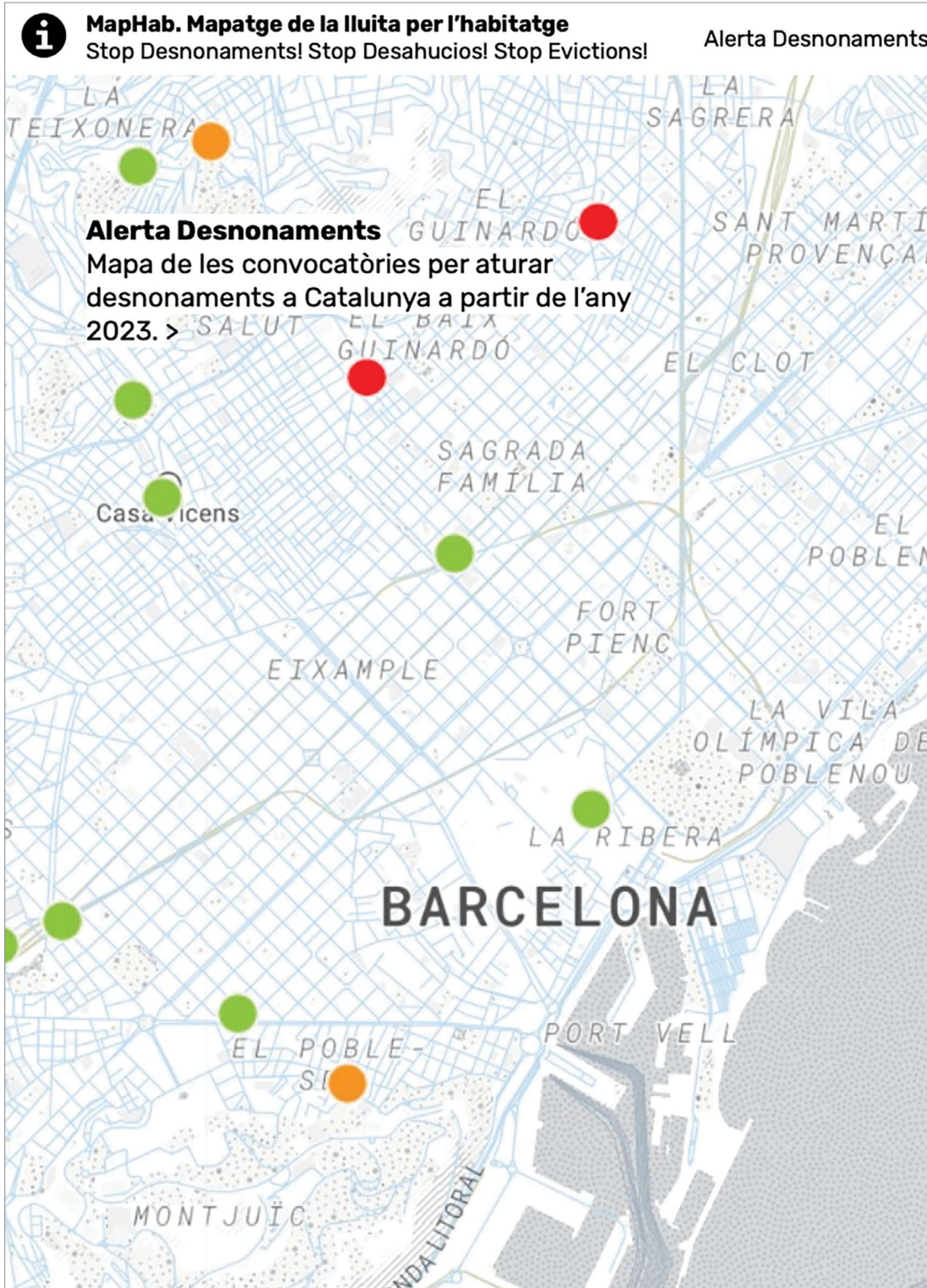
*2016/17, Berlin

Neighborhood initiative against displacement and for the preservation of living neighbors' needs.

* There are a total of 12 districts in Berlin, each responsible for their own urban development. However, the districts are not completely independent and work closely with the Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing. The Senate Department establishes overarching goals and plans for urban development, while the districts implement the urban planning schemes on site and decide on building permits required for the realization of building projects.

cmm-maps.eu/barcelona

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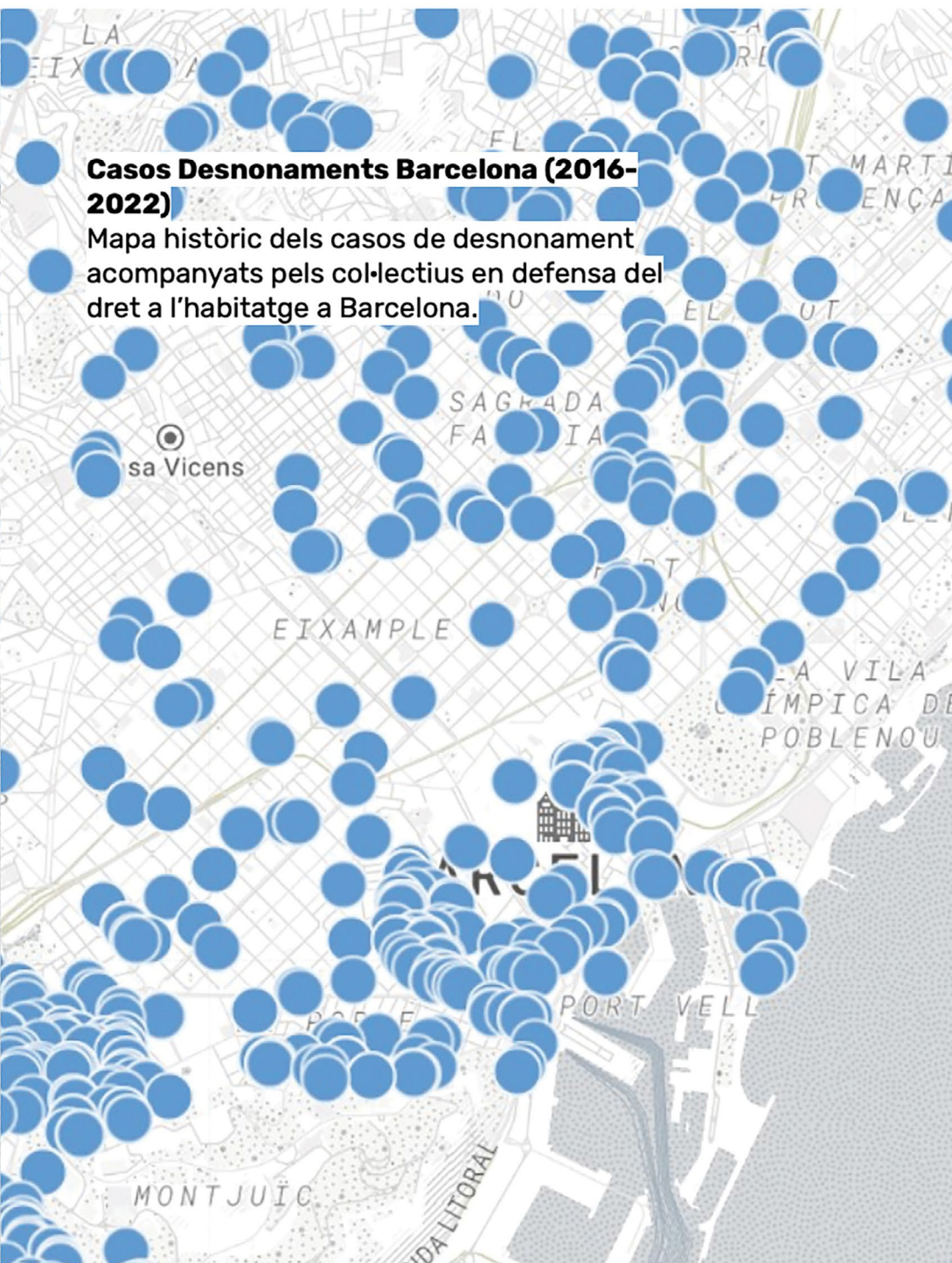


Casos Desnonaments Barcelona (2016-2022)

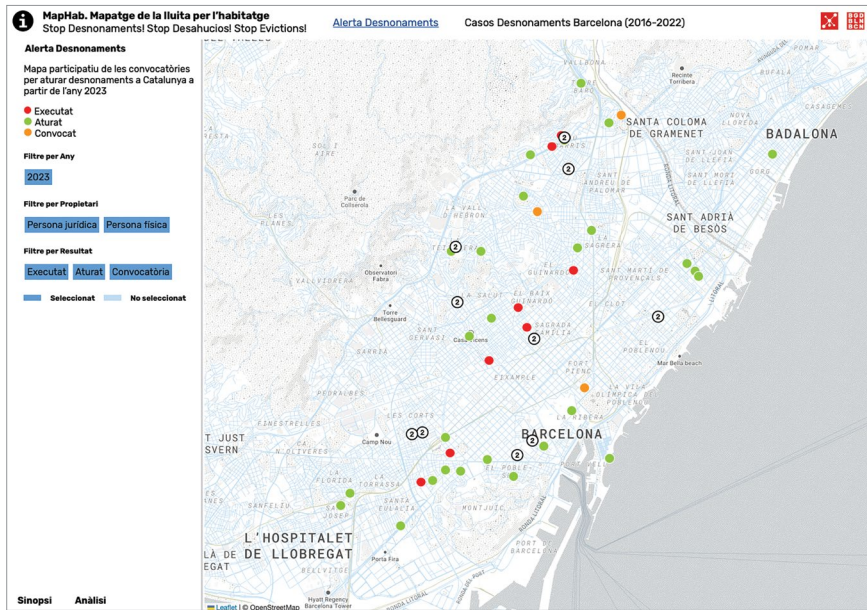


Casos Desnonaments Barcelona (2016-2022)

Mapa històric dels casos de desnonament acompanyats pels col·lectius en defensa del dret a l'habitatge a Barcelona.



1



Mapa de les convocatòries per aturar desnonaments a Catalunya a partir de l'any 2023. Indica lloc, data i hora de la convocatòria, el propietari demandant i el col·lectiu convocant. La informació la faciliten els propis activistes per un habitatge digne.

Objectius

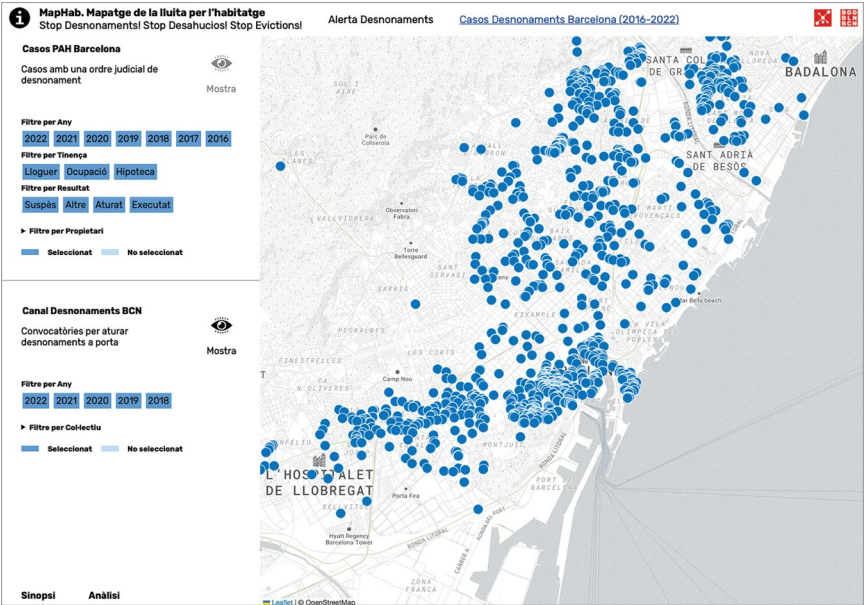
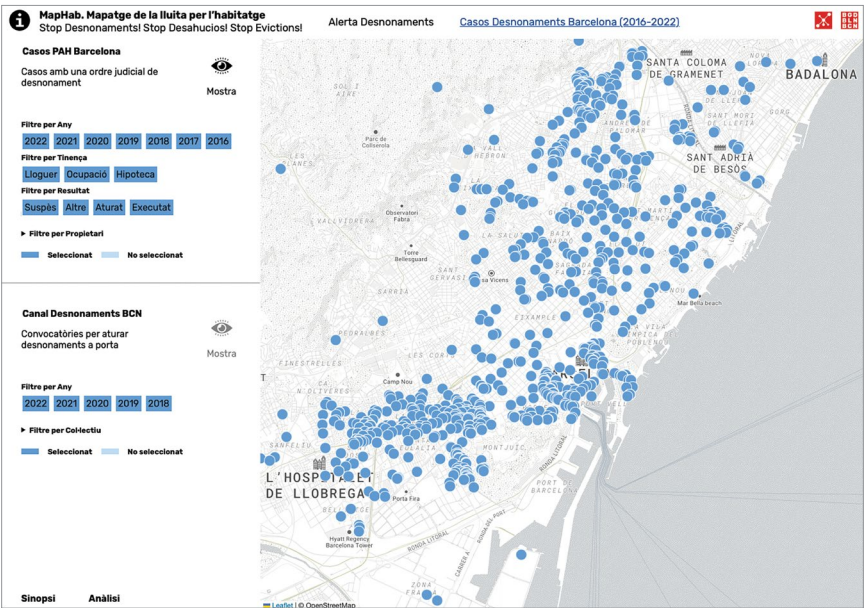
L'objectiu del mapa és visibilitzar el problema dels desnonaments a Catalunya i la resposta popular, així com sistematitzar la informació per tal d'afavorir la reflexió col·lectiva.

El mapatge posa de relleu la geografia de les convocatòries per convidar a reflexionar sobre el seu desplegament territorial. L'enregistrament de la data i l'hora de les convocatòries possibilita traçar la seva evolució temporal amb l'objectiu d'identificar possibles patrons rellevants. Sistematitzar les dades dels propietaris demandants, per altra banda, pretén millorar la comprensió de les relacions entre la geografia, l'estructura de la propietat i la problemàtica dels desnonaments. Finalment, mostrar les zones d'activitat dels diferents col·lectius permet visualitzar solapaments i complementarietats.

Metodologia

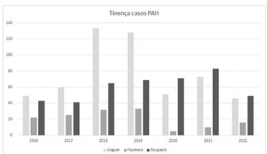
El mapa visualitza la informació compartida a través del canal de difusió de Telegram "DesnonamentsBCN" i les convocatòries facilitades per voluntaris de diversos col·lectius en lluita pel dret a l'habitatge a Catalunya.

2



Casos PAH Barcelona

Pel que fa al règim de tinença, s'observa un increment relatiu dels casos d'ocupació durant tot el període i un increment brusc de casos de lloguer fins l'entrada en efecte de les moratòries. Els casos amb hipoteca, per la seva banda, mostren una evolució lleugerament ascendent fins el 2020, quan cauen en picat.





PROTOTYPE CONCEPT

This initiative is driven by the belief that critical mapping is a key tool for empowerment as it allows for the democratization of knowledge about territory and establishes connections and alliances. In Barcelona, the task of mapping evictions seeks to provide a tool to make them visible and show where they take place. Likewise, the aim is to provide information about “who evicts in Barcelona” in order to make the structure of property ownership more transparent. Looking to the future, this website is intended to become a platform to collect different material in relation to housing struggles. For now, the website hosts two different maps:

EVICTIIONS ALERT is a map of the calls to stop evictions in Catalonia from 2023 on (yet, only those that had not been suspended prior to the launch date). It shows their place, date, and time, as well as the name of the owner (in the case of a legal person) and the group making the call. The information is provided by the activists fighting for decent housing. The map is intended to shine light on the problem of evictions throughout Catalonia and the grassroots resistance, as well as to systematize information and promote reflection on where the evictions take place. By recording the date and time of the calls, it is possible to trace their temporal evolution in order to identify potentially relevant patterns. In turn, systematizing the data of the owners aims to improve the understanding of the relationships between geography and the structure of property with regard to the problem of evictions. Finally, showing the areas of activity of the different groups allows us to visualize overlaps and similarities.

EVICTIION CASES BARCELONA (2016–2022) is a map of the eviction cases that were supported by the groups fighting for the right to housing in Barcelona. This includes the eviction cases managed by the Platform of People Affected by Mortgages (PAH) of Barcelona between 2016 and 2022. It contains the date, address, and housing tenure, as well as the name of the owner if it is a legal person (from 2020 onward). Moreover, it shows the outcome of each case: whether it was suspended in the courts, stopped at the door, executed, or unknown. In addition, the map also charts the calls of different housing groups to block evictions between 2018 and 2022. These include information on the place, date and the name of the group that made the call. In this case, however, there is no information on the housing tenure (rent, mortgage, or occupation/squat), the result before 2020 and the name of the owner in the case of a legal person before 2022. The result is specified only after 2020 and the name of the owner only for the year 2022. The aim is to identify spatio-temporal patterns

from the data collected by the groups fighting for housing in Barcelona. It is intended to raise awareness about the bottom-up information produced by the collectives themselves, pointing to both the potentialities and limits of the data collected. In doing so, this map seeks to show how the act of mapping can contribute to the struggle.

DATASET

The Evictions Alert map visualizes the information shared through the “DesnonamentsBCN” Telegram broadcast channel and the calls provided by volunteers from various collectives fighting for the right to housing in Catalonia.

The Eviction Cases Barcelona (2016–2022) map reflects two different databases. On the one hand, the database of the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) Barcelona is built from cases with a court order for eviction, extracted from its website. On the other, the database of the calls to block evictions is based on the information shared by the collectives on the “DesnonamentsBCN” Telegram broadcast channel and similars.

CONTRIBUTORS

Lorenzo Vidal was supported through the grant “H2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie” (#101026179)



Stop Evictions! Stop Desnonaments!

This illustration shows the eviction process from the moment an eviction order is issued against a tenant in Barcelona, including the possible trajectories and outcomes. It shows the actors involved along the way and how difficult it is to challenge an eviction order. Notwithstanding, here we provide information on where to find support. This illustration was prepared together with the "Stop Evictions!" online map.

More than a decade after the financial crisis of 2008, the housing emergency in Spain has become chronic, as evidenced by the fact that more than 1.5 million people were evicted between 2008 and 2019. More than 20% of these evictions were in Catalunya, with a concentration in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, averaging 33.7 evictions per day in 2019. Despite the eviction moratorium associated with COVID-19 in force, evictions still exceeded 80 per week in Barcelona during 2020.

At the beginning of the financial crisis, defaults on mortgage payments were the main factor behind the wave of foreclosures. However, since 2013, evictions are predominantly due to delays in or temporary inability to pay the rent. This is directly related to the lack of mechanisms and legislation to protect tenants. In contrast, between 2009 and 2013, a series of legislative reforms were silently passed in favor of landlords and international investors buying up the city.

Today, despite the many efforts by both municipal administrations and social movements, the city is highly controlled by market forces, vulture funds, and landlords who are becoming increasingly large and invisible. At the same time, the population continues to be very vulnerable, with 42.7% of households dedicating nearly half of their income to cover rent, and there is still a severe lack of social housing in the city.

The back of this poster features an index with the main actors involved in Barcelona's housing scene, some of which are mentioned in the illustration on the right. The index includes basic information about each actor and is organized according to the type (see key of categories) and the level of operation (e.g., national or municipal).

This poster was developed within the framework of the CMMM research project that has accompanied the activities of Observatori DESC since March 2020. It is part of ODESC's wider efforts to provide evidence and push for reforms in policies and procedures related to housing and creating just cities.

For data sources, statistics, or further information, visit observatoridesc.org or cmmm.eu

Cmmm

CMMM – Critical Mapping in Municipalist Movements is a 3.5-year research project that brings together an international team from Belgrade, Berlin, and Barcelona. It is based at K LAB, TU Berlin, supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, and was implemented in collaboration with Ministerstvo Prosto, AKS Gemeinwohl, Kollektiv Raumstation, and Observatori DESC.

In parallel to the Barcelona-focused "Stop Evictions!" online map and this accompanying poster, the Belgrade team developed the "How (un)affordable is housing in Belgrade?" online map and the accompanying "Law Proposal: Rent Control!" poster and the Berlin team developed the "Commoning Berlin" online map and the accompanying "Right of Preemption" poster. To view the maps and posters online, scan the QR code at the top.

Esta ilustración muestra el proceso de desahucio desde el momento en que se dicta una orden de desalojo contra un inquilino en Barcelona, incluidas las posibles trayectorias y resultados. Muestra los actores que intervienen a lo largo del proceso y lo difícil que es impugnar una orden de desahucio. No obstante, aquí proporcionamos información sobre dónde encontrar apoyo. Esta ilustración se preparó junto con el mapa en línea "Stop Desahucios!".

Más de una década después de la crisis financiera de 2008, la emergencia habitacional en España se ha cronicado, como demuestra el hecho de que más de 1.5 millones de personas hayan sido desahuciadas entre 2008 y 2019. Más del 20% de estos desahucios se produjeron en Catalunya, concentrándose en el área metropolitana de Barcelona, con una media de 33.7 desahucios al día en 2019. A pesar de la moratoria de desahucios asociada al COVID-19 en vigor, los desahucios siguieron superando los 80 por semana en Barcelona durante 2020.

Al principio de la crisis financiera, los pagos de hipotecas fueron el principal factor detrás de la oleada de ejecuciones hipotecarias. Sin embargo, desde 2013, los desahucios se deben principalmente a retrasos e incapacidad temporal para pagar el alquiler. Esto está directamente relacionado con la falta de mecanismos y legislación para proteger a los inquilinos. Por el contrario, entre 2009 y 2013, se aprobaron silenciosamente una serie de reformas legislativas a favor de los propietarios y de los inversores internacionales que compran la ciudad.

Hoy en día, a pesar de los muchos esfuerzos realizados tanto por las administraciones municipales como por los movimientos sociales, la ciudad está muy controlada por las fuerzas del mercado, los fondos buitres y los propietarios, que son cada vez más grandes e invisibles. Al mismo tiempo, la población sigue siendo muy vulnerable, ya que el 42.7% de los hogares dedica casi la mitad de sus ingresos a cubrir el alquiler, y sigue habiendo una grave carencia de vivienda social en la ciudad.

En el reverso de este póster figura un índice con los principales actores que intervienen en el ámbito de la vivienda en Barcelona, algunos de los cuales se mencionan en la ilustración de la derecha. El índice incluye información básica sobre cada actor y está organizado según el tipo (véase la clave de categorías) y el nivel de actuación (por ejemplo, nacional o municipal).

Este póster se elaboró en el marco del proyecto de investigación CMMM que acompaña las actividades del Observatori DESC desde marzo de 2020. Forma parte de los esfuerzos más amplios del ODESC para proporcionar pruebas e impulsar reformas en las políticas y procedimientos relacionados con la vivienda y la creación de ciudades justas.

Para fuentes de datos, estadísticas, o más información, visite observatoridesc.org o cmmm.eu

CMMM – Critical Mapping in Municipalist Movements es un proyecto de investigación de 3.5 años que reúne a un equipo internacional de Belgrado, Berlín y Barcelona. Tiene su sede en el K LAB de la Universidad Técnica de Berlín, cuenta con el apoyo de Robert Bosch Stiftung y se ha llevado a cabo en colaboración con Ministerstvo Prosto, AKS Gemeinwohl, Kollektiv Raumstation y Observatori DESC.

Paralelamente al mapa en línea "Stop Desahucios!", centrado en Barcelona, y al póster que lo acompaña, el equipo de Belgrado elaboró el mapa en línea "¿Hasta qué punto es (in)asequible la vivienda en Belgrado?" y el póster "Propuesta de ley: Control de alquileres", y el equipo de Berlín elaboró el mapa en línea "Commoning Berlin" y el póster adjunto "Derecho de tanteo y retracto". Para ver los mapas y carteles en línea, escanee el código QR arriba.

2



leave

After receiving the eviction notice, the tenant refuses to leave. He/she/they has the option of initiating a process to fight the eviction order alone with the legal assistance of a lawyer (either public or private) or of seeking help from groups that fight for dignified housing in Barcelona. These groups provide emotional support and useful information, while also accompanying the tenant(s) during the process and possibly organizing media and institutional pressure. Against the normalization of relocation and in defense of the right to stay, the Tenants Union launched the "We Stay" campaign (Ens Quedem) in 2017. Likewise, the neighbors of Pons i Gual, together with the Housing Union of Sant Andreu, did so under the slogan "We will not leave" (No Marxem).



stay

After receiving the eviction order, the tenant refuses to leave. He/she/they has the option of initiating a process to fight the eviction order alone with the legal assistance of a lawyer (either public or private) or of seeking help from groups that fight for dignified housing in Barcelona. These groups provide emotional support and useful information, while also accompanying the tenant(s) during the process and possibly organizing media and institutional pressure. Against the normalization of relocation and in defense of the right to stay, the Tenants Union launched the "We Stay" campaign (Ens Quedem) in 2017. Likewise, the neighbors of Pons i Gual, together with the Housing Union of Sant Andreu, did so under the slogan "We will not leave" (No Marxem).

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Tenant

eviction notice



eviction order

eviction lawsuit

After considering the eviction lawsuit filed by the property owner, the Court of First Instance sends an **eviction notice** to the tenant and summons him/her/ them to appear for a trial. This notice also announces the date of the "launching" (lanzamiento), meaning the eviction from the property.

Court of First Instance /
Juzgado de Primera Instancia

The landlord (private/public/other) petitions the Court of First Instance to issue an **eviction order** by which he/she/they can recover his/her/their property (due to the failure to pay rent, because the legal or contractual terms have expired, or for squatting).

Public Administration /
Administraciones públicas

Religious institutions /
Instituciones religiosas

Non-profit Organizations /
Entidades sociales

Communities of Goods and Property Owners /
Comunidades de Bienes y Propietarios

Asset Management Company for Assets Arising from Bank Restructuring /
Sociedad de Gestión de Activos Procedentes de la Reestructuración Bancaria - SAREB

Divarian, Blackstone, Lone Star

Listed Real-Estate Investment Companies /
Sociedades Anónimas Cotizadas de Inversión Inmobiliaria - SOCIMIs

Real-Estate Agents / Asociación Profesional de Agentes Inmobiliarios - API

Individual Owners / Propietarios individuales

landlords

The process of eviction

Public institution

Civil society organization or institution

Civic initiative

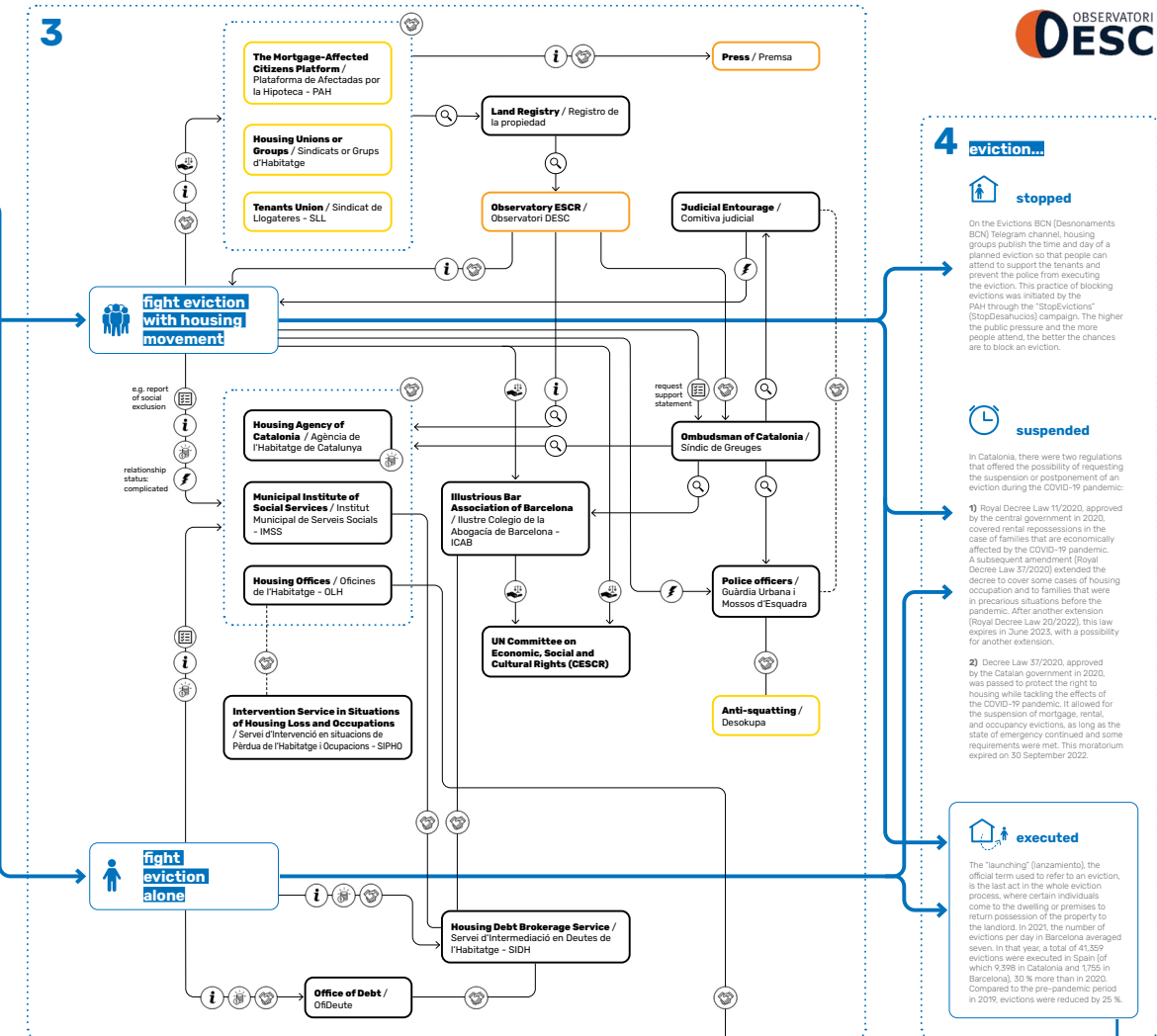


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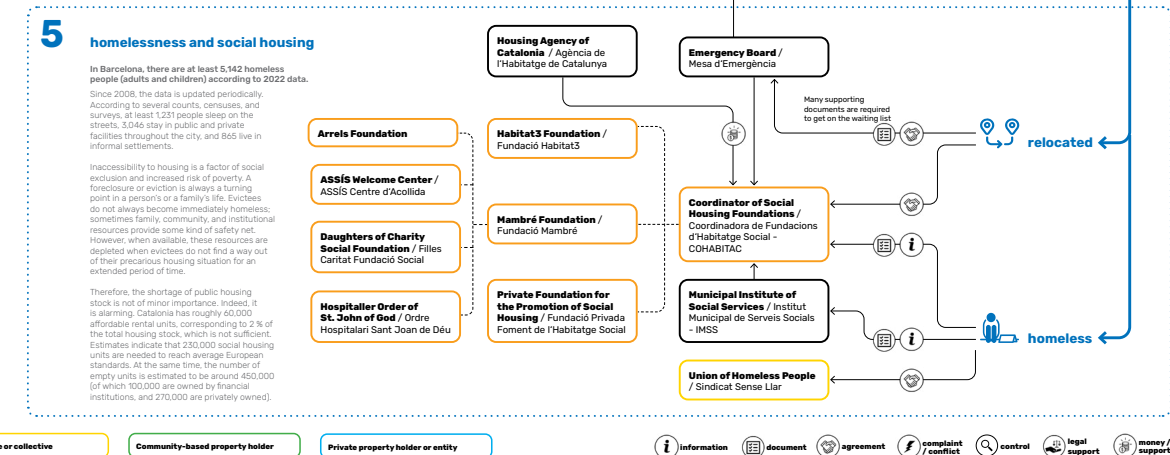
homelessness and social housing

In Barcelona, there are at least 5,142 homeless people (adults and children) according to 2022 data.

Since 2008, the data is updated periodically. According to several counts, censuses, and surveys, at least 1,231 people sleep on the streets, 3,046 stay in public and private facilities throughout the city, and 865 live in informal settlements.

Inaccessibility to housing is a factor of social exclusion and increased risk of poverty. A foreclosure or eviction is always a turning point in a person's or a family's life. Evictees do not always become immediate homeless; sometimes family, community, and institutional resources provide some kind of safety net. However, when available, these resources are depleted when evictees do not find a way out of their precarious housing situation for an extended period of time.

Therefore, the shortage of public housing stock is not of minor importance. Indeed, it is alarming. Catalonia has roughly 60,000 affordable rental units, corresponding to 2% of the total housing stock, which is not sufficient. Estimates indicate that 230,000 social housing units are needed to reach average European standards. At the same time, the number of empty units is estimated to be around 450,000 (of which 120,000 are owned by financial institutions, and 270,000 are privately owned).



ACTORS

International level

Actors named on the front side of this poster are briefly described here, as well as others that we find relevant to the illustrated process and the housing justice struggles in general.

UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) / Comité de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales de la ONU (CESCR)
*1985, Geneva

By virtue of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on ESC Rights, any person may submit an official communication by email. The response period is usually one week, and it is addressed to the State Attorney General's Office and then to the pertinent court. Regarding evictions, this protocol grants precautionary measures whenever the situation involves a high degree of disability, minor children, or undocumented migrants.

National level - Spain

Judicial Entourage / Comitiva Judicial

The judicial committees rotate (they do not always depend on the same court of first instance; that is, there may be different committees in successive eviction attempts of the same house) and they are composed of several judicial officials. On the day of the eviction and at the appointed time (between 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.), they always show up in a cab and at the corner of the house. The judicial committee is in charge of guaranteeing that a locksmith is there on the day the court orders the eviction.

Land Registry / Registro de la propiedad
*1861, Spain

Public institution designed to create entitlements by virtue of public power and to publicize the legal status of real estate, with the aim of protecting legal transactions. Any person can request what is referred to as a simple note (a information on the identification of the holder or holders of the rights registered for the property in question) and literal note (with more detailed information on the history of the property).

Land Registry - Ministry of Finance / Cadastre - Ministerio de Finanzas
*Spain

Administrative registry under the Ministry of Finance in which rural, urban, and special real estate are described. The cadastral description of the real-estate contains the physical, economic and legal characteristics, which includes the location and the cadastral reference.

Ministry of Transport, Mobility, and Urban Agenda / Ministerio de Transportes, Movilidad y Agenda Urbana
*2020, Spain

Department of the General State Administration in charge of proposing and executing the policy of the Government of Spain in the areas of land, air, and maritime transport infrastructures, under State jurisdiction. It is also responsible for access to housing, urban and land policies, and architecture.

Anti-squatting / Desokupa
*2017, Spain

Company founded by Daniel Estive dedicated to existing squatted apartments and returning them to their owner in less than a week starting at EUR 3,000. Neither the website nor the business cards show the address of its offices. The company receives requests by phone and manages around 30 operations per week. Recently, they launched a video platform imitating large US groups such as Netflix or HBO. On this website, the company uploads content related to its operations, as well as interviews with its founder.

Press / Prensa

Depending on the pressure exerted by the housing group or groups accompanying the case, some media outlets publish an article before the day of the launch. Sometimes, depending on the severity or media repercussion, they are also present on the day of the eviction.

The Mortgage-Affected Citizens Platform / Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca - PAH
*2009, Spain

Association and social movement for the right to housing that arose in Barcelona and is present throughout Spain. It was born as an initiative of citizens to conquer the right to housing in the face of the passivity of the ruling parties and public institutions throughout the nation. Consequently, the PAH was born with a clear collective, political, and non-partisan conscience.

Regional level - Catalonia

Asset Management Company for Assets Arising from Bank Restructuring / Sociedad de Gestión de Activos Procedentes de la Reestructuración Bancaria - SAREB
*2012, Spain

Well-known public limited company that manages assets transferred by four nationalized entities (BFA-Bankia, Catalunya Bank, NCG Banco-Banco Gallego, and Banco de Valencia) and others in the process of restructuring or resolution. It is known as the "bad bank" of Spain since it is a real-estate company for "toxic assets" (unsold finished or semi-finished houses, the leftovers of the real-estate bubble or entities rescued with public money).

Divarian, Blackstone, Lene Star

Hedge funds that invest in debt considered to be very weak or, by default, investors profit by buying debt at a discounted price in the secondary market and then using numerous methods to subsequently sell the debt for more than the purchase price. In Barcelona, Cerberus, Blackstone, and Lene Star are three of the main hedge funds.

Individual Owners / Proprietarios individuales

Private owners (natural persons) whose names cannot be published for legal reasons (data protection and right to honor). They can be either big (with 10 or more dwellings) or small landlords (with less than 10 dwellings). Among individual homeowners, the small landlords carry more weight (68.5%) than the big ones (8% with more than 10 dwellings). They represent 97% of all homeowners and have an average of 1.3 homes in the city. Collectives fighting for housing, such as the PAH, criticize the arbitrariness in defining large landlords (forced to lower rental prices by the Housing Law, now paralyzed while waiting for the government to process it) and enter into force at the end of 2022) and small ones (only obliged not to raise the price).

Listed Real-Estate Investment Companies / Sociedades Anónimas Cotizadas de Inversión Inmobiliaria - SOCIMIs
*2017, Spain

These companies represent one of the real-estate investment vehicles. Corporations of a mercantile nature and set up as a public limited company with a minimum capital stock of EUR 3 million. Their corporate purpose is to invest in urban real estate (housing, buildings, commercial premises, offices, garages, industrial buildings, etc.) for subsequent leasing. In addition, they must have a portfolio of real-estate assets and at least 80% must be for lease.

Real-Estate Agents / Asociación Profesional de Agentes Inmobiliarios - API
*1950, Barcelona

Professionals who, among other things, serve as an intermediary between the buyer and the seller of a property that is, they offer legal security to owners in the real-estate market. Through professional support, they aim to avoid the risk of erroneous contracts, fraud, or non-compliance. They put their knowledge of the market and of the legal framework relevant to the operations in question at the service of their owners and users.

Civil Roof / Sostre Cívic
*2004, Catalonia

Strives to promote an alternative model of access to housing that is fairer and more accessible, non-profit, non-sectarian and transformative. It is committed to cooperative housing in transfer of use, working on the dissemination and promotion of different areas, strengthening the social base, and influencing public policies.

Coordinator of Social Housing Foundations / Coordinadora de Fundacions d'Habitatge Social - COHABITAC
*2020, Catalonia

Coordinator of foundations that promote and manage social rental housing in Catalonia. It comprises 12 foundations and has an agreement with the Barcelona City Council to promote social and sustainable housing. It can be accessed by registering in the city council's housing stock or by contacting cooperatives that promote social housing on a cession of use basis. As a whole, the foundations that form it have promoted close to 10,000 social housing units and currently manage around 3,500 (7% of the social rental housing stock in Catalonia).

Regional level - Catalonia

Catalan Institute of Finance / Institut Català de Finances
*1985, Catalonia

Public financial institution of the Generalitat de Catalunya. Its objective is to promote the growth of the Catalan Economy by facilitating access to financing for the business community. It finances business projects through loans, guarantees, and investments in venture capital, among other things.

Department of Territory and Sustainability / Departament de Territori i Sostenibilitat
*2010, Catalonia

Department of the Generalitat de Catalunya with competences in the areas related to territorial planning and urbanism, public works and infrastructure, transport, environment, water, waste, natural environment and biodiversity, housing policy, and historic districts and centers.

Housing Agency of Catalonia / Agència de l'Habitatge de Catalunya
*2009, Barcelona

Citizen service space where everything the government offers in terms of housing is centralized. It finances local housing offices, answers legal questions, provides assistance by appointment, monitors and implements housing rehabilitation plans, and with officials in maintaining the Special Emergency Benefit (PEUE).

Ombudsman of Catalonia / Síndic de Greuges
*1984, Catalonia

Main function is to examine possible violations of citizens' rights and freedoms. It may initiate an inquiry upon request from a citizen or legal entity, or in cases where it is deemed appropriate. With regard to housing, it receives complaints concerning situations of residential emergency due to the loss of habitual residence, mainly as a result of judicial eviction proceedings.

Office of Debt / Ofidute
*2010, Catalonia

Free information and counseling service aimed at families or cohabitation units with difficulties in maintaining the ownership or use of housing. It offers information on contractual obligations and rights, negotiation possibilities, assistance from the administration, responsibilities arising from legal proceedings and free justice.

Police officers / Mossos d'Esquadra
*1789, Catalonia

At the regional level, the Mossos de Esquadra are the police force in charge of executing the eviction.

Civil Roof / Sostre Cívic
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Federation of Housing Cooperatives / Federació de Cooperatives d'Habitatge de Catalunya - FCHC
*1983, Catalonia

Endeavors to be faithful to cooperative principles laid out in Article 1 of Law 10/2002. In 2002, on Cooperatives, as those recognized by the law. Cooperative Alliance. It intends to promote their knowledge and compliance. It associates housing cooperatives in Catalonia and represents cooperative housing around 10,000 housing units in Catalonia.

Habitat3 Foundation / Fundació Habitat3
*2014, Catalonia

Habitat3 Foundation is a social manager driven from the right that works with social entities in public administrations and is right to decent housing for vulnerable situations. It represents social accompaniment (to educators carefully monitor housing, compliance with agreements, and coexistence relationships).

Mambré Foundation / Fundació Mambré
*2007, Barcelona

Mambré Foundation works to accompany homeless people struggling for decent housing in dignity and security and they currently manage 800 and comprise Anels Fundació Centre de Acollida, Compañías Hijas de la Caridad, and Hospitalaria de San Juan de social entities dedicated to homeless people. It was a cooperative project since, for time, non-profit organization with homeless people joining to form a residential care network.

Observatory ESCR / Observatori DECSO
*1998, Barcelona

Human rights center focused on dismantling the devalued of social rights (the right to work, education, health, relation to other fundamental rights such as civil and political rights). It has a specialized on Housing and to the City, and it combines advocacy with research, the elaboration of reports, and publications to denounce violations of rights and to seek for improve the guarantee of rights.

Pervire
*2017, Catalonia

Entity aimed at making coping by means of comprehensive and human support. They support to groups and collect economic and financial relationships (dealing with and facilitating the group and deal with legal and other aspects). Therefore, they are individuals and groups of well as entities and municipalities project driven by three entities (Aguila, Celobert, and Cooperatives).

Private Foundation Promotion of Social Housing / Fundació Privada Fomento de l'Habitatge Social
*1990, Barcelona

Fundación Fomento de la Social is an entity experienced management of social housing stock available to provide social rental housing and out refurbishment work. It was promoted by Caritas de Barcelona with the aim of the fight against residential disadvantage groups. It has stock available to provide social rental housing and out refurbishment work. It was promoted by Caritas de Barcelona with the aim of the fight against residential disadvantage groups. It has stock available to provide social rental housing and out refurbishment work. It was promoted by Caritas de Barcelona with the aim of the fight against residential disadvantage groups. It has stock available to provide social rental housing and out refurbishment work.

Public institution

Civil society organization or institution

Civic initiative or collective

Community-based property holder

Private property holders or entity

This is an interactive poster. Links to the websites of the actors are embedded in the names. Click to visit them.

< ... > City level - Barcelona

The Dinamo / La Dinamo

*2017, Barcelona

Foundation created with the aim of encouraging and promoting the implementation of the cooperative housing model as an alternative to conventional models of access to housing, as well as to normalize its existence. There are the main lines of action: replication (promotion of new cooperative housing projects and technical support to groups in the process of promotion); dissemination - research and training; and advocacy and consolidation (promoting the creation of its own legal framework, among others).

Tenants Union / Sindicat de Logateres - SLL

*2017, Catalonia

Group of tenants in the city fighting for the defense of the right to housing and affordable, stable, safe and dignified rent. It aims to jointly claim these rights and to influence all administrative and governmental areas, such as the Urban Leasing Law (LALI) or the development of legislative measures for the control and limitation of rental prices.

Housing Offices / Oficines de l'Habitatge - OLH

*2007, Barcelona

Meeting places for citizens in the housing sector. Each district has a housing office staffed by a specialized technical team that provides personalized attention to users, such as information on available subsidies or legal advice. The network of offices is promoted by the Barcelona Housing Consortium, formed by the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Barcelona City Council. They are in charge of preparing the files of each case to be assessed by the Emergency Board.

Housing Consortium of Barcelona / Consorci de l'Habitatge de Barcelona

*Barcelona

Integrated into the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Barcelona City Council, it works to improve housing-related services in the city. Among other functions, it is responsible for planning public housing actions and promoting a policy of affordable rental housing in the municipal area of Barcelona, as well as programming and promoting the remodeling and rehabilitation of publicly promoted neighborhoods.

Barcelona's Social Housing Council / Consell de l'Habitatge Social de Barcelona - CHSB

*2007, Barcelona

Advisory and participatory body on housing policy in the city, within the framework of the Barcelona Housing Consortium. It aims to provide a new space for citizen participation in housing matters. Among other functions, it is responsible for generating debate on the main instruments of municipal housing policy and formulating proposals for action, as well as monitoring and evaluating compliance with the Barcelona Housing Plans.

Court of First Instance / Juzgado de Primera Instancia

Eviction lawsuits, mostly for non-payment of rent, are filed in the courts of the city where the dwelling or premises are located. On average, an eviction process lasts about 6 months.

Emergency Board / Mesa d'Emergència

*2010, Barcelona

Mechanism dedicated to assessing the situation of people at imminent risk of residential exclusion and referring them to social emergency housing. To access this mechanism, it is necessary to submit paperwork in one of the housing offices of Barcelona. Its aim is to offer a solution to the most urgent cases in order to avoid the social exclusion of people with economic difficulties. The Bureau is an entity created by the Barcelona City Council and the Generalitat de Catalunya through the Barcelona Housing Consortium with the aim of ensuring the right to housing for people at risk of losing their home. At present, Barcelona has a waiting list of 600 families.

Housing Debt Brokerage Service / Servei d'Intermediació en Deutes de l'Habitatge - SIDH

*2012, Barcelona

Free information, counseling, and intermediation service. It addresses situations of mortgage over-indebtedness of the habitual residence through intermediation with financial entities. It is a consortium with the Office of Service of the Generalitat de Catalunya, the city councils, the district councils, and the bar associations of the Barcelona area. It now has 41 attention points.

Illustrious Bar Association of Barcelona / Il·lustre Colegio de la Abogacía de Barcelona - ICAB

*1833, Barcelona

As a public law corporation, it guarantees citizens the right to defense through the Public Defender's Office and Assistance to the Detainee. This task is complemented by the administrative management carried out by the Free Legal Assistance (SERVITA) and the Legal Guidance Service (SGC), which provides free initial legal advice to citizens by informing them about their rights and possible solutions to the case.

Intervention Service in Situations of Housing Loss and Occupations / Servei d'Intervenció en situacions de Pèrdua de l'Habitatge i Ocupacions - SIPH

*2015, Barcelona

Intervention Service in Situations of Loss of Housing and Occupations (SIPH) provides information, support, and legal advice to cohabitation units affected by an eviction process. It is a municipal service that tries to mediate between the affected person, the property, and Social Services. If it is not possible to reach an agreement to stop the eviction, the SIPH initiates actions to support the affected families.

Metropolitan Housing Observatory of Barcelona / Observatori Metropolità de l'Habitatge de Barcelona - OH-B

*2017, Barcelona

Tool with knowledge of the housing sector available to municipalities, researchers, sector operators, and citizens in general. It consists of a common database of indicators that is progressively being expanded. It aims to provide data to analyze and detect trends in the metropolitan area and to help design public housing policies.

Municipal Institute of Housing and Rehabilitation of Barcelona / Institut Municipal de l'Habitatge i Rehabilitació de Barcelona - IMHAB

*2018, Barcelona

Entity in charge of managing the public and private housing of the Rental Exchange (Borsa de Alquiler). Created by the Barcelona City Council, it is responsible for promoting the construction of public housing managing the available housing stock, and promoting sustainable housing policies such as the rehabilitation of apartments and buildings. It manages more than 7,000 apartments in the city, and 3,000 additional subsidized housing units are currently under construction or in the planning stage.

Municipal Institute of Social Services / Institut Municipal de Serveis Socials - IMSS

*2010, Barcelona

Autonomous organism of the Barcelona City Council aimed at responding to citizens' needs and demands. It is responsible for managing 150 public facilities, including 40 social service centers, childcare teams, and shelters for people at risk of residential exclusion. It is the institution that processes the vulnerability report, which is key to suspending eviction orders by the judge (according to the Royal Decree 37/2020).

Police officers / Guàrdia Urbana

*1907, Barcelona

At the municipal level, the Guardia Urbana police force is in charge of cutting off traffic and controlling the area when people demonstrate to block evictions.

Arrels Foundation

*1987, Barcelona

Arrels' members are people who wake up no one to sleep on the street. Since 1987, they have accompanied more than 17,200 homeless people on their path to autonomy, offering guidance and useful services, such as housing, food, social and health care, guidance, and counseling. They have the support of 79 workers, more than 300 volunteers, and 4,600 members and donors who collaborate to make living on the street possible. (#nobodysleepingonthestreet) possible.

ASSIS Welcome Center / ASSIS Centre d'Acollida

*2001, Barcelona

The mission of ASSIS is to improve the welfare and quality of life of homeless people, to whom they provide care and support. It has 257 volunteers, 14 members of the technical team, and 252 associates. They provide basic services to homeless people and have created a pioneering program of comprehensive psychosocial care for homeless women. They also organize leisure and cultural activities, together with awareness-raising campaigns to break down stigmas. They are a reference in research, advocacy, and dissemination regarding the phenomenon of homelessness.

Daughters of Charity Social Foundation / Filles de la Caritat Fundació Social

*1633, Spain

Organization that manages the social action of the Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Catalonia. Their action is based on social justice and focused on welcoming and supporting people in situations of exclusion. These people include the homeless, those suffering from illnesses, and those who have been released from prison or are inmates in penitentiary centers. They also support families and people referred from Social Services and offer the following services: shelter and orientation, day center, limited stay center, food distribution, support in penitentiary centers, and social housing.

Federation of Neighborhood Associations of Barcelona / Federació d'Associacions de Veïns i Veïnes de Barcelona - FAVB

*1972, Barcelona

Civic organization for the citizens of Barcelona aimed at improving the quality of life in the city. It brings together more than one hundred neighborhood associations of Barcelona and participates in city issues to promote solidarity, equality, and coexistence. It coordinates the activities of these associations in campaigns and activities that go beyond the neighborhood level.

Hospitaller Order of St. John of God / Ordre Hospitalari de Sant Joan de Déu

*15th c., Spain (1843)

*1979, Barcelona (SCJSSBCN)

The Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God is a non-profit institution that belongs to the Catholic Church and is dedicated to health, social and health care, social work, teaching, and research through various facilities, including hospitals, mental health centers, and centers for people with disabilities, for the elderly, and for people in situations of vulnerability - social exclusion. In Spain, the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God has a network of 60 health, social, community, teaching, and research centers that care for almost one million people a year. Sant Joan de Déu-Serveis Socials - Barcelona has been working in the city of Barcelona since 1979 serving homeless people within the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God.

Housing Unions and Groups / Sindicats i Grups d'Habitatge

*2017, Barcelona

Neighborhood Assembly for Tourism Degrowth / Assemblea de Barris pel Decreciment Turístic - ABOT

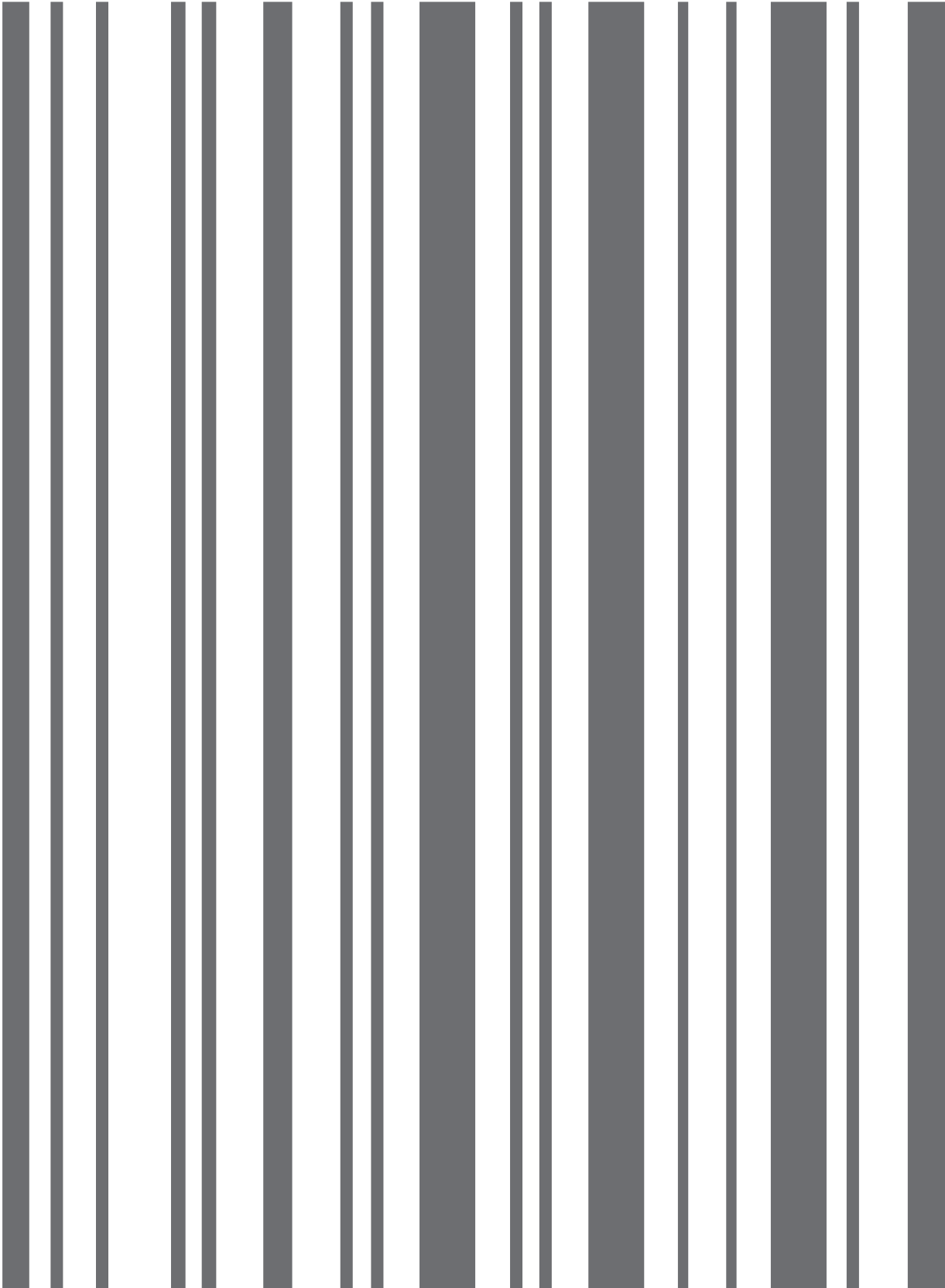
*2015, Barcelona

Group of collectives and neighborhood platforms of Barcelona campaigning for the deurbanization of the city and its economy.

Union of Homeless People / Sindicat Sense Llar

*2021, Barcelona

Organization of homeless people oriented to demand "effective" solutions to the Barcelona City Council and the Catalan Government. In its founding text, they pointed out that life expectancy among homeless people is 20 years less than the average and demanded that the administrations allocate part of the more than 10,000 empty apartments in the city to contribute to "radicating" homelessness.



APPROACH

mapping change
logbook

Section 16

THEORETICAL APPROACH

the “mapping change logbook”

As explained in the introduction, CMMM was a practice-oriented project funded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung between 2019 and 2023 that sought to support municipalist mobilizers in Belgrade, Berlin, and Barcelona in their endeavors to combat housing injustices through collaborative research, mapping, and the development of nuanced maps. It is based on our study of ample research conducted by peers in the field, which we had conducted within the “Mapping Change” research project implemented by K LAB between fall 2018 and early 2022, and was funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung through its program: “Original – isn’t it? New Options for the Humanities and Cultural Studies” (now OpenUp). In addition to the literature review, the Mapping Change project was built around findings collected from the expert workshop “Mapping for Change? Understanding Critical Cartographies that Influence Urban Transformation” (2019) and the international symposium “Cartographies of the Urban: Intersectionality and Climate Change Adaptation” (2020). The resulting web-based publication, the *mapping change logbook*,¹ connects insightful contemporary mapping projects and scholarly debates with each other to re-explore concepts that are central to uses of critical mapping for tackling the current precarious age of compounded global risks and crises. It is organized into three “stations,” each composed of three subsections of ±1,800 words.

¹ Aruri, Natasha, and Katleen De Flander and Andreas Brück. 2022. *mapping change logbook*. Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin. DOI: dx.doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-15560. Ebook: mapping-change.labor-k.org/overview/

Station one outlines the approach and theoretical framework, station two discusses how to re-situate mapping in craft*ing, and station three explores how Cindi Katz's notion of *countertopography*² can be applied to critical mapping practices. Each station connects to several clickable "detours," which are links to maps, videos, texts, and other types of materials that visitors can explore as their authors intended for them to be exhibited, inspiring each of them differently.

Since the turn of the millennium, there have been many movements for justice that mainly manifested in cities and on their public streets and squares and where imagery and audiovisual communication have played a significant role in redirecting attention to grave injustices that have been cast aside. In varying contextual trajectories, visual modes of expression have succeeded in forging and communicating solidarity across geographic and linguistic boundaries, in engaging people, and sometimes in forcing parts of the world to pause even if only for a few days or weeks at a time. Disruption of the status-quo machine is the goal, enchanting a critical mass of society through iconic vocabulary and visual languages is a key tool. Another important instrument is *nuanced mapping*, which involves bringing (non-/inter-)connected occurrences into conversation with each other and detaching from hegemonic perspectives and ways of seeing our lifeworlds to create what Ashanté M. Reese refers to as "geographies of self-reliance" and to "reveal different yet related experiences, namely, how the everyday lives of residents disrupt the dichotomy between death and survival to reveal how hope and visions for an uncertain future animate decisions."³ At the same time, site-based claims and visions of frontline mobilizers against the translocal and global shape transformation processes and constitute acts of *Ishtibak* (Arabic: engagement): short episodes of confrontation that employ temporality and simultaneity in physical and virtual realms, resulting in creative disruption. Re-defining roots of dispossession through narratives, agency, and defiant debate are essential in this context.

2 Katz, Cindi. 2001. "On the Grounds of Globalization: A Topography for Feminist Political Engagement." *Signs Journal of Women Culture and Society* 26 (4):1213-1234.

3 Quick Hall, K. Melchor. "Darkness All Around Me: Black Waters, Land, Animals, and Sky." In *Mapping Gendered Ecologies: Engaging with and beyond Ecowomanism and Ecofeminism*, edited by K. Melchor Quick Hall and Gwyn Kirk, 17-32 (p.22). Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021.

Accordingly, and as reflected in the various parts of the *mapping change logbook*, we understand critical mapping in a broader sense as processes of visual **conversations** (collective reflexive un-/re-making) and **communication** (solidarity through re-/co-learning, socializing knowledge). We consider it a sensory performance and an act of craftpersonship that unfolds through tacit knowledge acquired through *slow (disposable) time* and through dialectic labor embedded in social and intersectional knowledge. It is a practice that *collectivizes* by knitting together individual vested interests. It is a practice that involves *aimless observation* and a knowledge culture, where creating a plan or a map is not the target although it could potentially be an outcome. It involves *caring* and seeing the city less through the lens of utility and efficiency and more through the subjectivities and the “perceived, conceived, and lived” welfare of individuals. It involves *reading gendered spatial violence*, the systemic, social, and environmental violence reproduced in and through banal everyday spaces and aesthetics of exclusion that are regularly promoted by modern patterns of planning and seldom officially recognized as such. It is about continuities, where ends meet new beginnings. It is about giving rise to *counterimaginaries* of dissensus and resonance to imaginaries of hope and inspiring further resistance against dispossession and all forms of injustice.

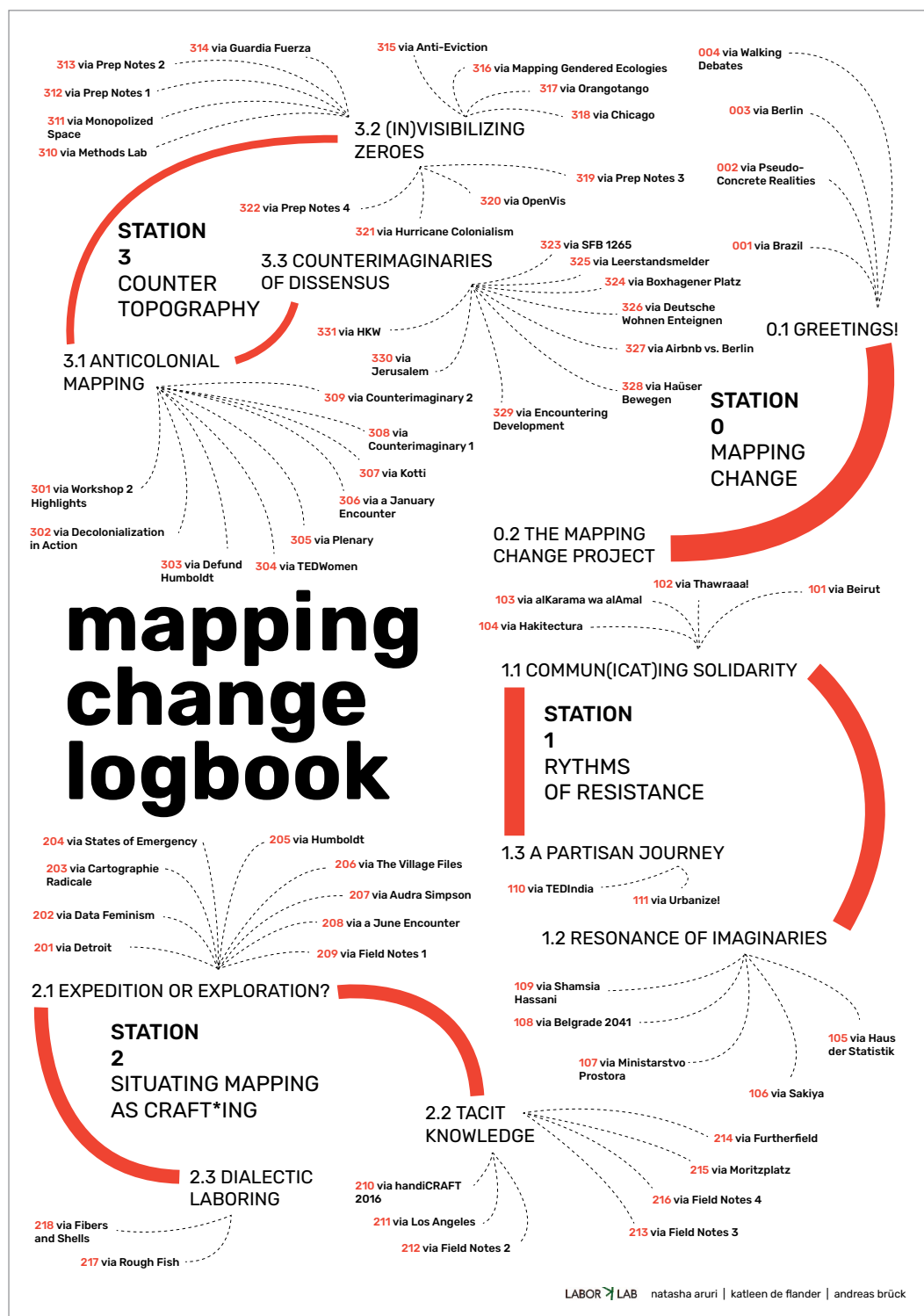
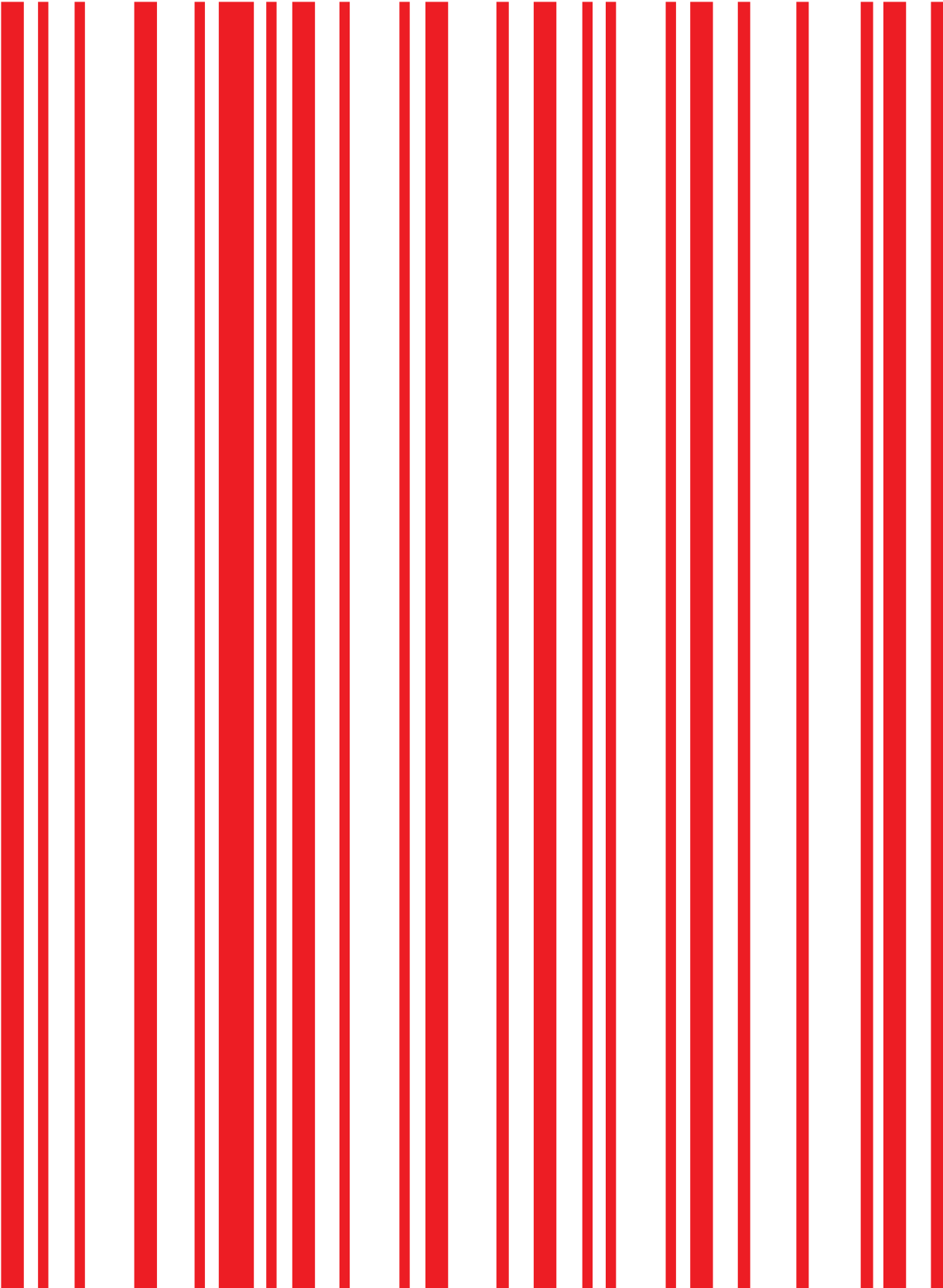


Figure 16.1 An illustration of the outline and contents of the *mapping change logbook*. An interactive webversion of the book can be explored under mapping-change.labor-k.org/overview/





REFLECTIONS

looking back,
looking ahead

Section 17

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

When we started this CMMM project, activist groups in Belgrade were questioning the lack of transparency around the **housing strategy** for their city and five of the prominent collectives involved in the right to housing were ironing out the last details for assembling the **Housing Equality Movement**. Soon thereafter, as a result of corruption and an intense level of collusion in most media outlets with the ruling party, most opposition parties decided to **boycott the 2020 parliamentary elections**. Meanwhile in Berlin, mobilizers launched the **campaign and referendum** to expropriate Deutsche Wohnen and other large companies, building on the resonance from the annual *Mietenwahnsinn* (rent madness) demonstration. Shortly afterward, the **Initiativenforum Stadtpolitik Berlin** (IniForum, Initiatives' Forum on Urban Policy) was created and the **rent cap** went into effect, although it was short-lived. Large-scale real-estate companies were buying the city en masse, but mass resistance was crystalizing into widespread public awareness and, particularly in the district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, the **right of preemption** (Vorkaufsrecht) was proving to be a helpful legal instrument to "buy back the city." Around the same time, Barcelona en Comú won 4.5% less votes in the **2019 elections** compared to the previous one, and the city was starting a new term under a minority government. The following fall, the first **Catalan Congress of the Housing Movement** was held, gathering hundreds of people from 70 housing groups, neighborhood unions, and tenants' unions to discuss how to move forward in defense of housing rights. This was the situation when we started four years ago, in late 2019.

Soon after we picked up the pace in our CMMM project, the COVID-19 Pandemic started spreading rapidly, revealing widespread housing vulnerability. While most European countries declared moratoriums on evictions, there were no mechanisms in place to relieve accumulated debts or tame the rise of prices in real-estate markets. As revealed in the **timelines** (Section 5) of the three cities, the past years have seen increasing challenges and some setbacks for the housing justice and municipalist movements. At the onset of our work, we agreed that one key tool in the struggles against vulture real-estate companies is access to cadaster data on their transactions. We discussed how our work and envisioned maps could help make this demand a reality. However, data protection laws and regulations do not differentiate between natural persons (owning one or two units) and profit-oriented large-scale companies (owning hundreds or thousands of units) and proved too complex to break through—which was also highlighted by the **Who Owns Berlin** project. Notwithstanding, this issue of data accessibility remains a central hurdle that municipalist movements need to make a priority in order to allow for targeted and effective actions that can change the paradigms and playing fields. The “**Commoning Berlin**” map and the “**Stop Evictions!**” map of Barcelona that our team produced corroborate this need, and we intend to revisit this endeavor in future endeavors.

Another issue we discussed and considered for investigation was that of mapping the housing-related legislation and policies of the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Investment Bank, as these bodies of the European Union (EU) play an important political role in terms of influencing national policies. This is true not only for Germany and Spain, but also for Serbia, which is a candidate state to join the EU. Although housing is considered a national competence, within the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU, the Housing Partnership was established and the Pact of Amsterdam states that its “objectives are to have affordable housing of good quality,” whereby the “focus will be on public affordable housing, state aid rules and general housing policy.”¹ In the same vein, we considered studying the role played by international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the timelines of the three cities demonstrated that these were major players in the economic restructuring of Europe, the push toward decoupling housing

1 EC Housing Partnership. *The Housing Partnership Action Plan*. Brussels: Urban Agenda for the European Union, 2018. Accessed May 5, 2023. ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/final_action_plan_euua_housing_partnership_december_2018_1.pdf

from its function as a basic commodity and a right, and transforming housing into a tradable market asset for generating exorbitant profits. This mapping of relevant bodies, structures, and policy hierarchies is essential for addressing governmental discourses. However, as we started examining these dimensions, it quickly became clear that this topic required significantly more resources than those available within our CMMM project and, similar to the issue of accessing cadaster data, we intend to revisit this endeavor in the future.

To create helpful resources for the municipalist movements and particularly for those interested in critical mapping practices, in the early stages of the project, we compiled and examined existing critical maps and mapping projects by engaged mobilizers, initiatives, networks, and collectives that were (and most of them still are) pushing to reshuffle power relations in their geographies. We highlight some of these inspiring works that we found particularly relevant to our work and to the struggles around the right to housing in **Section 6: Maps and Visualizations**. Furthermore, a selection of other publications, handbooks, collections, and helpful project websites were arranged into a subpage on the project's website titled "**Links**,"² which also includes select publications by the three CMMM city teams (Figure 17.1, p. 475). As our project advanced, we learned about further inspiring projects other than those mentioned, yet the need to draw the project to a close made it impossible to expand the selection any more.

As our team agreed that it is important to problematize the language we use and to differentiate between the connotations, subjectivities, and political positions that shape the variations in discourses, in the first year of the project, we embarked on creating a "Glossary" to map and reflect the various understandings of the terms *critical mapping*, *municipalist movements*, *housing*, and tentacled terms (Figure 17.2, p. 475). This dynamic **glossary**,³ featured on the project website, brings together definitions from (i) our city teams and their networks (filter: CMMM Wall); (ii) activists or public media and blogs (filter: Activist / Media); (iii) published scholarly sources (filter: Scholarly); and (iv) institutions relevant to our work (either because they echo a stance that resonates with our own, or because they advocate an oppositional one, filter: Institutional). Although we had initially foreseen this glossary as an activity that would continue to evolve and be reflected upon over the course of the project, the changes in the scopes of other outcomes and the time investment and effort required by those issues forced us to abandon this initial plan. While we think it was a worthy exercise to map the webs of issues connecting the three terms (domains), we recognize that it would have been more useful had it been revisited a second time toward the end of the project.

² cmmm.eu/other-resources

³ cmmm.eu/other-resources. The creation of this interactive glossary was led by our colleague Lýdia Grešáková.

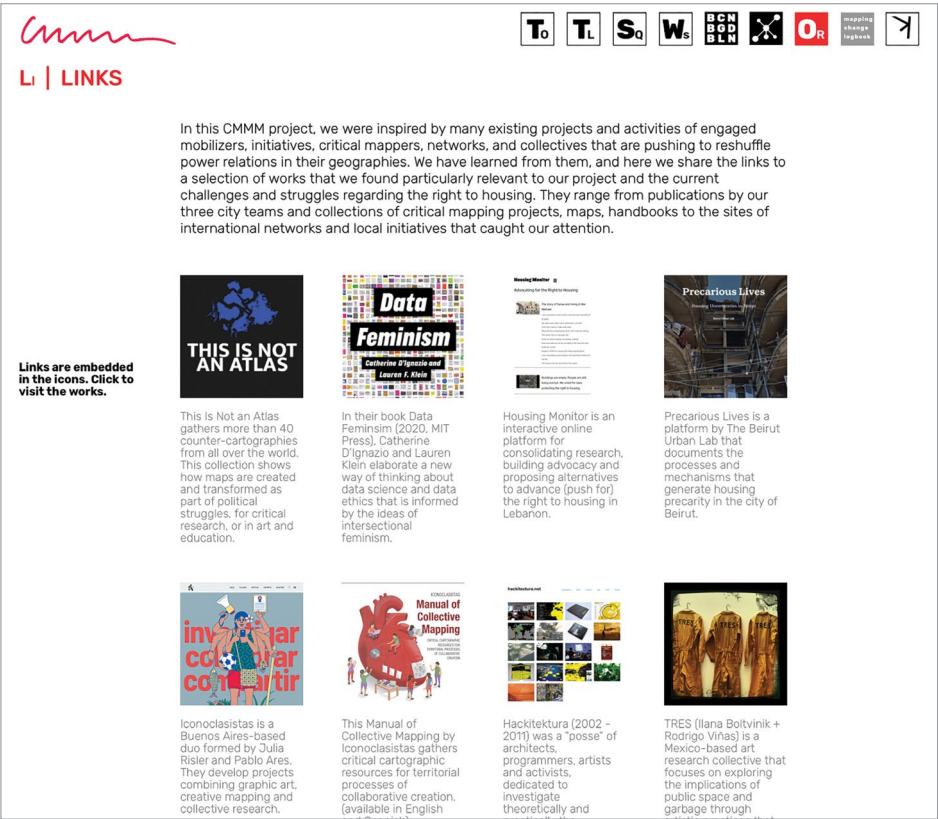


Figure 17.1 A screenshot of the “Links” subsection on the CMMM.eu project website.

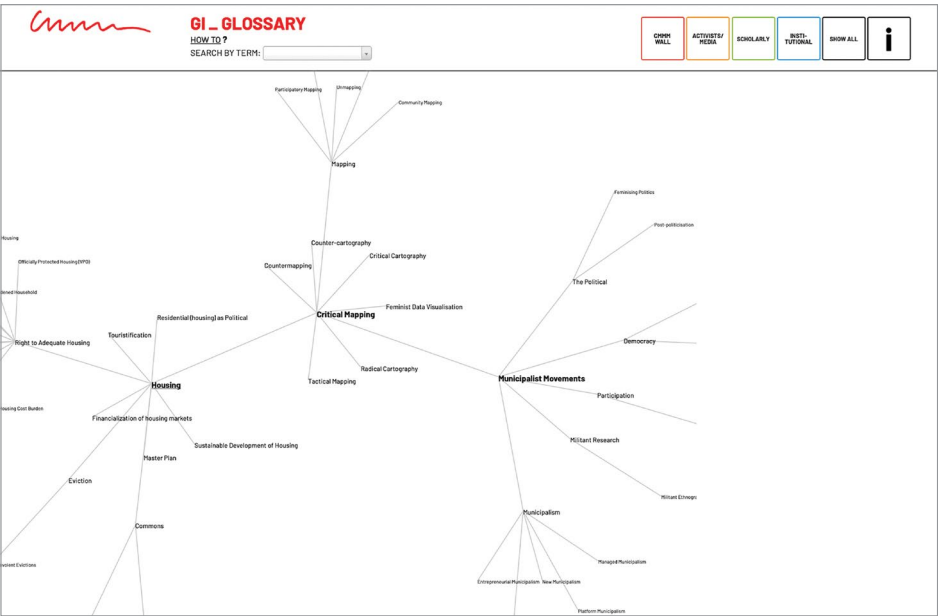


Figure 17.2 A screenshot of the Glossary that was created in the first phase of the project, around fall 2020. Available on the CMMM.eu website.

Looking back, we recognize that our ambitions surpassed the time and budgetary limitations of our CMMM project. However, we also appreciate that abandoning some targets made way for other, equally important, unforeseen ones that emerged in the course of the project in response to the needs and changing dynamics of the housing struggles in the three cities. For example, to articulate the particular political demands, we had initially planned for each city team to produce a simple static map illustrating and communicating alternative perspectives, which we aborted to instead develop three customized interactive maps with the help of the Visual Intelligence team (Section 15). These were more demanding in terms of time and resources, but they also promised broader usage and a longer lifespan in serving the local housing scenes. Other unforeseen additions include an expansion of the **Status Quo** section into four sections (initially thought of as only a ten-page brief), the production of advocacy posters for the three political demands (Section 15), and more personal insight into the motives, paths, and opinions of some of the team members in the audio clips (Section 4).

It is important to note that CMMM was a side project carried out in part-time alongside other work commitments, including those towards the collectives in which we are involved, and while responding to unfolding political events such as the elections that were held in Berlin (2021 and 2023) and in Belgrade (2022). Looking back, things have changed since we met each other for the first time in early 2020, as the following paragraphs illustrate.

Belgrade

During the **2022 general elections** in Serbia and the local elections in Belgrade, the municipalist platform **Don't Let Belgrade Drown** (NDM BGD) won seats in both the National Assembly and the Belgrade City Assembly, with 13 representatives in each (within the coalition "Moramo"). This change has given rise to opportunities with a significant impact on the work of the movement in general, as well as that of the Ministry of Space (MoS) collective. It has improved our access to institutional data and procedures that are normally closed to the public. It has also resulted in an increase in media and public appearances, where the housing movement now finds a larger stage than before to convey messages regarding urban development and to voice demands for alternative housing policies and measures. At a different level, the Ukraine war has exacerbated existing problems in the housing sector with a significant number of refugees arriving in Serbia, particularly in the first six months after its outbreak. In the

second half of 2022, rents rose by 50%, and in some cases even by 100%, and this in an already unaffordable and unregulated rental sector. Meanwhile, the state and city governments remain silent on the affair.

These developments underscored the significance of the goals and objectives that we at MoS had defined for our activities within the CMMM project, for which we had been working in parallel on two tracks: 1) raising awareness and mobilizing the wider public around housing unaffordability and 2) advancing arguments and advocating concrete proposals in the city assembly and national parliament. The first track was the guiding principle behind the interactive map “**How (un)affordable is housing in Belgrade?**,”⁴ as well as several public events that we organized, including the podium discussion “Global housing struggles: experiences from Berlin, Barcelona and Belgrade.”⁵ In the second track, during workshops organized within and beyond the CMMM project,⁶ we discussed concrete proposals for the city and national parliament with the members of the Housing Equality Movement (HEM). Prompted by the deteriorating conditions in the rental sector and with support from MoS, NDM BGD announced a proposal for a law on rent control in November 2022. This was the first legislative proposal to address the inaccessibility of housing in Serbia in a decade, if not longer. In this light, and to support advocacy efforts, we produced the **Law Proposal: Rent Control** poster as our last activity within this project.

While experimenting with critical mapping and developing the “How (Un)affordable Is Housing in Belgrade?” map, our collective worked in parallel on another project that touches on the realm of housing in a broader sense and aims to inform and mobilize people around spatial interventions in their neighborhoods. Named “**Where is the Plan?**,” this website provides information on proposed urban plans and development projects that are underway within the administrative territory of Belgrade. We believe that both maps will significantly help MoS in its endeavors to communicate, politicize, and mobilize around the issues of housing and urban development. In fact, looking back on the past three years, we can say with certainty that the efforts of the broader spectrum of activists and political movements have made housing an issue of public interest and that there is a solid foundation of knowledge and materials to promote policies based on housing as a right and to contribute to wider political transformation in Serbia.

4 cmmm-maps.eu/belgrade

5 Ministry of Space. “Global housing struggles – experiences from Berlin, Barcelona, and Belgrade.” YouTube video, 1:37:15. May 25, 2022. youtube.com/watch?v=kPJEG_KmD9k&list=PL-NZNI71IK8uA-TJ8I5a97hqBy30W_gio&index=5

6 See [Section 10 / BGD](#) “Housing burdens and public land for non-profit housing” and [Section 11 / BGD](#) “Mapping the unaffordability of housing in Belgrade.”

Berlin

The **2021 elections** at all levels (federal, state, and district/local) brought about little change to the political structure in Germany. Although the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) is no longer the ruling party, the Angela Merkel politics of the center-right was granted another term,⁷ and Berlin remained under the Red-Red-Green coalition.⁸ On the same election day, the **Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Enteignen referendum** was held, which was preceded by several months of campaigning and collecting signatures. Close to 60% voted in favor of the proposal that large housing companies should be expropriated and their stock communalized, demonstrating that the housing emergency is a predominant concern of Berliners. Shortly thereafter, in November 2021, a **court ruling** on a case in which the right of preemption (RPE) was applied repealed the instrument that the housing justice movement had been increasingly invoking to protect tenants against vulture capital (and which was our focus in this project). Instead of prioritizing the matter and showing that they take the messages of the DW&Co. referendum seriously, the new Berlin government created an expert committee to study and propose measures for how to tackle the situation in the housing sector. Unfortunately, the committee has been working very slowly, its sessions are not public, and so far its protocols have been published after substantial delay.

The continuation of the *modus operandi* of the SPD under the new Governing Mayor of Berlin Franziska Giffey (e.g., paying lip service to civic movements while refraining from taking any real steps to change the status quo, among other issues) resulted in a resounding defeat for the party in 2023. Due to the large number of irregularities, in fall 2022, the Constitutional Court of the State of Berlin declared the elections of 26 September 2021 invalid and ordered a repetition on 12 February 2023. The widespread dissatisfaction with the SPD brought about the termination of its 22 years of ruling the city-state, returning the CDU (conservatives) to the helm while removing the Greens and the Left from office. Many housing activists see this new reality as a bad omen for their aspirations and demands. Meanwhile, the Ukraine war has led to soaring energy prices and inflation rates, significantly increasing already high housing burdens.

7 Angela Merkel, CDU, served as Chancellor of Germany for four consecutive terms between 2005 and 2021. While the CDU is a conservative party, her center and in some instances progressive politics had her often described as “chairing the wrong party.” With the long history of joint ruling by the CDU and SPD (current Chancellor Olaf Scholz was her Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister of Finance), many observers regard the coalition of SPD, Greens, and FDP that succeeded her as a continuation of her political discourse.

8 Red-Red-Green: Social Democratic Party (SPD), The Left, The Greens.

While these developments give little cause for optimism, we try to remind ourselves of what we have achieved and focus on the next steps forward. In November 2021, [Häuser Bewegen GIMA Berlin-Brandenburg eG](#) was founded. This cooperative real-estate agency brings together housing cooperatives, associations, and the Tenement Housing Syndicate (Mietshäusersyndikat), which believe in the principles of *Gemeinwohl*, to support them in buying houses for the benefit of tenants. In fall 2021, [Baustelle Gemeinwohl](#) was launched, a platform intended to better coordinate the various activities of the many groups, projects, and organizations that are vested in increasing the participatory space for making decisions on the gestalt of our city and changing public policies to better meet the needs of people. In December 2022, the Berlin Senate published an interim report by the expert committee on the DW&Co. referendum indicating a positive evaluation of the initiatives' proposal for communalization. The release of its final report is scheduled for June 2023. Among other goals, we are pushing to amend the right of preemption (RPE) and reintroduce it as an effective and powerful instrument for defending the rights of tenants. We look forward to seeing the [RPE poster](#) that we produced to promote this objective around Berlin. While we are aware that the [Commoning Berlin](#) map^{9,10} will require periodic maintenance and campaigning in the upcoming months and years to make it operational, we are optimistic about its connective and informative power (to support people and structures dealing with housing struggles) and about the fact that the size of the housing justice movement in Berlin has reached a level that cannot be easily ignored.

Barcelona

As noted above, the CMMM activities in Barcelona commenced as Ada Colau was assuming her second term as governing [mayor in 2019](#), albeit this time with a minority government (the mandate of which is about to end as we write these lines). During this term, the government pushed to implement its [Right to Housing Plan 2016–2025](#) and introduced several regulatory measures, including those related to property harassment, touristic uses, and increasing social rental housing stock. At the same time, the groundbreaking [Catalan](#)

⁹ cmmm-maps.eu/berlin

¹⁰ While developing the Commoning Berlin map we had several discussions with Christoph Trautvetter who led the development of the “Who Owns Berlin?” (Wem gehört Berlin?) map and supporting research which is focused on the structure of real estate ownership and indirectly scandalizes the consequences of contemporary real estate policies. Those exchanges helped form the community organizing aspect in the Commoning Berlin map, and in thinking about ways to connect those two thematically interlinked maps.

Rent Control Law (Llei 11/2020) that was promoted by the Catalan Tenants Union was passed and then retracted by court ruling. On 27 April 2023, after years of deliberation, the Housing Rights Act of 2023 (de la Ley por el Derecho de la Vivienda de 2023) was finally passed. While observers note that the final text omits several important points that were raised during its drafting, this national law defines stricter caps on increasing values of rental contracts and on evictions and pushes to require regional governments to allocate more land for non-profit housing.¹¹ After many years of tragic consequences in the aftermath of the 2008 mortgage crisis, the pressure created by the many housing groups and organizations seems to be paying off. Nevertheless, the struggle is far from over.

When we joined the CMMM project, we saw it as an opportunity to expand our work at ODESC in relation to collecting data and strategies on evictions, one of our central topics. Our main objective was to identify and indirectly scandalize “who” the evictors are and to strengthen our longstanding track record of advocacy campaigns on social and economic rights of tenants. As accessing these data from the cadaster proved impossible, we based our “**Stop Evictions!**” maps¹² on databases from PAH and other collectives (shared on the Desnonaments BCN Telegram broadcast channel), including information on who is evicting the tenants, when and where the evictions take place (showing frequencies and geographic intensities), and what the results of the process were. Thus, an important shift in the course of the project was recognizing the value of data gathered by social movements and deciding to build the maps with that data instead of continuing to struggle to gain access to records from public institutions. We are of course aware that the cases reported on our maps do not represent the total number of evictions in the city by far, and this is why we seek to expose the lack of official public data on the matter and continue pushing to change this reality. Notwithstanding, thanks to this map, we managed to utilize the existing private communication channel among anti-eviction activists (used to gather people to block an eviction) to create a system that transforms personal notifications into a consolidated database visible to everyone. Another layer of information that we wanted to gather and illustrate on the map was the “profiles” of affected people: Who are they? Are women more likely to suffer evictions? Are children losing their homes? However, we were unable to acquire this data from the Barcelona City Council or from other sources. Therefore, we will pursue this endeavor in future projects.

11 The text of the law has not been published yet (4 May 2023) and therefore we are limited to information published in media e.g. Catalan News. “Spain passes new housing law capping rent increases: all you need to know.” *Catalan News*. April 27, 2023. catalannews.com/politics/item/spain-passes-new-housing-law-all-you-need-to-know#:~:text=Annual%20rent%20increases%20capped%20at,the%20cost%20of%20living%20crisis

12 cmmm-maps.eu/barcelona

While considerable work still lies ahead for us in terms of expanding the base of social movements that use and supply data for the two static and interactive maps, the initial feedback has been optimistic. Furthermore, several journalists have shown interest and confirmed that the visual illustration of eviction cases will help demonstrate the depth of the problem. At the same time, we will continue investigating the people behind the vulture funds and how citizens, social movements, and public institutions can stop them from violating human rights, such as the right to housing.

CMMM

Working within this team of engaged municipalist mobilizers from cities with similar experiences but different contexts and backgrounds helped raise questions, spark debates, and learn about lesser known facets of our three cities. It was a space in which we zoomed out and in at the same time. We compared thoughts, approaches, desires, and results from work with different points of focus while pursuing a shared goal: housing justice and de-commodification. We regularly took time for honest reflection, to question ourselves, and to rethink and change our strategies and agendas. It was touching, challenging, motivating, but also exhausting and overwhelming at some points. As we tackled arising emergencies and their sometimes serious consequences for our cities and for us as individuals, this exchange allowed us to keep sight of other perspectives, and to be human.

The CMMM journey as a accompaniment-research-project in addition to our stressed routines was not ideal, and we see room for improvement. Nevertheless, the various formats of mapping that we employed have enabled us to analyze information that was available but not yet methodologically collected and evaluated. This collective space allowed us to systematize knowledge about housing in our own local contexts and to articulate aspects of housing unaffordability in media accessible to the wider public. By recognizing differences and not pushing for unified deliverables at all costs, it was possible for our three city teams to deal with various elements and short-term goals, to remain focused on the needs of the local movements in which we are embedded, and to produce knowledge and tools that are directly applicable to and useful for our collectives and partners involved in housing struggles.

It is with great joy and sadness that we write these last few words. We regret not having a larger number of face-to-face encounters and in-space co-learning with each other (due to the COVID-19 pandemic). We did not know one another before CMMM, but together we not only saw through this project successfully from beginning to end but also saw two master theses get completed, a doctoral dissertation defended, and welcomed four babies to the world. Looking back, we are grateful not only for what we succeeded in producing collectively but equally and maybe even more so for the personal and professional exchanges that we had in our monthly meetings via video calls, for the new insights and lessons learned from one another, for the patience with constantly changing targets and schedules, and for the humor and solidarity with one another.

Figure 17.3 (on the right) A mural stating: **“Many small people who in many small places do many small things can alter the face of the world”** (German: Viele kleine Leute die in vielen kleinen orten viele kleine Dinge tun, können das Gesicht der Welt verändern). At the East-Side Gallery which is located on remainders of the wall that separated east and west Berlin. In the backdrop one sees the Oberbaumbrücke (Oberbaum bridge) which was bombed in the middle by the Nazis in the last days of World War II, and which became a border point between the two halves of the divided city until its reunification in 1990. Picture by Natasha Aruri, 2012.



