



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Squatting in Leiden and Leipzig in the 1970s and 1980s: A comparison of informal housing practices in a capitalist democracy and a communist dictatorship

Grashoff, U.; Rooden, C. van; Snoep, M.; Steen, B.S. van der

Citation

Grashoff, U., Rooden, C. van, Snoep, M., & Steen, B. S. van der. (2020). Squatting in Leiden and Leipzig in the 1970s and 1980s: A comparison of informal housing practices in a capitalist democracy and a communist dictatorship. In *Fringe* (pp. 66-94). London: UCL Press.
doi:10.2307/j.ctv13xpsrb.11

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Creative Commons CC BY 4.0 license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3214834>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Chapter Title: Squatting in Leiden and Leipzig in the 1970s and 1980s: A comparison of informal housing practices in a capitalist democracy and a communist dictatorship

Chapter Author(s): Udo Grashoff, Charlotte van Rooden, Merel Snoep and Bart van der Steen

Book Title: Comparative Approaches to Informal Housing Around the Globe

Book Editor(s): Udo Grashoff

Published by: UCL Press. (2020)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv13xpsrb.11>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



UCL Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Comparative Approaches to Informal Housing Around the Globe*

Squatting in Leiden and Leipzig in the 1970s and 1980s: A comparison of informal housing practices in a capitalist democracy and a communist dictatorship

Udo Grashoff, Charlotte van Rooden, Merel Snoep and Bart van der Steen

4.1 Introduction

The historical image of urban squatting in the Global North is dominated by militant activists from the 1980s engaging in confrontations with the authorities. This stereotype glosses over the diversity of the squatter population as well as the variety of ways authorities dealt with squatting. In contrast to the exaggerated visibility of squatting in the West, squatting in Eastern Europe was almost invisible and therefore underexplored. Moreover, scholars who conceptualise communist states as totalitarian regimes assume that these regimes suppressed scattered illegal occupations immediately and forcefully, which was not always the case.

This study addresses both issues through a comparison of squatting in Leiden and Leipzig in the 1970s and 1980s. The former was situated in the Dutch liberal democracy, the latter in the communist dictatorship of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). To explore the extent to which these political regimes affected the dynamics of urban squatting, three aspects will be systematically compared here: the urban and legal context in which people squatted; the strategies that squatters employed; and the interactions between squatters and authorities. Such a comparison of squatting on both sides of the Iron Curtain deepens our understanding

of the phenomenon, while the remarkable similarities in the dynamics of squatting in Eastern and Western Europe might also nuance the political dichotomy of dictatorship and democracy.

Historiography

This study responds to two distinct strands of research: the history of squatting in Western Europe and the social history of housing in communist Eastern Europe.

The literature on squatting in Western Europe is vast and mainly focuses on political squatting during the 1970s and 1980s in major metropolitan centres.¹ Göran Therborn has criticised authors for being ‘predominantly movementalist – that is, mainly interested in the mobilisations, demands and battles of the movements, and not that much in their urban or state effects’.² In a similar vein, Nazima Kadir has questioned the focus on militant, anarchist and metropolitan squatters, claiming that it has narrowed the view of researchers. As a result, a feedback loop has emerged that presents a specific group of squatters as the ‘real’ squatters.³ Even though squatting can be considered inherently political, because it subverts the property regime and elicits state responses,⁴ such an approach may overlook the self-understanding of the squatters, who frequently presented themselves as apolitical. Furthermore, politicians, civil servants and police officers are often depicted in a stereotypical fashion, as inherently unreasonable and repressive. Such a ‘movementalist’ perspective overlooks the fact that authorities responded very differently to different groups of squatters.

The historiography of housing within communist regimes has ignored informal housing for decades.⁵ The occurrence of illegal occupations of flats, albeit generally in secret, challenges the conceptualisation of socialist states such as the GDR as regimes with full control over their populations. The dictatorship seldom, if ever, responded to squatting with merciless police interventions or brutal and fast evictions. Instead, cautious squatters and restrained authorities entered into negotiations about informal housing.⁶

Sources and methodology

Comparing squatting in Leiden and Leipzig raises a number of challenges, as these were cities of different sizes, under different regimes and with different political cultures. With regard to the units of comparison, Leiden (101,220 inhabitants in 1970) was significantly smaller than

Leipzig (583,885 inhabitants in 1970). However, unauthorised housing was not dealt with by the city administration of Leipzig, but by the *Abteilung Wohnungspolitik des Rates des Stadtbezirks* (the housing departments of its five districts). In its comparison of government policies on squatting, this study focuses on these districts (mainly Leipzig-Nordost and -Südwest), ensuring that the compared administrative units are in the same range of 100,000 inhabitants. More importantly, it examines the dynamics that squatting evoked between squatters and authorities, and there are no indications that the different sizes of the two cities influenced these interactions significantly.⁷

As to sources, a consequence of the different political regimes in Leiden and Leipzig is that different types of sources are used. For Leiden, the main source is the city's main daily newspaper, the *Leidsch Dagblad*.⁸ Newspapers generate and frame news through commercial and political filters and do not provide unbiased information. Furthermore, word-searches have limitations as they are dependent on contemporary terminology and the quality of optical character recognition technology.⁹ Finally, not all squatters sought attention from newspapers. Even so, we hold that this method yields the most complete information on squatting in Leiden – far more complete than police archives, municipality archives or oral histories would have done. The police only reported incidents when they intervened, the municipality only held records of 'their' houses and extremely problematic cases, and oral histories risk singling out those people who still identify as squatters. Newspapers, on the other hand, were less selective and reported on all kinds of cases as they happened.

For Leipzig, other sources had to be used, because unauthorised housing was not discussed in the state-controlled media and there was no independent media. Therefore, a variety of sources were combined to form a comparable set of data, primarily containing files from the municipality and the secret police, complemented by oral history. The files belonging to the municipal housing departments cover a small but representative number of cases. The files produced by the Ministry for State Security (Stasi), the secret police of the GDR, also document some cases of illegal housing. Often, however, the documentation of these incidents is fragmented and incomplete. Oral history can counterbalance these deficits. Thus, 10 unstructured interviews were also carried out with former squatters in Leipzig.¹⁰ Insights from other parts of the GDR help to make the assessment more reliable.¹¹

With regard to differing political cultures, a challenge to our comparison is the different terminology used to denominate squatting. In the

Netherlands, the common term was *kraken*, which referred to pre-Second World War acts of burglary and later to clandestine resistance activities (stealing identity cards and food vouchers) during the Nazi-German occupation of the Netherlands.¹² Its meaning is very close to the English ‘squatting’. In the GDR, the German equivalent of squatting (*Hausbesetzung*) was rarely used, as, in most cases, individual flats were occupied and not whole houses. Moreover, the West German practice linked house occupations to political actions, which was not possible in the East German dictatorship. People in East Berlin used the term *Wohnungsbesetzung*, which alluded to the West German practice, but in the rest of the GDR (including Leipzig), the practice was referred to as *Schwarzwohnen*. Translated literally, this is ‘black living’, but the meaning is similar to *Schwarzarbeit* (undocumented work on the side), which referred more to the evading of state authorities than to the act of occupying. The term *Schwarzwohnen* thus expressed a different self-understanding of those who occupied flats clandestinely in the GDR. One interviewee from Leipzig underlined this difference in stating: ‘We did not squat [in] houses. It was no political action, no aggression and no provocation. It was basically quite natural because there was free living space, and we took it, that was *Schwarzwohnen* – that was such a typical GDR term that doesn’t exist anymore today.’¹³ It might, however, be possible that such a clear distinction is exaggerated and that it rather reflects the extent to which Western European stereotypes about militant squatters have come to dominate the image of squatting, thus leading to an underestimation of the actual similarities between house occupations in Eastern and Western Europe.

4.2 Setting the stage: The urban, legal and political context of squatting in Leiden and Leipzig

To compare the dynamics between squatters and authorities in Leiden and Leipzig, this first section will discuss the urban, legal and political context. Which factors hampered, or contributed to, the emergence of squatting?

Two cities in disarray: Built structure

During the 1970s and 1980s, both Leiden and Leipzig suffered from housing shortages of comparable dimensions. Leiden was an impoverished city with a run-down housing stock. In 1962, a Dutch newspaper dubbed the city a ‘slum champion’, because of the 3,000 run-down houses in the

city centre.¹⁴ In 1968, the municipality stated that a quarter of the 29,000 houses in Leiden were of inferior quality. Hundreds of houses were officially declared uninhabitable. Affordable housing in the city centre was of especially bad quality. When a journalist researched the housing conditions in the working-class district of Leiden-Noord, she came across families with four children or more living in 'small four-room houses, the living room included'.¹⁵ Often, wooden floors were rotting, and walls bowing or bulging. The problems were worsened by deindustrialisation, which set in during the early 1970s and left the city centre full of empty factory buildings, while unemployment rose.¹⁶ In 1970, 13.6 per cent of Leiden's population was registered as in need of housing (referring to young people and especially young families living with parents while waiting for their own accommodation).¹⁷ In 1977, the waiting time for affordable rented housing administered by the municipality could be as long as four years.¹⁸

Despite the different political context, the local housing situation in Leipzig was similar, if not worse.¹⁹ Dilapidated houses and grey facades characterised Leipzig's townscape. There were only a few stray instances of renovation. Just like in other parts of the GDR, there was a chronic shortage of living space. Approximately 70,000 inhabitants (12 per cent of the population) were looking for a new flat during the 1980s.²⁰ This shortage was only partly a result of too little housing. A survey from 1982 indicated that 100,000 flats (40 per cent of Leipzig's housing stock) were occupied by too few inhabitants (with one person per room as the standard).²¹ There was no material incentive for occupants to move to smaller flats, as rents were incredibly cheap. Uneconomic rents also contributed to widespread decay and disrepair, as landlords could not afford the upkeep.

In the 1970s, the communist leadership seriously tackled the housing problem in the GDR with an ambitious housing construction programme that pledged to provide every East German with adequate housing by 1990. However, the prioritising of new housing curtailed the available manpower and resources for renovation, with unintended negative consequences. In 1984, while the construction of large new blocks of flats on the outskirts of the city was in full swing, the city's authorities planned the demolition of 20,000 flats (8 per cent of the housing stock) within the next five years.²² Demolitions were often delayed for years due to severe problems in the planning process, and attempts to make the bureaucracy more effective and to regain control did not always bear fruit. Thus, as a side effect of radical urban restructuring, 10 per cent of Leipzig's housing stock was left empty during the 1980s. Squatting often started where the authorities lost the overview and control of their housing stock, and then spread to other parts of the town.

Leiden developed similar urban renewal policies, such as the construction of a new residential district north of Leiden in the late 1960s, the Merenwijk. This ameliorated the situation slightly, but the dearth of *affordable* housing persisted as the rents were twice as high as in the city centre.²³ As a result, many apartments in Merenwijk were left empty, and some of them were subsequently squatted in.²⁴ By the mid-1970s, Leiden benefited from funding and the new urban renewal policies of the central government.²⁵ It led to an increase of 1,200 houses per year between 1973 and 1978.²⁶ Even so, the housing shortage persisted. In 1979, the number of people registered as in need of housing was still 5,293 (5.1 per cent), while more than a thousand dwellings were left empty.²⁷ It would take until the early 1990s before the dire state of housing stock had been overcome.

Regulation of housing

In Leiden, the municipality and eight housing corporations administered social housing in the city, including most of the inner-city rental houses.²⁸ More comfortable houses, at higher rents or for sale, were designated to the free market. During the 1970s, the municipality acquired a leading role in assigning houses to people on the waiting list. Initially, only people who were born in Leiden or worked in the city were accepted on the list, and anyone under 24 could only apply if they were married. The waiting list was thus particularly obstructive for single working-class youths, youths who wanted to live together without being married, and young people who wanted to live communally rather than in single apartments. Those who were accepted onto the list still faced long waiting times, and this especially created problems for young families, who often had to live with young children at their parents' houses.

In the GDR, there was no free market, and housing was almost completely regulated by the municipality. To acquire a tenancy agreement, a person had to have an official housing allocation notice (*Wohnraumzuweisung*). Generally, the authorities allocated flats according to urgency, but even then there were long waiting times. The Leipzig system benefited young families and people important to the state such as Party officials, army and police officers, and bureaucrats. As the number of available flats was limited, all other apartment-seekers, such as (young) singles and divorcees, had almost no chance.

Furthermore, both cities struggled with ineffective bureaucracies. In Leiden, renovated houses would sometimes be left empty for months before they were allocated to renters. In other cases, houses were left empty on purpose and designated as temporary housing in case of large-scale

renovations. In Leipzig, delays in urban development also led to the emergence of a grey area of neglected old building stock – closed for repairs that failed to materialise, or designated for demolitions that continued to be delayed. Bureaucrats even partly lost track of the building stock and did not always know whether a flat was occupied or not. A scenario could even arise in which a *Schwarzwohner* wanting to negotiate a lease with the housing department would find out that their flat had been removed from the register.²⁹ The situation did not improve over time as there were no systematic inspection rounds, while scattered attempts to regain control served to demonstrate the degree of disarray within the bureaucracy.³⁰

Legal and political context

The legal context of squatting differed markedly between the two cities. In Leipzig, unauthorised occupation of flats was considered illegal, whereas, in the Netherlands, squatters enjoyed a certain degree of legal protection.

In the Netherlands in the 1970s and 1980s, the act of squatting itself was illegal, but if a squatter's action was successful (such as occupying the dwelling for 24 hours and moving in a table, a chair and a bed) they enjoyed a certain amount of legal protection from immediate eviction (*huisrecht*). This was based on a court ruling from 1914, renewed in 1971. Private owners and housing corporations thus had to secure a court order to evict. During a certain period, the owner also needed to identify the squatters and give their names to the judge, which led squatter activists to call on fellow squatters to keep their surnames secret at all times. The owner could, however, also evict if they could establish that there were new legal renters or realistic and immediate renovation plans.³¹

In Leipzig, housing departments were obliged to suppress all attempts at unauthorised housing, since the dictatorship aspired to maintain complete control over all aspects of social life. Even so, the clandestine occupation of an apartment was only considered an administrative offence. If informal occupiers were 'caught', authorities imposed moderate fines.³² The authorities subsequently had to decide whether the occupiers should leave, but their decision had to comply with the *Zivilgesetzbuch* (Civil Code), which stated that nobody was to be homeless in a socialist country. Therefore, *Schwarzwohner* could only be evicted if alternative living space was available to them. And only if squatters stubbornly ignored an eviction notice could they be fined more harshly.

The discourse about squatting in the two cities was also very different. In the Netherlands, squatters generally attracted a lot of media coverage.

Not only did newspapers publish articles about squatting, the squatters themselves also produced pamphlets, posters and magazines. No such public discourse existed in the GDR. Although unauthorised occupation of flats became a frequent issue for the housing departments of the districts during the 1970s and 1980s, it did not trigger any debate, either among those in power or between them and the *Schwarzwohner*. GDR citizens did, however, have some means to communicate with the regime, most notably through *Eingaben* (petitions). Among the grievances put forward through these petitions, housing was the most frequent issue.³³ The extensive petitioning system can, to a certain extent, be considered an equivalent to the public discourse in the Netherlands.

4.3 Squatter strategies: Informality, negotiation and occasional protest

Squatters in Leiden and Leipzig responded to the simultaneous existence of housing shortages and vacant spaces. In both cities, the squatter population was diverse, and the squatters' varying identities and goals influenced their strategies to acquire and retain living spaces. So who were the squatters and what were their strategies?

Motivations

In Leiden in the 1970s, a significant proportion of the squatters consisted of young working-class families with children who wanted to leave their parental homes. Some squatters stated that their marriages had suffered because of cramped living conditions. Even though they were eligible for allocation to affordable housing, they had to wait up to four years, while they could not afford housing outside the regulated housing market. Apart from such cases, which Pruijt has dubbed 'deprivation-based squatting', there were also youths who used squatting to acquire alternative forms of housing (see [Figure 4.1](#)).³⁴ In the mid-1970s, students, working youths and political activists started to occupy places to live collectively. They were not 'merely' looking for a roof over their heads, but also demanded spaces where they could combine living with political and/or creative activities. These Leiden-based squatters, among other activities, ran a youth shelter and a women's social centre. Alongside these two groups, there were all sorts of other people who squatted, such as artists looking for workspaces or migrant workers who needed places to live and socialise.³⁵



Figure 4.1 Young squatters in a bank building in Leiden. Photographer unknown. © Archives *Leidsch Dagblad*, Historische Vereniging Oud Leiden.

In Leipzig, there was a similar spread of motivations. The main difference was that *Schwarzwohnen* was not about acquiring *affordable* flats, since rents were very low in the GDR. Instead, occupiers sought spaces to live in on their own (see Figure 4.2). Families with children moved to bigger or better-kept flats, divorcees wanted to escape their often unbearable domestic situations, and students and apprentices sought ways to leave their parental homes or to evade collective accommodation in dormitories.³⁶

There were no squatted social centres and only very few examples of communal living. In one exceptional case, an occupied house was silently turned into a meditation centre by a dozen Bhagwan followers.³⁷ During the late 1980s, a handful of sites housed illegal bars and cafés, which sometimes hosted unofficial concerts and art exhibitions.³⁸ Youths also occupied spaces for underground culture, as the punk band ‘Wutanfall’ (English: tantrum) did in 1983. The group occupied an attic flat in a house close to the city centre. When the house, which was slated for demolition, was vacated in November 1983, the punks moved to another informally occupied place in Leipzig. The band thus used squatting mainly as an alternative housing strategy and did not link occupation to provocative political action.

According to the different political context, similar sets of goals were communicated differently. In Leiden, squatters were open about their



Figure 4.2 *Schwarzwohner* in front of ‘their’ house in Leipzig, mid-1980s. Photo: Oliver Schoenberger © Dieter Rink.

intentions. Some were mainly seeking housing, while others sought places for alternative living. In Leipzig, there was no such choice. Even those *Schwarzwohner* with a hidden agenda of self-empowerment had to present themselves to the authorities as in need of housing only. To mention countercultural motivations would have been detrimental to their case.

Strategies

The means by which squatters found out about empty houses highlight fundamental differences between the two cities. In Leiden, identifying suitable houses for squatting became a semi-public matter. There was even a group of political squatters who organised a weekly *kraakspreekuur* (consultation practice), where people considering squatting could acquire information on where and how to do so. In Leipzig, identifying empty flats was completely up to the individual in question. Usually, people would look for windows with no curtains, which would indicate that a flat was empty. Some people even informed the housing authorities about unregistered empty flats hoping to get allocated one of them, which in some cases was successful. After having occupied a flat, squatters deployed several legalisation strategies, which we compare next.

a) Simulation of lawfulness

Squatting working-class families in Leiden almost always tried to establish formal or informal agreements with the owner, so as to secure their residence. The most common way to do so was by contacting the owner and

establishing short-term rental contracts. Squatters often offered to pay rent, sometimes even when an agreement could not be reached. Thus, the youths who squatted in the monastery in Zoeterwoude wired money to the order of nuns who owned the property, to illustrate their willingness and ability to pay rent. The latter refused the payment and had it transferred back.

If a house was owned by a private owner or company, handbooks (published by, and for, squatters) advised occupants to wire unsolicited rent to the owner's account: 'After three months of accepting rent it will be more difficult to get you out through a [normal] procedure.'³⁹ Such handbooks also advised squatters to establish informal networks with neighbours and sometimes also to present themselves as regular paying tenants, so they could claim to have built up informal residential rights. Many squatters paid electricity, water and gas bills, which was possible irrespective of whether their house was rented or squatted in. Neither paying unsolicited rent nor being well connected to the neighbourhood offered strong legal protection, but they did improve the negotiating position of the squatters, which was significant, as most formal agreements were reached informally.

Many of Leiden's squatters, and almost all of Leipzig's squatters, made every effort to appear as law-abiding as possible, and many (though not all of them) paid utility bills. In Leipzig, *Schwarzwohner* also often contacted the police registration office and, in most cases, had the address of the squatted place registered in their passport – a phenomenon that did not arise in the liberal Netherlands, where addresses were not registered in passports.⁴⁰

Unsolicited rent payment was a common strategy of Leipzig's *Schwarzwohner* to secure a good negotiating position in case of detection by the authorities. Presumably, this practice was more frequent than occupation without rent payment, and was often carried out clandestinely without contacting the owner. A rumour stated that three months of voluntary rent payments established a tacit contract between the owner and the tenant. Although the rumour was factually incorrect, the common practice of anonymous rent payments significantly reduced the sense of wrongdoing among *Schwarzwohner*. In a number of cases, clandestine flat occupiers would try to camouflage the illegality by claiming they had acquired the flat through a *Wohnungstausch* (home exchange), which was permitted by law. Another trick was to draw up a sham sublease.

In the GDR, a large percentage (up to 40 per cent) of the old housing stock was in private ownership or held in trusts. By moving into these houses and establishing informal agreements with the owner, *Schwarzwohner* could circumvent the housing allocation of the state.⁴¹ In some cases, *Schwarzwohner* were even able to make similar deals with

the housing association ('VEB Gebäudewirtschaft Leipzig'). One example is the case in which students and youths occupied a house south of the city centre in the mid-1980s. Initially, they were ordered by the housing association's staff to vacate the premises, but after two months or so without any action from either side, an employee offered the youths a *Nutzungsgenehmigung* (usage agreement) so that they could stay in the apartment legally, albeit without full tenants' rights.⁴²

Unlike the situation in Leiden, such semi-formal or informal deals between *Schwarzwohner* and owners could be considered an administrative offence. The registers of financial penalties therefore contain several names of owners who were fined in the same way as squatters when traced. The different property regime in the GDR with state power of disposition over private housing created such paradoxical situations. At the same time, however, it facilitated informal deals with *Schwarzwohner*. While private owners were unable to procure materials or manpower for renovation, they benefited from the willingness of the residents to carry out repairs at their own expense, thus preserving the house.

b) Voluntary repairs

In both cities, squatters would move into buildings that were officially classed as 'uninhabitable', or that had simply stood empty for a long time due to a delay in building plans. In some cases, the local authorities would then realise that these houses or flats were usable and would clear the squatters out in favour of other people in need of housing. In other cases, however, squatters could make their case for formalisation by making repairs to the squatted property, or by claiming to do so. This became an important strategy of acquiring formal residence through goodwill. The central argument of the squatters was that they had not jumped the waiting list but created living space that had not existed before.

This was the central argument made by a group of youths who had squatted in a flat next to an old printing complex in Leiden in the mid-1970s. When they were given an eviction notice, they even set out to renovate the neighbouring house as an alternative for the new prospective renters. Their action, however, was to no avail, and they were still forced to leave.⁴³ In another instance, in May 1974, Leiden students squatted in a former monastery in the nearby village of Zoeterwoude. They made plans to turn the building into housing for 200 people, as well as spaces for artists, conferences and socialising.⁴⁴ The squatters told the media they wanted to renovate the monumental but dilapidated building, and even drew up plans with a specialised non-profit housing

bureau in Amsterdam. However, the costs, which would have to be paid in part by the municipality, proved to be too high and the plan folded. By contrast, squatters who occupied the fifteenth-century *Begijnhof* in 1983 successfully renovated it and turned it into five apartments. Not only did they save the building from demolition, but they were also able to stay.⁴⁵

Aiming at similar outcomes, *Schwarzwohner* in Leipzig at times offered to undertake extensive renovations at their own expense. Most of the occupied flats were run-down, and often even uninhabitable. In one case, a 27-year-old man had occupied a flat that was allocated to someone else. He managed to convince the authorities that the flat was uninhabitable and that he himself was the best person to change this. In his petition to the housing department, he meticulously listed all the required repairs. The occupant planned to procure two new windows, a boiler, two heaters and a slow combustion stove, and underlined that he would pay for everything.⁴⁶ Promptly, the housing department offered the *Schwarzwohner* a lease. In another case, in February 1988, the housing department of Leipzig-Südwest issued a housing permit to a man on the condition that he would install a new load-bearing wall.⁴⁷ It seems that offering to make voluntary repairs was a more successful strategy in Leipzig than in Leiden, presumably due to the greater difficulties associated with renovating old housing stock.



Figure 4.3 Monastery in Zoeterwoude squatted in May 1974. The squatters envisaged extensive renovation work that never materialised. Photo: Jan Holvast. © Archives *Leidsch Dagblad*, Historische Vereniging Oud Leiden.



Figure 4.4 A student during the roof repair of a privately owned house in Leipzig inhabited by several *Schwarzwohner*, late 1980s.
© Olav Metz.

c) Communicative practices

Leiden squatters frequently used publicity to acquire goodwill. By telling their stories of woe to local newspapers, they could pressure local authorities. As the following examples show, newspapers and the various publications issued by squatter movements, had a direct influence on how events unfolded.

In the early 1970s, a large percentage of the squatter population of Leiden consisted of young working-class families, often with small children. In about half of the cases, political activists offered support and know-how, thus increasing the chances of success. Typically, after occupying a house, the squatting families were mentioned or even interviewed in the local newspapers as people who were desperate for living space and did not see any other option than squatting. Squatters and their supporters also wrote letters to the newspapers, calling for help or attention. After positive media coverage, the municipality generally decided to help

the young families. They would be provided with a housing permit or an alternative address, even though official policy dictated that everyone had to respect the municipal waiting list. However, for squatting families to be successful, they needed to be unrelenting and in continuous contact with the press. One such example of a successful squatter action took place in Leiden in 1970. After a family had squatted in an apartment, the police arrived to evict them. When the father told the police that the family had nowhere to go, they were offered a police cell to spend the night (they were explicitly not arrested). In the following days, the father used the local media to pressure local institutions to provide him and his family with a home, which eventually worked. The family was allocated a rental house, thus effectively jumping the queue.⁴⁸

Sometimes, supporters would write to the newspaper either to defend squatters who were losing their dwellings or to express sympathy.⁴⁹ If media attention was less positive, squatters lost leverage. This happened, for example, to a young man, who squatted in a house for himself and his pregnant wife in 1971. After a failed squatter attempt in June 1971, the man had to appear in court in November, where he was sentenced to a fine and two weeks' probation, because he had squatted in a total of five houses, as well as driving a dangerously unroadworthy car without a drivers' licence or insurance. The squatter replied that he could not pay the fines and that eviction and imprisonment would mean he had to leave his family living on the street. The newspaper depicted the man not so much as an individual worthy of sympathy, but rather as a petty criminal. Subsequently, he did not receive much goodwill from the municipality.⁵⁰

In Leipzig, access to media was virtually non-existent. *Schwarzwohner* generally avoided publicity but did use the semi-public means of petitioning to nudge the authorities towards supporting their cause. The common discursive strategy in such appeals to the authorities was to combine appreciation of the positive sides of the regime with individual demands. Jeremy Brooke Straughn has dubbed this strategy 'the arts of consensual contention'.⁵¹ One example of this came from the town of Halle, close to Leipzig. In 1981, two young couples had occupied a flat together in the old town centre and were evicted shortly afterwards. The couples moved in again the very next day, and wrote a petition to the mayor in which they presented a dramatic description of their living conditions, interspersed with quotes from Party officials denouncing housing shortages. The housing department of Halle considered the petition, at least partly, to be a form of 'constructive criticism' and allocated the older couple alternative living space. The other two youths, though, were sent back to their parents.⁵²



Figure 4.5 Newspaper report on squatters in *Leidsch Dagblad*, 22 May 1979. © Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken. By contrast, there was no media coverage of *Schwarzwohnen* in Leipzig.

A fundamental difference between Leiden and Leipzig was that public mobilisation was impossible under the communist dictatorship. ‘Consentful contention’ was more likely to be successful if the occupation was framed as an individual case. Any direct critique of state policy would backfire. In Leiden, on the other hand, there were activist groups that used criticism of the authorities to support working-class families. In May 1970, the action group Comité Woningnood squatted in two houses on the Lange Mare Street for two families.⁵³ As reported in a local daily newspaper, the committee members explicitly stated that their action was not only aimed at acquiring housing, but also functioned as a ‘political stunt’ to address the ‘ridiculous housing situation’ in Leiden.⁵⁴ The two families, however, told the newspaper that the squatter action was primarily aimed at ‘getting a house’ for them and their young children. Both the police and the owner of the two houses refrained from undertaking action against the squatting families. They decided that both families could stay, at least temporarily. Likewise, when members of the Socialist Party occupied the town square with tents in support of three squatting families threatened with eviction in June 1973, the municipality conceded that they would review their cases one more time.⁵⁵

4.4 Reactions of the authorities and interaction with squatters

Both in Leiden and Leipzig, the authorities responded differently to the actions of different kinds of squatters. Why were some negotiations successful and others not?

Neither in Leiden nor in Leipzig did authorities embark on a particular hard-line approach towards squatting. In Leiden, the municipality and housing corporations responded in three different ways to the rising tide of house occupations in the 1970s. In the first instance, they tried to improve their administration, so that houses were more easily allocated to renters and not left empty for long periods of time. This, however, proved difficult, because Leiden had no fewer than eight housing corporations, many of which had boards run by volunteers.⁵⁶ Second, they put formal and informal pressure on squatters to incite them to leave their squatted residences. The municipality officially claimed to repress the squatting of corporation houses, since it considered such action the equivalent of queue-jumping. In a similar vein, the municipality denounced the occupation of empty dwellings that functioned as temporary housing for people whose houses were being renovated. It considered the squatting of these houses antisocial and an obstruction to renovation works.⁵⁷ Third, the municipality and housing corporations attempted to prevent squatting by rendering houses inhabitable, either by removing plumbing and/or electrical wiring or by demolishing them altogether. This, however, often led to public outcries of indignation in a city where housing shortages were rampant.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, many squatters achieved legalisation, often without serious conflicts. The Leiden municipality even sometimes pressured private owners to negotiate with squatters.⁵⁹ When a group of youths squatted in several privately owned apartments in a newly built apartment block in the city centre in 1981, the municipality stalled eviction measures and instead pressured the building's project developer to offer rental agreements to the squatter youths, which eventually happened.⁶⁰

The municipality would only start a court case against squatters in the most extreme cases, because they were costly and time consuming and often led to unsatisfying results for the municipality and housing corporations. Judges rarely fined squatters, but limited themselves to handing out eviction notices (often needlessly, because squatters rarely awaited the court ruling and left before an official eviction notice was issued).⁶¹

The formal reaction of Leipzig's housing administration to violations of the legal allocation procedure was twofold. After having imposed a fine, the authorities had to decide if the squatters could stay. This decision was made on the basis of the assessment of urgency of the case. In practice, this led to outcomes that were very similar to those in Leiden. Even

though the language of the housing administration was uncompromising and intimidating, there was a striking discrepancy between the harsh rhetoric and the rather lenient practice of housing authorities. Samples indicate that at least half of the *Schwarzwohner* ultimately obtained permission to stay in the property. However, not all *Schwarzwohner* dared to await this decision, moving out immediately when put under pressure.

Discriminative practices

In both cities, authorities were more sympathetic to ‘deprivation-based squatting’ and less inclined to accept ‘alternative youths’ with more or less overt political motivations.

In Leiden, the municipality often accommodated families of squatters, but generally thwarted squatter actions of alternative youths, because they considered them troublemakers. Thus, when eight youths squatted in a large complex on Hooigracht Street in 1974, the municipality promptly responded by stating that the building would be used to house 35 immigrant workers.⁶² The squatters were offered individual housing, but no spaces for collective living. The squatters protested, among other means by sleeping in front of the mayor’s house. The city council, however, remained unsympathetic to their claims.

Seven years later, an abandoned factory building was squatted in by unemployed youths. They claimed that they wanted to establish multiple small enterprises in the building, such as an art studio, a handicraft centre, a photo studio and a music studio – and a shop where these manufactured products would be sold.⁶³ The municipality, however, had already made plans for the building prior to the squatters’ arrival. Ironically, they wanted to tear down the building to make room for a regional employment office.⁶⁴ After lengthy negotiations, the municipality offered the squatters the abandoned Harteveld complex, a former jenever (gin) distillery that was subsequently renovated to accommodate small studios. The squatters gladly accepted the proposal as a suitable alternative. The case illustrates the more sympathetic attitude of the municipality to ‘entrepreneurial’ squatters than to those who demanded spaces for communal living.

The response of Leipzig’s housing administration to squatting was, at first glance, more negative and less discriminative. The negotiating position of Leipzig squatters was, however, strengthened by the fact that authorities could only file an eviction notice if suitable alternative living space was available. Hence, the housing administration’s decision was made on the basis of their assessment of urgency and the available

alternatives for the informal occupiers. In the case of a divorced shift worker who lived with his former wife and three children in cramped conditions before he occupied a flat, the housing department imposed a very moderate fine of only 150 Marks, and conceded: 'Eviction is impossible.' The man was issued a housing permit.⁶⁵ A young couple who had occupied the flat of someone who had emigrated to West Germany also received official approval. The man worked as a waiter and had lived in an 8 m² room in his parents' flat, while the woman had lived with her parents without having her own room. A couple of days after the informal occupation, they married. In a discussion with the housing authorities, they indicated that the young woman was pregnant, which provided a last knock-down argument.⁶⁶ In another case, it was not urgency, as such, but the lack of alternatives that made the housing department accept the unauthorised occupation. A man who had lived with his grandmother occupied a flat in December 1989 and ignored two eviction notices. It turned out that his grandmother was not willing to accommodate him any longer – and he was thus given permission to stay in the flat.⁶⁷ Generally, bureaucrats in the GDR perceived and treated *Schwarzwohnen* exclusively as deprivation-based squatting. Similar to Leiden, authorities were hostile towards, and distrustful of, alternative youths. Nonetheless, this did not mean they resorted to brutal repression. The two cities were, in fact, rather similar in their restrained responses to political provocation, as the following section shows.

Confrontations

Generally, political protest was common in Leiden and very rare in Leipzig. The reactions of the authorities were neutral-to-sympathetic in Leiden, and very negative in Leipzig. Even so, in neither city was squatting brutally repressed.

As we have seen, in Leiden, activist squatters often used squatting to draw attention to housing problems. Through short-lived theatrical actions, they endeavoured to exert pressure on the municipality. The authorities often responded sympathetically, although they did not always offer concrete solutions. The city's main street, the Breestraat, was a popular setting for squatters who wished to make a statement. In March 1979, women occupied Breestraat N°125, demanding that a women's social centre be located there, which was eventually granted (see [Figure 4.6](#)).⁶⁸ In December 1979, approximately 50 youths temporarily squatted in a building at Breestraat N° 24, decorating the facade with banners stating: 'Youths want to live somewhere too' and 'No postponement of building



Figure 4.6 A short-lived theatrical action against housing shortage and speculation on the Breetstraat in Leiden, December 1979. Photo: Jan Holvast. © Archives *Leidsch Dagblad*, Historische Vereniging Oud Leiden.

plans'. The action, however, did not elicit any other response than a sincere statement from the city's alderman to look into the situation.⁶⁹

When Leipzig's *Schwarzwohner* acted in a similar, provocative way, their chances of success were greatly diminished, not least because, in these cases, it was not the housing department but the police and the Stasi that stepped in. Even so, repression was rarely brutal, as the following example illustrates. In May 1984, *Schwarzwohner* displayed slogans on the facade of two dilapidated houses in Erich-Ferl-Straße, a busy road east of the town centre. Both slogans had been taken, in an act of subversive irony, from the list of suggested slogans for the 1 May demonstrations that had been published in the official newspaper of the ruling *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Socialist Unity Party). One banner read 'Freedom to all patriots incarcerated by the reaction' and alluded to the arrest of one resident's friends. Another five-metre-long banner stated 'Housing policy is the centrepiece of our social policy' and was displayed on the front of the neighbouring house, which was in a state of collapse. The irony did not go unheeded, and it led to the instant removal of the slogans by the fire brigade. Three weeks later, the Stasi

interrogated the residents.⁷⁰ The four young inhabitants, however, did not face criminal prosecution, and it took almost three months for the police to initiate eviction procedures.

Notably, the eviction only came after another provocation by the youths. They had displayed a notice in the window on the ground floor stating: 'This house is still inhabited, don't carry out any construction works. The tenants'.⁷¹ The police removed the notice and the housing department ordered the occupiers to vacate the premises two days later. The house was put under constant surveillance by the police and Stasi. On the day of the eviction, the young men brought their furniture out and started a sit-in action. For hours, they sat on the pavement of the busy road and waited for events to unfold. The police asked the mayor of the borough to take action, and he ordered staff to ask the squatters to leave, but to no avail. Meanwhile, the police also informed the Leipzig chairman of the Socialist Unity Party, who ordered the housing department to procure a lorry to remove the furniture. That afternoon, everything was loaded into the lorry and delivered to different locations, such as the homes of family members. Then the authorities cut off the electricity, gas and water supplies and nailed the door shut. The authorities nevertheless made sure that every resident had an alternative place to stay; indeed, when one of them could not be housed with friends or family, the housing department allocated him a flat.⁷² This example illustrates how the state reacted in moderation, even in this exceptional case of political provocation.

But even though the reaction of the authorities to protest and criticism was softer than one might expect from a dictatorship, there was a fundamental difference: no matter how meagre the results finally were, the squatters in Leiden staged their protest with the expectation of achieving something. By contrast, the political protest by squatters in Leipzig was a desperate provocation, a fatalistic subversive act without any expectation of change.

Escalation

In both cities, forceful evictions were only carried out when the authorities feared that public order was threatened, as the following examples illustrate. In Leiden, there was a limited number of violent confrontations when political and punk youths refused to vacate buildings despite court orders. These incidents mainly took place in the 1980s and were, to a large extent, inspired by militant confrontations in Amsterdam and other metropolitan cities. Thus, an eviction at a house on the Scheepmakerssteeg in 1983, for instance, resulted in scuffles with the police, when 50 youths

refused to vacate the property.⁷³ The eviction at Breestraat 122 in 1984 also resulted in violence, even though the eviction itself transpired peacefully. Punk youths had barricaded the house and laid doors, smeared with oil, on the staircases to make it as hard as possible for the police to enter or inspect the house. Even so, when the police entered the building, they did not offer active opposition. After the eviction, however, a riot ensued in a neighbouring street between police and youths, in which one of the officers felt so threatened that he fired a warning shot into the air.⁷⁴

These kinds of confrontation remained exceptional in Leiden, and it is remarkable that both squatters and authorities in the city often referred to them as ‘Amsterdam-like situations’ in the media.⁷⁵ In March 1980, after heavy squatter riots in Amsterdam, Leiden’s deputy mayor stated that a combination of ‘six years of open debate about squatting’ in the media and the Leiden Squatters’ League’s ‘careful’ choices of property to squat in had made it possible to avoid such escalation in Leiden.⁷⁶ Indeed, when a group of squatters occupied the city council building in June 1979, in solidarity with other squatters threatened with eviction, the occupiers blocked the door but refrained from further action. Correspondingly, the council members decided not to call the police but to leave through an open window and start a discussion with the activists (see Figure 4.5).⁷⁷ Even in 1985, after a number of Leiden evictions had ended in police interventions, the Leiden mayor claimed proudly: ‘Never has the riot police had cause to intervene in the city, and it will remain that way.’⁷⁸



Figure 4.7 Police and young squatters in Leiden in April 1980. Photo: Jan Holvast. © Archives *Leidsch Dagblad*, Historische Vereniging Oud Leiden.



Figure 4.8 The location of the Rockpalast party in Leipzig-Lindenau in 1981 after a raid by the People's Police. © BStU.

In Leipzig, there was no violence on the part of the squatters at all. Brutal, mass police action only occurred when the security forces feared disturbances or political provocation on a large scale. This happened in the exceptional case of a temporary occupation of an empty house in Leipzig-West in 1981. The purpose of the one-night squatting action was not to acquire housing but to throw a party. The annual 'Rockpalast' concert in Cologne was broadcast that evening on West German TV, and the young organisers used this as an opportunity to organise a big social event. The event was secretly prepared, electricity supply installed, a TV borrowed and the banisters mended. About a hundred youths turned up in joyful anticipation of watching groups such as the Grateful Dead and The Who in concert. By midnight, an exuberant party atmosphere had developed, when the police brought the event to an abrupt end.⁷⁹ Police started to inspect the passports of the guests, and after much wrangling they bundled dozens of young people into army trucks, partly with force, and interrogated them until the next morning. Most of them only had to pay a moderate fine of 75 Marks.⁸⁰ The police interpreted the event as a subversive activity. The organisers had taken their cue from West German squatters, and one guest had displayed leaflets at the party featuring socio-critical poetry. The harsh reaction of the state was partly a result of this political interpretation of the event, and also partly due to fears that the action would reach the public sphere.

By contrast, the eviction in 1989 of a house occupied by punks remained peaceful. The ramshackle house in Dufourstraße had become a meeting place for Leipzig's punks, but although the Stasi and the police were aware of this, they tolerated it for years. Apparently, they did not

deem the house to be a threat to public order or the political status quo. The authorities only evicted the residents in 1989, mainly because of the risk of the building collapsing. The punks toyed with the idea of blowing up the property, but ultimately left grudgingly, only leaving one anarchist flag to the rear of the house.⁸¹

4.5 Conclusion

The fundamentally different political regimes of Leiden and Leipzig obviously had an impact on the appearance of squatting and its treatment by the two cities. In Leiden, squatting was more overt, as publicity would help mobilise support in many cases. In the GDR, *Schwarzwohner* remained a tacit and rather invisible practice. Also, in contrast to the occupation of whole buildings in Leiden, *Schwarzwohner* normally occupied single flats.

At the same time, there were remarkable similarities in the motivations, strategies and official responses to informal housing in Leiden and Leipzig during the 1970s and 1980s. Studies of the two cities reveal a similar variety of motivations for squatting, and a similar discriminative policy practised by the authorities – prioritising deprivation-based squatting and looking askance at (Leiden) or repressing (Leipzig) communal living. Considering this, *Schwarzwohner* in Leipzig almost always presented themselves as needy, since any indication of political motivations or alternative lifestyles weakened their bargaining position. To propitiate the state, they also offered voluntary maintenance and repairs, and paid unsolicited rents. Squatters in Leiden applied very similar strategies. They, too, wired money to owners and offered voluntary renovation work.

A slight difference lies in the fact that most *Schwarzwohner* considered informal occupation primarily a means to an end. Generally, there was no ‘squatter identity’ in the GDR and no squatting for the purpose of acquiring spaces for politically oppositional activities. Squatters in Leipzig commonly displayed a willingness to legalise their occupation. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of squatters in Leiden also squatted out of necessity and made great efforts to reach an agreement with the authorities. Political activists and alternative youths were thus only part of a much larger squatter population.

Furthermore, the general attitude of the authorities in Leipzig and Leiden was rather similar. Housing administrations in both cities displayed a marked discrepancy between a relatively harsh rhetoric and rather lenient practices imbued with socialist values. However, these

policies came into effect differently. In Leiden, local authorities were mainly social democrats in a bind between the 'ideal' of social housing and the reality of housing shortage. Concessions to squatters were often a result of media pressure. In Leipzig, the authorities were intent on restoring order, but evictions were seriously hampered by the legal framework. The root cause of this was that the communist dictatorship highly valued social security and justice, which established authoritative points of reference to which the *Schwarzwohner* could appeal. These binding values made it impossible to deny the right to housing enshrined in the constitution, and therefore turned out to be conducive to informal housing in many cases. Additionally, mismanagement facilitated unauthorised housing significantly (a feature that applied to Leiden as well).

To some extent, these resemblances challenge the dichotomy of democracy and dictatorship. However, some aspects of squatting in the Netherlands did not have any equivalent in the GDR, such as the possibility of public campaigns and protest. Squatters in Leiden were frequently supported by activists – often, the squatters were activists themselves. They would try to organise popular support and resort to actions such as picketing and occupations of streets, squares or municipal offices. Although they required tenacity and a keen eye for the media, such protests were often successful in the Dutch city. In the East German dictatorship, by contrast, charm offensives in the media or political protest were entirely impossible. While squatters in Leiden could use publicity to vent their general criticisms of housing policy, comparable intentions were met with harsh repression in Leipzig. There, stories of hardship could only hope to achieve results if addressed directly to the government, accompanied and supported by ideological phrases.

Notes

1. For a discussion of this historiography, see Bart van der Steen, 'De papieren van de revolutie: De kraakbeweging en haar geschiedschrijving', *Stadsgeschiedenis* 9, no. 2 (2014): 166–81; Bart van der Steen, Ask Katzeff and Leendert van Hoogenhuijze, 'Introduction: Squatting and Autonomous Action in Europe, 1980–2012', in *The City is Ours. Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe from the 1970s to the Present*, ed. Bart van der Steen et al. (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2014): 1–19.
2. Göran Therborn, *Cities of Power. The Urban, the National, the Popular, the Global* (London: Verso, 2017), 195.
3. Nazima Kadir, 'Myth and Reality in the Amsterdam Squatters' Movement, 1975–2012', in *The City is Ours: Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe from the 1970s to the Present*, ed. Bart van der Steen et al. (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2014), 21–62.
4. Rowan Tallis Milligan, 'The Politics of the Crowbar: Squatting in London, 1968–1977', *Anarchist Studies* 24, no. 2 (2016): 8–32.
5. Only recently, scholars have demonstrated that a practice similar to squatting existed in socialist cities such as Leningrad or Prague as well. Michaela Pixová and Arnošt Novák, 'Prague:

- Post-1989: Boom, Decline and Renaissance', *Baltic Worlds* 9, no. 1/2 (2016): 34–45; Tatiana Golova, 'Squatting and the Moral Economy of Public–Private Relations', *Baltic Worlds* 9, no. 1/2 (2016): 57–67.
6. Udo Grashoff, 'Cautious Occupiers and Restraint Bureaucrats: Schwarzwohnen in the German Democratic Republic: Somewhat Different from Squatting', *Urban Studies*, 56, no. 3 (2019): 548–60.
 7. In Western Europe, squatting in metropolitan centres such as Amsterdam, Copenhagen or West Berlin tended to have different dynamics, since the potential for violent escalation was greater there. However, we contend that this was exceptional rather than the norm, so it may be more adequate to compare Leipzig with a non-metropolitan city.
 8. By searching the digitised archives of the newspaper for the words *kraken* (squatting), *krakers* (squatters) and *gekraakt* (squatted), we compiled a newspaper clippings archive containing 877 clippings from the years 1970–1990. We organised the clippings using a digital historical map that now shows all 223 squatter actions between 1970 and 1990. Our method is discussed in greater depth in Charlotte van Rooden, Merel Snoep and Bart van der Steen, 'Krakende katenvrouwtjes en banketbakkers: Nieuw onderzoek naar de diversiteit en dynamiek van kraken in Hollandse steden', *Holland: Historisch tijdschrift* 50, no. 1 (2018): 55–64. This research is part of a larger research project on the history of squatting in Leiden between 1970 and 2010. See the project website: www.krakeninleiden.nl.
 9. For example, before 1970, occasional house occupations were not discussed as squatter actions in *Leidsch Dagblad*. A reflection on the methodological pitfalls of digital newspaper research is published in Marcel Broersma, 'Nooit meer bladeren? Digitale krantenarchieven als bron', *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 14, no. 2 (2012): 29–55.
 10. To avoid the potential bias of using too narrow a sample, interviewees were recruited via newspaper advertising.
 11. The cases from Leipzig are part of a bigger research project on *Schwarzwohnen* in many East German cities. For a more in-depth discussion of the sources used for this research, see Udo Grashoff, *Schwarzwohnen: Die Unterwanderung der staatlichen Wohnraumlentung in der DDR* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2011).
 12. For the international terminologies of squatting, see Bart van der Steen, Ask Katzeff and Leendert van Hoogenhuijze, 'Introduction: Squatting and Autonomous Action in Europe, 1980–2012', in *The City is Ours. Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe from the 1970s to the Present*, ed. Bart van der Steen et al. (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2014), 3; Bart van der Steen, 'De metropool voorbij: Een korte geschiedenis van kraken in Leiden in de jaren zeventig', *Stadsgeschiedenis* 12, no. 1 (2017): 75–85, particularly 77f.
 13. Bettina Jahnke, interview, Leipzig, 2008, own translation.
 14. Cor Smit, *Strijd om kwaliteit: De geschiedenis van de volkshuisvesting in de regio Leiden* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2006), 127, 146.
 15. "M'n huis is net een oude overall", *Leidsch Dagblad*, 8 January 1973.
 16. A civil servant exclaimed: 'All municipalities have problems, but Leiden has them all' (Cor Smit, *Strijd om kwaliteit: De geschiedenis van de volkshuisvesting in de regio Leiden* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2006), 177).
 17. Cor Smit, *Strijd om kwaliteit: De geschiedenis van de volkshuisvesting in de regio Leiden* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2006), 127, 146.
 18. 'Lezers schrijven', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 19 January 1977.
 19. In contrast to Leiden, there were no empty commercial buildings, and rough-sleeping was virtually absent in Leipzig.
 20. Thomas Nabert, 'Kommunaler Wohnungsbau in Leipzig mit Tradition', in *Vom Wert des Wohnens*, ed. Gregor Hoffman (Leipzig: Leipziger Wohnungs- und Baugesellschaft, 2006), see 26.
 21. Christoph Bernhardt, 'Die sozialistische Stadt zwischen Herrschaft, Partizipation und Aneignung', in *Gedachte Stadt – Gebaute Stadt: Urbanität in der deutsch-deutschen Systemkonkurrenz 1945–1990*, ed. Thomas Großbölting and Rüdiger Schmidt (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015), 262.
 22. MfS, KD Leipzig-Stadt, Operativinformation 109/84, 18 July 1984 (BStU, MfS, KD Leipzig-Stadt, 01545/04, Bl. 75–7).
 23. Cor Smit, *Strijd om kwaliteit: De geschiedenis van de volkshuisvesting in de regio Leiden* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2006), 164.
 24. Between 1975 and 1980, these amounted to 120 million guilders. 'Ruim 1000 woningen staan leeg', *Leidse Courant*, 10 December 1974.

25. Frits van Oosten, *De stad en de wethouder: Hoe Cees Waal de binnenstad van Leiden vernieuwde* (Leiden: Ginkgo, 2017): 12.
26. Cor Smit, *Strijd om kwaliteit: De geschiedenis van de volkshuisvesting in de regio Leiden* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2006), 162.
27. 'Harde confrontatie dreigt ook in Leiden', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 29 March 1980.
28. Non-profit organisations responsible for the majority of cheap and mid-range rental housing.
29. Nikolaus Voss, interview, Schwerin, 2007.
30. An inspection in Leipzig-Nordost in May 1989 indicated that, of the total of 93 apartments vacated by elderly people who had moved to retirement homes, only 14 had been allocated to new tenants within three months. ABI-Kontrolle Leipzig-Nordost 24 May 1989, Bericht 10.8.1989, Stadtarchiv Leipzig (hereafter: StAL), Stadtbezirk Nordost, 1835, Bl. 26–30.
31. Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een voet tussen de deur: Geschiedenis van de kraakbeweging 1964–1999* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 2000), 64–5, 184–5.
32. In some cases, the issue of a fine marked the beginning of a tough and long drawn-out struggle. A few *Schwarzwohner* refused to pay and, in these cases, follow-up measures by the authorities are hard to detect. In many other cases, however, the contestation of the fine was unsuccessful and people ultimately paid. Stadtbezirk Leipzig Südwest, Abteilung Wohnungspolitik/Wohnungswirtschaft to Abteilung Finanzen, 14 December 1988, StAL, Stadtbezirk Südwest 87, p. 51, 111.
33. Cf. Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
34. Hans Pruijt, 'The Logic of Urban Squatting', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 1 (2013): 19–45.
35. At least partly, they can be subsumed under Pruijt's notion of 'entrepreneurial squatting'.
36. In the GDR, all students were offered accommodation, but in most cases in shared rooms with three or four students and little privacy.
37. AKG, Information zu einer religiösen Gruppierung, Leipzig, 9 May 1984, Bundesbehörde für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR (hereafter BStU), MfS, BV Leipzig, Abt. XX, 01111/02, Bl. 26f.
38. Maix Mayer, interview, Leipzig, 2009; Peter Wensierski, *Die unheimliche Leichtigkeit der Revolution: Wie eine Gruppe junger Leipziger die Rebellion in der DDR wagte* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2017), 291f.
39. Gezamenlijke kraakgroepen, *Kraakhandleiding* (Amsterdam 1978), 13. The advice was copied in a squatter handbook from Rotterdam in 1980. The Leiden Kraaksprekuren and Leiden Squatter League (Leidse Kraakbond) did not publish their own squatter handbook but instead circulated squatter handbooks from other cities. Even so, in 1982, the Amsterdam squatter handbook advised to never 'simply' wire money to the owner, since no rights could be derived from paying unsolicited rent: 'The owner does not even have to pay the money back [...]'. KJHR (Komitee Jongeren Huisvesting Rotterdam), *Kraakhandleiding* (Rotterdam: KJHR, 1980), 11; Kraaksprekuren Amsterdam, *Kraakhandleiding* (Amsterdam: Lont, 1982), 22–4).
40. Even more so, (activist) squatter handbooks advised squatters not to put their real names on the letter box or reveal their surnames to the neighbours, because it was easier for the owner to have the squatters evicted via a court case if the squatters' names were known.
41. Olav Metz, interview, Groß Zicker, 2007.
42. The difference, compared with a tenancy agreement, was that the residents did not have the rights of regular tenants and paid a fee instead of rent. Dieter Rink, interview, Leipzig, 2009. For a similar example, see Gabriele Wurmus and Maix Maier, interview, Leipzig, 2008.
43. "Kraker, dat ben je niet voor je lol ...", *Leidsch Dagblad*, 29 December 1977.
44. 'Krakers maken het goed', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 20 August 1974; 'Open huis', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 26 June 1974; 'De krakers van het voormalige Goede Herder-klooster', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 29 June 1974; 'Van klooster tot kraakpand en woningbouw', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 5 December 1977.
45. 'Pand in Begijnhof gekraakt', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 13 October 1983; 'Monumenten van zelfwerkzaamheid', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 4 November 1989. The squatters were able to buy the two apartments that made up the Begijnhof from its previous owner (the university), shortly after their squatter action.
46. The total cost of all works and material amounted to 7,000 Marks (Mr S. to Stadtbezirksrat Urbanek, Leipzig Nord, 8 April 1990, StAL, Stadtbezirk Nord 1577, Bl. 61–3).
47. Stadtbezirk Leipzig Südwest, Abteilung Wohnungspolitik/Wohnungswirtschaft to Mr S., 22 February 1988, StAL, Stadtbezirk Südwest 87, p. 72.

48. 'Krakers sliepen ook vannacht weer in cel', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 21 August 1970; 'Krakers sliepen op bureau', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 19 August 1970; 'Gekraakt hofje', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 24 August 1970.
49. The opposite also happened: residents would sometimes write letters to complain about the problems squatters caused. In one extreme case, one citizen wrote to the newspaper to express his disdain over the sympathetic tone in which one of the editors had written about squatters in general. 'Kraker', *Leidse Courant*, 16 May 1974.
50. 'Bed uit gekraakt pand', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 15 June 1971; 'Celdeur op kier voor Leidse woning-kraker', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 16 November 1971.
51. Jeremy Brooke Straughn, 'Taking the State at Its Word: The Arts of Consensual Contention in the German Democratic Republic', *American Journal of Sociology* 110, no. 6 (2005): 1598–1650.
52. Udo Grashoff, *Leben im Abriss: Schwarzwohnen in Halle an der Saale* (Halle: Hasenverlag, 2011): 46–52.
53. Housing Crisis Committee, an activist group grown out of the Leiden student movement.
54. 'Twee huizen aan de Mare "gekraakt"', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 22 May 1970.
55. 'Een grote tent midden op het stadhuisplein', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 27 June 1973.
56. Cor Smit, *Strijd om kwaliteit: De geschiedenis van de volkshuisvesting in de regio Leiden* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2006).
57. The reason that corporation houses and temporary housing were squatted in was that they were often left empty for long periods of time. 'Een aantal mensen verziekt de boel', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 29 November 1974.
58. 'Krakers: pand is onbewoonbaar gemaakt', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 2 April 1980.
59. 'Rembrandtbrug – en route in gebruik; acties van krakers', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 16 July 1983.
60. 'Stichting: Elk jaar Rembrandt-festival houden', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 15 July 1983; 'Rembrandt-brug – en route in gebruik; acties van krakers', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 16 July 1983.
61. 'Bed uit gekraakt pand', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 15 June 1971.
62. 'Pand van de gemeente in Leiden gekraakt', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 21 September 1974; 'Kraakpand voor gastarbeiders', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 25 September 1974.
63. 'Fabriekscomplex Clos gekraakt', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 8 June 1982.
64. 'Krakers Clos & Leembruggen druk aan het verbouwen, ondanks onzekerheid', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 14 July 1982.
65. Stadtbezirk Leipzig Nord, Abteilung Wohnungspolitik/Wohnungswirtschaft, 27 June 1988, StAL, Stadtbezirk Nord 1577, pp. 89–98.
66. Stadtbezirk Leipzig Nord, Abteilung Wohnungspolitik/Wohnungswirtschaft, 12 June 1990, StAL, Stadtbezirk Nord 1577, pp. 24–6.
67. Stadtbezirk Leipzig Nord, Abteilung Wohnungspolitik/Wohnungswirtschaft, 27 January 1990, StAL, Stadtbezirk Nord 1577, pp. 31–9.
68. 'Vrouwenhuis viert jubileumfeest in gekraakt pand', *Leidse Courant*, 12 March 1979; "'Vrouwenhuis" betreft pand van bureau huisvesting', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 17 October 1979.
69. 'Scholieren-actie in de Breestraat tegen woningnood', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 29 December 1979.
70. Vernehmungsprotokoll, Leipzig 22 May 1984, BStU, MfS, BV Leipzig, AU 1606/84, Bl. 79–86.
71. KD Leipzig-Stadt, Operativinformation Nr. 113/84, 21 July 1984, BStU, MfS, BV Leipzig, KD Leipzig-Stadt, 01545/04, Bl. 85–7.
72. KD Leipzig-Stadt, Betr. Sachverhaltsinformation, Leipzig, 23 July 1984, BStU, MfS, BV Leipzig, AOP 1761/87, Bd. 2, Bl. 198f.
73. 'Kraakmachteloos', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 10 June 1983; 'Politie raakt weer slaags met krakers', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 11 June 1983; 'Woning politieman met verf beklad', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 13 June 1983.
74. 'Krakers: verzet tegen ontruiming pand Breestraat', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 27 October 1984; 'Incidenten na rustige ontruiming in Leiden', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 1 November 1984.
75. 'Een geintje dat verkeerd werd begrepen', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 28 May 1980; 'Steeds', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 29 February 1980.
76. 'Harde confrontatie dreigt ook in Leiden', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 29 March 1980. The *Leidse Kraakbond*, which can be translated as *Leiden Squatters' League*, offered squatter advice, had a short-lived newspaper and published a number of pamphlets. It only squatted in derelict houses, houses that were slated for demolition, houses that did not belong to the council, or houses that did belong to the council but were – for one reason or the other – not rented out.
77. 'Krakers uit raadzaal verwijderd', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 22 May 1979.

78. 'Leidse poorter met een onevenwichtige afdronk', *Leidsch Dagblad*, 15 November 1985.
79. Connie Mareth and Ray Schneider, *Haare auf Krawall: Jugendsubkultur in Leipzig 1980 bis 1991* (Leipzig: Connewitzer Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1999), 43–5.
80. MfS Leipzig, Information Nr. 550/81, 29 March 1981; Information 550.1/81, 30 March 1981, BStU, MfS, HA IX, Nr. 301, Bl. 76–8.
81. Connie Mareth and Ray Schneider, *Haare auf Krawall: Jugendsubkultur in Leipzig 1980 bis 1991* (Leipzig: Connewitzer Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1999), 138–41; MfS-KD Leipzig-Stadt, Information zum Grundstück, 14 April 1989, BStU, MfS, BV Leipzig, KD Leipzig-Stadt, Nr. 00038, Bl. 11f.