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The Hut on the Garden Plot: Informal Architecture in Twentieth-Century Berlin

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First World Shantytowns

In the early 1950s, a city official described the housing situation on West Berlin's northern fringe as follows: "Dwellings run from a parked trailer to the most primitive timber hut. . . . The most frequent form is a shed that has been extended time and again through annexes and can cover a considerable area, sometimes more than a hundred square meters. Foundations, insulation, floors, and ceilings consist of the most diverse materials, mostly from demolished sites, and are assembled in a technically inadequate way."¹ The description refers to a largely forgotten phenomenon. Only a few decades ago, informal settlements of self-built dwellings were an intrinsic part of Berlin (Figure 1).²

Unplanned self-help housing in Berlin was not set up on fields or parkland, but rather on garden plots that were originally designed for growing fruits and vegetables; these plots were the allotments, the gnome-adorned icons of German orderliness. Sheds and shanties began to proliferate on these plots after the First World War and continued to grow, particularly after the enormous housing shortage generated by the destructions of the Second World War. Already in the early 1930s makeshift huts on Berlin's allotment colonies housed

approximately 120,000 people, or 2.8 percent of Berlin's residents.³ To a large degree integrated into the larger social fabric, allotment dwellers tended to be recorded in the official censuses and their children went to state schools. But their buildings stood in stark contrast to the ordered city that was then becoming the norm: they were built by their inhabitants from makeshift materials, they usually had no running water, and only in some cases electricity. They ignored municipal plans and were constructed either without permission or with permits that did not allow for permanent dwellings. In this respect, they were informal housing in a manner similar to squatter settlements and slums of the Global South, and they generated similar discourses about public health and civic order.⁴

Informal architecture has been a challenge not only for municipal authorities but also for scholars. Self-built homes in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have become the subject of numerous studies.⁵ Similar buildings in Europe or North America, however, remain largely unacknowledged by architectural and urban historians. The few existing studies have primarily focused on sociological aspects such as poverty and marginalization.⁶ And while there is a substantial body of publications on the history of Germany's allotments, they have not been viewed as generators of informal architecture.⁷ Overall, the view of the European city as a product of order and organization has prevailed, and scholars have tended to treat unplanned architecture as an exception.⁸ This article

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Figure 1 Self-built sheds in the Marienthal allotment colony (now Mariengrund) on Südostallee, Treptow district, 1912. The colony was founded in 1908 and still exists (courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)

will show that, at least in Berlin, the permanent city was not exclusive, and informal dwellings were an intrinsic part of the urban fabric. Berlin's self-built sheds were an important element in the modernist desire for an ordered landscape among the city authorities. They were part of a struggle between officially sanctioned and unauthorized forms of dwelling and between modernization and perceived backwardness. This struggle was fundamental in the forming of Berlin as a modern metropolis. Nowhere is this more evident than in the West Berlin neighborhood now known as the Märkisches Viertel.

“Green Slums” in the Märkisches Viertel

The area of the Märkisches Viertel, the object of the city official's comment cited at the outset, was Berlin's largest allotment settlement. It was situated in the sleepy suburb of Wilhelmsruh—the name translates into “Wilhelm's rest”—and soon became a trouble spot. Publications referred to these allotments as “blighted areas” or “green slums.”⁹ Wilhelmsruh lies to the north of the city, approximately twenty kilometers (12.4 miles) from the center, and since the 1870s had been connected to the city by a suburban railway line.¹⁰ The wider area to date irradiates peace and quiescence. Tree-lined streets and single-family homes alternate with fields, forests, and winding brooks. In this area, allotment holders had started to inhabit their sheds since the early 1900s.

Allotment colonies were often laid out on agricultural land and never received a planning permit as a residential area (Figure 2). Many were given evocative names such as Rabe-horst (Raven's Nest), Kleintierfarm (Small Animals Farm) or Frohsinn (Cheerfulness).¹¹ Although allotments were rented out exclusively for gardening purposes, tenants soon started to inhabit sheds that were originally set up for storing tools and providing temporary shelter.¹² Permanent dwelling was unlawful, and tickets were issued to illegal residents as late as 1939.¹³ Allotment dwellers took to darkening their windows at night so that the police would not notice them.¹⁴

In 1956 an estimated 12,000 inhabitants lived in the area, and 9,500 people were officially registered.¹⁵ Approximately 8,000 were deemed to dwell on “unordered territory”; that is, construction was banned on their tracts and the division into parcels had not been authorized.¹⁶ Allotment dwellings were mostly built by the inhabitants “using the most simple construction methods and the cheapest materials,” as a policeman put it in 1919.¹⁷ There were patterns to this disorder and simplicity, however.

One can distinguish different types among these makeshift dwellings, consisting of one or two rooms. They were either built of wood (Figures 3 and 4) or of brick (Figures 5 and 6).¹⁸ Form, and particularly the type of roof, depended on the available skills and materials. Figure 5 shows an example of a rudimentary roof construction: a flat surface, insulated with tar paper and weighted down with stones. The walls

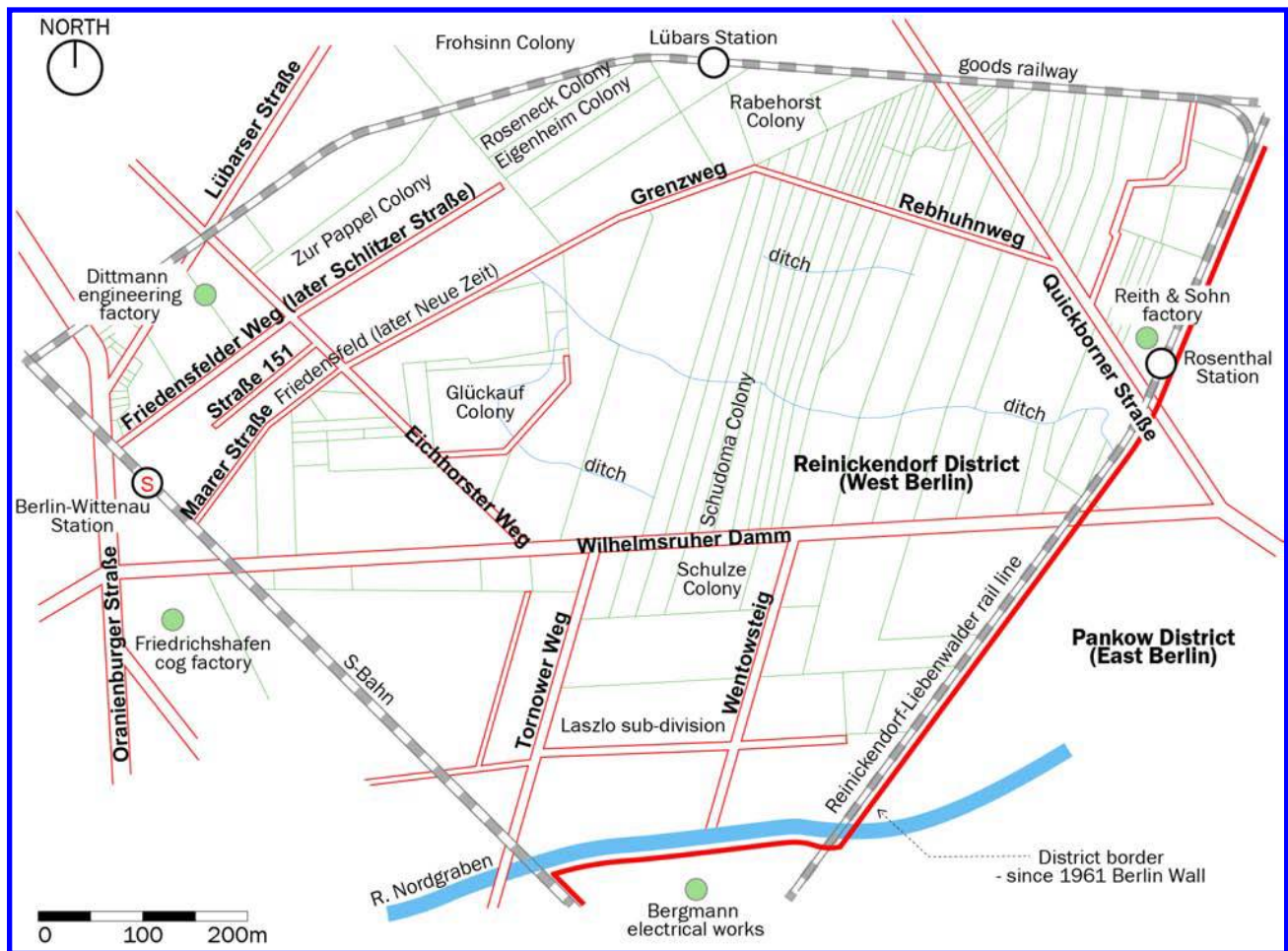


Figure 2 The Wilhelmsruh area in the 1950s. At the time, all parcels on both sides of the street Wilhelmsruher Damm were built up with allotment dwellings. Most of them were cleared for the construction of the Märkisches Viertel tower block development from 1963 onward (author's drawing with information from Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, pp. 62–63)

and the chimney, however, show a greater degree of sophistication: they appear to have been built by a trained bricklayer. Roofs were insulated with whatever material was available—mostly tar paper, but occasionally also tin or tiles. Windows, in some cases, seemed to have been taken from other buildings—historic sources confirm the use of spoils from bombed houses or factories (see Figures 3 and 4).¹⁹ All huts show a high degree of improvisation, as evidenced in the reuse of materials. But in some instances, as in the case of custom-built shutters for added insulation, they demonstrate a significant effort beyond mere improvisation. The wooden huts suggest the work of a professional joiner. Another distinctive feature these self-built homes share with those in other countries is the additive process of building, based on both available resources and growing needs of the inhabitants. Floors and porches were often added later (see Figures 4 and 6), and in some cases the upper story was executed more carefully (see Figure 3).²⁰

That simple construction methods might lead to sophisticated outcomes is evidenced by the homes where old railway wagons were extended into larger homes (Figures 7, 8). Such railway car dwellings have entered the German collective memory as the home of the “Nonsmoker,” a friendly oddball character from Erich Kästner’s relentlessly popular school story *The Flying Classroom* (first published in 1933 at the peak of Germany’s housing shortage).

The inhabitants lived a quasi-rural lifestyle. Pigs, goats, and rabbits were kept in improvised stables. Fruits and vegetables were grown in the gardens. Electricity was only available in select areas. Most hut dwellers pumped their drinking water from wells on their land; about 10 percent were without any form of water supply and had to rely on their neighbors. Most sheds had no sewerage connection but outhouses or toilets with cesspits.²¹

While the houses were self-built, the inhabitants were anything but transient. They were often families with



Figure 3 "Green slums": Self-built homes on Wilhelmsruher Damm in the Märkisches Viertel area, 1955 (Bert Saß; courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)



Figure 4 "Green slums": Self-built homes on Wilhelmsruher Damm in the Märkisches Viertel area, 1955 (Bert Saß; courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)



Figure 5 "Green slums": Self-built homes on Wilhelmsruher Damm in the Märkisches Viertel area, 1955 (Bert Saß; courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)



Figure 6 “Green slums”: Self-built homes on Wilhelmsruher Damm in the Märkisches Viertel area, 1955 (Bert Saß; courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)

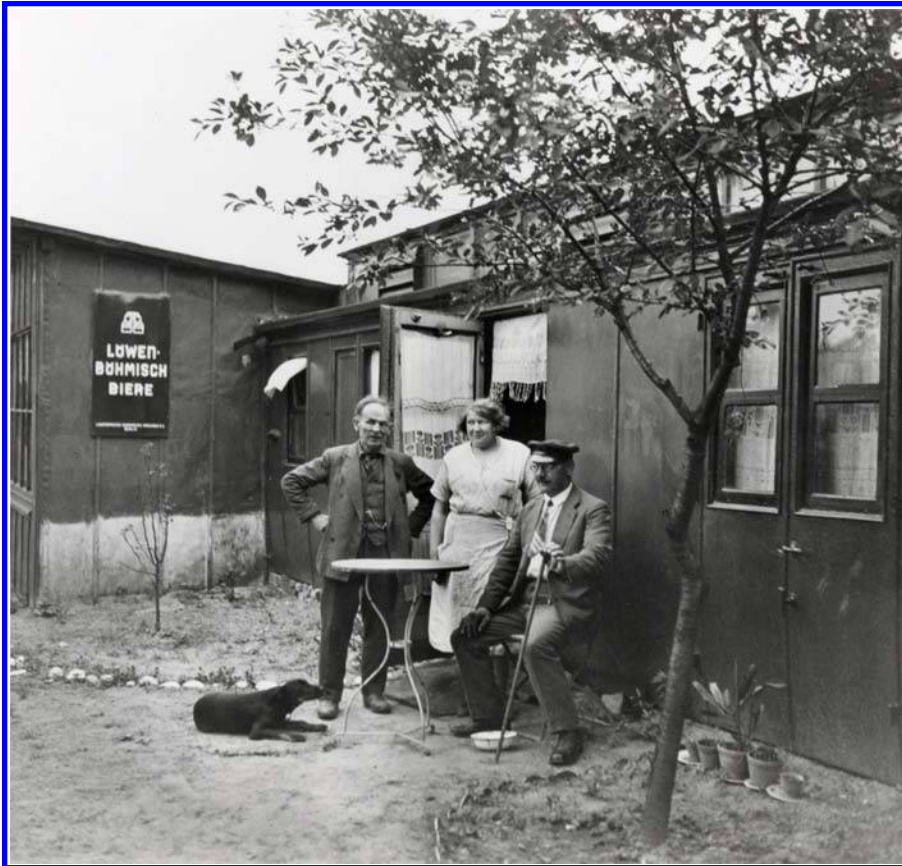


Figure 7 Railway car dwelling in Berlin, 1930 (Hans G. Casparius; courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)

children whose fathers worked in Berlin’s factories. Some also operated small businesses on their premises such as a secondhand shop, a bakery, or a food store.²² They were clearly among the city’s economically weaker groups. The number of nonemployed (unemployed and retired) heads of household in 1956 was more than double the Berlin average.

Over 80 percent of the inhabitants were factory workers or retired, and only 17 percent were classified as “nonretired middle class.”²³ Most residents paid between 5 and 10 marks rent for their plot per month in the early 1960s—there was no extra rent charge for the shed. Ten years later they would have to expend between forty and eighty times as much for



Figure 8 Railway car dwelling in the Plötzensee allotment colony, Charlottenburg district, 1934 (courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)

an apartment in one of the newly erected tower blocks that offered them modern sanitary facilities: 400 marks, which equaled approximately 50 percent of a truck driver's monthly wage.²⁴ Notwithstanding the marginal economic status of the residents, the huts displayed distinctive signs of modern consumerism. The documents from the 1950s mentioned TVs, fridges, and electric stoves in the houses of those residents who had electricity.²⁵ It seemed that the rural lifestyle of growing fruits and vegetables and keeping small animals was countered by a strong desire for modern amenities.

Eventually, it was modernization that made the huts disappear. Along with the growing influence of the tower-in-the-park model of housing that guided municipal policy, the huts were increasingly depicted as eyesores or, at best, as residue from the times of postwar reconstruction. In their reports, the authorities also referred to the possible dangers of disease, familiar from early twentieth-century descriptions of inner-city slums.²⁶

The neighbors in the adjacent subdivisions of single-family homes harbored a bad image of the allotments. The shantytown was called Eierkisten-Stadt (Egg Carton City) or Klein-Moskau (Little Moscow)—the latter name resonated backwardness and estrangement and alluded to real or imagined Communist inhabitants. Children from the allotments came to school poorly clad, and in winter often neglected hygiene because of frozen water pumps. A former neighbor remembered that the sheds were deemed a “no-man’s-land” where he was forbidden to go when he was a kid.²⁷

Those who lived in the “green slums” had a significantly better view of the situation. The rudimentary construction and sanitary facilities notwithstanding, they fondly remembered an idyllic landscape between flowers and apple trees as well as a pedestrian-oriented environment that gave children endless possibilities to play and to experience the grown-ups’ life world between houses, workshops, and cultivated fields. They praised neighborly help, community spirit, and the taste of homegrown vegetables.²⁸

In a political climate obsessed with modernization and development, the allotment dwellers were in a feeble position. They were the weakest land users in a city that was hard-pressed for open space. Eventually the huts were demolished to make way for West Berlin’s largest modernist tower block estate (built 1963–75). The Märkisches Viertel is now home to approximately 20,000 Berliners, many of whom are former inhabitants of sheds and huts.²⁹ It is useful to understand the historical transformation of these allotments over the *longue durée* of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly the years of the Second World War, to put the replacement of a “green slum” by a modernist apartment tower in context.

Principles and Pragmatism (1880–1945)

The formal and the informal city

The history of the Wilhelmsruh colony is emblematic of many similar settlements that were demolished in the process

of modernizing the city. The idea that such informal settlements were disruptive to an urban order and therefore had to be upgraded or removed obviously relies on the existence of a formal city with a high degree of sophistication, as well as of a municipal authority with an ordering remit. In the early nineteenth century, a makeshift house with a wood-burning stove, chickens in the yard, and no running water differed little from wealthier urban homes in terms of building equipment, appliances, and shared spaces for work and living. By the mid-twentieth century, building technology and regulations had advanced. Self-built housing now stood in stark contrast to the formal city, and it was increasingly prosecuted as an offense.³⁰

The gradual division of the city into formal and informal areas originated in an acknowledgment of the early industrial city's numerous flaws. The Haussmann-inspired tenement fabric that had been laid out in Berlin since the 1870s provided permanent housing, running water, efficient roadways, and good connections between residences and workplaces, but at the same time deprived the cramped working-class inhabitants of fresh air and healthy food. The allotment movement, the earliest of various reform movements that aimed to provide green spaces for the working classes, tackled these shortcomings with the (re)introduction of a "pre-modern" element, and at the same time an area that allowed for a certain self-determination in an increasingly regulated city: small gardens in which factory workers could grow their own food.³¹

The allotment movement can be traced back to England, where the earliest garden plots were laid out in 1809.³² Following these models, *Armengärten* (gardens for the poor) were established in Berlin in the 1830s.³³ The German allotment movement gained momentum with the establishment of the Schreber Association in Leipzig in 1864, which promoted garden plots for educational and nutritional purposes.³⁴ Even today, allotments in Germany are referred to as *Kleingärten* (small gardens) or *Schrebergärten* (Schreber gardens). Similar associations were established in Germany's rapidly industrializing cities in the late nineteenth century. The models they promoted were similar: the municipal government or a private landowner rented garden plots to mill workers, weavers, and tradesmen to grow potatoes and other staples. The nutritional benefit was the foremost consideration, and gardens were rented to the most needy. At the same time, the rentals were usually short term until the land was needed for other purposes. At the turn of the twentieth century, there were approximately 40,000 allotments in Berlin.³⁵

The authorities seemed to have been aware of the disruptive potential of such islands of self-reliance in a city

polarized between rich and poor, and attempted tight regulation through paternalistic laws. There were not only rules about sowing and harvest times, but also about permitted tools (only spades and hatchets) and the correct form of sheds to be constructed in these allotments ("completely transparent").³⁶ Both were attempts to prevent workers' riots.

The inhabitants themselves conjured more bucolic images. They fondly referred to their wooden sheds as *Lauben* (arbors) and their plots as *Laubengärten* (arbor gardens), both terms being still in use. Allotment life was basic to Berlin's popular culture, inspiring Claire Waldoff's 1928 cabaret hit "Was braucht der Berliner, um glücklich zu sein? 'ne Laube, 'nen Zaun und 'n Beet" (What does it take to make a Berliner happy? An arbor, a fence, and a flower bed).³⁷ The *Laube* became Berlin's most typical urban form next to the tenement, and in a way its antagonist. Whereas the tenement was built from solid materials by large construction companies, the *Laube* was the product of self-help or neighborly work and generally not designed for permanence.

Two aspects of Berlin's allotment housing were present already in the nineteenth century and determined its position as an unruly place within an increasingly orderly city. The first was the blurring between garden and residence. Like all European industrial cities at the time, Berlin grew at an unprecedented rate through the influx of impoverished villagers and was unable to keep up with the construction of formal housing. Tenement rooms were frequently shared by five and more people.³⁸ In this situation, a quasi-private allotment with a utility shed was among the more attractive abodes. Residence in the sheds was technically forbidden, but this was difficult to control. There is little evidence of evictions for the mere reason of violating the residence prohibition, and makeshift homes on allotments proliferated.

The second was the tension between temporary allotments and long-term planning strategies that increasingly aimed at urban modernization. Generally it was not the plot holders who owned the land but rather the city, public bodies, or private individuals. Large plots of land were rented to gardening associations or private *Generalpächter* (general tenants), who in turn rented parcels to the individual allotment holders. With the exception of the few "permanent colonies," small gardens were conceived as a temporary form of land use in areas reserved for future housing or infrastructure. Allotment holders were thus frequently evicted whenever land values rose or large projects were planned—in that case entire buildings had to be taken down and moved to a different plot.³⁹ To increase their power vis-à-vis the owners, allotment holders formed associations that soon developed

into lobby groups. The conflict between users and owners has essentially remained to the present day.

Shed dweller Charlotte Tessen exemplifies the ambivalence of many working-class Berliners who were forced into these illegal or quasi-legal living conditions and at the same time were proud of their self-built homes. They aspired to an independent dwelling, and at the same time struggled to cope with poverty and unemployment. Tessen described her situation during the worldwide depression of the 1920s and '30s. In the 1920s she had lived in the inner city, where she shared a room with her unemployed husband and two other family members. In 1929 the couple moved into a *Laube* in the northern suburb of Rosenthal, where Charlotte's husband was able to find work as a farmhand. Three years later they moved again, now to the adjacent Wilhelmsruh area—the future Märkisches Viertel. Her new home was situated on a former field that had recently been divided into parcels. She noted:

We were the second renters on the new colony [owned by the farmer family] Schudoma. We had approximately 600 square meters and had to pay 4.50 marks per quarter of the year. Ms. Schudoma came to charge the rent; her husband had fallen in the war. First we had only the empty field. No light, no water. We built a fence. Then we used a small handcart to carry old and broken bricks from a rubble yard on Kopenhagener Straße. . . . We leveled a portion of the soil and laid out the bricks. We did not have the money for a real foundation. Then came a layer of tar paper, and then we used battens to erect a living room of three by four meters. We got the wood gradually from the wood dealer Höhr, always as much as we could afford. We commissioned a well builder to build a well. After 4.50 meters we hit the groundwater table. Then my husband and I moved in. A spirit lamp gave us light. We took down our *Laube* in Rosenthal and used the parts for a kitchen annex of 3 by 3 meters. The living room was originally built with only one wall. We nailed a layer of tar paper to it from the inside (another one was already on the outside) and built a second wall. In the summer ants built their nest between the two walls and swarmed into the living room and we had to dig them out. The kitchen was walled in and a real chimney was built. For this, we got help from our neighbor Krüger from number 6, who was a bricklayer. Later we constructed a veranda around the pump so that it would not freeze in winter, and another annex where my mother moved in. We kept chickens and rabbits. In the beginning the chickens had to sleep in the living room so that they could not be stolen.

Two years later, Charlotte gave birth to her daughter in the shed.⁴⁰

The legal situation

The incorporation of small gardeners' associations since the early 1900s led to a gradual stabilization of the allotment holders' legal situation. Over the course of the twentieth century, allotment tenants' rights were strengthened, although their contracts never attained the level of protection that German residential contracts enjoyed. Most could be terminated at any time when the land was needed for other purposes.

Comprehensive national legislation was first passed in 1919. The *Kleingarten und Kleinpachtlandordnung* (KGO, Small Gardens and Small Landholdings Act) capped rents for both public and private land, effectively ending for-profit management of garden plots.⁴¹ In West Germany, the law remained valid until 1983, when it was replaced by the *Bundeskleingartengesetz* (BKG, Federal Small Garden Law).⁴² East Germany had no national small garden law but rather numerous small regulations. After reunification in 1990, the BKG was extended to the whole of Germany.

Only during the period between the 1930s and the 1960s—in East Germany until 1990—certain forms of allotment dwelling were legal, but the legality was always contested and construction was always restricted. The 1919 KGO allowed termination without notice for “important reasons,” which included permanent residence. This provision was nevertheless almost immediately mitigated by a number of regulations that allowed for ample exceptions.⁴³ Most significant were two such laws: a 1935 regulation that allowed permanent dwelling if the allotment dweller had already moved in before 1935 and could not secure any other appropriate abode,⁴⁴ and a 1944 law that explicitly allowed bomb victims to dwell on their garden plots.⁴⁵ In West Germany this dwelling permit was revoked in 1969.⁴⁶ The BKG, valid in West Germany until 1983 and in the whole of Germany until 1990, explicitly forbade permanent dwelling, but upheld a right of continuance if permission had already been granted.⁴⁷

But even during the period in which permanent residence was legal, shed dwellers resided in a gray zone that comprised various levels of legality: the possibility to register an allotment address as one's permanent residence, the legality of a rental contract for an allotment that allows for permanent dwelling, and the retroactive legalization of dwellings that were erected without municipal building permit (but often sanctioned by the landowner).⁴⁸ It is safe to say, however, that from the 1920s onward, allotment dwelling was widely practiced and rarely punished.

Attempts to order the informal

Until the Second World War, Berlin's municipal authorities followed an ambiguous policy toward these islands of

informality on the fringes. On the one hand, they deemed the makeshift huts undignified for a modern city and a potential threat to public order. On the other hand, they accepted them as a part of the city's reality and an effective remedy for thousands who would otherwise be homeless. There is little difference between the policies adopted during the Weimar Republic and the early Nazi period. Under both regimes, government action alternated between eradication and legalization. Bans on allotment dwelling or attempts at "consolidation"—preventing existing colonies from further growth—went hand in hand with pro-allotment legislation and sometimes even public subsidies for the upgrading of makeshift homes. Infrastructure was improved and zoning regulations enforced. But makeshift dwellings continued to grow. They were verbally rejected, but there were no large-scale evictions.⁴⁹

The strategies changed substantially with the outbreak of the Second World War and the increasing homelessness of all social classes due to the bombings. Now self-built homes of any kind were officially supported, and the decades-old project of a neatly ordered city was placed on hold. There was a general sense that these measures were temporary, that the self-builders would be housed in permanent structures once the war was over, and that the city was to be rebuilt.⁵⁰ In practice, however, makeshift settlements grew at an unprecedented scale, and lingered well into the postwar era.

Already after the First World War the housing shortage produced a grim picture. The four years of wartime economy had brought residential construction to a standstill, while Berlin's population continued to grow, reaching approximately 3.8 million in 1920. The need was exacerbated by the influx of refugees from the parts of Germany that were ceded to France and Poland following the Versailles Treaty. Many had to live under dismal conditions and were subject to exploitation by slumlords.⁵¹

Resolutions for the "upgrading" of such areas were passed since the 1920s. A 1923 law sought to establish specific *Wohnlauben* (residential allotment sheds) areas in order to prevent permanent residence in other allotments, but it proved rather ineffective.⁵² After 1918 construction of such *Wohnlauben* sheds would be subsidized by the government, as long as they were likely to last a minimum of five years and complied with certain building regulations.⁵³ Subsidies were given to municipalities, nonprofit construction associations, and private investors. In return, the owners were required to cap rents for ten years according to the provisions of the municipality and give preferential allocation to families with many children and families of veterans or war victims. To qualify as a *Wohnlaube*, a shed had to be equipped

with a watertight and removable septic tank, and the floor had to be situated at least 50 centimeters above the highest groundwater table. The buildings had to be smaller than 50 square meters and not higher than 4.50 meters.⁵⁴ The reality seemed to have looked less bright. Throughout the 1920s, allotment associations constantly had to deal with unauthorized dwellings.⁵⁵ A 1933 article complained that of the 120,000 allotment dwellers, only a minority lived in structures that were officially approved as permanent dwellings.⁵⁶

Critical voices against the tolerance policy were frequent and resonated a new conception of city planning that increasingly aimed at rationalization and the implementation of a comprehensive order to the benefit of the city dwellers. For early twentieth-century reformers such as Ludwig Hilberseimer, Hans Bernhard Reichow, Nikolai Milyutin, and Le Corbusier, the planned city was both principle and promise.⁵⁷ According to the increasingly popular logic of linear progress, the planned city was the future, and self-built homes represented residues of an undeveloped past.

Along those lines, better-off Berliners reviled the makeshift dwellings as *Zigeunerndörfer* (gypsy villages) and called for law and order.⁵⁸ A 1913 police order asked for measures to prevent "gathering of criminal riffraff, drunkards, and the like."⁵⁹ Likewise, Berlin's housing commissioner in 1918 stressed that "facilitating the erection of *Wohnlauben* must not lead to grievances that are incompatible with the requirements of public moral."⁶⁰ And a year later, in 1919, police officers pointed to the confusing layout of allotment areas without proper street names and house numbers, and warned that if the current practice was maintained, then "a multitude of dark elements might take advantage of this opportunity and find a long-term hideout in the garden plots."⁶¹ The general feeling of threat from these "unregulated zones" is also evident in the attempts to enforce resident registration. Such registration is an obligation of every citizen in Germany, but it was particularly difficult to control in the allotment colonies, and the authorities called for better surveillance.⁶²

The number of allotment dwellers between the world wars and the space occupied by them were substantial. At its peak in 1925, the area covered with allotments extended over 6,200 hectares—six times the size of Berlin's central Mitte district.⁶³ The 1933 census mentions 120,000 permanent residents in these areas, a little less than 3 percent of Berlin's 4.2 million inhabitants.⁶⁴ From this one can assume that the vast majority of Berlin's approximately 103,000 garden plots were permanently inhabited.⁶⁵ A 1935 report describes most basic shanties built from dismantled wooden boxes and tar paper, often without doors and windows, and

exposed to the wind and cold.⁶⁶ In between, one has to imagine playing children, gardening parents, and the noise of continuous construction and repair.

Although allotment dwellers, in the majority, were comparatively poor and belonged to the working classes,⁶⁷ there is evidence of demographic change. In the early 1930s, one out of five allotment dwellers was a child under the age of fourteen;⁶⁸ figures from the 1950s suggest fewer children and more pensioners.⁶⁹ Anecdotal evidence suggests that the overwhelming majority supported the Social Democratic Party or the Communists, generating nicknames such as “Red Heinze Colony.”⁷⁰ But since the late 1920s there was also a growing number of members of the Nazi Party. The 1920s saw occasional disagreements between allotment holders of different political affiliations, ranging from pub fights to property damage, but there is little evidence of a threat to public order comparable to the violent demonstrations and riots in the inner city at the time.⁷¹ Contrary to the fears of police and municipal officials, Berlin’s allotments largely remained a realm of peace.

Nazi policies: Consolidation and eviction

Under the Nazi regime, informal sheds continued to play an ambivalent role in the modern city. The policy of the Nazi rulers reflected the ambiguity of their ideas between modernization and “return to the roots.” The practice of gardening fit neatly with the blood-and-soil ideology that assigned the German peasant tradition a particular significance. Allotments were aptly construed as promoters of land-bound values for the German race and as counterweight to the ethnically mixed and, according to Nazi dogma, therefore morally depraved big city. A propaganda publication in 1938 summarized this attitude: “The allotment is a location where the genetically healthy [i.e., non-Jewish] German city dweller connects with the soil, where he develops peasant mentality.”⁷² Next to the ideological romanticization of farming and gardening, the Nazis also acknowledged the significance of allotment horticulture for the national economy that they wanted to become autarchic. The small garden, as a concept, was therefore broadly supported. New permanent colonies were established, and the overall number of allotments increased. Prospective tenants were supposed to come from all social classes, as long as they were “Reich nationals, of German or German-related blood, politically reliable, and genetically healthy.”⁷³ But allotments were not to hamper urban development. The verbal endorsement of the garden plot idea did not give rise to a consistent support policy, and allotments continued to be cleared whenever land was needed for construction.⁷⁴

Along the lines of modernization, makeshift dwellings were deemed incompatible with the goal of an orderly city. The authorities frequently scorned them as *Elendsquartiere* (slum areas).⁷⁵ This was connected with an ongoing rhetoric of danger. Allotments were deemed to be infiltrated with “asocial and politically unreliable elements.”⁷⁶ The latter referred to the many Social Democratic or Communist allotment holders who constituted a potential threat to the regime. As both pockets of premodern dwelling and strongholds of political opposition, permanent allotment dwellings were to be contained at all costs.⁷⁷ They were tolerated in the short run, but the long-term goal was to move the inhabitants into “orderly living conditions.”⁷⁸

The unruliness of the informal neighborhoods was perceived as a threat, and the Nazi authorities tried to increase surveillance. They appointed Sanierungsdezernenten (heads of rehabilitation), city district councillors responsible for urban renewal, whose task was to contain and upgrade allotment areas.⁷⁹ Several measures against illegal residents were discussed, such as better policing, control of classified ads for allotment dwellings, and increasing pressure on the garden plot associations. At the same time, the authorities were aware that in light of the enormous housing shortage, a complete prevention of illegal allotment dwellings was illusory.⁸⁰ In the long run, the Nazi authorities never assumed full control in the way they had hoped, and the garden plot areas provided shelter for many persecuted persons, including Communists and Jews.⁸¹

In other cases, residents shared some of the official strategies and actively pursued “upgrading” and “consolidation” (Figure 9). An example is Friedensfeld—the first allotment colony that was established in the Wilhelmsruh area, and one of the few that was not cleared for the Märkisches Viertel tower blocks. It was established in 1915 on land owned by the factory owner Borsig and his family, and occupied a 226,000-square-meter plot close to the Wittenau train station (see Figure 2, middle left). Illegal dwellers had lived there in garden sheds since the 1920s.⁸² When the contract with the Borsigs expired, residents founded a cooperative with the belligerent name *Neue Zeit* (new era) and tried to collectively purchase the plots (Figures 10–13). This step was politically debated. The more radical leftist colonists thought it unacceptable to “buy land from capitalists,” and about a third of the former residents left. After long negotiations the *Neue Zeit* cooperative signed a contract of sale with the Borsigs, but eventually was unable to fulfill it. Parcels of land were thus sold to individual residents.⁸³ In the early 1930s, under the Nazi regime, the city lifted the building ban and established the area as a residential neighborhood, officially allowing only single-family homes and not allotment



Figure 9 "Consolidation": Improved sheds in the Rehberge area, Wedding district, ca. 1924. Berlin's first "permanent allotment colony," Rehberge was officially established two years after this picture was taken and was inaugurated in 1929. It was designed together with the adjacent Rehberge Park. The colony still exists, comprising approximately 470 parcels of 250 square meters each (courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)



Figure 10 Neue Zeit allotment colony, ca. 1935 (courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)



Figure 11 Street 151 (now Angersbacher Pfad), Neue Zeit allotment colony, ca. 1935 (courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)

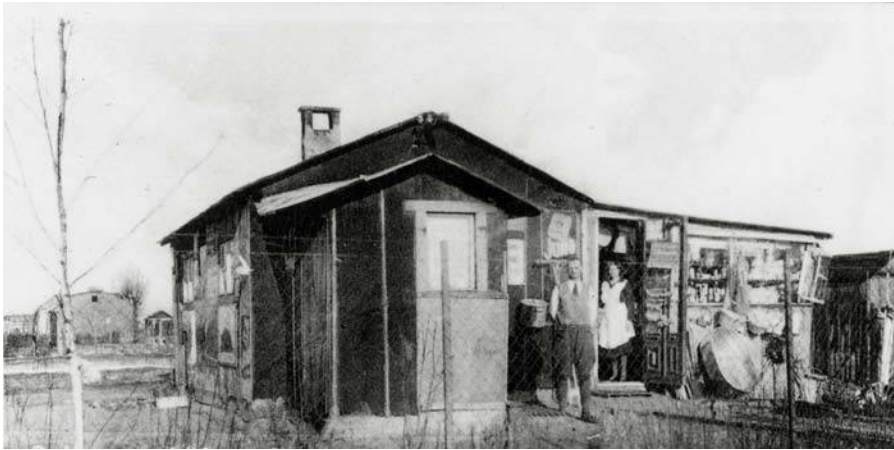


Figure 12 Otilie Gillert's soap store in the Neue Zeit allotment colony, ca. 1935 (courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)

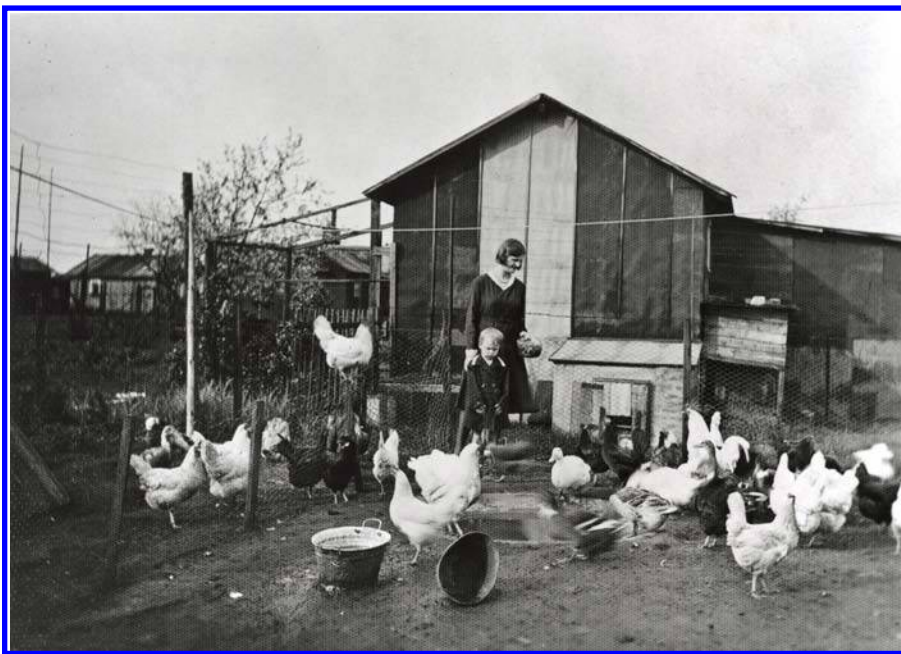


Figure 13 The shed of the Hasselmann family at Friedensfelder Weg 213 (now Schlitzer Straße 56) in the Neue Zeit allotment colony, 1931. A stately single-family home now occupies the site (courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)

dwelling (see Figure 10). The differences remained blurry for a long time. Repeated waves of construction have yielded solid middle-class homes that betray little of their humble beginnings.⁸⁴ At present, only a few residual single-story cottages with tar paper roofs and awkward extensions recall a squatters' era that is long gone (Figure 14).

Wartime improvisation

With the beginning of the Second World War and the bombing of Berlin, the National Socialist authorities were forced to reverse their upgrading and modernization policy. In light of a growing number of Berliners who lost their homes in the air raids, the objective of consolidating the formal city became unrealistic. In 1943, the Reichsarbeitsminister (Reich minister of labor) called upon all administrative organs to refrain from banning permanent residence on

allotments.⁸⁵ Also the keeping of small animals, which had already been restricted, was legalized once more, with the provision that "within six months after the end of the war" pens and stables had to be taken down again.⁸⁶ As Berlin's modern infrastructure was increasingly destroyed, the city had to revert to premodern ways of functioning.

Many wartime decrees relied on the "socialist" aspects of National Socialist ideology, calling for solidarity and mutual help among the members of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community) vis-à-vis enemy attacks. Now self-help construction was glorified as an act of national resistance against the bombings.

Along with the return to primitive forms of housing production, the line between formal and informal dwellings blurred increasingly. While the authorities insisted that no structure was to be built without a permit, self-help and



Figure 14 The street Grebenhainer Weg in the former Neue Zeit allotment colony. Rebuilt sheds stand next to middle-class single-family homes (author's photo, 2011)

the use of improvised materials were encouraged.⁸⁷ The application form for a permit to build a *Behelfsheim* (makeshift home)—also referred to as a *Notwohngebäude* (emergency residence)—included questions such as “Can relatives or acquaintances collaborate in the construction of the dwelling?” and “Does the applicant possess building materials and if so, to what extent?”⁸⁸ Permits were preferentially issued for bomb victims who had an appropriate plot at their disposal and were willing to construct the building themselves.⁸⁹ Each dwelling could be supported by subsidies of up to 1,700 marks.⁹⁰ Also, municipal authorities and private companies began to construct makeshift homes on patches of unused land. Private companies mostly sought to provide dwellings for their employees.⁹¹ These efforts were by no means exclusively based on solidarity and neighborly help. Rather, they were well integrated into the Nazi machinery of war and extermination, as in some cases forced laborers from Eastern Europe were employed on the sites.⁹²

One of these *Behelfsheim* settlements was established during the war in Berlin's southern Lichtenfelde district. In 1944 an empty patch of land between two residential streets was officially slated for construction with thirty-seven makeshift homes (Figure 15). Small huts were to be set in the middle of plots of approximately 15 by 15 meters left and right of Bergstraße (now Wormbacher Weg). The plan resembles a neighborhood unit and thus resonates one of the mid-twentieth century's most progressive planning ideas. It afforded a certain degree of privacy to the inhabitants. The thirty-seven families had to share three *Wasserstellen*

(wells or water cranes, marked “w” on the map). The makeshift homes appear to be well integrated into the neighborhood and offer some high-quality amenities in the wider area: Lichtenfelde was (and still is) an affluent district with tree-lined boulevards. The makeshift homes were set only about 400 meters from the suburban train station and 300 meters from the tramway, and there is no visible separation between the existing four-story residential blocks and the *Behelfsheim*. All these factors suggest that the authorities did not anticipate hostilities from the long-standing residents toward their new neighbors but, on the contrary, counted on neighborly solidarity.

Several aspects of these official informal abodes can be deduced from a contemporaneous plan. The buildings were referred to as *Lauben* (follies), like allotment sheds. The “Goscha shed for bomb victims” type was built from a double row of light concrete slabs, erected over a basic foundation on a rectangular plan 6.5 by 4 meters. The building had a slightly pitched, tiled roof, a wooden door, two interior rooms, and a cellar compartment for cold storage.⁹³ Floors and roofs were insulated. There were no sanitary facilities—outhouses are not shown on the plan. There were also no chimneys—one has to imagine that wood-burning stoves were somehow integrated.

Compared to these most basic concrete sheds, the type developed by architect C. H. Vieth in Bielefeld around the same time is more comfortable (Figure 16). It was also a two-room hut built with 1.25-meter-high prefab concrete panels that enclosed a dwelling space of approximately

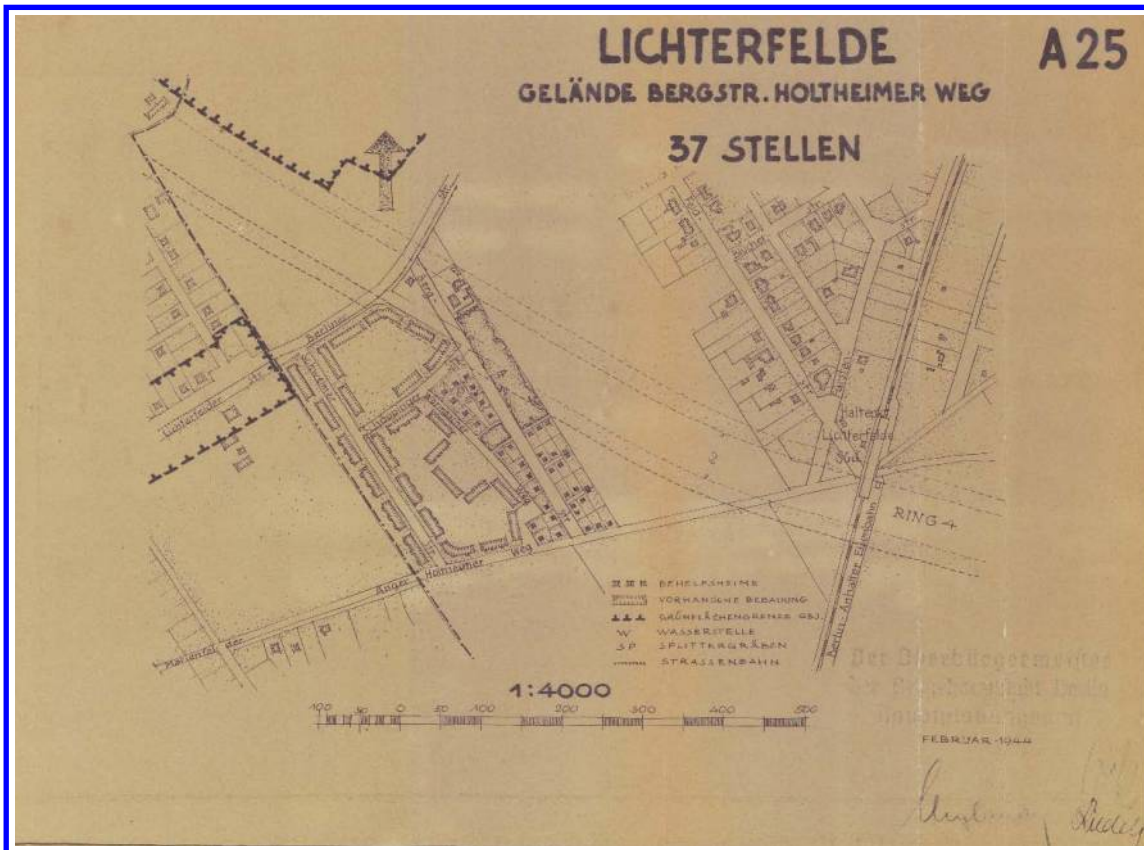


Figure 15 Plan for the state-sponsored erection of *Behelfsheime* (emergency homes) on Bergstraße (now Wormbacher Weg) in the Lichterfelde district, 1944 (courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep. 042-08 Nr. 236)

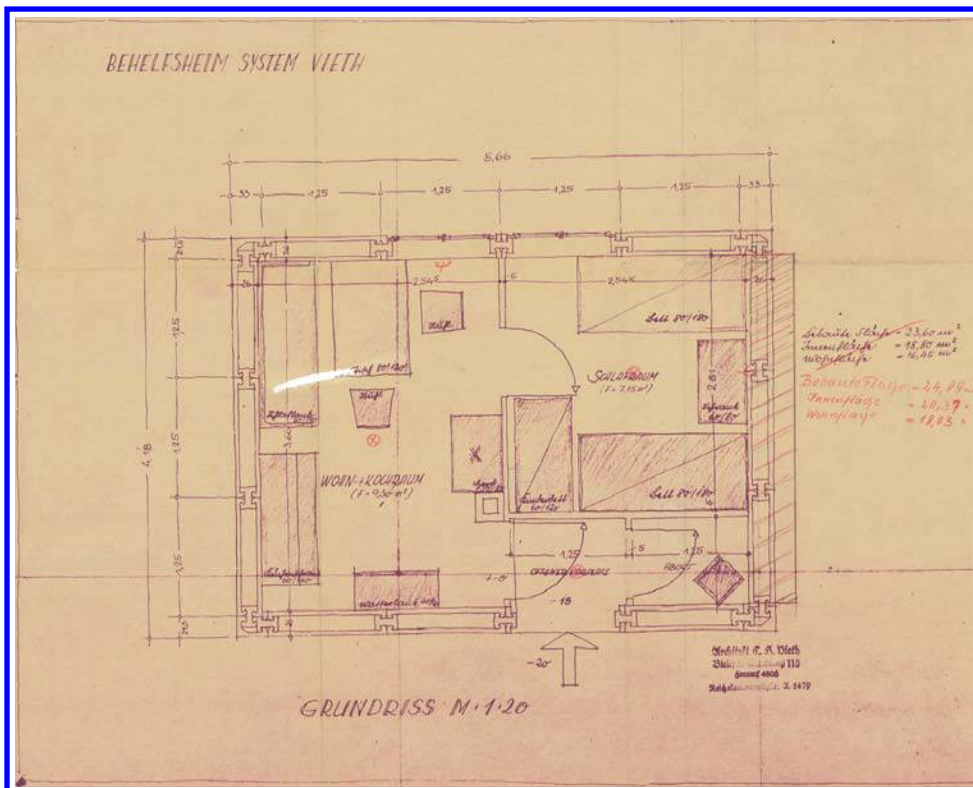


Figure 16 Plan for an "emergency home" by architect C. H. Vieth in Bielefeld, 1944 (courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep. 042-08 Nr. 236)

16 square meters: a kitchen/living room with a bunk bed, and a bedroom with three beds. The kitchen range is attached to a chimney; the “water bench” (kitchen sink) suggests that at least in theory the shed could be connected to the piping system. A toilet is integrated in the building. Foundations were made from old bricks “to save on cement and gravel.” All parts were to be cast on-site. “System Vieth” settlements of prefab huts, like other houses, were to be complemented by communal buildings such as washhouses.⁹⁴ Many of these makeshift homes lingered well into the 1960s.

Tidying Up the City (1945–55)

Life among ruins

By the end of the Second World War, the modern project of building a rationally ordered city was virtually reduced to rubble. Approximately 50 percent of the building stock in the inner-city districts was destroyed. The informal city, in this context, gained particular significance and attained a quasi-official status. During the hunger years of the late 1940s, allotments once again were the only source of food for many.⁹⁵ In light of the fact that thousands of bombed-out Berliners were already converting their allotment sheds into dwellings of some sort, local policy was based on pragmatism rather than planning principles.⁹⁶ In both East and West Berlin—the municipal administration was divided in 1948—the Nazi policy of supporting self-help approaches was continued, and *Behelfsheime* or *Notwohngebäude* were officially sanctioned. The definition was unspecific and included a broad scale of buildings, most of which were erected on allotments, including trailers, timber huts, and self-built single-family homes.⁹⁷ In 1954, about one-third of West Berlin’s allotments had residential buildings, inhabited by approximately 21,000 families.⁹⁸ East Berlin’s allotment dwellings were estimated to house 35,000 families in 1948.⁹⁹ Many of them had been erected illegally during or after the war, but were subsequently legalized. “After the war it rained a lot, and as a consequence, some buildings have grown,” joked a municipal official in the late 1940s in reference to the many illegal extensions.¹⁰⁰

The West Berlin government also commissioned the construction of makeshift homes in a similar way to that of the Nazi authorities. Many were not that different from self-built shanties, thus further blurring the distinction between formal and informal dwellings. A plan from 1946, authored by the Amt für Hochbau (Surface Construction Authority) of the Tiergarten city district, shows forty-five *Wohnbaracken* (dwelling barracks) set up by the municipality (Figure 17). Although situated in a working-class neighborhood, they

would probably be considered prime real estate from a contemporary point of view: they overlooked the Spree River, and the central park, the Tiergarten, was less than ten minutes’ walking distance. Buildings were wedged between a sports field, the streets, and the river. Like those proposed for the Lichterfelde district, they constituted small “neighborhood units” set aside from the main street and communicated by tree-lined small pathways. The plots were similar in size to those in Lichterfelde (approximately 15 by 15 meters). The buildings, constructed according to a longitudinal plan, were slightly larger—approximately 5 by 10 meters. For every twelve barracks a “washing and toilet barrack” was built.

Another popular makeshift dwelling built by the West Berlin government was the Nissen hut, which had originally been developed by the Canadian engineer Peter Nissen for the British Army in the First World War. Nissen huts were cheap, corrugated sheet metal structures fixed on brick foundations.¹⁰¹ A drawing by the municipal authority, dated October 1945, shows the principle of a round wall/roof over a brick floor (Figure 18). Only the walls on both ends of the round structure had windows.

Municipal documents confirm that in the postwar years “residential” Nissen huts were put up on schoolyards, sports fields, or plots of public land next to railway lines, and complemented by “laundry and toilet huts.”¹⁰² Nissen huts lingered well into the 1950s. In the Charlottenburg district, the last of these “ugly residues from the war period” disappeared in 1958.¹⁰³ The main constructive flaw, according to contemporaneous descriptions, was the deficient insulation. Walls had a 2.5-centimeter-thick layer of grass mats, while the floor remained uninsulated for reasons of cost efficiency.¹⁰⁴ East Berlin propaganda quickly scorned the new huts in the capitalist sector as “freezer homes,” “oil drums,” or “flowstone caves,” and savored the fact that icicles were hanging from the interior walls and many inhabitants suffered from frostbite.¹⁰⁵ Of course they did not mention that during the unusually cold winter of 1946–47, conditions were not that different in many East Berlin homes.¹⁰⁶ These shortcomings notwithstanding, in a city of ruins the state-sponsored makeshift homes seem to have been more attractive than the available alternatives.¹⁰⁷

Gradual expulsion

As soon as hunger and the housing shortage diminished, the state authorities took up the modernization project and started to push back informal dwellings. The prewar strategy of “consolidation,” which combined legalization of existing settlements and prevention of new ones, was abandoned. Now allotment dwellings had to be entirely eradicated.¹⁰⁸

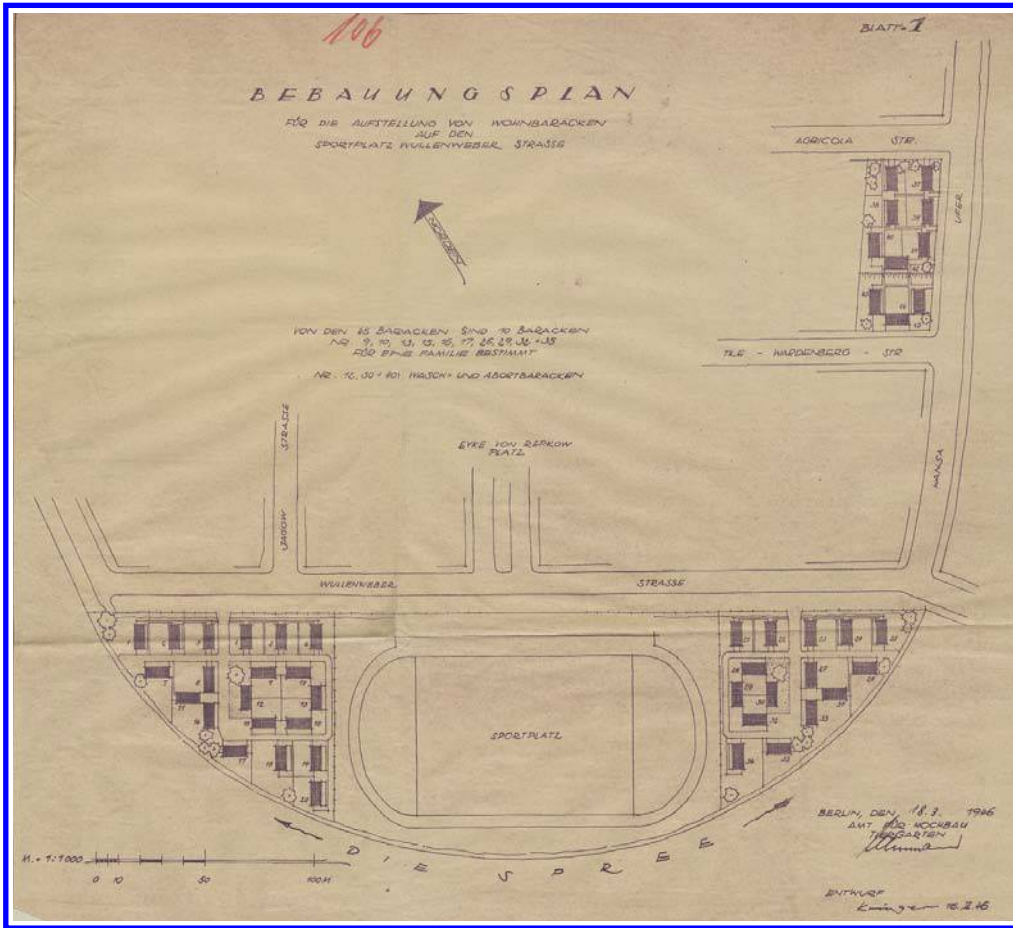


Figure 17 Plan for the erection of “emergency homes” on the Spree River in West Berlin’s Tiergarten district, 1946 (courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep. 109 Nr. 186, p. 106)

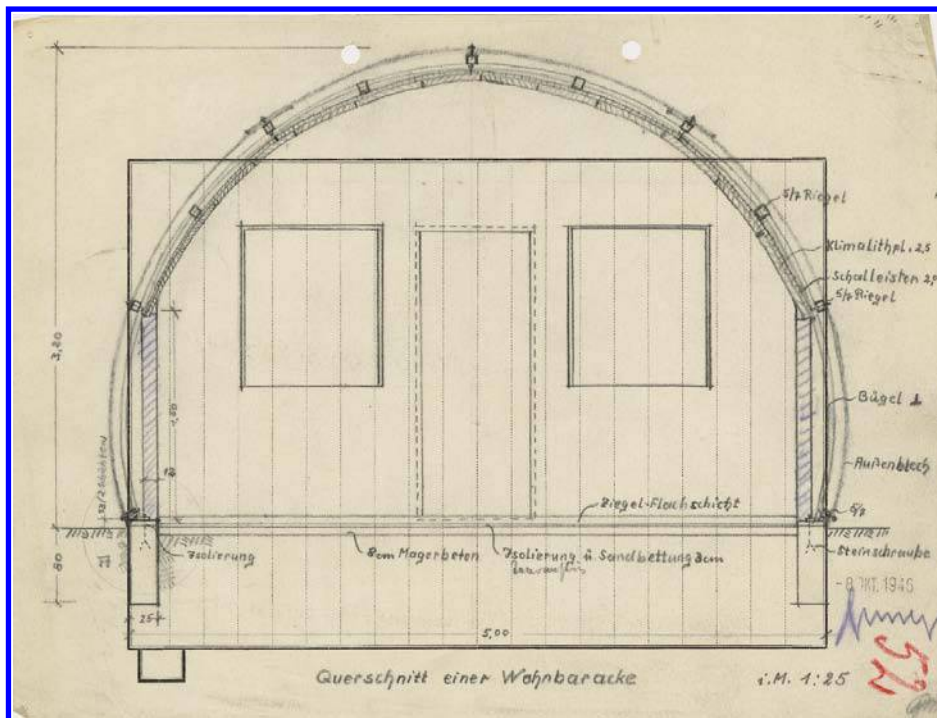


Figure 18 Plan for a Nissen hut, 1945 (courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep. 109 Nr. 186, p. 52)

In 1956, approximately ten years before garden plot dwelling was outlawed in the whole of West Germany, the West Berlin government made it illegal. And this time it was determined to enforce its policy. Current tenants were allowed to stay but could not sell or bequeath their dwelling right.¹⁰⁹ Between 1950 and 1960, the number of families living in “emergency homes” was officially halved to 11,000.¹¹⁰

The overall number of allotments also continuously decreased. Substitutes for destroyed homes, as well as streets and motorways, were preferentially built on garden plot land, since allotments were temporary by definition and easy to clear. If tenants protested they were accused of standing in the way of progress. As a result, garden areas in West Berlin were reduced from almost 3,000 hectares in 1947 to less than 2,000 hectares in 1969. Approximately 58 percent of the cleared land was used for housing construction, the remainder for industry, public buildings, or new streets.¹¹¹ The rebuilding of the war-damaged city, as well as the adaptation to the motorcar, therefore was directly related to the ousting of allotment dwellings.

From shed dwelling to holiday chalet

The gradual disappearance of informal housing on allotments also reflected a cultural change. Since the 1960s, allotments were less and less used for food production and more for leisure purposes. Wealth and leisure time for the working classes had increased continuously, and gardens were no longer necessary for food provision. Allotments were therefore used as “bourgeois” weekend homes “with lawn, roses,

and garden gnome” (Figure 19).¹¹² The new focus on leisure reflected an international trend. Spearheaded by the Scandinavian countries, allotments all over Europe increasingly became “chalet gardens,” and both vegetable gardens and simple self-built residences were increasingly viewed as anachronisms.¹¹³

The East Berlin experience

The situation was essentially similar in East Berlin; housing in 1945 was just as bad.¹¹⁴ In the postwar era, East Berlin’s allotment dwellers lived in similarly dire conditions as those in the West. The hardships of their everyday life can be gauged from the “women’s section” in the state-operated journal *Der Kleingärtner* (The Small Gardener). Titles range from “How to Accommodate a Room for Five Persons” and “How to Insulate Windows and Doors” to “How to Fight Rats and Mice,” “Appropriate Heating with Common Brown Coal” and “Where to Store Coal and Potatoes for the Winter.” Such do-it-yourself tips suggest that living in allotment sheds was anything but an exception.¹¹⁵

In 1948 there were more than 35,000 families officially registered as residents in *Dauerwohnlauben* (permanent allotment dwellings). While the formal city was being rebuilt, their number slowly diminished, as many of them moved to apartments. East Germany’s allotment holders since 1959 were organized in the *Verband der Kleingärtner, Siedler und Kleintierzüchter* (Association of Small Gardeners, Colonists, and Small-Animal Growers), which had little concern for permanent dwellers. In 1958 there were only 10,000



Figure 19 Gnomes in a “chalet garden,” Am Segelluchbecken allotment colony next to the Märkisches Viertel (author’s photo, 2011)

households left.¹¹⁶ By the late 1960s, permanent dwelling had become a rare exception.¹¹⁷

However, allotment dwelling was less controversial in the East than in the West. No *Kleingartengesetz* (small garden law) was passed, and the wartime legalization of permanent residence remained valid until the end of the German Democratic Republic in 1990.¹¹⁸ In the immediate postwar era, the Berlin Magistrat (city government) even included allotment sheds in the pool of dwellings that were allocated by the authorities to needy citizens and allowed for dwelling in areas that were originally not zoned for the erection of allotment sheds.¹¹⁹ Although this policy was abandoned in the 1950s, East German authorities took a pragmatic approach and refrained from large-scale evictions.¹²⁰ This is possibly related to their modest economic power and their inability to build homes at the same pace as the West. The goal to provide formal houses for everyone was just as prominent, however, and in the long run similarly effective.

Like West Berlin, East Berlin erected many tower blocks on former allotments, and small gardeners were rarely in a position to resist the ending of their contracts. As in the West, East Berliners were pacified through monetary compensation. They also could apply for allotments outside the city boundaries—in contrast to the “island city” of West Berlin, the East was less pressed for open space.¹²¹ There is anecdotal evidence that as in the West, schoolchildren from East Berlin’s allotments were deemed poorer and less respectable than the norm by their classmates, but abuses were not widespread.¹²² Neighborly solidarity and community feeling were as strong as in the West, and many permanent residents have fond memories of their lives on the garden plot.¹²³

East Berlin’s allotments as such were subject to an ambiguous policy under the socialist regime. On the one hand they were viewed as a legitimate heritage of Germany’s early working-class culture, and on the other hand their tightly knit communities and their quasi-capitalist territoriality were suspicious and seen as no longer appropriate for a socialist state.¹²⁴ The East German authorities thus attempted a close monitoring of the allotments and issued tight regulations. Much suggests, however, that Berlin’s allotment colonies—with or without permanent dwellers—retained a certain degree of unruliness and resisted forced assimilation into the orderly city.¹²⁵

Clearance Policies (1955–75)

Urban renewal

By the late 1950s the most important war damage had been repaired, and, particularly in the West, the economy once again allowed for big plans. Based on a broadly shared belief

in modernization, many of the prewar efforts to improve housing and infrastructure were taken up again. At the same time the principles of the Athens Charter gained influence. The charter advocated functional separation, a structured, dispersed urban environment, and a focus on automobile traffic, and evinced a general contempt of nineteenth-century neighborhoods. In this spirit, West Berlin prepared the First Urban Renewal Program, which was eventually passed by the local government in March 1963. Dubbed *Kahlschlagsanierung* (total chop-down renewal) by its critics, the program foresaw the demolition of six tenement areas in the inner city and the relocation of approximately 140,000 Berliners—approximately 10 percent of the West Berlin population. The majority was to be resettled in new tower block estates on the fringes, for which the government needed land. Housing was fundamental for the ruling Social Democratic Party, which in the late 1950s regularly received more than 50 percent of West Berlin’s votes and in 1963, under Mayor Willy Brandt, peaked at nearly 62 percent. The necessity of improving the living conditions of Berlin’s poorer half was broadly accepted, and critics of the gargantuan program were clearly in the minority.¹²⁶ The attempt to “tidy up” the city and end makeshift dwelling conditions outweighed the concerns about the housing shortage as soon as the most urgent needs were resolved. The new strategy reconfigured the parameters of urban improvement. Promising light and air for inner-city dwellers, the tower blocks at the same time deprived garden plot dwellers of their right to the land they occupied.

Making space for the Märkisches Viertel

The new policy dealt a deathblow to the Wilhelmsruh allotment colony, and the cornerstone for the Märkisches Viertel was laid in 1963 (Figure 20). To construct the ambitious tower block development, the state-operated builder Gesobau had to buy 430 individual properties. The government had granted a right of preemption to prevent speculation, but negotiations still stretched over an entire decade. The last property was bought in 1970.¹²⁷ Evicted residents on average received 1,700 marks’ indemnity—twice a truck driver’s monthly wage—and enough to pacify many small-garden dwellers.¹²⁸

The hope of Reinickendorf city district councillor Schäfer that “the people out there have apparently accepted the relocation” was nevertheless premature.¹²⁹ Protesters against the urban modernization united in the “Not- und Prozeßgemeinschaft Berlin-Wittenau-Nord e. V.” (approximately, Association for Support and Legal Action in Northern Berlin-Wittenau [i.e., Wilhelmsruh]).¹³⁰ The association had about 400 members in 1963, of whom 90 came from the



Figure 20 Construction of Märkisches Viertel, 1967 (Horst Siegmann; courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)



Figure 21 Protest by allotment dwellers who are in danger of being evicted, Märkisches Viertel area, 1964. The sign reads “Bombs, fire, housing shortage, and expulsion [from the areas ceded to Poland and the Soviet Union] brought us to these houses. With our own diligence we built our homes and lived in peace and quiet. Now our lives’ work is about to be taken away. . . . These methods are undemocratic and have nothing in common with justice. They are unconstitutional!” (Johann Willa; courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)

area of the Märkisches Viertel and the rest from other parts of Berlin.

A photograph from the early 1960s shows the protest coordinated by the association (Figure 21). The protest characterized the destruction of the allotment homes as unconstitutional, and reminded the authorities why the houses were built in the first place: “Bombs, fire, housing shortage, and expulsion [from the areas ceded to Poland and the Soviet Union] brought us to these houses. . . .” The sign summarizes the ambivalent position of Wilhelmsruh’s allotment dwellers, which in some ways signaled the self-understanding

of many informal builders: they saw themselves as victims of circumstances, in this case particularly of the Second World War, but at the same time they were proud of their self-determination and their achievements, especially in the context of postwar reconstruction.

The allotment dwellers’ protest received much publicity. They took legal action against approximately seventy evictions, but the courts eventually decided against them. The association’s president, Herbert Eick, who used various tricks to delay being evicted from his own allotment home, eventually was forced to leave in 1965. Individual colonists were

able to hold out longer, sometimes entrenched in their sheds between the newly built towers. But political support soon waned, and the last allotment dwellings were given up in the late 1960s.¹³¹

Clearances for residences and motorways

Modern Berlin was literally built on the memories of informal neighborhoods (Figure 22). The area of the Märkisches Viertel was the largest colony of allotment dwellers, but it was not the only one. Informal dwellings, both legal and illegal, abounded in Berlin's outer districts.¹³² Many were cleared for modernist tower block estates, including the Falkenhagener Feld in the Spandau district (begun in 1962 after a plan by Hans Stefan) or the Gropiusstadt in the Neukölln district (begun in 1960 after a revised plan by Walter Gropius and Wils Ebert).¹³³ Also, infrastructural projects were built on former allotment sites, such as the multilane thoroughfares Kurt-Schumacher-Damm and Goerdelerdamm or the wholesale market on Beusselstraße. On the latter site, allotment holders had extended their gardens illegally, squatting on municipal land.¹³⁴ Municipal planners also complained about the homeless living in barracks on and around the plot slated for the market hall.¹³⁵ All of them eventually had to leave.

The same applied to numerous modern residential developments, such as the Georg-Ramin-Siedlung in Spandau (begun 1957), the Paul-Hertz-Siedlung in Charlottenburg (planned by Wils Ebert and others; begun 1961), and the Charlottenburg-Nord development (planned by Hans Scharoun and others; begun 1962). Before it was cleared, the

Charlottenburg-Nord area was home to allotment colonies such as Sonnenheim (Sunny Home), Forsthaus (Forest House), or Heidekrug (Heather Inn).¹³⁶ The idyllic names, however, soon contrasted with the belligerence with which some residents fought their evictions, going against public opinion that accused them of obstructing necessary housing construction.¹³⁷ There were nevertheless a broad variety of reactions to the municipal clearance plans. Some residents refused to leave, simply because they were too poor to afford any kind of formal dwelling.¹³⁸ Other, better-off residents left their plots without major resistance, happy to be offered a small plot where they could legally invest their savings in a solid home.¹³⁹

From the perspective of the municipal authorities, the "cleanup" was successful. As a result of clearances, state-subsidized formal housing, an increase in wealth, and an overall shrinking population, the number of makeshift dwellings rapidly decreased during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1982, only 2,000 West Berlin households, approximately 0.2 percent of the population, officially lived on their allotments, and the number of illegal residents was probably negligible.¹⁴⁰ By the 1980s, when hot running water, central heating, and toilets in apartments had become the norm in West Berlin's formal buildings, improvised dwellings had largely disappeared. Many of the improvised sheds with repeated annexes nevertheless linger in Berlin's remaining allotment colonies (Figures 23 and 24). And although they are no longer permanent residences, their tenants continue to fight whenever their tenure is threatened by the formal city (Figure 25).



Figure 22 Haus Genzmann on Wilhelmsruher Damm and Treuenbrietzener Straße in the Märkisches Viertel, 1971. The building was later demolished (Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, image no. 365)



Figure 23 Improved construction, Am Segelluchbecken allotment colony next to the Märkisches Viertel (author's photo, 2011)



Figure 24 Allotment shed with annexes, Am Segelluchbecken allotment colony next to the Märkisches Viertel (author's photo, 2011)

Informal housing as a moral and hygienic danger

Modernization at the cost of informal dwellings was promoted across the political spectrum. Albeit spearheaded by the Social Democratic Party, the clearing of Berlin's informal settlements mobilized images and conceptions from diverse ideological origins. Some recalled bourgeois reformers' diatribes against "rental barracks," the overcrowded tenements

of the late nineteenth century. Others eerily reminded readers of Nazi propaganda. Comparisons with "Negro villages" were used both during the Nazi period¹⁴¹ and in the post-war era.¹⁴² Other formulations suggest continuous patterns of thinking. Up to the 1960s one could find descriptions that warned against "asocial" people.¹⁴³ Reports to the city government stressed the goal of making nomadic allotment dwellers "finally sedentary."¹⁴⁴ They called for a "solution to



Figure 25 "Allotments instead of luxury apartments": Small gardeners protest plans to build condominiums on their plots. Heynstraße, Pankow district (author's photo, 2011)



Figure 26 The "Communist" Schillerhöhe allotment dwellings in 1953. The sheds were cleared in 1953, and four-story blocks with 3,000 apartments were built on the site (Bert Saß; courtesy Landesarchiv Berlin)

the allotment question."¹⁴⁵ And they even demanded the expulsion of undesirable elements: "All measures that can lead to an increase of the missing middle class are highly desirable. . . . In particular the large group of 'nonworking' should be the center of attention."¹⁴⁶ The implicit threat recalled the measures inflicted a few years earlier on those classified as "nonsedentary" or "asocial": thousands of traveling people and gypsies were killed in National Socialist concentration camps.

The oppressive instrumentalization of health and hygiene against undesired groups was particularly evident on West Berlin's northern fringe. It was directed not only against the poor but also against Communists.¹⁴⁷ Communist activities are also thought to have played a major role in the clearing of the Schillerhöhe colony, a 42-hectare area with approximately 700 garden plots north of Seestraße in the Wedding district (Figure 26). The area was known as a Communist stronghold; the Schillerhöhe Small Gardeners Association

was under Communist leadership, and conservative politicians nurtured rumors about East German agitators.¹⁴⁸ In 1953 the Berlin government decided to evict the allotment dwellers and build 3,000 apartments on the site. The garden plot association sued the Berlin government but lost—the public benefit of new apartments was considered more important than the public benefit of garden plots.¹⁴⁹

The description of improvised settlements as potentially dangerous others is a constant in twentieth-century Berlin. It resonates with the situation in Paris at the same time, where shantytown dwellers were marginalized twofold, once for being immigrants (mostly from North Africa or Portugal) and once for living in substandard housing.¹⁵⁰ It also resonates with the situation in Latin America, where one often finds strong ethnic and class divisions between slum dwellers, many of whom are recent country-to-city migrants, and the population that has lived in the city for a long time.¹⁵¹

In postwar West Berlin, informality was frequently related to disease and moral depravation. “Green slums” referred as much to constructive and infrastructural shortcomings as to the “social structure” of these areas, which the government believed to be unacceptable and requiring immediate action.¹⁵² Technological and moral aspects were thus intertwined. Equating physical and social decay, the West Berlin government deemed the illegally built-up garden plots a “hygienic and social danger.”¹⁵³ The National Socialist logic of cleaning and curing the “body of the folk” was only slightly tilted. Whereas the Nazis had still allowed for pragmatic self-help for earth-bonded Germans, the postwar government increasingly warned against a danger to public health. The stated objectives in the planning of the Märkisches Viertel, as formulated by the bureaucrats in West Berlin’s planning division, read like a manual of physical determinism: “Social decline and primitive dwellings stand in a reciprocal relation. The existence of a large number of emergency dwellings contains the seed of social danger, and after a longer persistence of these conditions the lower milieu, the slum develops. This will be the seedbed of moral danger, asocial behavior, political radicalization, and decline of the family.”¹⁵⁴ In the official descriptions, a subtext of danger had been noticeable since the nineteenth century. It seems, however, that the demonizing of informal settlements and their inhabitants was directly proportionate to the common acceptance of rational planning and the modern, functionally separated city.

Conclusion

Berlin’s self-built settlements evidence the dialectics of modernization. They show how a modern city evolved from the

struggle between formality and informality, rationality and disorder, principles and pragmatism. While the Haussmann-inspired early modern city had enabled and to a certain extent tolerated allotment dwellings as niches of premodern lifestyles, they became incompatible with comprehensive planning and the increasingly popular Corbusian tower-in-the-park model. The attempts to establish a modernist urban order were ambivalent from the beginning. Along with the goal of providing solid roofs and modern amenities for everybody came a growing impulse to exclude and drive out “asocial” or “morally depraved” elements.

The triumph of the modern city, at the same time, was never complete. While self-built abodes largely disappeared from Berlin’s urban fabric by 1970, other unruly homes evolved in the wake of antimodern criticism. Particularly in West Berlin, community advocates and rebellious students spearheaded self-organized forms of dwellings: squatter tenements, trailer settlements, and adapted industrial buildings. Like the allotment dwellings before, they followed a duality of reactions to urban order: they were a reaction to the excessively tidy city, and at the same time were enabled or at least tolerated by the authorities.

Although the shantytowns on Berlin’s allotments developed in a different social and political context than the *favelas*, *encampamentos*, and encroachments that had grown in Asian, African, and Latin American metropolises since the mid-twentieth century, there are some similarities. They were built in violation of existing regulations on the outskirts of a big city. They housed the poorer strata of society and were at the same time highly diversified. They were constructed from makeshift materials, extended as necessary, and equipped with multiuse spaces that could function as bedrooms, workshops, or stables. And they stood in contrast to the surrounding modern city on which they depended, both socially and economically, and to which they supplied cheap labor.

In Berlin, where state regulation has a long tradition and an effective planning apparatus had been at work since the nineteenth century, informal settlements were quite orderly spaces. There were, at least in the twentieth century, no spontaneous appropriations of uninhabited land. Nearly all allotment dwellers had some form of rental agreement with the landowners. And in most cases, they filed orderly applications for building permits—although they often ended up building without them. They were technically squatters, but at the same time they were cared for and controlled by the municipal authorities whose principles they often shared. They lacked permission for permanent dwelling but often registered with the police. They violated zoning regulations but at the same time produced orderly spaces between picket

fences and well-trimmed hedges. The ambivalence of Berlin's allotment dwellers, who were both guarantors of stability and potential threats to the well-ordered city, thus challenges the conception of modernization as a linear process.

Allotment dwellers described their daily lives in largely positive terms. Their assessments also have to be seen in relation to the standards of the time. Until the 1970s, the majority of tenants in Berlin's formal houses—both in the East and in the West—heated their rooms with coal stoves and shared a toilet with their neighbors. Sanitary and infrastructural deficiencies of the allotments notwithstanding, there were undeniable advantages. Hut dwellers enjoyed comparably independent lives and a strong community spirit. They also benefited from physical characteristics that only much later were valued by city planners, such as a pedestrian-oriented environment, adaptable mixed-use homes, and play spaces for children. Their feeling of contentment is also likely to have derived from a comparison with their personal situation before, which was characterized by pollution and overcrowding. Against this background, they continuously worked on “upgrading” their buildings and campaigned for “legalization” of their settlements. Their story therefore teaches not only about poverty and need but equally about the freedom in spatial interstices and the opportunities of marginal environments. Evoking Germany's most compliant and most rebellious images, the history of Berlin's “green slums” thus shows the ambiguity of many conceptual foundations on which the modern city was built.

Notes

1. The description refers to the allotment colonies in the Wilhelmsruh neighborhood where the tower block colony Märkisches Viertel was built a decade later. Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, ed., *MV Plandokumentation* (West Berlin: Kiepert, 1972), 26. All translations are by the author.
2. Self-built settlements were also frequent in other large European cities, for example, in Paris. See, e.g., Monique Hervo and Marie-Ange Charras, *Bidonvilles: L'enlèvement* (Paris: Maspéro, 1971).
3. The 1933 figure is from Statistisches Landesamt, quoted in “120,000 Berliner in Lauben und Baracken,” *Lokalanzeiger* (Berlin) 378, 12 Aug. 1933.
4. I use the term “informal housing” because it focuses on the buildings, in contrast to “squatter settlement” or “slum,” which describes the same phenomenon but stresses social and economic conditions. My definition—houses built by poor people, often in violation of land-use or building regulations—aligns with that used by the theorists who since the 1960s have attempted to come to terms with the *favelas*, *invasiones*, *pueblos jóvenes*, or *zopadpattis* in the Global South. See, e.g., John F. C. Turner, “The Squatter Settlement: Architecture That Works,” *Architectural Design* 38 (1968), 355–60; David Epstein, *Brasília, Plan and Reality: A Study of Planned and Spontaneous Urban Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Harini Narayanan, “In Search of Shelter,” in *Bombay and Mumbai:*

The City in Transition, ed. Sujata Patel and Jim Masselos (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2006); or Robert Neuwirth, *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, a New Urban World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

5. Among the earliest sociological studies were Epstein, *Brasília*, and Oscar Lewis, “The Culture of Poverty,” *Scientific American* 215, no. 4 (Oct. 1966), 19–24. For studies that combine both sociological and architectural aspects see Turner, “The Squatter Settlement”; Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973); or John Habraken, *De Draggers en de Mensen* (Amsterdam: Scheltema en Holkema, 1962), published in English as *Supports: An Alternative to Mass Housing* (London: Architectural Press, 1972). For recent analyses of squatter settlements in the context of political economy and urban development, see Davis, *Planet of Slums*—a rather gloomy account—or Neuwirth, *Shadow Cities*, a comparatively positive assessment.

6. Among the few accounts of informal housing are Peter Hall, “The City of Sweat Equity,” in *Cities of Tomorrow* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 262–93, which describes mid-twentieth-century shantytowns in Britain, and Neuwirth's account of the early twentieth century, “Squatters in New York,” in *Shadow Cities*, 25–40. For squatter settlements in the Paris region see, e.g., Hervo and Charras, *Bidonvilles*, and Abdelmalek Sayad and Eliane Dupuy, *Un Nanterre algérien: Terre de bidonvilles* (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 1995); for those in southern England see Dennis Hardy and Colin Ward, *Arcadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape* (London: Mansell, 1984). Possibly the only architectural study of an informal settlement in 1970s Europe is Isabelle Herpin and Serge Santelli, *Bidonville à Nanterre: Étude architecturale* (Paris: Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, Institut de l'Environnement, 1973), 188; quoted in Neil Leach, *The Hieroglyphics of Space: Reading and Experiencing the Modern Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 2002), 253. Contradicting the common narrative of a “chaotic” settlement, Herpin and Santelli conclude that French *bidonvilles* built by North African immigrants derive their forms and organizing principles from typical Arab towns. They were thus not a product of poverty and disorder but rather of a cultural transposition.

7. For the history of allotments in Britain and in Europe see Colin Ward and David Crouch, *The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture* (London: Faber, 1988); Denis Moran, *The Allotment Movement in Britain* (New York: Lang, 1990); or Jeremy Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement in England, 1793–1873* (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell Press, 2002). For the history of Berlin's allotments see Martin Kleinlosen and Jürgen Milchert, *Berliner Kleingärten* (West Berlin: Berlin-Verlag Arno Spitz, 1989), or Bodo Rollka and Volker Spiess, eds., *Berliner Laubenpieper* (West Berlin: Haude und Spener, 1987).

8. This can be deemed a heritage from early twentieth-century attempts to rationalize the city, which were proposed by urban reformers such as Ebenezer Howard, Clarence Perry, Raymond Unwin, and Le Corbusier. While their approach came under attack in the 1960s from Jane Jacobs, Christopher Alexander, and many others, urban theorists still grapple with the applicability of the rational model and its limits. See, e.g., Eric Reade, “An Analysis of the Use of the Concept of Rationality in the Literature of Planning,” in *Rationality in Planning*, ed. Michael Breheny and Alan Hooper (London: Pion Limited, 1985), or Linda Dalton, “Why the Rational Model Persists: The Resistance of Professional Education and Practice to Alternative Forms of Planning,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 5, no. 3 (1986), 147–53.

9. *Tagesspiegel*, 14 Feb. 1963, and *Der Abend* (West Berlin), 1964, both quoted in Jürgen Bräunlein, “Das Märkische Viertel aus der Sicht von Erstmietern,” in *40 Jahre Märkisches Viertel*, ed. Brigitte Jacob and Wolfgang

Schäche (Berlin: Jovis, 2004), 114; see also Harri Gräser, “‘Grüne Slums’ sollen neuem Stadtteil weichen,” *Tagespiegel*, 24 June 1962; Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *MV Plandokumentation*, 20.

10. Before 1920 Wilhelmsruh was part of the Rosenthal municipality, which was then divided. The eastern portion became a part of the Pankow district (East Berlin after 1945). The western portion around the street named Wilhelmsruher Damm became part of the Reinickendorf district (West Berlin after 1945). In the documents from the 1950s, this area is referred to as Wilhelmsruh or Wittenau-Ost; currently it forms the sub-district of Märkisches Viertel.

11. Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *MV Plandokumentation*, 14.

12. Memories of Alfred Zitz, longtime president of the Siedlergemeinschaft Neue Zeit in 1956, in Bernd Hildebrandt and Klaus Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube* (West Berlin: Gertrud Großkopf, 1990), 46.

13. For example, to resident Wilhelm Münch, who had lived in his allotment shed on Wentowsteig 29 since 1925. *Ibid.*, 56.

14. *Ibid.*, 70.

15. The numbers are from 1956; quoted in Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 185.

16. The estimate of 8,000 is from 1956. Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *MV Plandokumentation*, 14. A contemporaneous description mentions that of the 365-hectare area, only 73 hectares were officially divided into parcels. Gräser, “‘Grüne Slums’ sollen neuem Stadtteil weichen.”

17. Letter of Städtische Baupolizei—Polizeipräsident von Berlin, 1 Apr. 1919, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep 057 Nr. 724, p. 28.

18. Sometimes both materials were combined. Ursula Reinhold, born in 1938, describes her childhood and youth in an allotment shed with wooden walls. After years, her father gave in to her mother’s complaints and reinforced the wood with an additional layer of brick for better insulation. Ursula Reinhold, *Gemütlichkeit: Erinnerung an Kindheit und Jugend im zerstörten Berlin* (Berlin: Trafo, 2003), 10–24.

19. Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *MV Plandokumentation*, 28; and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 142–43.

20. Adaptability is also one of the main features of self-built homes that John Turner celebrated in his defense of Peruvian squatter settlements. See John F. C. Turner, “Village Artisans Self Built Houses,” *Architectural Design* 33, no. 8 (1963), 361–62.

21. Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *MV Plandokumentation*, 32.

22. Memories of Alfred Zitz, longtime president of the Siedlergemeinschaft Neue Zeit in 1956, in Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 57–58. The information refers to the area around Ganghoferweg and Quickborner Straße.

23. *Ibid.*, 20.

24. For rent in the 1960s, see Gräser, “‘Grüne Slums’ sollen neuem Stadtteil weichen”; for rent in the 1970s—referring to a four-room apartment of approximately 90 square meters—see Eberhard Schulz, “Die Hölle ist es nicht: Plädoyer für das Märkische Viertel,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10 Nov. 1973. The monthly salary of a Reinickendorf truck driver in 1971 was reported as 850 marks; Horst Lange et al., eds., *Wohnste sozial, haste die Qual—jetzt reden wir—Bewohner des Märkischen Viertels* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1975), 114.

25. Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *MV Plandokumentation*, 22.

26. A municipal report stressed the “high number of tuberculosis patients” among Wilhelmsruh’s allotment dwellers: between 3 and 9 percent compared with a 1.2 percent average in the city district. Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *MV Plandokumentation*, 36. The report also calls for a *Gesundung* (cure) of the neighborhood through urban renewal; 28. Other

articles remarked on safety hazards, as embodied in fires in 1954 and 1961, each of which took the lives of two children. See *Nord-Berliner* (West Berlin) 26 Feb. 1954, in Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 178; or Gräser, “‘Grüne Slums’ sollen neuem Stadtteil weichen.”

27. Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 5.

28. Memories of resident Gerd Bartholomäus, in Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 174.

29. For the history of the Märkisches Viertel, see Alexander Wilde, *Das Märkische Viertel* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1989); Dieter Voll, *Von der Wöbllaube zum Hochhaus: Eine geographische Untersuchung über die Entstehung und die Struktur des Märkischen Viertels in Berlin-West bis 1976* (West Berlin: Reimer, 1983); Torsten Birne, “In weiter Ferne—Das Märkische Viertel und die Gropiusstadt: Wohnungsbau in Westberlin 1960 bis 1972,” in *Stadt der Architektur, Architektur der Stadt: Berlin 1900–2000*, ed. Thorsten Scheer (Berlin: Nicolai Berlin, 2000), 307–13; or Harald Bodenschatz, *Platz frei für das neue Berlin!* (West Berlin: Transit, 1987).

30. In Germany, municipal authorities have enforced some forms of building regulations since the Middle Ages. With the growth in population and the hygiene movement in the nineteenth century, regulations became successively tighter. On the history of building regulations in Germany, see Ekke Feldmann, *Bauordnungen und Baupolizei: Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte zwischen 1850 und 1950* (Frankfurt/Main: Lang, 2011).

31. For the establishment of allotments in early industrial cities see Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement in England*, 70–97. For other early nineteenth-century reform movements see Leonardo Benevolo, *The Origins of Modern Town Planning* (London: Routledge, 1967). Founding texts of the garden city movement include Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (London, 1902); and Raymond Unwin, *Nothing Gained by Overcrowding!* (London: Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, 1912).

32. The Great Somerford Free Gardens in Wiltshire are commonly regarded as the oldest in England. Richard Savill, “England’s Oldest Allotments Celebrate 200 Years,” *Telegraph* (London), 10 Mar. 2009.

33. Kleinlosen and Milchert, *Berliner Kleingärten*, 26.

34. The Schreber Association was founded by the Leipzig pedagogue Ernst Hauschild and named after his father-in-law and collaborator, pediatrician Moritz Schreber. On the history of the Schreber Association and the allotment movement in Leipzig see Peter Sundermann, *Die Leipziger Kleingartenbewegung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Erfurt: Sutton, 2008).

35. Friedrich Coenen, *Das Berliner Laubenkoloniewesen: Seine Mängel und seine Reform* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1911), 11. The author suggests that there might be a few thousand more.

36. Kleinlosen and Milchert, *Berliner Kleingärten*, 14; Rollka and Spiess, *Berliner Laubenpieper*, 27.

37. Lyrics: W. Hassenstein; music: F. Paul.

38. See, e.g., Rudolf Eberstadt, *Handbuch des Wohnungswesens und der Wohnungsfrage* (1909; repr., Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1920), 201–9.

39. Memories of former inhabitant Walter Barz, whose Communist parents were thrown out of their two-room allotment shed in the Heinze colony over a political dispute with their landlord. Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 61.

40. Memories of Charlotte Tessen, in Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 68 and 103.

41. Georg Kaisenberg, *Die Kleingarten- und Kleinpachtlandordnung* (Berlin: Vahlen, 1920). The law also forbade *Generalpacht* to private individuals.

42. The BKG was passed on 28 Feb. 1983, *Bundesgesetzblatt I*, p. 21.

43. For example, in 1919 the construction of *Wöbllauben* (residential allotment sheds) was legalized. These sheds could officially be inhabited, at least

from April to October. "Sonderverordnung des Regierungspräsidenten in Potsdam zur Errichtung von Wohnlauben im Landespolizeibezirk Berlin," 11 Apr. 1919, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep 057 Nr. 724, p. 32.

44. "Ergänzungsgesetz zur KGO von 1919," Reichsgesetzblatt I no. 67, p. 809, 29 June 1935. Thanks to Manfred Kassel for this information.

45. Verordnung über Kündigungsschutz und andere kleingartenrechtliche Vorschriften §10, 15 Dec. 1944, Reichsgesetzblatt I, no. 65, p. 347. See also Lorenz Mainczyk, *Bundeskleingartengesetz: Praktiker-Kommentare*, 9th ed. (Heidelberg: Rehm, 2010), 179.

46. Gesetz zur Änderung und Ergänzung kleingartenrechtlicher Vorschriften, 28 July 1969, *Bundesgesetzblatt I*, p. 1013.

47. See §9, 2.1, in Gundolf Bork, ed., *Bundeskleingartengesetz* (Göttingen: Schwarz, 1991). For the right of continuance see §18, no. 2.

48. Registration was allowed in 1919; see memorandum issued at the 106th Police Station, 14 Oct. 1919, signed Retschke, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep 057 Nr. 724, pp. 47–48. According to Wilde, permanent dwelling was allowed by a police regulation issued 11 Apr. 1919 (originally limited to five years but never ended), while Dietrich quotes a 1929 regulation. See Alexander Wilde, *Das Märkische Viertel* (West Berlin: Nicolai, 1989), 12; and Isolde Dietrich, *Parzelle, Laube, Kolonie* (East Berlin: Märkisches Museum, 1988), 52.

49. In practice, the police tolerated permanent residence in allotments even if they were not classified as *Wohnlauben*, and intervened only on exceptional occasions. Letter of Städtische Baupolizei, Polizeipräsident von Berlin, 1 Apr. 1919, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep 057 Nr. 724, p. 28. See also Memorandum of the Staatskommissar für das Wohnungswesen, 18 Nov. 1918, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep 057 Nr. 724, p. 10. An exception was the eviction of approximately 2,300 allotment dwellers in Charlottenburg-Nord in 1938 to make space for Albert Speer's redesign plans. The Nazi press claims that the residents were allocated substitute plots. "Charlottenburger Kleingärtner ziehen um," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 29 Apr. 1938. Construction was stopped because of the outbreak of the war; the area was eventually built up with residences in the 1950s.

50. This was already evident in the terminology. The officially supported self-built houses were called *Behelfsheime* (makeshift homes, emergency homes), a word that would remain in use well into the postwar period. See, e.g., memorandum by the Deutsche Arbeitsfront, Dec. 17, 1943, or the questionnaire "Fragebogen für Betriebe, die Behelfsheime im Rahmen des Deutschen Wohnungshilfswerkes errichten wollen" of the Steglitz District Administration, 14 June 1944, both available at Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep. 042-08 Nr. 236.

51. See, e.g., the report on the rat-infested emergency shelter in Adlershof that was home to 180 refugees: "Menschenunwürdig! Skandalöse Zustände in den Adlershofer Baracken: Die Leiden deutscher Flüchtlingsfamilien," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 14 Aug. 1921, at Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep 001-02 Nr. 195, p. 92.

52. Stadtplanungsamt Reinickendorf, *Gutachten über den Ortsteil Wilhelmsruh (Wittenau Ost) im Bezirk Reinickendorf* (1956), reprinted in Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *MV Plandokumentation*, 7.

53. "Bestimmungen des Bundesrates für die Gewährung von Baukostenzuschüssen aus Reichsmitteln," *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung* (edited by the Prussian Ministry of Public Works), 38 n. 91/92, 9 Nov. 1918, 450–51, Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep. 040-08 Nr. 689. See also Memorandum of the Deputation für Wohnungswesen, signed Loehning, 6 Oct. 1920, Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep. 040-08 Nr. 689.

54. Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 71–72.

55. See, e.g., the minutes of the general meetings of the allotment association Gemütlichkeit III in the Treptow district in southeast Berlin, property of the former president of the association Manfred Kassel (Berlin). At the meeting on 18 Jan. 1925, the members were informed that permanent dwelling was illegal. See also minutes for March 1926, Dec. 1927, and July 1930. Thanks to Manfred Kassel.

56. "120,000 Berliner in Lauben und Baracken," *Lokalanzeiger* (Berlin) 378 (12 Aug. 1933).

57. Le Corbusier, *Urbanisme* (Paris: G. Cres, 1925); Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Grosstadt-Architektur* (Stuttgart: Hoffmann, 1927); Clarence Perry, "The Neighborhood Unit" (1929, excerpt), in *The Urban Design Reader*, ed. Michael Lance and Elizabeth Macdonald (London: Routledge, 2006), 58–65; Nikolai Milyutin, *Sotsgorod: Problema stroitel'stva sotsialisticheskikh gorodov* (Moscow, 1930), translated as *Sozgorod: Die Planung der neuen Stadt* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1992); Hans Bernhard Reichow, *Organische Stadtbaukunst: Von der Großstadt zur Stadtlandschaft* (Braunschweig: Westermann, 1948).

58. Kleinlosen and Milchert, *Berliner Kleingärten*, 18.

59. Letter of the Polizeipräsident in Abteilung III to Regierungspräsident zu Potsdam, signed v. Jagow, 6 Aug. 1913, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep 057 Nr. 724, p. 28.

60. Memorandum of the Staatskommissar für das Wohnungswesen, 18 Nov. 1918, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep 057 Nr. 724, p. 12.

61. Memorandum issued at the 106th Police Station, 14 Oct. 1919, signed Retschke, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep 057 Nr. 724, pp. 47–48.

62. See, e.g., the letter of the Polizeipräsident in Berlin to the Regierungspräsident in Potsdam, 28 Jan. 1914, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep 057 Nr. 724, p. 1.

63. Kleinlosen and Milchert, *Berliner Kleingärten*, 43.

64. The data are from the July 1933 *Berliner Wirtschaftsberichte* published by the Statistisches Landesamt, quoted in "120,000 Berliner in Lauben und Baracken." The information is also quoted in "120,000 Berliner in Wohnlauben," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 12 Aug. 1934. Other sources give slightly different figures: 120,000 (1935), Sanierungsdezernent Ahmels of the Pankow district, public lecture at a local school on 4 July 1935, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep 057 Nr. 1163, pp. 1–4; also quoted in J. Fischer-Dieskau, *Einführung in die Wohnungs- und Siedlungspolitik: Grundlagen und Hauptprobleme* (Leipzig, 1938), 35; or 97,000 (1936), "Noch 97,000 Berliner in Wohnlauben," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 523 (6 Nov. 1936).

65. "Berlin hat 103,000 Laubensiedler," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 329 (3 Aug. 1933). This is also confirmed by a 1937 report on the Wilhelmsruh area in northern Berlin: in the Heinze colony, 235 out of 242 allotments were permanently inhabited; in the Frohsinn colony (owned by the Red Cross), 122 out of 216; and in the Kleintierfarm colony, 95 out of 96. Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 86–87.

66. Sanierungsdezernent Ahmels of the Pankow district, public lecture at a local school on 4 July 1935.

67. A 1919 memo from the office of Berlin's police administration stresses the small need for *Wohnlauben* in the Schöneberg city district because the working-class population in the district is not very numerous. Memorandum of Polizeipräsident von Berlin, 18 Jan. 1919, Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep 057 Nr. 724.

68. In 1933, the figure was 26,700 out of 120,000; "120,000 Berliner in Lauben und Baracken."

69. In the allotment colonies in the Wittenau area, approximately 37 percent of the inhabitants were over sixty-five years old. Gräser, "Grüne Slums" sollen neuem Stadtteil weichen."

70. Memories of Walter Barz, in Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 61.
71. In the 1920s most allotment holders supported the Social Democratic Party or the Communists. For politically motivated distress between neighbors see *ibid.*, 61 and 82.
72. H. Steinhaus, *Grundsätzliche Kleingartenfragen* (Berlin, 1938), quoted in Kleinlosen and Milchert, *Berliner Kleingärten*, 44.
73. "Charlottenburger Kleingärtner ziehen um."
74. Kleinlosen and Milchert, *Berliner Kleingärten*, 46–48, and Rollka and Spiess, *Berliner Laubenpieper*, 47–50.
75. Sanierungsdezernent Ahmels of the Pankow district, public lecture at a local school on 4 July 1935.
76. Stadtrat Pfeil, quoted in "Die geplante Sanierung der Berliner Pachtlaubengebiete," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 218 (11 May 1935).
77. Sanierungsdezernent Ahmels of the Pankow district, public lecture at a local school on July 4, 1935.
78. See, e.g., the celebration of relocation in the Köllnische Allee area, "Kleinwohnungsbau am Rande von Groß-Berlin," *Lokalanzeiger* (Berlin), 4 Oct. 1936, Grundstücks-Beilage. Along these lines, the 1936 Gesetz zur Ergänzung der Kleingarten- und Kleinpachtlandordnung protected allotment dwellers against eviction, but at the same time forbade new moves into allotments. "Wer darf in den Lauben wohnen?," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 295 (27 June 1935).
79. Memorandum of the Kommando der Schutzpolizei, 8 Oct. 1935, signed Dillenberger, Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep 101-02 Nr. 18424, sheet 11/14.
80. Letter of the Stadtkommissar der Hauptstadt Berlin to the mayor of Berlin, 4 June 1935, Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep 101-02 Nr. 18424, sheet 7/14.
81. The entertainer Hans Rosenthal, the actor Michael Degen, and the author Inge Deutschkron were among the most prominent Jews who survived hidden in Berlin allotment colonies. See the autobiographies Hans Rosenthal, *Zwei Leben in Deutschland* (Bergisch Gladbach: Bastei-Lübbe, 1980), Michael Degen, *Nicht alle waren Mörder* (Munich: Econ, 1999), and Inge Deutschkron, *Ich trug den gelben Stern* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1979). Reinhold, in her childhood memories, mentioned that resistance fighters found refuge in the Gemütlichkeit colony in the Treptow district. Reinhold, *Gemütlichkeit*.
82. Memories of Alfred Zitz, longtime president of the Siedlergemeinschaft Neue Zeit in 1956, in Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 46. The colony is situated between Schlitzer Straße and Maarer Straße immediately west of the Märkisches Viertel.
83. Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 70–71; see also Voll, *Von der Wohnlaube zum Hochhaus*, 17.
84. Voll, *Von der Wohnlaube zum Hochhaus*, 17.
85. Decree of the Reichsarbeitsminister, quoted in "Kriegserleichterung für Wohnlauben," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 543 (13 Nov. 1943).
86. Rollka and Spiess, *Berliner Laubenpieper*, 48.
87. Questionnaire for those applying for a construction permit for a provisional home in the context of the Deutsches Wohnungshilfswerk, 7 June 1944, Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep. 042-08 Nr. 236.
88. *Ibid.*
89. *Ibid.*
90. Erlass of the Reichswohnungskommissar on 22 Sept. 1943, quoted in "Lauben werden wohnhaft gemacht," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 72 (13 Mar. 1944).
91. See, e.g., memorandum by the Deutsche Arbeitsfront, 17 Dec. 1943, or the questionnaire "Fragebogen für Betriebe." A typical case was the development for families of SA members on state-owned land on Bergstraße in Lichterfelde. Thirty-one provisional homes were erected there in 1944. They were connected to water pipes but not to sewers. Memorandum of the Planning Commission of the Steglitz district, 18 Sept. 1944, Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep. 042-08 Nr. 236.
92. Planungsamt Steglitz, report of a site visit of the Behelfsheim-siedlungen, 20 Nov. 1944, Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep. 042-08 Nr. 236.
93. *Ibid.*
94. In the summer of 1944 the Deutsche Arbeitsfront commissioned the erection of eighteen of these dwellings on Goerzallee and Ruthener Weg in Lichterfelde. "Plan for Behelfsheim System Vieth" and Planungsamt Steglitz, report of a site visit of the Behelfsheim-siedlungen, both Landesarchiv Berlin A Rep. 042-08 Nr. 236.
95. The figures refer to the districts of Mitte and Tiergarten. Given that damage was concentrated in the inner city, the statistics for the city as a whole look less impressive: 11 percent of Berlin's buildings were totally destroyed, and another 8 percent damaged beyond repair. Compared to the years after the First World War, Berlin's population decreased after the Second World War. The population maximum of 4.1 million inhabitants in 1939 was never reached again after the war. Of the 4.3 million Berliners in 1939, only 2.8 remained by 1945. The figures come from the Statistisches Landesamt Berlin, quoted from Herbert Schwenk, *Lexikon der Berliner Stadtentwicklung* (Berlin: Haude und Spener, 2002), 253 and 272.
96. The proliferation of allotment dwellings is, for example, mentioned in 1956 Expertise of the Planning Department of the City District of Berlin-Reinickendorf, reprinted in Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *MV Plandokumentation*, 7.
97. *Ibid.*, 26.
98. The figure is from 1954. "Wohnrecht von 11,000 Kleingärtnern bedroht," *Berliner Morgenpost* 17 Feb. 1960. The number of families who tended an allotment decreased from 250,000 in 1953 to 49,000 in 1962. Hanuske, *Bauen, bauen, bauen*, 445 and 451–52.
99. The figure refers to the number of families officially registered at their allotment homes in 1948. Isolde Dietrich, "ne Laube, 'n Zaun und 'n Beet," in *Befremdlich anders: Leben in der DDR*, ed. Evemarie Badstübner et al. (Berlin: Dietz, 2000), 374–414, here 404.
100. Comment of a building inspection officer in the Reinickendorf district, quoted after Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 144.
101. See drawing at Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep. 19 Nr. 186, p. 52.
102. Memorandum of the Hauptamt für Hochbau, 5 Nov. 1946, Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep. 109 Nr. 186, p. 13, Report of the Bezirksamt Spandau, Abteilung für Bauwesen, 8 Oct. 1946, Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep. 109 Nr. 186, p. 55.
103. "Keine Nissenhütten mehr," *Telegraf* (Berlin), 9 Jan. 1958.
104. *Ibid.*
105. "Gefrieranlagen als Wohnbaracken," *Vorwärts* (East Berlin) 217 (27 Dec. 1946); "In den Tropfsteinhöhlen von Berlin W," *Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin) 210 (29 Dec. 1946).
106. In the winter of 1946/47, about 400 froze to death in the whole of Berlin. Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 142.
107. There is no evidence that people were forced to move into the Nissenhütten; on the contrary. Architect Hans Scharoun, in a 1946 Magistrat (city council) meeting, mentioned that Berliners generally disliked the Nissenhütten but, for lack of better alternatives, were nevertheless fighting to get one. Minutes of the Magistrat meeting on 14 Sept. 1946, Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep. 19 Nr. 186, p. 6.
108. In 1953, for example, the planning authority of the Spandau city district rejected the idea of legalization as a means to prevent illegal

settlements; letter of the Senatsbauverwaltung to the Spandauer Amt für Stadtplanung, 28 Apr. 1953, quoted from Hanuske, *Bauen, bauen, bauen*, 446.

109. This was established in the 1956 contract between the West Berlin government and the local garden plot associations. Rollka and Spiess, *Berliner Laubenpieper*, 52. See also Hanuske, *Bauen, bauen, bauen*, 447.

110. "Wohnrecht von 11,000 Kleingärtnern bedroht," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 17 Feb. 1960; Hanuske, *Bauen, bauen, bauen*, 445 and 451–52. Of the garden plot land in 1954, 60 percent was owned by the municipality of Berlin. See also Norbert Schindler, "Zur Kleingartensituation in Berlin," *Kommunalpolitische Beiträge* 6, no. 3/4 (19 Jan. 1968), 4.

111. Kleinlosen and Milchert, *Berliner Kleingärten*, 50–52.

112. Karl Krings, "Die viel zu kleine Decke: Der neue Flächennutzungsplan Berlins," *Tagesspiegel*, 15 Mar. 1966, 11.

113. See the famous Thorpe report on the situation of English allotments in the European context. Harry Thorpe, *Report of the Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Allotments*, Cmnd 4166 (London: HMSO, 1969). See also Colin Ward and David Crouch, *The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture* (London: Faber, 1988), 7–10.

114. In East Berlin the percentage of totally destroyed apartments was 31 percent (plus an additional 21 percent "heavily destroyed"); in West Berlin, 32 percent (plus 13 percent "heavily destroyed"). Günter Peters, *Gesamtberliner Stadtentwicklung von 1949–1990* (Berlin: Hochschule der Künste, 1992), 38.

115. Dietrich, "'ne Laube, 'n Zaun und 'n Beet," 404.

116. Ibid.

117. Isolde Dietrich, conversation with the author, 12 Sept. 2011. Dietrich published several books on allotment culture in the GDR. Manfred Kassel, conversation with the author, 16 Feb. 2012. Kassel was the longtime president of the allotment association Gemütlichkeit III in the Treptow district. See also Reinhold, *Gemütlichkeit*.

118. Ursula Reinhold, conversation with the author, 13 Feb. 2012.

119. Magistrat resolution "Verordnung über die Bewirtschaftung der Wohn- und gewerblichen Räume," 18 June 1945, and Magistrat directive "Richtlinie über bewohnbare Lauben" (directive on inhabitable allotment sheds), 9 Nov. 1945, *Verordnungsblatt* 26, no. 46, p. 204; information given by Kassel, conversation with the author, 16 Feb. 2012.

120. Kassel, conversation with the author, 16 Feb. 2012. See also Magistrat directive "Arbeitsrichtlinie für die Bearbeitung von Kleingartenangelegenheiten," 5 Mar. 1956, *Verordnungsblatt* 11, no. 85, which specifies that inhabitable sheds should no longer be erected on allotments.

121. Kassel, conversation with the author, 16 Feb. 2012.

122. Ursula Reinhold remembers pointed remarks in her childhood. Reinhold, conversation with the author, 13 Feb. 2012. The estimation that there were no widespread abuses such as "asocial" was confirmed by Kassel, conversation with the author, 16 Feb. 2012, and Dietrich, conversation with the author, 12 Sept. 2011.

123. Reinhold, conversation with the author, 13 Feb. 2012.

124. A 1954 article in the small-gardeners journal, for example, presents allotments as a "typical product of capitalism rooted in the same oppressive urban logic as the tenement." *Der Kleingärtner* 6 (1954), 14, quoted after Isolde Dietrich, *Hammer, Zirkel, Gartenzaun: Die Politik der SED gegenüber den Kleingärtnern* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2003), 113.

125. See Dietrich, *Hammer, Zirkel, Gartenzaun*, 9–32.

126. Criticism can be found, for example, in a 1959 article that celebrated the initiative of allotment holders who by the sweat of their brows built up their sheds to "little treasuries" with often "exemplary sanitary facilities"

and warned against banning allotment dwellings, which would increase the need for housing. "Kein Zuzug für Wohnlauben," *Spandauer Volksblatt*, 22 July 1959.

127. Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 186–87.

128. Schindler, "Zur Kleingartensituation in Berlin," 3. The salary of a Reinickendorf truck driver, 850 marks per month in 1971, is mentioned in Lange et al., *Wohnste sozial*, 114.

129. Stadtrat Schäfer, quoted in Gräser, "'Grüne Slums' sollen neuem Stadtteil weichen."

130. Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 187–90.

131. Eick had moved to Berlin in 1950 as a refugee. Ten years later he was evicted from his Wohnlaube in Siemensstadt because of the construction of the motorway. He sued the government and received compensation of 6,500 marks. Ibid.

132. For example, already in 1936 there were approximately 2,700 Wohnlauben with 8,000 inhabitants in the western Siemensstadt area south of the Jungfernheide park; "Noch 97,000 Berliner in Wohnlauben," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 523 (6 Nov. 1936).

133. On both sites, there were several settlements of "emergency dwellings"; Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, "Study of Existing Residential Areas," approximately 1970, Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep. 009-311, p. 275; Jürgen Grothe, "Leitmotiv für das Falkenhagener Feld war die ruhige Wohnlage," *Volksblatt Berlin*, 31 May 1985.

134. Letter of Tiergarten District Council, Department of Finances, to Verwaltung des Reichsbahnvermögens in Westberlin (owner of the garden plot land), signed Küster, 15 July 1960, Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep. 010-01 Nr. 349.

135. Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep. 010-01 Nr. 349.

136. See plan of Gewobag, Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 207 Nr. 4049.

137. For the accusation that a few hundred garden plot holders obstructed the construction of 1,600 apartments, see, e.g., "Streit um Räumungstermin," *Telegraf*, 29 Dec. 1957, or "Energisches 'Nein' der Charlottenburger Kleingärtner," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 15 Sept. 1957.

138. Concerning the difficulty of finding alternative homes for allotment dwellers, a public servant wrote that "no landlord can be expected to put up with . . . people at the lowest income scale." Letter from Bezirksamt Tiergarten, Rechtsamt to Senatsrat Gens with Senator für Wirtschaft und Kredit, Abteilung Ernährung, signed Wolff, 25 Jan. 1961, Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep. 010-01 Nr. 349.

139. Letter from Gewobag to Stadtrat Friedberg at the Bezirksamt Charlottenburg, 3 Apr. 1962, Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 207 Nr. 4049. The firm also happily reported that allotment dwellers from Charlottenburg-Nord moved to Marienfelde. Letter from Gewobag to Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen Rolf Schwedler, dated 18 Apr. 1961, Landesarchiv Berlin B Rep 207 Nr. 4049.

140. They mostly had permissions that dated from the postwar years. Horst Farny and Martin Kleinlosen, *Kleingärten in Berlin (West)*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 1986), 76–77.

141. Sanierungsdezernent Ahmels of the Pankow district, public lecture at a local school on 4 July 1935.

142. Hans Scharoun quoted the estimations of the population about Nissenhütten. Minutes of a Magistrat (Berlin government) meeting on 14 Sept. 1946, Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep. 19 Nr. 186, p. 6.

143. Gräser, "'Grüne Slums' sollen neuem Stadtteil weichen," or see memories of Lieselotte Rackwitz, who moved into the Wilhelmsruh area in the 1950s, in Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 174.

144. Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *MV Plandokumentation*, 28.

145. Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen (Housing Department), letter to Amt für Stadtplanung (Department of Urban Planning) of the Spandau district, 28 Apr. 1953, estate of the public servant Walter Nicklitz, now at Landesarchiv Berlin, quoted in Hanuske, *Bauen, bauen, bauen*, 445.

146. Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *MV Plandokumentation*, 20.

147. Former inhabitants of Wilhelmsruh, for example, recall that the majority of the inhabitants before the Second World War supported the Communist Party. Hildebrandt and Schlickeiser, *Abschied von der Laube*, 61 and 82.

148. Landesarchiv Berlin Rep. 203, Acc. 2128, Nr. 8645 (Documents on Schillerhöhe). See also Hanuske, *Bauen, bauen, bauen*, 450–51.

149. Hanuske, *Bauen, bauen, bauen*, 451.

150. *Bidonville* dwellers in the Paris region in the 1960s not only suffered from the xenophobia of their neighbors but also were ashamed to

acknowledge their place of residence. See Hervo and Charras, *Bidonvilles*, 74–75, 118, 211, 266, 268.

151. For the cultural difference between slum dwellers and the inhabitants of formal housing in Peru see Turner, “Village Artisans Self Built Houses,” 361–62; for examples in Mexico see Lewis, “The Culture of Poverty.”

152. Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, letter to Amt für Stadtplanung of the Spandau district, 28 Apr. 1953, estate of the public servant Walter Nicklitz, now at Landesarchiv Berlin, in Hanuske, *Bauen, bauen, bauen*, 445.

153. Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, “Vorlage zur Kenntnisnahme über Verfügungstellung von Kleingartenland,” 21 Sept. 1954, in Hanuske, *Bauen, bauen, bauen*, 446.

154. Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, *MV Plandokumentation*, 30.