

## Report I

# Municipalism in practice

## Progressive housing policies in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin and Vienna

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## 1. Housing political Municipalism, what does it mean?

### 1.1 Municipalism

Municipalism has become a popular concept to bring together different strategies to institutionalize grassroots mobilization and to implement transformative policies on the local level. In some cities, municipalist platforms won the majority of votes in local elections and took over leading positions in city councils and administration.

In our understanding Municipalism has three core elements:

**Municipalism as participative mode of governance:** This new mode of governing includes (1) *a strong link to urban social movements* in the sense that elected people in governance emanate/originate from urban social movements, that new programs taking over positions of urban social mobilizations, that there is a strong recognition for moments of self-organization for public interest, inclusiveness and social justice initiatives. Municipalism is more than a progressive policy to reform the city on behalf of its citizens “but to place power in the hand of the people by transforming the way politics is done as such” (Castro 2018: 193). Another elements of municipalist ways of organizing governance could be described as (2) *Radical Democratization* and includes strategies to promote new ways for the access to and design of decision-making processes, to develop collective decision-making processes based on transparency of decisions, structures, processes and resources and to improve user control at the implementation level of policies and by managing public institutions (property management, transport operators, infrastructures). A basic concept of municipalist modes of governance is (3) *to encourage urban social movements to organize and build tools for changing cities*, to break with traditional party-politics and to avoid to transform municipalist platforms into electoral machines. As a precondition for new policies, municipalism tries to (4) *decentralise decisions, responsibility and power* to neighborhoods, communities and grassroot initiatives and to promote (5) *inclusive & protagonistic practice of governing* like the feminization of politics, a high sensibility for all questions of representation, and a general recognition/acceptance of differences including a strong care orientation of policies by orienting political strategies and instruments to the basic needs and demands of those, who are most depressed and excluded. Feminization of politics includes different elements: gender equality at the level of institutional representation and public participation, a commitment to public policies that challenge gender roles and break down patriarchy, and a

different way of doing politics based on values and practices that put an emphasis on everyday life, relationships, the role of the community, and the common goods (Galceran/Carmona 2017).

**Municipalism as (local) public responsibility:** Municipalism is not only a new mode of governing but is also directed to policies that prioritize social need and public infrastructure instead of private profit. This refers to a (1) *Clear commitment to public provision and public control* of social infrastructure in all fields of life (housing, mobility, health, education, digital infrastructure etc.), (2) a general *preference of use values* instead of exchange value by developing strategies and implementing instruments, (3) a *focus on unrestricted provision of social infrastructure* and basic needs for all, including specific support for those, who are excluded and disadvantaged, and (4) an *accountability* in the sense of comprehensible decisions and traceable responsibilities.

**Municipalism as an independent and sovereign political body:** In the context of increasingly financialized global capitalism and progressing neoliberal policies on national and supranational levels, cities - as political actors - are becoming a force to resist and develop alternatives. Municipalist cities are trying to (1) *expand local/municipal legal foundations to implement social, inclusive, and ecological politics* and social redistribution by using the given frameworks for local policy making, using all cities capacities to (2) *protect their cities and inhabitants against predatory extraction* of urban surplus, including to develop strategies and instruments to limit capital interests (like financialized investments in housing & real estate, private companies in the field of infrastructure, globalized platform capitalism...) and repressive and neoliberal state power (like undermining federal or European deportation orders, opposing austerity orders on financial cutbacks). At last, municipalist policies are directed to (3) *change legislative frameworks* by intervening into federal and supranational institutions and by organizing networks of rebellious cities.

The aim of the project is to identify for each of the four cities moments of municipalism, political structures and policies in line with the municipalist orientation on public responsibility and to describe the relation between grassroots mobilisations, social urban movements, governments and administrations and how the power in the city is structured and organized.

## 1.2 Housing

Housing is one of the main social challenges in our cities and one of the basic needs for everyday life in cities. The access to housing and the quality of housing has not only an effect on social status and available economic resources. The structure of a housing system can also increase or reduce existing injustices in other fields of society. Under conditions of contemporary capitalist urbanization, housing has become a major medium to (re)produce social, racial, gender, and spatial inequalities in our societies.

The housing question includes aspects of access and distribution of housing, as well as issues of quality and standards and finally the conditions of tenancies in terms of security, reliability, affordability and the grade of autonomy of the users. A socially oriented way of housing provision therefor would encompass broad and non-discriminatory access to decent, adequate, affordable housing under secure, durable and invulnerable (legal) conditions.

The current situation in many cities (in Europe) is determined by increasing pressure from financial investments, ongoing speculation with properties and buildings, and a systemically failure of the private market to provide enough and affordable housing for all. Housing as a social need is under attack. “Most immediately, there is a conflict between housing as lived, social space and housing as an instrument for profitmaking – a conflict between housing as home and as real estate” (Madden/Marcuse 2016: 4). Cities like Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, and Vienna are facing a lack of housing supply, shortage of decent and affordable housing, gentrification pressures and displacement, and overall increasing housing cost.

Housing could be define as an economic, social, political and cultural relation and is intimately connected with the power relation in our societies. In critical housing research, there is a long tradition to analyze housing and to explain failures of housing provision along the economic and political determinants. In social urban movements, neighborhood organizations and tenants struggle, the social needs, community effects and cultural meaning of housing are driving factors for the activities. In our study on municipalist housing policies we attempt to bring together these aspects in a common analytical framework.

The field of housing policy, in our understanding, not only represents *areas of action* (like the production of housing, maintenance of the housing stock, and regulations of tenancies), a *medium of intervention* (like governing with money, governing with law, governing with

property rights<sup>1</sup>), *modes of intervention* (like distribution, improvement, protection, regulation), but also plays a defining role as *mediator of social relations* between people, communities, organized interest groups and institutions. Following the general concepts on municipalism, any housing policy intervention could be analyzed as a result, an arena and a precondition of social interactions and power relations.

The aim of the project is to inform about the housing situation, housing market and housing policies in all case study cities and to highlight the main challenges for a socially oriented housing provision and to describe the main available strategies and instruments in the field of housing.

### 1.3 Municipalist housing policies

The link between municipalist policies and housing policy instruments can be understood as a mutual relation. On the one hand, municipalist policies in the field of housing should be characterized by a close link to demands from social mobilizations and grassroots movements and a strong involvement of civil society and grassroots actors in the implementation of new policies. On the other hand, municipalist housing instruments should imply moments of encouraging and improving grassroots activities and establish a political culture of solidarity, cooperation and sharing power in the cities. A third characteristic of municipalist housing policies could be seen a clear orientation on improving socially oriented housing provision, on resource and power redistribution to the disadvantaged and on action against the dominance of market forces and neoliberal politics.

The aim of the project is to identify several municipalist housing policy instruments in each city and to describe /analyze their intention, their mode of implementation and their effects as well as the role of movements and grassroots mobilization in the creation, design, operation and evaluation of these instruments.

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1 Medium of intervention: a) governing with money: all financial aspects like investment in public or social housing and other forms of financial subsidies; b) governing with Law: law, orders, prohibitions, (difference in legislative capacities!) (enactment of norms); c) Governing with Ownership: leasehold of public land use, "grant of use" rights), public companies, public housing stock.

## 2. City Reports

The city reports give a brief overview on each case study city. The city reports include information about the political constellation in the cities, the housing political challenges, the new housing political instruments, and the mode of the political procedures of housing provision.

*Political Profile:* This section aims to give a brief overview of the general political constellation in each city and find answers on following question: How is the political majority structured? How is progressive/anti-neoliberal power organized? Why would we present our cities as municipalist or progressive cities? What municipalist moments can be described for urban and housing politics at the city level?

*Housing political challenges:* This section is directed to give an overview of a) the structure of housing markets, b) the shape of anti-social pressures from real estate dynamics and c) the social and structural needs in each city.

*Instruments:* This section includes a short description of progressive new – or existing - housing policy instruments and presents brief information about their mode of operation, their legal and administrative implementation, as well as their effects.

*Political Process:* A fourth part of the city reports analyze the political process of housing policy changes. Contents in this section are the composition of actors/movements, the relation between grassroots movements and administration, and the way, how grassroots demands/proposals became political programs and/or implemented practices.



## 2.1. Amsterdam

A prefatory note: the word “municipalism” is not used in the Netherlands. Some administrators within the current Amsterdam government are inspired by “municipalism” abroad and are currently thinking of ways to transfer and translate the notion to the Dutch context. While the exact phrase “municipalism” is not in use, its constitutive elements are present. For the sake of brevity, we here consider “municipalism” as a shorthand for democratic and redistributive urbanism.

**Political Profile:** We can discern three phases in the development of Amsterdam’s distinct type of municipalism in Amsterdam: 1) 1920s: the rise of the social democratic ideal; 2) 1945-1970: The extension and universalization of the social democratic during post-war reconstruction and the formation of the Fordist-Keynesian Welfare State; 3) 1970s-1980s: Deepening participation and the consolidation of social housing within the context of social movement mobilization.

Municipalism in Amsterdam can be traced back to 1920s, when the social democratic government laid the foundation of welfarism in Amsterdam. In this period, self-organized housing associations were promoted through national legislation. These housing associations would serve their constituents, who were often middle classes. In this period, there was a sense that some of the poorer households were not fit for social housing and consequently they were relegated to the private market or contained in special, heavily monitored housing projects. This phase was extended in the post war period when the government assumed a greater role in urban development. Post-war expansion areas in Amsterdam in the West and the South-East, which were all social housing, were built following the social democratic ideal. While poor households were not actively shunned after the World War, such areas were planned for the middle classes.

Lastly, during the 1970s and the 1980s, there grew a city-wide opposition to the top-down modernist planning that created orderly neighborhoods with little citizen participation. With the famous Nieuwmarkt riots, for example, people reclaimed and got the right to have a say over the renewal of their own neighborhoods. The government got under pressure and participation increased drastically. In this period, social housing was still administrated

through particular (pillarized) housing corporations, but the government assumed responsibility to allocate housing based on a model that applied throughout the city. This model gave rights to all residents regardless of income and drastically reduced the discretion of landlords to choose tenants or set rents. This is a period in which the government assumed greater control over the housing supply, extended rights to more groups, and deepened participation. After 1980s there was a drastic move away from social democratic ideal with decreased protection of tenants, scaling back of rights and drastic privatization operations. Renewal at this point in time served to reduce the proportion of social housing and increase the proportion of owner-occupied housing. New projects would typically have at most 30 percent social housing. The commodification of the social housing was accompanied by restriction of social housing to low incomes, resulting in the residualization of the social sector. Since social housing residents were expected to move elsewhere to allow for restructuring, they were no longer involved in the urban renewal process.

Since the municipal elections of 2018, there has been a cautious resurgence of municipalism. In the current political constellation, the Green Left party has the highest number of seats in the Amsterdam government and it rules in a coalition with the liberal democrats (D66), the Socialist Part (SP), and the Labor Party (PvdA). The new government stipulated that the new housing projects should be planned according to the 20-40-40 rule: 20% owner occupied, 40% private rental and 40% social housing. The city government insists also that the private rental market should be controlled by using zoning regulation. There is also the resurgence of the idea of democratization and participation. Present city government invests heavily politically and to some degree also financially in empowering residents to participate, though it is unclear in what decisions residents are to have a meaningful say. At the very least, the government no longer insists that privatization is key to prosperity and good governance.

**Housing political Challenges:** The Amsterdam housing market is characterized by rapidly increasing housing prices in the owner-occupied sector. Homeownership is heavily leveraged in the Netherlands. The Housing market in Amsterdam, and in the Netherlands at large, is heavily financialized, which extends into the relatively large social housing sector (Aalbers 2008). The insecurity the latter brings was exemplified in recent years with the financial

damage of 3 billion euros incurred by the social housing corporation called Vestia that engaged in derivatives speculation (Aalbers et al 2018).

Despite the long period of privatization from the early 1990s to 2018, Amsterdam has still relatively large yet gradually shrinking social housing sector (42%). Fast privatization of social housing brought about exclusionary displacement: Amsterdam's housing market is unaffordable for many. Waiting time for a social housing in Amsterdam has increased to 8 years in 2008 to 14 years in 2017. Prices have increased rapidly: the average square meter price was 2.888 €/m<sup>2</sup> in 2014 and increased to 4.437 €/m<sup>2</sup> in 2018. There has been an increasing precarity of tenure, not only with decreasing tenure protection but also increasing number of insecure, temporary tenure arrangements such as anti-squat housing, sub-renting etc. The international real estate investment has a strong role in shaping the housing market in Amsterdam with international investors buying up 20 percent of the housing units that come on the market, contributing to problems of affordability and accessibility. A further driving force of exclusionary displacement and rising prices is the growth of the tourism industry, AirBnB in particular; AirBnB has no fewer than 20.000 listings in Amsterdam (according to the Inside AirBnB website). While the forces pushing for the price increases and displacements are overwhelmingly strong and assertive, the government's steps to regulate the housing market are somewhat timid.

**New housing policy Instruments:** Until very recently, ground under private properties was mostly owned by the government to whom homeowners paid a lease. The lease would usually be for a period of a 100 years after which it would be readjusted to reflect price increases. This lease system—called *erfpachtsysteem*—ensured that at least part of the price increases associated with urban development would be redistributed through the government, effectively mitigating against land speculation. The previous urban government—a coalition of D66, SP and the right-wing liberals of the VVD—attempted to abolish this system of ground lease, making possible the buying of the ground under one's house. Due to bureaucratic obstacles, the sale of land has been less rapid than anticipated.

The city further enacted measures to control AirBnB in the city. A maximum 60 days of renting was allowed with the new legislation. The city has also implemented some modest

measures against speculation: in some cases, people who construct their own dwellings or buy former social housing pay a penalty when they sell their property within three years.

Lastly, Amsterdam city government has recently engaged in an international consortium of Barcelona, Amsterdam and London, Naples, called Fearless Cities. This consortium showcases the attitude of the left-wing governments that their inhabitants should not fear losing their houses and city and that they should be fearless in resisting finance capital.

**Political process of implementing new housing policies:** Amsterdam used to have a strong radical housing movement in 1970s and 1980s that managed to institutionalize the rights of residents, both with respect to tenure as well as participation. These movements in time turned into interest groups safeguarding the rights of tenants in the social housing system. Tenants Associations Amsterdam and Amsterdam Resident Support Teams, as the heritage of the housing activism in Amsterdam in 1970s and 80s, gradually became partners of the city governments (Uitermark 2009). Today Amsterdam lacks a strong housing movement that can be effective to contest urban policies. There is a scattered scene of activism in the urban and housing field: there are tenants protesting urban renewal; groups resisting the expansion of AirBnB and touristification; groups squatting for refugees; and groups struggling for free spaces. Although these groups play an important role in keeping issues on the political agenda, they are fairly modest in size and influence, especially in comparison with the formidable processes they're mobilizing against.

## 2.2. Barcelona

**Political Profile:** In Barcelona (and elsewhere in Spain), the current wave of municipalism cannot be understood without the previous existence of the “indignado” movement: intense mobilizations against neoliberal politics and the development of different autonomous experiences since 2011. From platforms against evictions, and neighborhood assemblies, to “waves” in defense of public health and education: such is the background from which emerge many of those who participate in Barcelona en Comú. In fact, the municipalist hypothesis was formulated in 2014 as a way of taking new radical forms of democracy one step further. The “institutional assault” would help overcome the existing political deadlock, while democratizing governmental institutions and redefining traditional party-forms. And, against all odds, the self-proclaimed municipalist platform of Barcelona en Comú won the local elections in May 2015.

The electoral success of the citizen platforms is noteworthy. Under a year after their launch in 2014, their candidates, most of whom had no previous experience in electoral politics, took office in most of the country’s main cities with an explicitly anti-austerity, feminist, environmentalist and democratising agenda. Barcelona en Comú won the elections with a program that showcased a “democratic rebellion” and the “reappropriation of the institutions for the people”. At the same time, in Barcelona, the victory was a narrow one: Barcelona en Comú holds just 11 of the 41 municipal council's seats - with the previous governing party winning 10 - and in this sense is a relatively weak government, depending on opposition parties to pass legislation.

Barcelona En Comú’s political agenda is geared towards redistribution, and ending up with social and urban segregation and inequalities. There have been several achievements or emblematic experiences in fields like tourism, housing and basic urban services (nurseries, health...). However, and despite having more than doubled social investment (social, education and health) in these two years, we can see that inequalities have increased in the city at a time of economic growth, and unemployment has not been significantly reduced. Although it was a programmatic priority and one of the strategic areas in the struggle against a historical trajectory marked by neoliberal government, it is not easy to reverse privatization processes and take back the control over common resources like water and electricity. There

have been problems around the Remunicipalisation of water supply and sanitation services at the municipal level because changes are needed in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, a supra-regional level of government. There are legal problems to terminate the current contracts with big corporations for urban cleaning services and electricity. Moreover, the creation of new urban services, such as the public funeral parlor to reduce the costs of dealing with death, has been repealed by the opposition as a result of being a minority government.

Finally, in spite of the attempt to produce a new political subject or a party-movement organization, there is a strong institutional blockage. Municipal power is constantly faced with all sorts of antagonists and normative limitations: foreign investment funds, big corporations, mainstream media and bigger-scale administration. Where the limits become more clear is precisely on those fronts that the new government had defined as a priority: housing and tourism.

**Housing political Challenges:** Since the end of the 1950s, housing policies in Barcelona (like in Catalonia and Spain) have promoted the extension of home ownership among the vast majority of residents. One of the distinctive features of Francoist plans was the production of subsidized “social housing” which could be privately owned by the beneficiaries. And this policy, which consists in a privatization of public housing *avant-la-lettre* was prolonged during decades of democracy, particularly under the Catalan Socialist Party for more than three decades. As a result of this policy, the percentage of public housing in Barcelona is extremely low: 1.6% of the total stock. This is also why the majority of units in working class neighborhoods are, still today, owner-occupied. Moreover, the extension of mortgage loans to virtually all of the population, as a result of financial and mortgage market deregulations by the State, accelerated the growth of home ownership since the 1980s until 2007.

However, the mortgage crisis of 2008 implied a significant shift, and the number of units in the rental market seems to have increased ever since, growing from approximately 30% to 38.2% today (265,688 out of 774,190 units). As to the structure of the rental market, there is a debate around the proportional weight of small home owners and big landlords. The most accurate reports show that 34% of the rental units are owned by companies.

The biggest housing political challenge is the huge surge in rental prices. While the demand for rental housing went up dramatically between 2008 and 2013, prices only began to go up after state legislations. In 2012, the Spanish government gave all sorts of fiscal privileges to REITs, which have been a key actor in the boom of private investment funds, and many of which pursue highly opportunistic strategies. In 2013 the rental law was reformed in order to adapt the rental market to the aims of these funds, and tenants lost many guarantees. Parallely, in 2011 the Catalan government changed touristic laws and made it extremely easy to get a license for a touristic rental: this change fostered a rapid boom of this kind of business, which has taken housing units away from the local residential market and possibly contributed to boosting general housing prices.

Barcelona has one of the governments that has most clearly fought to ensure the right to housing. Municipal investment in this area is now four times bigger than it used to be, evictions in 2016 decreased by 8%, and a public emergency unit has been created in order to actively stop evictions and homelessness. However, the housing crisis is ongoing. Rents have increased exponentially (they are at an all-time high), as speculative investment has increasingly shifted to the rental market, and 83% of evictions are currently due to this problem. Furthermore, the overburden rate among people who pay rent is no less than 42.3% percent. More than 300.000 people are overburdened by the cost of rent (INE and Idescat, 2016.). Housing is the main challenge that the city of Barcelona faces, together with other metropolitan councils.

As pointed out, the biggest challenge is that housing is mainly a competence of the Generalitat of Catalonia. Moreover, key policies such as the possibility of rent control or others are subject to State laws. And the Spanish State is not only ruled by a right wing government, but also by the European Union neoliberal directives. To cope with the housing crisis, one of the key elements is to have a sizable public rental park, so you become an operator in the market capable to influence prices -or at least create the necessary stock to cover the right to housing of those that will never afford market prices. But generating a public supply of 100,000 rental homes at below-market prices requires money and time (cities like Vienna have been building public housing for a century). And the development of public housing is proving to be too slow. Moreover, the purchase of empty housing, currently

in the hands of banks has been insufficient. It has quickly become apparent that the market will need to be regulated, but this depends on the State

**Instruments:** The City Council has openly declared war on illegal tourist apartments and platforms that advertise tourist flats without a license (it is estimated that between 6,000 and 8,000 unlawful units are announced in the city nowadays), applying sanctions of up to 600,000 euros to the different platforms (Airbnb, Homeaway...) which are considered to have contributed to the rise of rental prices and to gentrification and touristification. Airbnb has announced that it will not to publicize more illegal tourist apartments in Barcelona.

Working groups have been made with different collectives and social movements to design public housing policies and many proposals have been made forward, the majority reflected in the Plan for the Right to Housing 2016-2025. The Plan increases the municipal spending on housing by 77% compared to the period 2008-2015. It addresses the most imminent needs such as residential emergencies, through a policy of strong direct aid and the mobilization of empty housing units (subsidies to the rehabilitation of private houses or negotiating and sanctioning empty houses of financial institutions). Other measures are the mediation unit (Unidad Contra la Exclusión Residencial): a specialized service that tries to detect, stop and solve evictions using negotiation with the owners, rental aids, public park or other solutions.

There has been also an attempt to implement longer-term solutions, such as construction of public houses or legislative changes. To confront the historical deficit of the public housing park (with only 1% in front of the 15% on average in Europe), there is a plan to produce about 1000-1200 homes per year.

**Political Process:** The city council has in some specific instances shown a clear disposition to “rule by obeying”, incorporating or strengthening grassroots initiatives. The most famous one is the motion to ensure that 30% of the new housing stock built (or fully renovated) by developers is under the regime of affordable housing. This proposal has been put forth and developed by a coalition of housing movements and organizations, and strengthened with economic and juridical reports provided by the city council.

Similarly, the campaign against housing harassment led also by a coalition of housing movements has been a form of joint work between city council and organized citizenship. The idea is that the latter leads, and the former obeys, but these collaborations have come



with different kinds of tension too. Housing movements such as the Tenants Union have started to file complaints against big landlords as a tool of self-defense, given that the state legislation promotes no-cause evictions.

The city council has also been active in the creation of spaces where it can work with housing movements. Notoriously, it has created an “Expulsions Group”, which includes tenants from 90 different buildings acquired by investment funds and under threat of eviction. The aim of these group is to share a variety of tools: data in order to map the properties of big landlords and help tenants organize; money to fund strategic litigations led by the tenants union; institutional meetings with investment funds and big landlords in order to stop evictions when there is an ongoing struggle.

### 2.3. Berlin

**Political profile:** Berlin, the capital of Germany, is strongly affected by 25 years of neoliberalism and austerity. After the fall of the wall and the reunification the former socialist structures in East Berlin as well as the artefacts of an extensive welfare system in West Berlin were transformed in to market relations and local governments - despite their political color - prioritized the consolidation of public budget instead of the protection of public infrastructure and missed to be response for social housing provision. In reaction to privatization of housing, the cut of social housing subsidies and the ongoing gentrification pressure in the city a wide but fragmented tenant and anti-eviction movement arose around the year 2010 and gained with a mix of legal strategies, public action and militant protest a new public and political attention for the housing question. After years of denegation the political parties in Berlin couldn't longer ignore the housing problem and especially the Left party and the Greens started to increase the cooperation with grassroots initiatives. After the local election in 2016 a coalition of SPD (social democrats), Left party, and the Greens taken over the government. The *r2g-coalition* (red-red-green) adopted many of the movements demands into their government program.

In respect to our understanding of municipalism Berlin could be characterized as a *municipalist city in progress*: First the city rediscovered the commitment to the provision of social infrastructure and changed after 20 years of austerity into a policy of public investments and public responsibility in many fields of urban politics. Second, and following our definition of municipalism, Berlin's government try to enlarge the opportunities for social policies and tenant protection as a sovereign political actor in the federal arena (by several applications for change the tenant and planning laws in the Federal council [Bundesrat] and achieved cities interest against the federal real estate agency (BIMA). At third the *r2g-coalition* expanded the scope of participation and collaborates directly with grassroots initiatives in specific fields of policy. But until now there is no strategic invitation and no institutional framework for a general admission of civil society into the political decision making.

**Housing political challenges:** Berlin's housing is dominated by tenant housing – more than 85% of all households are dwelling with rental contracts. Until the end of the 1980s Berlin's housing was basically organized as socialist housing in East Berlin and social housing in West Berlin. During the time of the reunification more than 51% of the rental housing stock was in public hands or regulated by the schemes of social housing programs (44% of all housing). Therefore, Berlin was during the 1990s one of the most relaxed housing markets in Europe with average rent prices by 3,70 €/m<sup>2</sup> (long term tenants) and 4,28 €/m<sup>2</sup> (new contracts). After 20 years of neoliberal housing policies and austerity, Berlin has become since the year 2010 one of the overheated housing markets in Europe. After a strong wave of privatization (220.000 of 480.000 public housing units were privatized) and the substantial cut of housing subsidies (social housing reduction from 370.000 housing units in 1993 to 98.000 housing units in 2017) the share of public and regulated housing reduced to less than 20% of all housing. The average rent prices increased to 6,64 €/m<sup>2</sup> for long term tenants and to 10,80 €/m<sup>2</sup> new contracts in the year 2017.

Since the financial crisis Berlin's housing market is affected by a strong influx of international capital looking out for profitable investment opportunities. Financial investors and institutional funds dominate the real estate activities and increased the property prices to high levels in both, undeveloped lands from 422 €/m<sup>2</sup> (2008) to 2.055 €/m<sup>2</sup> (2017) and developed properties from 1.498 €/m<sup>2</sup> (2008) to 4.432 €/m<sup>2</sup> (2017). Despite of the economic model to calculate with an increase in value, high property cost has to be refinanced at least by revenues from the management of the buildings. Because the German rent law protects rent prices for long term tenancies better than in new contracts many new landlords are trying to push out old tenants in order to realize a higher rental income or to sale the unit as condominium to a higher price. The new composition of landlords is enforcing a new composition of neighborhoods by displacing long term inhabitants from their dwellings. Gentrification and displacement have become a city-wide problem for many tenants and the protection of displacement and the preservation of low rent prices in neighborhoods with gentrification pressure is one of the most important challenge for the housing policy in Berlin.

Because of an ongoing growth of population during the last decade (2008 bis 2017: +320.000 ppl.) and a deficit of housing constructions (2008 bis 2017: +81.000 housing units) Berlin's

housing policy must overcome a lack of around 200.000 housing units until the year 2030. At once the lack of affordable housing is by around 150.000 housing units. The challenge consists in the enforcement and enabling of production of affordable housing in relevant scales.

**New housing policy instruments:** In terms of policy instruments Berlin has developed and implemented some new strategies to protect tenants, to provide households with low income with housing and to enable an affordable housing production.

*Protection instruments:* Enlarge social protection zoning (“Milieuschutzgebiete”) to more than 50 areas with around 850.000 inhabitants, including the regulation of modernizations, restriction of transformation of tenant into condominium houses and to exercise pre-emptive purchase option by the local administration. Another instrument to protect housing and to restrict speculation is the mis-use of housing prohibition (“Zweckentfremdungsverbotsverordnung”) with strong punitive damages for unapproved vacancy and illegal subletting as tourist apartments. Beyond former regulations the new prohibition act allowed the acquisition of buildings through the municipality and the management under the aegis of public housing companies.

*Housing provision:* To provide households with low income and with specific needs with affordable housing, the public housing companies are obliged by law and by shareholder resolution to assign 60% of all contracts to lower income tenants with proofed income certification (Wohnberechtigungsschein – WBS). For 25% of these income-based housing allocations the public companies have to accept tenants with special needs (single parent families, homeless people, refugees, people released from prison etc.). Furthermore, the companies with their 320.000 housing units are required to limit rent increase to maximum 4% in two years and to cap rents after modernization on the affordability threshold of rent price maximum of 30% of the household’s income.

*Real estate policy in general interest:* Until now real estate was mainly regarded as an instrument of debt liquidation and arranged accordingly by resorting to a policy of selling to the highest bidder. In future, the sustainable and strategic management of urban land should be pursued as a goal. Public land for housing construction should be solely given to state-

owned housing associations or to leasehold to cooperatives and social housing associations. The allocation criteria for sales or lease agreements must be shaped in such a manner that 30% to 50% of the inhabitable space created falls under rent controls and offers tenancy protection. For the establishment of new building sites, the model of cooperative site development will be applied in order to force private companies to offer at least 30% of the inhabitable space as rent controlled and tenancy protected units.

**Political process of implementing new housing policies:** The reign of Red-Red-Green can be assessed as a U-turn on housing policy. Public investment instead of austerity, expansion of the public housing companies instead of privatization, prohibition of misappropriation of housing and pre-emption rights in social protection areas instead of red carpet for investors. Even if social provision deficits cannot be remedied in a short period of time, the new housing policy points in the right direction. And even the relationship between movement and government also has a changed contour and has moments of municipalism. An evaluation of cooperation is contradictory. On the one hand there are several previously impossible collaborations, on the other hand there are many situations in which the classic top-down relationship between movement and government continues. There are different levels of collaboration, that can be describe: project-related cooperation, opening of expert rounds for initiatives, training for administrations, extended co-drawing of legislative procedures. The relation between activists and the heads of departments and to politicians is much more open, than in the past, but in many fields the decisions were made inside the old network of public companies, institutions and administrations. But examples like the political gridlock by reforming the social housing law, the preventions of grassroot initiated housing projects by many years of non-decisions, the resolutions of a new program for modernization without consultation of housing groups demonstrate that Berlin culture of governing is far from being a collaborative mode of co-production.

## 2.4. Vienna

**Political profile:** Vienna, the capital of Austria, has a long tradition of progressive municipal policies. This goes back to the 1920s, when the Social-Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP) started their experiments with municipal socialism. Central was the provision of social infrastructure and de-commodified housing and the development of a local welfare state for the working class. The city has never fully retreated from these early experiments and has maintained a strong focus on local welfare that continues to shape the city's development trajectory. In the current moment, Vienna may be characterized as municipalist with limitations: First, the city conforms to our understanding of municipalism in that it shows a strong commitment to the provision of social infrastructure and interventionist housing policies in particular. Second, and equally in line with our understanding, it promotes and defends this policy orientation against pressures from higher levels of government (e.g. the current right-wing Austrian government or the European Union) and, thus, furthers the city as a sovereign political actor. Meanwhile, it runs against our understanding of municipalist in that it provides limited room for democratic participation and bottom-up governing. The city's political system is characterized by a highly consensual politics and a "governing through institutions" that remains fairly rigid and exclusive for bottom-up initiatives and governance. Taken together, then, Vienna may represent a municipalism of two-thirds that has grown out of an "old" municipalism from the 1920s and has become highly institutionalized since then.

Regarding political majorities, the Social Democrats have been in power for the last 100 years, interrupted only by the Austro-Fascist and the Nazi Regime between 1934 and 1945. Most of the time, they formed a one-party government (1919-1934, 1973-1996, 2001-2010). Since 2010, they are in coalition with the Green party. In the election 2015, they received 51.4% of the votes. In terms of legal and administrative set-up, Vienna is one of the nine federal provinces of Austria (Bundesländer). While provinces hold a certain degree of autonomy for the design and implementation of local policies, the federal level provides a basic framework, particularly through the federal constitution, federal legal competences and the collection and redistribution of the majority of taxes. In terms of housing policies, there are three particularly relevant legal frameworks at the federal level: the tenant law, the

homeownership law and the limited profit housing law. Tax revenues for housing subsidies were until recently also collected at the federal level and then redistributed to the provinces. Since 2018, provinces collect and decide about the use of housing subsidies autonomously. In Vienna, housing policy competence is split up between different city departments, including the department of housing, of finance, of city planning as well as of zoning. Meanwhile, the alderman of housing is a relevant political figure in steering policy decisions between administration and political institutions.

**Housing political challenges:** More than in many other European cities, Vienna's housing market is shaped by historical policies of decommodification. Vienna is a city of renters (80%) and social housing makes up almost half of all units (44%). Social housing consists of council housing (Gemeindebau, around 25% of all housing units) that is owned by the municipality, as well as limited-profit housing (Gemeinnuetziger Wohnbaum around 19% of all housing units) that is owned by limited-profit housing associations. Beyond social housing, one-third of the housing units are privately rented and some 19% are owner-occupied. In terms of rent levels, the council housing sector is the cheapest market sector, with average net rents of 3.97€/m<sup>2</sup> (2016). Limited-profit housing is located in the middle of the rental market price range with an average net rent of 4.84/m<sup>2</sup>. Also, tenants must make a down-payment to the housing association in order to access this segment, which presents an additional financial barrier. The private rental market is the most expensive rental segment with an average net rent of 6.34/m<sup>2</sup>. The average housing-cost-income ratio (including renters and owners) in 2017 was 27% and 38% of the population paid more than 25% of their income on housing.

Although the size of the market segments has remained relatively stable since the early 2000s (the social housing sector has even grown slightly in relative terms), the housing market changed profoundly. Private investments have rocketed, particularly since the onset of the GFC. Vienna has been discovered as a "safe haven" by national and international investment capital. The private rental market in particular has been targeted and has been transformed from a low-quality, low-priced into a high-quality, high-priced segment. Between 2008 and 2016 alone, gross rents have increased by one-third. Meanwhile, the legal protection for tenants has been weakened. Parts of it relates to the legalization of temporary rental contracts and more lax rules for rent setting, which enable landlords to regularly adapt

rents to current market conditions. Landlords exploit different regulatory loopholes to maximize profits. This includes demolition and new construction (in its strictest form rent regulation only applies to buildings built before 1945) and the conversion of rental into owner-occupied apartments. The conversion of apartments into permanent holiday homes (e.g. Airbnb) is another relevant mechanism. Taken together, this has promoted displacement, affordability problems and evictions, particularly in the context of rising poverty levels since 2007/08. While the social housing sector in principle provides an inexpensive alternative to private renting, it is difficult to access. Waiting lists are long and particularly for people that newly moved to the city, social housing is no realistic alternative. Exclusion is partly promoted by policy that prioritizes people that have lived in the city for longer. Altogether, the housing supply is increasingly insufficient to address the growing need for affordable housing. Between 2005 and 2017, the rent-to-income ratio has grown from 16% to 27%.

In order to counteract these developments, the legal protection of tenants needs to be strengthened. While the current right-wing Austrian government tries to further weaken the tenant law, the opposite is necessary. In particular: stricter rent regulation, a reform of the legalization of temporary renting contracts and the protection of apartments against the conversion into holiday homes. Furthermore, Vienna has grown by 100.000 people in the last 10 years alone. There is, thus, an increasing need for housing and especially for affordable housing. The social housing sector has not kept up with rising demand. Around 9.000 affordable new apartments are needed every year. In addition, access criteria for social housing need to be reformulated in order to stop discrimination and secure equal access to social housing for all those in need.

**New housing policy Instruments:** In terms of policies Vienna has developed to address urban housing problems, three are particularly noteworthy. First, the council housing program is a key instrument to provide city-owned, decommodified housing units. It is administered by a subsidiary of the city (Wiener Wohnen) that allocates units based on time of registration and need through waiting lists. Low- and middle-income households can apply. Rents are set by the city within the frame of the federal tenant law. New construction was stopped in 2004 and restarted on a small scale in 2015. Through providing units below market rents, the



segment dampens rent levels city-wide and, through the socio-economically population, mitigates segregation. Second, the limited-profit housing program provides relatively inexpensive housing for low- and middle-income groups. It takes place within the frame of the federal limited-profit housing law and local housing subsidies and is implemented by limited-profit housing associations. One-third of new units are allocated based on the same criteria as the council housing stock, while two-thirds are allocated by the housing associations according to their own rules. Rents are strictly cost-based for the subsidy period, while afterwards, they drop to a legally set amount that covers maintenance and renovation costs. As with council housing, rents are significantly lower than in the private sector. Third and finally, Vienna has recently taken steps to reform the local building code to promote affordable housing. Newly zoned land has to be predominantly zoned for subsidized housing. On such land, land costs are limited to 188€/m<sup>2</sup>, rents are strictly regulated, and units cannot be sold at a profit for 40 years. Also, the new building code includes measures to curb the conversion of units into permanent holiday homes (permanent use of units for touristic purposes is forbidden in designated residential areas).

**Political process of implementing new housing policies:** Vienna is characterized by strong institutionalization. The advantage of the fairly rigid political setting is a certain degree of stability, not least in the housing sector e.g. continued commitment for and protection of council housing against privatization. The downside of the strong institutions is a limited access to decision-making processes for the population. Even though there are some instruments like council housing tenants' advisory boards (Mieterbeiräte) and several citizen consultation processes in urban development projects, those committees and events have hardly any decision-making power. Due to institutionalization and a number of municipal or municipally-funded offices and organizations that offer support in case of housing problems, there is very little self-organization. Those services, like neighborhood offices accompanying urban renewal processes (Gebietsbetreuung), legal support for tenants (e.g. Mieterhilfe) and consultations in case of evictions (FAWOS) do provide individualized help but do not facilitate collective experiences. Nevertheless, there are some small self-organized political groups that try to push processes of community organizing and challenge the dominant narrative of the "social city". Those grassroots initiatives try to stop evictions

(Zwangsräumungen verhindern!), offer legal support for tenants (MieterInneninitiative) and squat houses to take action against vacancy, speculation and gentrification. With a number of (counter-/sub-)cultural and academic initiatives those groups are organized in the Right to the City Network (“Recht auf Stadt”), which predominantly serves as a platform for information exchange rather than as a political actor to mobilize, formulate and push demands. The institutionalization in Vienna is even extended to the realm of research. The municipality has its own housing research department (Wohnbauforschung) that provides data, analysis and reflection and commissions research. Meanwhile, an independent institute for

### 3. Research Design

The aim of the project is to identify, to describe and to estimate typical structure and modus operandi of municipalist housing policies. The research will be carried out as comparative and collaborative study in four cities with progressive or municipalist political settings (Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Vienna).

The project is collaborative in the sense of an ongoing exchange and discussion between the rapporteurs of all case study cities, facilitation by a cloud platform to exchange documents, by conversations on an email-list and by bilateral and collective workshops.

The project is embedded in each city by organizing ongoing communication between the rapporteurs and partners in movements, governments and administration in each city<sup>2</sup>.

The study will be executed in four consecutive modules to develop comprehensive information about municipalist housing policy instruments.

#### Module 1: Political Structure and Moments of Municipalism

**Aim:** The main goals of this first module is to provide general information about the political constellations and power relations in each city and to identify and describe moments of municipalism for each city. The work on this module will include a short introduction into the political system of power relations in each city, a brief mapping of the structure and the role of grassroots mobilization, social urban movements and civil society organizations and their relations to government and administration.

**Questions:** Guiding questions are: How is the political power organized and structured? Which aspects of municipalism exist in each city and how are they structured? (Municipalism as participative mode of governance, Municipalism as (local) public responsibility, Municipalism as local sovereignty)

**Methods/working steps:** (1.1.) Qualification of rapporteurs' experiences and knowledge from documents and literature for a descriptive draft about the political structure in each

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<sup>2</sup> See the list of possible partners in each city, working paper I (2018)

city. (1.2.) Making use of the rapporteurs' experiences, documents, websites and literature and informational interviews with partners from movements, governments and administration to draw a first draft on the status of municipalism in each city by using the structure of the common understanding on municipalist policies of this project (including information and assessments for all sub-points of the elements<sup>3</sup>) (1.3.) Reflective revision of the drafts by discussing with partner from movements, governments and administration in each city.

## Module 2: Housing and housing policies

**Aim:** The second module aims to describe the structure of the housing markets and the current challenges, to give an overview on the framework of regulation in the field of housing and to analyze the recently enacted and implemented housing political instruments.

**Questions:** How is the housing market in each city structured and organized? What are the main challenges by recently dynamics on real estate and housing markets? How are the government and the (housing political) grassroots organizations defining demands and need in order to address the housing crisis or to improve housing provision? Which housing related instruments were enacted and implemented since 2015/16<sup>4</sup>? How do these instruments effect the housing provision in aspects of a) impact on affordable housing supply, b) influence on access to housing for underprivileged/disadvantaged households, c) implications in term of standards and quality of housing, d) improvements for the security of tenancies and the protection of inhabitants?

**Methods/Working steps:** (2.1.) Description on housing, housing markets and the current challenges by analyzing data reports, documents and publications. In order to adjust the structure of the drafts the rapporteurs will define a common set on variables for the analysis. (2.2) Based on rapporteurs' experiences, public documents, information from websites and publication housing political strategies of governments and housing political demands and proposals from movements and civil society organizations should be named, summarized, and appraised for their general adequacy in respect to tackle the main challenges. (2.3) Based on documents, own experiences and informed partners in government, administration

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<sup>3</sup> See the section on the core elements of municipalism in working paper I (2018)

<sup>4</sup> The period of the study depends on the date, when municipalist/progressive governments were elected.

and movements all rapporteurs compile a list/schema of all enactments and implementations of housing political / housing related instruments (including short descriptions) during the analyzed period and classify all identified instruments by their fields of action, medium and modes of intervention<sup>5</sup> and effects. (2.4) Reflexive workshop with partner from government, administration and movements to complete and to improve the overview on housing political instruments and rework the scheme.

### Module 3: Municipalist housing instruments

**Aim:** The third module aims to carve out specific and typical aspects, modes and effects of instruments with a strong concordance to the principles of municipal housing policies.

**Questions:** What are intentions, the modes of implementation and effects of the selected instruments? How movements and grassroots mobilization were active or passive integrated into the creating, designing, operation and evaluation of these instruments?

**Methods/working steps:** (3.1.) Deep description<sup>6</sup> of 3 selected instruments based on documents, rapporteurs' knowledge and informed partners in government, administration and movements. (3.2.) Analyzing the interaction between grassroots, government and administration for all steps of implementing (creating, designing, operation and evaluation) of the selected instruments by including perspectives from all sites (grassroots, government, administration). (3.3.) Reflexive workshop in each city to discuss and develop the draft on deep analysis of selected instruments.

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<sup>5</sup> See the systematical order to analyze housing political instruments in working paper I (2018)

<sup>6</sup> Deep description means detailed description of the aim, the legal structure, the modus operandi, the coordination between involved actors, and the previous results of each instrument.

#### Module 4: principles of municipalist housing policy

**Aim:** The aim of this final module is to define general principles of municipalist housing strategies.

**Question:** What are the comprehensive characteristics of municipalist housing elements? What fields of housing policy, which medium of intervention and what kind of modus operandi fits at best to the goals of municipalism?

#### Methods/working steps:

(4.1.) Developing a comprehensive analysis scheme<sup>7</sup> of housing political instruments based on the results from module 3 and extracting thesis on municipalist potential of instruments along the fields, the medium and the mode of housing political instruments

(4.2.) Organizing an international workshop for all rapporteurs and invited partner to discuss the selected instruments (module 3) and to improve the identified principles of municipalist housing policies.

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<sup>7</sup> The comprehensive analysis scheme based on cross tabulations of elements of municipalism with the field, medium and modes of instruments:

Fields of housing policy	Elements of Municipicism		
	Participation	Public responsibility	Local autonomy
production of housing			
handling the housing stock			
regulating the conditions of tenancies			

Medium of intervention	Elements of Municipicism		
	Participation	Public responsibility	Local autonomy
Money			
Law (developing norms)			
Ownership			

Modus of intervention	Elements of Municipicism		
	Participation	Public responsibility	Local autonomy
Distribution			
Improvement			
Protection			
Regulation			

## 4. Outline for the final report

The final report will be present the deep analysis of municipalist housing political instruments in each case study city as well as the results of the comparative reflection. The report will be structured in 10 sections.

<b>Content</b>	<b>pages</b>
1 Introduction	5
2 Municipalism and Housing	10
3 Research design and methods	5
4 Case Study Amsterdam	20
4.1 Political constellations and moments of municipalism	(5)
4.2 housing political challenges and housing policies	(5)
4.3. new housing political instruments (deep description)	(10)
5 Case Study Barcelona	20
5.1 Political constellations and moments of municipalism	(5)
5.2 housing political challenges and housing policies	(5)
5.3. new housing political instruments (deep description)	(10)
6 Case Study Berlin	20
6.1 Political constellations and moments of municipalism	(5)
6.2 housing political challenges and housing policies	(5)
6.3. new housing political instruments (deep description)	(10)
7 Case Study Vienna	20
6.1 Political constellations and moments of municipalism	(5)
6.2 housing political challenges and housing policies	(5)
6.3. new housing political instruments (deep description)	(10)
8 Comparative Analysis of municipalist policies in the field housing	10
9 Municipalist housing policies	10
10 Bibliography and Sources	10
<b>in total</b>	<b>130</b>

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