Chloé Jonniaux

# GOVERNANCE OF COLLABORATIVE HOUSING: TOWARDS AN URBAN COMMONS?

## A Berlin case study


FrancoAngeli

Nuove Geografie. Strumenti di lavoro

**Nuove Geografie. Strumenti di lavoro**

*Collana diretta da* Andrea Pase (Università di Padova)



La collana, nata nel 2014 da un'intuizione di Marina Bertoncin, propone esplorazioni sui nuovi modi di rappresentare, studiare e discutere il territorio. Mutano infatti le forme della spazialità e si affacciano nuovi attori: sorgono così tematiche inedite e altre – più consolidate – richiedono di essere interpretate con sensibilità diverse. Sulla base di proposte teoriche e metodologiche al passo con il dibattito internazionale, la collana dedica particolare attenzione al lavoro di terreno, all'indagine di campo, all'ascolto del territorio e delle soggettività che in esso si esprimono.

La collana si rivolge in primo luogo alla comunità dei geografi e ai colleghi di altre discipline che studiano il territorio, ma ha l'obiettivo di allargare la platea degli interessati ai nuovi "discorsi sul mondo".

I testi presentati sono esaminati in prima battuta dal Comitato scientifico e poi sottoposti a doppio referaggio cieco, al fine di certificare la qualità dell'opera e la sua congruenza agli obiettivi della collana. La *peer review* è sempre intesa come un momento di crescita e di ulteriore sviluppo del lavoro scientifico e non come una mera attività di valutazione.

 ISBN 9788835169062




Copyright © 2024 Chloé Jonniaux. ISBN 9788835169062

Chloé Jonniaux

# GOVERNANCE OF COLLABORATIVE HOUSING: TOWARDS AN URBAN COMMONS?

## *A Berlin case study*

FrancoAngeli
OPEN ACCESS
Nuove Geografie. Strumenti di lavoro

 ISBN 9788835169062

This publication has been realized thanks to the support of Dipartimento di Ingegneria Civile, edile e ambientale (DICEA), Università degli Studi di Padova, International Master's Degree on "Climate Change and Diversity: Sustainable Territorial Development" (CCD-STeDe).

CCD-STeDe is a two-year Master's Degree course (120 ECTS) that aims to prepare experts in the area of sustainable territorial development in the context of global climate and environmental challenges. This unique, inclusive, innovative, multi-languages, Master Programme is mutually managed by a consortium of 2 EU and 3 non-EU universities and 3 EU and 1 non-EU professional partners. CCD - STeDe refers to a Consortium of high-level international universities and professional partners in the field of sustainable territorial development. The 5 partner universities of the Consortium are the University of Padua, (programme coordinator, Italy), Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar (Quito, Ecuador), Université Joseph KI-ZERBO (Burkina Faso), Universidade da Madeira (Portugal), University of Johannesburg (South Africa). The professional partners are: The European Association for Local Democracy - ALDA (France/Italy), Via Via Tourism Academy (Belgium), Fundación Pachamama (Ecuador), GISHub Association (Padova/Italy).
CCD-STeDe is organised in 4 academic paths, combining different languages, and different types of teachings: in presence, blended, and online:

- Climate change, sustainability, development / Cambio Climático, Sustentabilidad y Desarrollo (University of Padova and Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar; teaching languages: English and Spanish)
- Regional and local studies / Estudos Regionais e Locais (University of Padova and Universidade da Madeira; teaching languages: English and Portuguese)
- Territorial management / Aménagement du Territoire (University of Padova and Université Joseph Ki Zerbo; teaching languages: English and French)
- Environmental Management (University of Padova and University of Johannesburg; teaching languages: English and French)

At the end of the courses students will receive a double degree (path 1,2,3) or a joint degree (path 4 – from University of Padova and University of Johannesburg).

*Cover image:* "WIR BLEIBEN ALLE", Mural at Kreuzberger Waldemarstraße 81
(by the collectives *pappsatt* and *orangotango*, 2019).

Chloé Jonniaux, **Governance of collaborative housing: towards an urban commons? A Berlin case study**, Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2024, Isbn: 9788835169062 (eBook)

The digital edition of this volume is available on the website *www.francoangeli.it.*


Published by FrancoAngeli srl, Milan, Italy,
thanks to the support of Dipartimento di Ingegneria Civile, edile e ambientale (DICEA),
Università degli Studi di Padova.

# *Contents*

# *Introduction*

In many cities all over the world, exploding housing prices are making headlines (Carrard, 2021). In 2020, on average, more than a third of low-income tenants in the OECD countries are considered overburdened by housing costs[1] (OECD, 2020, p. 3). Even in "rich Germany", this housing-related poverty affects 11.4 million people, almost 14% of the total population (Ressourcenwende, 2022). Meanwhile, large private real estate companies such as Vonovia and Grand City Properties have made record profits in recent years (Awan *et al*., 2019). This disproportionately urban phenomenon threatens to turn cities and the economic, cultural, educational, and social opportunities they offer, into exclusive realms, thereby deepening social inequalities (Ressourcenwende, 2022). In Berlin, where the population is composed of close to 85% of renters, appeals to put a halt to the Mietenwahnsinn – the rent madness – have been particularly loud in the past years and forced their way up the political agenda (Hall, 2021). Between 2015 and 2020, Berliners had to face average rent increases of 44% (Schönball, 2020). The argument that adequate housing is a human right enshrined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and that it should therefore not be commodified is gaining traction and becoming a rallying cry for citizens taking on the streets (Deutsche Wohnen and Co Enteignen, 2021). After decades of austerity politics and the shrinking of public housing that ensued in many cities, the state appears unable to guarantee that right (OECD, 2020). The current situation has brought renewed attention to housing cooperatives and other alternatives to state and market, referred to in literature and by social movements for the right to

[1] Meaning that they are forced to spend more than 40% of their disposable income on housing.

housing as the housing commons. In a city like Berlin that possesses a long tradition of self-governance and community organisation in housing to fill the vacuum left open by the state, such alternatives are more numerous than elsewhere: from cooperatives with roots in the squatter movements to Mietshäuser Syndikat initiatives born after the turn of the 21st century. However, given the scarcity of affordable land in today's Berlin, the scope for expanding such initiatives seems limited.

Concurrently, since the beginning of the 21st century, a (renewed) growing interest in self-governed community living has been witnessed in Berlin and elsewhere in Europe, in reaction to the individualisation and ageing of society, changing family structures and the roll-back of the state (Lang *et al.*, 2020). This collaborative housing movement has received increasing attention from local governments on the basis of its promise to empower citizens through self-governance, as well as to promote social cohesion at the house level through the inclusion of diverse residents, and at the neighbourhood level through the promotion of a culture of solidarity. Its long-term affordability and radical potential to politically mobilise its inhabitants and shape urban development are also highlighted as arguments for supporting the movement. As such, it can be seen as part of the debate on commoning housing and the city, centred around social justice, a universal right to housing and of all citizens to shape their environment. However, the collaborative housing movement is very heterogeneous. It includes expensive owner-inhabited projects that can be bought for speculative purposes as well as Community Land Trust projects whose aim is the stewardship of affordable housing. This conceptual vagueness has led Chiodelli and others to critique the CH movement on the basis of the exclusive and insular tendency of some of its manifestations (2015).

In doing so, this critical scholarship drew attention to the potentially problematic nature of state support for CH, and called for its academic examination (2015, p. 2575). Scheller and Thörne highlighted that CH projects with ties to the right to the city movement were most likely to positively contribute to social sustainability (2018). Hence, which types of co-housing are supported by local governments is decisive for the achievement of the public policy goals mentioned above, such as improving social cohesion. Consequently, this study inquires **how the local government governs collaborative housing in Berlin,** and **which consequences it has for the development of collaborative housing**

**commons.** The introduction of this conceptual category for collaborative housing projects, whose ambitions go beyond community living and self-governance to include the development of housing commons for the benefit of all, aims both to achieve conceptual clarity and to guide local governments in the management of CH. Through focusing on these research questions, this study aims to draw exploratory conclusions on the ways in which Berlin fosters or hinders the development of a form of CH that is most likely to tackle common good objectives.

To answer these research questions, this study first briefly reviews the state of the art on collaborative housing. It provides a broad definition of CH and presents the main models of CH that developed in Germany since the 80s, highlighting its ties to commoning movements in housing. Then, it emphasises its Janus-faced current development, the academic arguments made in support of CH and its critiques. Second, after reviewing the literature about the urban and housing commons, it develops the concept of collaborative housing commons, which includes only those forms of CH that - on top of strong community relationships and self-governance in the house – promote inclusion, address the needs of their neighbourhood and contribute to the realisation of a city-wide right to affordable housing. Finally, it describes the ways in which city governments have been shown to support and hamper the developments of this type of CH. In the chapter on methods, it presents the qualitative, explorative research approach at the core of this study, as well as the data collection, processing and analysis methods used to address its research question. Fourth, it presents findings from the analysis of strategy, policy, and communication documents illustrating Berlin's governance approach and tools for the development of collaborative housing, as well as from interviews conducted with state actors, CH activists, and actors involved in the realisation of the Lynarstraße project, a CH project promoted by the city as exemplary. Finally, it summarises these findings and draws conclusions about good practices and problematic developments in Berlin's CH governance to promote true CH commons fostering less individualised, more socially just cities that empower citizens.

 ISBN 9788835169062

# 1. *Literature review*

## 1.1. Collaborative housing

### *1.1.1. Definition*

A growing number of scholars use the umbrella term "collaborative housing" (CH) to designate a broad range of models of **self-organised and collective housing provision**, including private building groups and squats as well as housing cooperatives, projects of the Mietshäuser Syndikat – MHS, and some types of Community Land Trusts – CLTs (Griffith, Jepma and Savini, 2022; Lang *et al.*, 2020, p. 10; Scheller, 2020, p. 70). This large spectrum encompasses different forms of development and ownership, ranging from projects «instigated by a group of future residents who own individual units, to those created as rentals by non-profit developers» (Lang *et al.*, 2020, p. 13). It includes projects with varying levels of social engagement, from mere "higher quality housing" objects to projects that aim to address socio-political issues as comprehensively as possible (Holm and Laimer, 2021, p. 4).

What unites these different models is, on the one hand, a commitment to self-governance in the form of participatory planning, design and management of housing projects by residents, following non-hierarchical and consensus-based decision-making principles (Sargisson, 2012). On the other hand, their residents move in with the intention of «creating a community» (Fromm, 2012), of living closer together than regular neighbours (Rogojanu, 2015, p. 181). This entails undertaking shared activities and relationships of mutual help. This communal aspect is expressed spatially by the presence of shared facilities, such as community gardens, guest apartments, kitchens, and/or

laundry rooms to complement (often smaller) "private" units (Sargisson, 2012). In practice, the degrees of self-governance (measured by users' involvement) and intentional community (measured by the intensity of social contact between residents) aspects within specific CH initiatives vary along a spectrum (Czischke, 2018, p. 57).

This form of housing is observed in different variations across a range of historical contexts. The historical context significantly shapes the essence of CH in a specific city, region, or country, making it crucial in grasping CH's potential to evolve into a real housing commons. This is why this study focuses on one particular country, Germany, where CH «is part of broader long-standing traditions of cooperation and mutual help» (Czischke, 2018, p. 57) particularly conducive to the (re)production of urban commons, as will be discussed below. The next section describes the mosaic of CH forms that emerged out of the specific German historical housing context in Table 1.

### *1.1.2. A short history of CH in Germany: from an emancipatory movement to a middle-class phenomenon?*

*1968-early 1990s: the activist roots of German CH*

Holm and Laimer trace the roots of contemporary CH in Germany back to movements for the development of communal, self-organised and self-governed living that flourished in the late 1980s and early 1990s (2021, p. 3). This movement was a continuation of earlier experiences with experimental forms of living together and new housing typologies, starting with the communes of the late 1960s, then the squats of the 1970s and 1980s, whose legalisation called a new cooperative movement and the Mietshäuser Syndikat – a network of self-governing housing projects – into life. Central to these forms of housing was that they combined «alternative lifestyles and ideas of coexistence with economic, ecological and political issues» (Holm and Laimer, 2021, p. 3).

The link between contemporary CH and the communes movement is highlighted by Fedrowitz (2016) and Scheller (2020). The first communes emerged in West Germany at the end of the 1960s as a far-reaching form of living together that went far beyond simply sharing flats. Their residents had emancipatory ambitions: they were opposed

to the social and economic status quo. These ambitions were manifest in the management of the communes themselves, which was collaborative and based on non-hierarchical, consensual decision-making, sometimes involving the pooling of economic resources. It was also evident in the political engagement of its inhabitants outside the walls of the communes, as part of the neo-Marxist, anti-fascist, pacifist student movement that was then blossoming.

Contemporary German CH is also intimately connected to the **squatter movement** that emerged in the late 1970s in West Germany. In the wake of «financial crisis, recession and austerity policies», the extent of vacancy was particularly remarkable in West Berlin and laid the foundations for squatters to occupy a large number of houses from 1979 onwards (Bernet, 2021, p. 24). They lived there with a strong sense of community and in a self-governed way. This occupation was driven by the idea of a *right to stay* in squatted buildings, as old houses were demolished to erect «new owner-occupied apartment buildings to attract capital» and middle-class taxpayers (Scheller, 2020, pp. 63-5). In this context, the squatters understood themselves as *Instandbesetzer* (preservation squatters) whose aim it was to halt the destruction and gentrification of inner-city neighbourhoods by demonstrating in practice that it made more (economic) sense to renovate the old than to demolish it to build new (Bernet, 2021). During this period, the purposes as well as the inhabitants of CH projects became more heterogeneous (Scheller, 2020, p. 63). In Berlin, after a few years of repression, the squatters' efforts were supported by the granting of subsidies for small self-help projects in buildings in need of renovation (Bernet, 2021, p. 24). The aim of this programme was «the social integration of radical squatters» (Droste, 2015, p. 85). Between 1982 and 2002, this self-help programme enabled the renovation of nearly 300 apartment buildings before it was discontinued due to the city's debt (p. 27; Droste, 2015, p. 85).

Connected to this squatting movement, the 1980s saw a "**renaissance of the cooperative idea**" as new cooperatives were founded for the first time since the 1950s, to enable the legalisation of squatter projects (Ache and Fedrowitz, 2012, p. 3; Bernet, 2021, p. 31; Scheller, 2020). Much like the early housing cooperatives that emerged in the late 19th century as a collective self-help solution to the acute need for quality housing for workers, these new cooperatives

were non-profit and aimed to secure affordable, quality housing for their members. They also offered high stability, as the purchase of shares in the cooperative gives members an indefinite right to use a cooperative flat, which can be revoked only in very rare situations. Thus, the choice of the co-operative model of ownership for the legalisation of squatting was a deliberate choice to protect against spiralling housing prices and foster stability. Moreover, the democratic principle of "one member one vote" and the community orientation (lived in practice in the cooperative's common spaces and activities), which are cornerstones of the cooperative idea, were aligned with the goal of upholding the self-governance and communal living experience found in squats (Wohnungsbaugenossenschaften Deutschland e.V., n.d.). However, in the absence of incentives for cooperatives to expand beyond a single housing project (i.e., to become umbrella cooperatives comprising several projects), the number of people who could benefit from cheap and secure rents in cooperative housing remained limited (Bernet, 2021, p. 32). Cooperatives' limited propensity to expand (without state support) as well as further critiques are discussed at later points in this study.

By contrast, expansive ambitions were at the root of the founding of the **Mietshäuser Syndikat** by Freiburg activists in 1989, after a decade of struggle against forced evictions. Its aims were to support groups seeking to live together in self-governing communities (including squatters) to acquire (collective) property and to protect it from future commodification, thereby promoting affordable, decent housing for all in the long term (Mietshäuser Syndikat, 2021). To help these groups acquire property, the network has developed a system of know-how and financial transfers between old and new or embryonic projects, with the old projects financially supporting the new[1]. Similarly to cooperatives, the Mietshäuser Syndikat integrated their member projects in a legal construct which prevented them from selling their property back on the market or to privatise the housing units.

[1] Old projects are bound to channel the surplus generated by falling interest rates (as their loans are being repaid) into a solidarity fund. This fund provides new projects with start-up capital or assistance in repaying high interest rates.

Although CH continued to develop in the 90s, scholars have observed a resurgence since the early 2000s, among others in the form of cluster apartments or co-living (Lang *et al.*., 2020, p. 24; Schmid, 2021). Contemporary CH retains a link to the projects of the 80s but has been influenced by a changing housing context (Rogojanu, 2015). This new context gave rise to two contradictory forces. On the one hand, the options for cheap projects in existing buildings have shrunk following the inner-city restructuring that happened in the past decades. Thus, very few new and durable **squats** have been established in Berlin (Pappsatt and Reclaimyourcity.net, 2024) and initiatives of joint planning and building have increasingly shifted to the area of new construction projects (Holm *et al.*, 2021, p. 230). Additionally, with the emergence of ethical banks, state financial help has decreased in importance in the development of such projects (Bernet, 2021, p. 32). Another trend observed by Rogojanu in Vienna is that, through the professionalisation of the sector, many new projects are initiated to a certain extent in a top-down fashion by architecture and moderation bureaus and display a limited communal character (2015). As a consequence, a majority of CH in Germany was initiated and inhabited by middle-class, **owner-occupying building groups** (Droste, 2015, p. 80). Unlike the non-profit cooperative idea, this new form of ownership enables the reselling of flats for a profit (Scheller, 2020, p. 68).

On the other hand, today's demand for CH has been bolstered by increasing pressures on housing in many Central European cities, as the dismantling of social benefits are forcing larger segments of the population to reduce their cost of living, which strengthens the importance of mutual aid (Holm *et al.*, 2021, p. 229-30). In this tight market environment, the need for non-profit developers or organisations such as **housing cooperatives**[2] and the **Mietshäuser Syndikat**[3] to permanently withdraw housing from the market and thus from speculation became increasingly strong (Schmid, 2021, pp. 171-2). Some of them have done so in collaboration with **land foundations**

[2] Today, 10% of rented German apartments belong to cooperatives (Seddon Klibinger, 2023).

[3] 190 housing projects have seen the light of day as part of the Mietshäuser Syndikat in Germany, and around twenty more are under way (Mietshäuser Syndikat, 2021).

such as the Stiftung Trias or the Stiftung Edith Maryon, which have both become part and parcel of the German CH landscape in the past two decades. Following a model similar to the Community Land Trust model, which has not yet successfully developed under this name in Germany[4], these foundations acquire land and lease it to (most often) non-profit building owners (cooperatives, projects of the Mietshäuser Syndikat, other self-managed housing communities or social organisations). Just like in the case of CLTs, the heritable lease agreement that seals this partnership aims to protect land from commodification and speculation, thereby enabling the long-term provision of affordable housing on these plots. Such heritable leases represent about 5% of German real estate (Kriese, 2022, p. 177). Finally, CH as rental projects, be it by profit-oriented or social housing companies, are minor phenomena (STATTBAU and SenSBW, 2021).

These contradictory trends are observed by Scheller (2020), who notes that notwithstanding the tendency towards ownership-based self-build communities in 21st century Germany, successful examples of bottom-up initiatives show that «there is also potential for emancipative politics and to push the boundaries further for affordable and self-maintained forms of housing in the city» (Scheller, 2020, p. 68).

Tab. 1 describes these different CH models characteristic of the CH scene in Germany using criteria such as their form of ownership, their inclusive and expansive potential, which are relevant to their development as housing commons, as will be argued later in this study.

[4] Although the first German CLT – the Stadtbodenstiftung – was founded in 2021 in Berlin. It defines itself as a «communal, non-profit ownership model that removes land from speculation in order to make it available for permanently affordable housing». It is still striving to acquire its first plot, but has proclaimed its motivation to enable access to CH for citizens with difficult access to housing, and to reach out beyond the usual left-alternative circles and the co-housing scene (Netzwerk Immovilien e.V., 2022, pp. 19-20). In addition, the Stadtbodenstiftung plans to involve not only the residents of the housing projects but also the neighbourhood with equal weight in decisions about the use of the land and the buildings on it, so that they meet local needs (Stadtbodenstiftung, n.d.).

| *Model* | *Ownership* | *Defining features* |
|---|---|---|
| *Squats* | Collective<br><br>No fixed status, until legalised (through acquisition by non-profit actors, such as cooperatives or church organisations) | No private capital needed<br><br>Very low rents (operational costs) |
| *Private building groups* | Private ownership of individual units<br><br>Collective ownership of common spaces (by an association of residents) | High initial capital needed<br><br>Profit-oriented resell option |
| *Cooperatives* | Collective (through ownership of cooperative shares) | Varying initial capital necessary (depending on the size of the cooperative[5])<br><br>Expansion potential (umbrella cooperatives can reinvest the excess generated by stable rents and decreasing interest rates from old projects into the construction of new projects) |
| *(Projects of the) Mietshäuser Syndikat* | Collective (through a housing association established as a Non-profit Limited Liability Company) | Moderate initial capital necessary, thanks to solidarity transfers from older projects in the network<br><br>Expansion potential (through knowledge and financial support within the network)<br><br>Housing association autonomous in all questions except house sale and substantial statutes' change |
| *Collaboration with heritable leasehold structures*[6] | Non-profit landowner (e.g., a foundation) | The landowner leases a plot of land for long periods of time, usually between 60 and 99 years |

[5] Large (umbrella) cooperatives can offer lower share rates, as they have some starting capital (Scheller, 2020). By newly founded (small) cooperatives, the initial capital needed is high.

[6] Following a model similar to the Community Land Trust model.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Buildings owned by non-profit partners such as cooperatives, MHS project | No initial capital necessary for the buildings' owner<br><br>Expansion potential (by reinvesting the excess generated by stable rents combined with decreasing interest rates in the construction of new projects) |

*Tab. 1 – Main models of contemporary collaborative housing in Germany. Source: Author, adapted from Scheller (2020, p. 70).*

### *1.1.3. Arguments in support of promoting CH*

In Germany, which counts approximately 5000 CH projects, 500 of which in Berlin (Lafond, 2019), local governments have started showing interest in contemporary CH around 2007 (Ache and Fedrowitz, 2012, p. 2). Scheller and Thörn identify four arguments formulated by the current CH movement regarding their contribution to more socially just cities[7], which municipalities use to justify their support for it (2018). First, *at the house level*, CH initiatives' autonomous organisation and emphasis on self-government improves their **responsiveness to inhabitants' needs** as opposed to investors'. In other words, when residents are empowered to make decisions about their homes, they are likely to make decisions that improve their quality of life (the use value) rather than its financial (or exchange) value. Concretely, this accent on use value can be observed in the statutes of many cooperatives[8], associations as well as housing projects part of the Mietshäuser Syndikat (Scheller, 2020, p. 69). Second, many positive examples show that CH projects can strengthen **social cohesion** *at house level* through the inclusion of different

[7] The movement's claims to enable more efficient and ecological lifestyles will neither be detailed nor analysed in this study, as these are less central to state governance of CH in Germany. Nevertheless, ecological considerations are essential motivations for many CH projects and could gain traction in the face of the climate breakdown. For insights into the ecological potential of CH, see Marckmann, Gram-Hanssen and Christensen (2012).

[8] An example of this is provided by the statutes of the Bremer Höfe cooperative, which states in its first lines: «The purpose of the cooperative is to promote and support its members, primarily by providing good, stable and socially responsible housing» (Bremer Höfe e.G., 2011).

generations, varied income levels and diverse cultures (through the inclusion of people with a migrant background). This is enabled notably thanks to the establishment of solidarity funds and community building efforts within CH projects (Chatterton, 2013, pp. 1663-4; Lang *et al.*, 2020).

Third, the contribution of CH initiatives to **social cohesion** *at neighbourhood level* has also been lauded, based on the assertion that their solidarity and sharing culture radiates in their neighbourhood and prompt the development of neighbourly self-help networks (Fromm, 2012; Jarvis, 2011; Rogojanu, 2015). As such, CH is portrayed as an answer to social isolation (Tummers and MacGregor, 2019, p. 70). Fourth, at a broader level, the CH movement also stresses its **comparative and long-term affordability**, stemming from the cost savings enabled by sharing resources such as space and repair equipment as well as mechanisms to prevent increases in the value of housing through consecutive sales (Lang *et al.*, 2020, p. 17; Chatteron, 2013, pp. 1664-6).

Next to these arguments, some authors emphasise the radical challenge which CH projects can represent to the individualistic and exclusionary existing system (in which housing both reflects and reinforces the individualisation of our societies and is exploited as a highly profitable investment) *at the scale of the city*. This potential stems first from the model function they can play, among others for public and non-profit housing (Holm *et al.*, 2021, p. 230). Second, their politically mobilising power on both their inhabitants, their neighbourhood, and the wider city, is also put forward (Sargisson, 2012). In this way, CH can prompt «rethinking of the way urban space is used, planned and integrated» (Chatterton, 2013, p. 1668). This radical potential is most likely to be fulfilled when CH projects are linked to urban activism against gentrification, for access to affordable housing and the right to the city, through the organisation of activities open to outsiders and demonstrating that other housing models are possible (Thörn *et al.*, 2020). Such links exist most often in cities or neighbourhoods that have a history of housing activism, such as Berlin (*ibid*., p. 205).

### *1.1.4. Critiques of CH*

Despite this overwhelmingly positive picture painted of CH by its proponents, be it its inhabitants or (at least rhetorically) supportive politicians, a critical strand of the literature on CH stresses the lack of evidence that such projects actually realise their potential and the need for more criticality in the research analysing CH. In other words, it argues that local government's support for CH, is based not on the demonstrated positive impacts of CH for society at large, but on a convincing, dazzling self-portrait and should therefore be discontinued (Chiodelli, 2015) or at least questioned (Droste, 2015, p. 80). Not only do they question its alleged benefits to society, but they also highlight pitfalls associated with CH.

First, the claim that it enhances **social cohesion at housing level** (inclusivity and social mixing) is challenged in studies that show that inhabitants in CH projects are often homogenous in terms of their origins, as well as their income and education levels. This is a natural consequence not only of their coming together around shared values, such as social and environmental justice (Chatterton, 2013, p. 1665; Chiodelli, 2015), but also of the time and skills, or cultural and social capital, required from CH members (Lang *et al.*, 2020; Scheller and Thörn, 2018, p. 17). Rogojanu (2015) attributes this to the necessarily selective accession process for new residents. She observes that, when selecting a new member for their CH project (which is a lengthy process of getting to know the applicants), residents look for someone who the community as a whole (or in practice a majority of its members) considers to be a good fit, i.e., a person who shows commitment to the project and who is in line with the community's values.

Second, studies expose that, contrary to the above-mentioned assertion that CH generates **social cohesion beyond its walls**, the increased social cohesion among CH inhabitants comes at the cost of broader societal advantages: not only does openness to the neighbourhood appear to be «more declared than practised» (Chiodelli, 2015, p. 2573), residents' social involvement outside of the house's community also seems to decrease (Kehl and Then, 2013, p. 54, in Scheller and Thörn, 2018, p. 16). Moreover, scholars have also drawn attention to CH's potential to cause **gentrification** in the neighbourhoods where it is located (Droste, 2015, p. 82; Thörn *et al.*,

2020, pp. 210-11). Third, the alleged (long-term) **affordability** of CH is also dismissed, at least in the case of newly built housing (Chatterton, 2013, p. 1664; Thörn *et al.*, 2020, p. 210), not least because common spaces are costly, which in turn harms social mixing (Chiodelli, 2015, p. 2568). Finally, critics point out that CH is **not inherently radical**, as its ambitions are not always to challenge the status quo, but are increasingly focused on providing merely «practical everyday living and social benefits» (among others through relationships of mutual help and pooling of social capital) to the middle class (Thörn *et al.*, 2020, pp. 210-11). Moreover, given the obstacle that rising land values pose to the creation of new CH projects in many cities of the Global North, the modest impact of such projects has been noted, namely the emergence of «pockets of co-housing can provide *marginal* alternatives to dominant forms of housing» (p. 210). Along the same line, Sargisson regards CH not as a radical alternative but as an expression of "piecemal utopianism" whose aim is to «improve the world one neighbourhood at a time» (2012, p. 51).

Thus, CH covers a wide array of self-organised and collective housing types in which residents democratically govern their dwelling and share a sense of community (and communal facilities). In Germany, this housing model has strong ties with the development of community and self-organised living going back to the sixties and flourishing in the 80s-90s in squatted houses with emancipatory visions. Since the early 2000s, it has re-emerged in 2 key forms: a professionalised, owner-oriented one, and as a grassroots, non-speculative one. Independently from this dichotomy, CH has attracted political interest in Germany for its potential to better meet residents' needs and to enhance social cohesion at both house and neighbourhood level. Its broader contribution to the city has also been lauded based on its potential for long-term affordability and on the catalyst it can represent for re-inventing housing and urbanism through its model function and mobilising force, especially in contexts of prevalent housing activism. However, its ability to fulfil these promises is an issue of debate in the literature. This study claims that the potential of CH is only realised in cases where it has ambitions to commonise the city and is supported in these efforts by appropriate urban governance. The remaining of this literature review describes what such ambitions entail and how they can be supported.

## 1.2. Urban and housing commons

### *1.2.1. Definition*

In the last decades, the body of academic research on the urban commons has grown and the concept was embraced by an increasing number of urban movements aiming to reclaim the city for its citizens. These movements, disappointed in both state and market as a consequence of political and financial crises, turned to the commons as an alternative way of managing local tangible and intangible resources (Kip *et al.*., 2015, pp. 9-10). At the most basic level, the urban commons are thus defined as those urban resources that are collectively managed by urban residents instead of state or market actors (Lamarca, 2015, p. 167; Susser and Tonnelat, 2013, p. 108). This means that the rules governing their use are (to a great extent) negotiated by its users who share and manage them (Rogojanu, 2015, p. 178). Following Kip *et al.*, this section breaks this definition in its three constitutive elements characteristic of commons arrangements: 1) common *resources*, 2) which are (re)produced through *commoning practices*, 3) by a *community* of commoners (with a shared vision) (2015). For each of these features, the specificities and complexities of the housing commons are outlined.

*Common resources*

In the literature, collectively managed common resources are overwhelmingly presented as an alternative to state or market-dominated resources, as both actors are regarded as failing to prioritise the common good in their management of resources (Bollier and Helfrich, 2019; Kratzwald, 2015; Opazo Ortiz, 2015; Rogojanu, 2015; Susser and Tonnelat, 2013; Tummers and MacGregor, 2019, p. 63). Indeed, so the argument goes, market forces drive the commodification of resources[9] and produce negative externalities to society, such as social exclusion in the case of housing, to the benefit of capital owners (Berge and van Laerhoven, 2011). At the same time,

[9] Which can be defined as the process of conditioning access to these resources on ability to pay and its provision on the prospect of profit (Vidal, 2019, p. 450).

governments tend to favour the status quo and are vulnerable to the influence of (economically) powerful interests (Berge and van Laerhoven, 2011; Bollier and Helfrich, 2019). Thus, both actors pose a threat to common resources, meaning *those resources that* «*cannot be monopolised, alienated or capitalised by anybody, be it a person or institution*» (Vidal, 2019, p. 453). Scholars who conceive of housing as a common resource have done so on the basis that affordable housing is a basic need and resource enshrined in Article 25 of the UDHR. Accordingly, it belongs to each individual in society and «should not be traded but collectively controlled» (Aernouts and Ryckewaert, 2019, p. 94; Balmer and Bernet, 2015, p. 179; Bruun, 2015).

*Commoning*

Commoning practices have been identified as essential for the production and reproduction of urban commons. They are necessary because state and market actors tend to collude to enclose them through privatisation and commodification (Bruun, 2015, p. 156; Harvey, 2012, in Pithouse, 2014, p. 134; Kratzwald, 2015, p. 31). In other words, governments promote a neoliberal agenda resulting in the expansion of urban space devoted to capital accumulation at the expense of urban space that «creates non-commodified means of reproduction», i.e., use value (Lamarca, 2015, p. 168). Thus, the creation and preservation of the commons are challenged by the current power arrangement (Kratzwald, 2015, p. 38). This applies to the housing commons, as the right to housing is increasingly threatened by market actors **(**e.g., for-profit construction firms, landlords and commercial banks) who seek to gain maximum control over the housing stock through its commodification and privatisation (Nonini, 2017, p. 28). Moreover, the privatisation of large parts of the public housing sector in recent decades seems to denote the state's tight ties with the market (Aernouts and Ryckewaert, 2019, p. 97).

Against the backdrop of hostile power structures, *commoning - the collective (re)appropriation, creation and reproduction of urban space as commons* - is crucial to the continued existence of commons (Kratzwald, 2015, p. 31; Aernouts and Ryckewaert, 2019, p. 97; Susser and Tonnelat, 2013, p. 108; Tummers and MacGregor, 2019, p. 63). Commoning is enabled by the collective organisation of a

community around a shared vision that the city must be commonised, that is reclaimed by its citizens (Bollier and Helfrich, 2019). This shared vision centres on two core convictions.

First, it is based on the belief that **citizens have a right to shape their environment** and more broadly urban development. Contrary to market (and per association state) forces, commoning efforts aim to safeguard the use values (things of utility) instead of exchange (market) value of essential urban resources for collective use (Aernouts and Ryckewaert, 2019, p. 97; Nonini, 2017, p. 25). Accordingly, when it comes to the commons, citizens (or user communities) are the primary stakeholders, over and above investors" (Bollier, 2007, p. 29, as cited in Susser and Tonnelat, 2013, p. 108). This implies the right of citizens to participate in shaping urban life, at different levels (Kratzwald, 2015, p. 31). Urban dwellers' commoning efforts defend not only their right to housing (house level) and to a neighbourhood that meets their needs (neighbourhood level), but also their power of defining "public space and the possibilities for its use in new ways" (city level) (p. 32). The urban commons make it possible for citizens to shape their environment at a city level by creating public platforms in which citizens can deliberate on urban issues and develop solutions autonomously from market and state, in a democratic way (Müller, 2015, p. 148). From this perspective, housing commons **open discussions** on the question of housing and represent a forum for citizens to redefine how it should be organised or which functions it should meet.

Second, commoners should share a commitment to enabling **"an equitable life in the city" for all residents**, meaning that all, including marginal groups, get to design the city, including in the field of housing (Bruun, 2015; Kratzwald, 2015, p. 31). More specifically, housing commons should «participate in broader efforts to make access to a housing commons a universal right» (Nonini, 2017, p. 35). Indeed, commoning is practised with a view to the public interest, which implies a right for the public « "not to be excluded" from the use of the commons» (Bloomey, 2008, p. 320, cited in Aernout and Ryckewaert, 2019, p. 97).

In this continuous process of commoning, «**(re)production depends on mechanisms of regulation preventing monopolistic appropriation and overexploitation**» of common resources by both state and market (Aernouts and Ryckewaert, 2019, p. 97; Bruun, 2015,

p. 158; Susser and Tonnelat, 2013, p. 108; Tummers and MacGregor, 2019, p. 63). While erecting safeguards against the state primarily takes the form of embracing a **non-state status** (Ferreri and Vidal, 2022; Vidal, 2019), protecting the commons from market interests and thus from the use of land and property rights for practices of speculation and capital accumulation, has taken many forms (Bunce, 2015, p. 140; Vidal, 2019). Safeguards have been developed by a variety of models in a diversity of context, be it the CLT (and other landowners issuing hereditary building rights), the MHS or the cooperative model, such as long lease contracts in the case of the CLT and heritable building rights or the requirement of a two-thirds majority for the sale of a cooperative apartment back on the market. A right of veto by the Mietshäuser Syndikat on the privatisation or market sale of any of its projects ties the hands of its residents/communities in the public interest (Mietshäuser Syndikat, 2021). All models are not equally effective in preventing commodification, and their effectiveness depends on the context. For example, collective organisation in limited liability companies maintains a greater focus on the individual, and, in this way, creates worse conditions for commoning than small cooperatives organised around the principle of «everything belongs to all, but no one individually» (Helfrich, Knaffl and Meretz, 2021, p. 50). Even the mechanisms supposed to prevent commodification are not always absolute safeguards, as even cooperatives can be dissolved provided that ⅔ of its members vote in favour of dissolution, which almost automatically leads to the market sale of its apartments (at a market value). These practices have therefore been referred to as the partial **decommodification of housing** (Balmer and Bernet, 2019; Ferrari and Vidal, 2021). Another crucial commoning mechanism is the establishment and curation of **democratic organisation structures for collective decision-making and management**. Taking the example of housing cooperatives, the organisation of residents in thematic working groups and the one member one vote principle for the election of the executive committee ensure the reproduction of a housing commons by contributing to a sense of “egalitarian togetherness” at the level of the housing community, which is a crucial source of social power (Bruun, 2015, p. 163).

*Community*

Based on the social justice and equalitarian ambitions at the core of the urban commons vision, all citizens have a "right *not to be excluded"* from the commons' uses and benefits (Bruun, 2015, p. 160). Accordingly, the **inclusivity or open access to common resources** is a defining feature of the urban commons, in contrast to earlier conceptions of the commons (for instance by Elinor Ostrom, which referred primarily to natural resources) as depending on management by a clearly defined group of people (Bruun, 2015, p. 160; Ostrom, 1990; Susser and Tonnelat, 2013, p. 112). This open access ambition seems irreconcilable with the rivalrous nature of some urban resources, such as roads or housing, whose use by one person reduces what others can use (Kornberger and Borch, 2015, p. 5). Indeed, the inclusion of new users is limited as «people's homes cannot be everyone's property at the same time» (Bruun, 2015, p. 168; Nonini, 2017, p. 25). However, Komberger and Borch highlight the way in which a more abstract type of commons, the "urban atmosphere" – that is the «subjective experience of urban reality that is shared by its people» – sees its value rise through its use and sharing (Böhme, 2014, p. 58, in Kornberger and Borch, 2015, p. 10). This value increase is what Parker and Schmidt refer to as the co-production of values, a form of positive/network effect they attribute to the urban commons (2017). Nonini underlines that, given their focus on use value, rivalrous commons like CH projects enable non-rivalrous commons, such as a creativity-friendly atmosphere which is preserved by its residents and made available to outsiders (Nonini, 2017, p. 25). In this way, they contribute to the broader «re-appropriation of the city for its use value» (p. 35). Another way in which the housing commons can serve the common good is by reinforcing the conception of housing as a universal right. For instance, Bunce stresses how CLTs raise awareness about common land stewardship, which constitutes an immaterial, non-rivalrous commons next to material, decommodified, self-organised housing (2015, p. 136). More generally, CH projects organising events such as educational opportunities, open to the public create non-rivalrous commons. This leads Bruun to insist that «the people sharing a common (…) must not be seen as a kind of corporation with absolute ownership of a clearly bounded resource»

(2015, p. 162). They «can be 'owned' in different ways and by more than one singular owner, such as the public, (…) and local communities of commoners at the same time» (p. 161).

The complex issue of community was analysed in the case of housing cooperatives and CLTs, which are both organised around collective ownership. Both fall outside of more restrictive definitions of urban commons which exclude (even collective) property claims, as the housing space they create is formally owned by a clearly defined community of users (Balmer and Bernet, 2015, p. 179). However, cooperative residents have been conceptualised as **"stewards or caretakers" of the housing commons** (Bruun, 2015, p. 168). They do not only have a right to use it but also the moral duty to manage it as well as protect it from commodification, thereby safeguarding its reproduction. As such, they «have several 'owners' and groups of users and beneficiaries» (*ibid*., p. 167). On the one hand, cooperative members currently 'use' and take care of their living space – to the exclusion of outsiders – and ensure the conditions for its continued reproduction by adhering to commonly agreed rules of collective management. On the other hand, all citizens could potentially access an affordable cooperative flat and thereby benefit from this stewardship (p. 167). In conceptualising CLTs as housing commons, Bunce has similarly qualified collective, non-profit, decommodified housing provision as a form of long-term stewardship of land. From this perspective, land is seen as "common heritage" instead of as "a form of individual rights over land", as the users' community commit to safeguarding the non-profit and use-value-orientation of land they are stewarding (2015, p. 138).

Who gets access to this land in the long term and how the rights of access are transferred between generations of "caretakers of the housing commons" is the subject of surprisingly little academic scrutiny. The procedures that regulate the entry of new tenants vary greatly from model to model, and from project to project. Some models, like the housing cooperative in Germany, are the subject of specific legislation. In that case, both the national Cooperative Law and the statutes of a given cooperative influence the transfer of the right of access to a next-generation tenant. According to the Cooperative Law, the cooperative has no obligation to transfer membership to a deceased tenant's heir, that is to say to entitle them

to housing in the cooperative, unless the cooperative's statutes stipulate so. Where this is not the case, the cooperative buys back the shares from the heir and in most cases selects new tenants from their waiting list (Mieder, 2013). While not all housing cooperatives rely on open waiting lists to give new people access to housing, they have been described by Vidal as "commons-friendly" as long as they are open to all sections of the population (2019, p. 456). Moreover, Aernouts and Ryckewaert show that beyond this stewarding function at the project level, cooperatives can also engage in further commoning at a broader scale by expanding their housing stock and in this way, give more citizens a chance to become cooperative tenants (2019, p. 103). Whether or not membership is hereditary, the cooperative has internal waiting lists and is expanding has serious implications for the social justice orientation of the housing commons. This discussion could be extended to other practical cases of housing commons, such as the MHS, in which each house project is free to choose the next tenant of their choice, as well as in further models.

To summarise, the conceptualisation of housing as an urban commons that should be collectively controlled by urban residents stems from an understanding of affordable housing as a universal right. In the face of the government's failure to guarantee this right and the markets' (largely successful) attempts to commodify housing, which have among others resulted in the scarcity of affordable housing in today's urban contexts, collectively organised communities have undertaken efforts to (re)appropriate, create and reproduce housing as a commons. These commoning efforts have been motivated by the ambition to realise a shared democratic and egalitarian vision of urban development and housing, one in which all citizens get to shape their environment and access affordable housing. Beyond a non-state status and mechanisms of partial decommodification, the realisation of this vision depends on collective organisation based on democratic self-governance (Ferreri and Vidal, 2022). Against the background of the rivalrous nature of housing, housing commons aim to realise this vision of a more inclusive and democratic housing and city-making beyond their walls through the creation of a people-centred urban atmosphere, stewardship of affordable housing and expansive efforts.

### *1.2.2. Critique of the commons: failing to live up to their ideals*

Just like in the case of CH, the "uncritical celebration" of the urban commons literature has been deplored (Pithouse, 2014, p. 131). Perhaps the most common criticism formulated against practical examples of urban commons, as in the case of CH, is that their benefits accrue only to **exclusive** groups of citizens. This criticism is supported by the example of housing cooperatives, which in many cases fail to provide access to housing way beyond their membership. Brandsen and Helderman highlight that, although anyone can apply for housing in a cooperative, provided they can afford the shares (which are higher in new and small cooperatives), in practice cooperative members in Germany rarely leave their cooperative flat, meaning that access to new people is rare (2012). Moreover, many cooperatives are not expanding to make their affordable housing and cooperative living "accessible to outsiders" (Bruun, 2015, p. 167). Brandsen and Helderman state that German cooperatives often follow a "strategy of limited expansion", sometimes even limited to maintenance of their stock (2012, p. 184). This is because many cooperatives consider serving the interests of their members – instead of broader society – as their central mission (Bernet, 2022, p. 276). This, in turn, lies in a lack of financial or personal resources to cater for the interests of society at large (Brandsen and Helderman, 2012, p. 186). Additionally, they are subject to "nepotism and other exclusionary practices" which threaten the ideal of a city-wide right to the commons (Bruun, 2015, p. 168). This is reinforced by the common practice of intergenerational transfer of housing within families and the long internal waiting list in many cooperatives, which benefits long-time members and thus reduces accessibility for newcomers (Brandsen and Helderman, 2012, p. 184). Ferreri and Vidal summarise these critiques in the case of cooperative housing by stating that «cooperative housing can be held as commons between members, but exclusively vis-a-vis the outside world» (2022, p. 8). This critique of exclusivity is compounded by the general challenge of scaling up urban commons to the point where they would represent a substantial opportunity for the development of inclusive and quality urban life. This challenge derives in part from the difficulty of establishing «adequate communication and mutual regulation by participants» in broader, more diffuse groups (Parker and Schmidt, 2017). What is more, even the extent of self-governance within practical cases

of housing commons, such as the cooperative, can be very limited (Brandsen and Helderman, 2012, p. 183).

Contrary to the equalitarian ambitions of the urban commons, the downloading of important social responsibilities, such as the provision of affordable quality housing to exclusive groups of citizens can thus exacerbate **inequalities** (Parker and Schmidt, 2017; Pithouse, 2014, p. 134). This threat is reinforced by the observation made by Foster that a community who has been granted the right to manage a public space as a commons is less prone to solidarity with urban residents outside of their community, such as through tax-paying to support citywide provision of these services and goods to other communities (2011, p. 125). A further unintended contribution of urban commons initiatives to growing inequalities is their potential of leading to **gentrification** (Foster, 2011, p. 119). The difficulty for the state to monitor and hold urban commons initiatives accountable to their common-good orientation enhances the significance of these critiques (Foster, 2011).

What is more, the housing commons are not infallible because «a social threat always lurks in the form of property rights» (Kriese, 2022, p. 177). This has led many ownership-oriented cooperatives to converting from cooperative to private ownership of its flats:

> In its statutes, a cooperative may even prohibit any pursuit of private profit. But this can change quickly and allows for it, too. Due to a generational shift, for example, a new majority can agree on something that was previously unthinkable. When this happens, issues of sufficiency, community and solidarity may fade to the background in favour of questions like "what is my property worth?" or "how can I rent out, bequeath or sell my apartment?" (Kriese, 2022, p. 177).

Before exploring the relationship between the commons and the state and potential governance tools to mitigate these critiques, this study first delineates under which conditions CH qualifies as a commons and explains the relevance of this conceptual lens for the study of the governance of CH.

### 1.3. Collaborative housing commons

Lang *et al.* identified a number of studies which regarded CH as an instance of urban commons for the potential it holds to «lead(ing) to a

democratic, non-hierarchical organisation of housing beyond state and market, which addresses the needs of all its residents» (2020, p. 22). Chatterton, for example, qualifies CH as a «transformative practice of urban commoning» for the local, niche challenge it offers to the capitalist order through de-commercialising housing (2016, p. 411). Pickerill makes the same claim regarding "eco-communities", based on the observation that through the «sharing, interaction, and mutual support», they enable the creation of a mobilising place, a transcendence of individualism as well as a housing model based on use instead of exchange value (2015, pp. 2-3). These claims, however, are often based on single case studies (Tummers and MacGregor, 2019, p. 75), which is not conducive to representative results.

In contrast, Rogojanu justifies her conceptualisation of initiatives of self-organised, communal building and living in Vienna by the fact that they are often assimilated to other commons projects, even if they do not necessarily see themselves as part of the commons discussion (2015, pp. 180-1). For her, they represent a complex form of commons, which can be associated with the above-mentioned notion of multi-level ownership. While the space within the four walls of the housing project are (often collectively) owned and used by a closed group following a commonly agreed set of rules (p. 181), she stresses that a lot of Viennese CH initiatives additionally generate a social resource for public benefit through integrating marginalised people and organising different events and educational activities supposed to radiate in the neighbourhood (pp. 181-2).

This **social justice orientation** is crucial to a conceptualisation of CH as commons. Helfrich, Meretz and Knaffl insist that an intentional community can only claim to engage in commoning if it consciously considers the needs (i.e., use value) not only of its members but also of other people and of society at large, which presupposes a concern for social justice and inclusivity (2021, p. 45). To achieve these goals, aspiring CH projects should, among others, involve inclusive and cooperative decision-making as well as a decommodification of land and housing (p. 46).

Thus, in cases where it does not challenge "existing property regimes", CH is nothing more than a pragmatic utopian phenomenon bringing together citizens sharing a "common vision of the good life" and living and mobilising their efforts towards its realisation

(Sargisson, 2012; Helfrich, Meretz and Knaffl, 2021). That explains why Ferreri and Vidal (2022) assess the concept of collaborative housing as a «problematic reference point for the study of housing commons» in light of the inclusion of commodified forms of housing in its definition, despite this commodification being «at the root of the contemporary "housing question"» (p. 7). For instance, the ownership orientation of a substantial part of the CH movement in Berlin has been decried as a culprit for gentrification in the city (Holms, 2010). Thörn *et al.* concur with the significantly higher potential of decommodified forms of CH to contribute to a more socially sustainable city and address the contemporary urban crises when compared with speculative, owner-occupied projects (2020, p. 206). However, they insist that even decommodified forms of CH can provoke processes of gentrification in their urban environment.

However, as Bruun has shown, **decommodification** alone does not make a commons as it does not guard against insularity (2015). In other words, even if collective ownership limits the exclusionary effects of property (Helfrich, Meretz and Knaffl, 2021, p. 50), it does not ensure that the CH project engages in commoning efforts to the **benefit of all inhabitants of the city** beyond its own residents, that is contributes to a "just city" (Droste, 2015, p. 80). As briefly discussed above, the regulation of access to CH commons plays a strong role here. Given the demographic trend towards aging of the population, it is clear that expansion of the CH commons stock is crucial to fulfilling this social justice claim of the CH commons.

Both elements are therefore crucial to any conceptualisation of CH as engaged in the commoning of the city. Thus, *this study defines CH commons as those forms of CH (i.e., housing collectively organised by an intentional community) that are non-state, (partially) decommodified, and strive to contribute to a more socially-just city, meaning that it is inclusive at house level, addresses the needs of its neighbourhood as well as those of the broader population of the city, notably through expansive strategies.* Based on the above discussion, Tab. 2 summarises which forms of CH can be understood as CH commons and which are excluded from this definition, while Fig. 1 presents the key features of the CH commons and the operationalisation (in the black boxes) used in the analytical part of this study.

| | *CH* | *Housing commons* | *CH commons* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Defining features* | **Intentional community** = relationships of mutual help (immaterial), common spaces and facilities (material) | | **Intentional community** |
| | **Self-governance** = collective organisation, participatory design and management, based on democratic decision-making. | **Self-governance** | **Self-governance** |
| | | **Non-state status** = the state does not own the apartments | **Non-state status** |
| | | **Decommodification of housing** Safeguards against speculation and capital accumulation. | **Decommodification of housing** |
| | | **Social justice orientation** *a. House level*: inclusive (affordability, social mixing, inclusion of marginalised groups) *b. Neighbourhood level*: addresses the needs of the neighbourhood *c. City level:* addresses the needs of all residents | **Social justice orientation** |
| *Includes* | Collectively owned projects (cooperatives, MHS, CLTs…)<br><br>Building groups with private ownership<br><br>Rental projects (state-owned housing | Collectively owned projects (cooperatives, MHS, CLTs…) | Collectively owned projects (cooperatives, MHS, CLTs,) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | companies - SOHC, profit-oriented landlords) | | |
| *Excludes* | Projects with weak relationships between residents | | Projects with weak relationships between residents |
| | Developer, top-down projects | Developer, top-down projects | Developer, top-down projects |
| | | Building groups with private ownership | Building groups with private ownership |
| | | Rental projects | Rental projects |

*Tab. 2 – Comparing CH, housing commons and collaborative housing commons. Source: Author.*

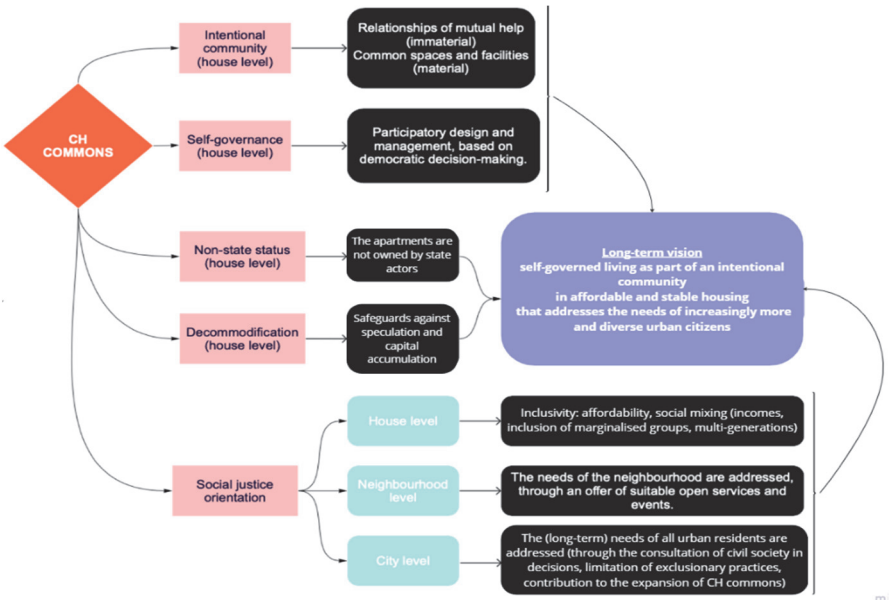


*Fig. 1 – Defining features and operationalisation of the collaborative housing commons. Source: Author.*

Although they arguably do not represent a majority of existing CH projects, the literature reviewed above shows that they have the greatest potential to lead to a more socially just city and contribute to solving the crises highlighted in the introduction. Defining this ideal category which addresses the critiques formulated against CH (such as their homogeneity and insularity) is an interesting starting point to analyse state governance of CH. That is because the realisation of the commons is closely tied to state governance (Thörn *et al.*, 2020). For instance, the decommodification of housing is «conditioned by housing legislation, housing policies and predominant forms of housing provision in the respective national contexts» (p. 206). Thus, this study now turns to the instruments used by the state in governing CH and how they both enable and disable its commoning.

## 1.4. State governance of the CH commons

### *1.4.1. The necessity for embedded autonomy*

As described above, the potential of CH to serve public good objectives has been questioned on the basis of empirical observations of selected collaborative housing projects showing high resident homogeneity, limited integration into the neighbourhood and affordability. Doubts have also been expressed about its scalability and thus its chances of delivering the radical change it claims to promote. Finally, the risk of collaborative housing projects driving gentrification in their neighbourhood was highlighted. Similar reservations were expressed concerning the urban and housing commons.

The existence of such ambivalence concerning the realisation of urban commons' public good ambitions has led scholars to call for an embedded autonomy of the commons (Ferreri and Vidal, 2022). Such appeals conceiving of state support as a crucial enabler of the commons, have been opposed by critiques of state intervention. Opazo Ortiz depicts it as an attack on the concept of self-governance at the heart of the commons (2015, p. 117), while Castillo Ulloa's analysis of the case of Paso Ancho positions the state as a defender of the status quo, with disabling effects on the commons, notably through negating petitions,

forbidding gatherings and the use of jargon (2015). These critiques shed light on the disabling effect the state can have on the CH commons, to which this study comes back later in this section.

However, in today's urban context, the housing commons cannot be studied in isolation from the state, they can only be «imperfectly (…) enacted 'in-against-and-beyond" the state», for their commoning practices intersect with state responsibilities vis-à-vis the housing sector, including social and housing policy-making and urban planning (regulations, standards, allocation of land and resources) (Bruun, 2015, p. 159; Bunce, 2015, p. 140; Ferreri and Vidal, 2022, p. 4). This is especially the case since the current shortage of affordable housing brought «housing back onto the agenda as a common good, whose access has to be regulated to some extent by the state» (Tummers and MacGregor, 2019, p. 70).

As already highlighted, CH does not escape this rule, and has received increasing attention from local authorities in the last years, for the reasons laid out in section 2.1.3. and as a low-cost means of revitalising and upgrading urban districts (Rogojanu, 2015). Thus, although state intervention happens at different levels of governance and policy making (2021; Dellenbaug *et al.*, 2015, p. 16), this study focuses exclusively on local state governance. These interactions with the state, such as the receipt of funding, are necessary to achieve commoning objectives and do not preclude a degree of autonomy (Bunce, 2015, p. 140). This section first exposes 2 rationales in the literature for the necessity of state governance before addressing the disabling effect it can have, and finally the question of autonomy.

State governance of the housing commons is deemed necessary based on two main considerations: the need for 1) an **arbitrator to ensure the common interest prevails** and 2) a **resource and coordination provider in the face of the hostility of the neoliberal city** to commons arrangement, given its scale but also market interests' prevalence. Regarding the first consideration, it is argued that the state can and should limit both the exclusivity and insularity of (CH) commons initiatives and their market- or commoners' appropriations (Aernouts and Ryckewaert, 2019, pp. 100-1; Bruun, 2015, p. 157, p. 168; Droste, 2015, p. 89; Helfrich, Meretz and Knaffl, 2021, p. 50; Parker and Schmidt, 2017, Pithouse, 2014, p. 142). In this way, the state can ensure CH commons live up to their social justice claim. This

can be achieved by embedding them in "wider redistributive processes" (Ferreri and Vidal, 2022, p. 5). An instance of the state's ability to act as an arbitrator of the common interest was observed by Aernouts and Ryckewaert in the case of Belgian cooperative housing. In that case, state intervention played a positive role in «securing control and use over housing for those groups that are most in need» (2019, p. 107).

However, not all cities take their role as guardians of the common good equally seriously. In supporting CH, some cities (e.g., Hamburg) have placed stronger emphasis on the **disciplinary side of governance**, making their support conditional on a common good orientation (e.g., stricter selection process for the allocation of land, detailed regulations concerning the recruitment of members), than others which decided to refrain from intervening too much (e.g., Gothenburg) (Scheller and Thörn, 2018, p. 17). In line with Hamburg's example, two main options exist for municipalities that do wish to take an active, steering role in the development of the commons: supporting commoning of CH through the **conditional provision of resources** and through **regulation**. They can do so at different stages of the process, namely its production (e.g., land, financial and technical resources allocation), management (financial allocations, regulating access) and reproduction (regulation of commodification) (Ferreri and Vidal, 2022).

Considering the hostile context the city represents for commoning, state **enabling through the provision of resources and coordination** is deemed crucial to CH and the commons' expansion and prolonged viability (Ache and Fedrowitz, 2012; Aernouts and Ryckwaerts, 2019, p. 106; Chatterton, 2013; p. 1669; Foster, 2011, p. 91; Parker and Schmidt, 2017). Many authors observe that the state is most often needed to supply the financial, spatial and other (e.g., running water for urban gardens) resources needed for cooperative behaviour (Berge and van Laerhover, 2011; Foster, 2011; Kratzwald, 2015, p. 38; Parker and Schmidt, 2017; Pithouse, 2014, p. 142; Rogojanu, 2015). Indeed, Scheller stresses that historical developments have shown that the provision of legal and financial support as well as affordable land is a decisive factor for the «development of CH towards collaboration, mutual help and solidarity» rather than the neoliberal atomisation of society into isolated individuals (2020, p. 69).

### *1.4.2. Enabling governance instruments*

Out of these resources needed for (CH) commons production, **public land** is often acknowledged as the most important (Castillo Ulloa, 2015, p. 140; Susser and Tonnelat, 2013, p. 109; p. 112). In Hamburg and Freiburg, 20% of municipal land is dedicated to CH projects (Ache and Fedrowitz, 2012, p. 7; Scheller and Thörn, 2018). Tübingen designated an entire area for CH projects (Ache and Fedrowitz, 2012, p. 7). In Viennese new urban development areas, plots of land are reserved for building groups (Rogojanu, 2015). Droste points to the use of (more or less flexible) **criteria for land allocation** as a common tool to ensure CH projects support the common good. In Vienna, the introduction of criteria such as "social sustainability" and "community-promoting character" in regular developer competitions in 2009 has given CH commons projects good chances of success (Rogojanu, 2015, p. 185).

Similar to Vienna, Hamburg has adopted a disciplinary approach to governance and uses land allocation as a leverage to ensure the common good orientation of the projects. It allocates land to groups based on criteria including a social concept, an ecology and energy concept (Ache and Fedrowitz, 2012, p. 7; Scheller and Thörne, 2018). It also emphasises social mixing by promoting the integration of groups with varying income levels (Scheller and Thörne, 2018, p. 9). However, this programme «focuses on middle-class applicants charged with incorporating other underprivileged "focus groups" directly in the self-build groups» (p. 17). This primary target group is reflected in the fact that "interested groups can become owners of their housing starting at a 10% capital share, which in light of the above discussion might represent a higher risk of speculation and ultimately rising housing prices as leasing land from non-profit or state actors with a common-good orientation (Ache and Fedrowitz, 2012, p. 7). In contrast, the alternative of land leases from such actors, such as through hereditary leasehold structures and CLTs, has the advantage of protecting rent stability and reducing the starting financial burden on CH projects (Droste, 2015, p. 84). Next to that, Hamburg has also taken steps to **integrate CH in the municipal housing stock**, «letting blocks of flats to cohousing coops» for reduced rents «in exchange for handling over maintenance responsibilities through a model of self-government»,

which also enhances the inclusivity of such projects (Scheller and Thörne, 2018, p. 9).

Additionally, measures enabling access to **finance and economic resources** are significant determining factors for the affordability (and thus inclusivity) and ability to scale up CH projects at production and management stage (Ferreri and Vidal, 2022, p. 9; Parker and Johansson, 2012, p. 21). This can take the form of **subsidies** enabling CH projects to «include social or cultural facilities that also serve the wider neighbourhood» (Droste, 2015, p. 83). At the stage of management, the state can play a crucial role in improving accessibility of CH by subsidising low income residents and renovation works to safeguard affordability (Ferreri and Vidal, 2022, pp. 14-15). More structurally, cities can **promote partly decommodified forms of ownership** instead of self-ownership, such as non-speculative cooperatives, non-profit housing associations, holding leasehold rights or collaboration with public housing, to bolster CH's inclusivity to lower-income individuals, in the long term (Droste, 2015; Scheller and Thörne, 2018). Hamburg, for example, offers construction subsidies and grants for monthly rent proportional to households' incomes for cooperative members. Next to that, loans to finance personal cooperative shares have been introduced by the city's public development bank to facilitate access to cooperative membership by low-income households and thereby the realisation of more inclusive CH projects, at scales (Scheller and Thörne, 2018, p. 9). Through creating these and other mechanisms to favour (partly) decommodified forms of housing, the state can contribute to the maintenance of housing commons over time (Ferreri and Vidal, 2022, p. 15).

Finally, **technical support and knowledge** are other important resources provided to CH projects by municipalities at production stage (Ferreri and Vidal, 2022, p. 9; Parker and Johansson, 2012, p. 21). This is in line with the CH literature which stresses that the complexity inherent in CH projects, notably in relation to the legal aspects, calls for state support (Ache and Fedrowitz, 2012, p. 9). According to Ache and Fedrowitz, given their difficult fiscal situation, most German municipalities primarily support CH through communication and information activities. These include web pages, regular newsletters, information packages, and handbooks, but also roundtables, market places, exhibitions and the building of data bases

on projects (2012, p. 8). Such efforts have been undertaken primarily by state funded support structures established in some German states and municipalities, such as Aachen, Hamburg, NRW and Berlin (Ache and Fedrowitz, 2012, p. 8; Droste, 2015, p. 183).

Regarding **coordination**, several authors stress the positive relationship between scale of the urban commons and necessity for state involvement (Foster, 2011, p. 64; Kip, 2015, p. 46; Parker and Sargisson, 2012; Pithouse, 2014, p. 134). According to them, in the face of the scale and complexity of cities, state provision of **institutional structures** as well as **norm activation** and **coordination** is crucial for urban commoning to succeed (Foster, 2011, p. 90). In this coordination process, Scheller and Thörn have underlined the importance of mediation between the myriad of actors active in the field of CH (2018, p. 16). To support upscaling, municipalities can also play a significant role in facilitating «knowledge transfers between projects and with the wider public» (Droste, 2015, p. 83).

### *1.4.3. Disabling governance instruments*

Finally, some authors also warn against ambiguities existing in the state-commons relationship. Kip *et al.* underline the contradiction between governments' facilitation of commons initiatives such as urban gardening and the concomitant undermining effect of the austerity politics they conduct, which are responsible for the enclosure, that is the exploitation and control of the commons already mentioned above (2015, p. 19). For example, cooperative housing has been threatened by government decisions of enforcing **neoliberal reforms** in Denmark (Bruun, 2015, p. 164) and Amsterdam (Nonini, 2017, p. 34). Another instance of threatening impact of state policies on the CH commons is the Danish state's implementation of a "right-to-buy" scheme as well as the reduction of its financial commitments towards the Common Housing sector. These measures opened the sector to piecemeal privatisation in the future, strain on solidarity and forced efficiency-maximising measures such as professionalisation, which contradicts the idea of self-governance at the core of the commons (Vidal, 2019).

State intervention can also pose other threats to the self-organisation and autonomy of housing commons, which Scheller warned against (2020). Its desirability has been particularly debated in relation to the **right of access** to the commons, which is often seen as a key element of the self-governance of housing commons. Indeed, the fact that commoners "define for themselves the rules by which they are accessed and used" is a crucial element in Kratzwald's definition of the commons (2015, pp. 14-15). Similarly, Balmer and Bernet stress users' ability to make decisions concerning their homes including defining «for themselves the rules through which they are accessed and used» as central to the commons (2015, p. 180). Meanwhile, Catsillo Ulloa understands urban planning as an instrument of the state to control access to the urban commons, including the rules of inclusion or exclusion that apply to them (2015, p. 130). Similarly, improving the inclusivity of CH through regulation is seen as an important role for public administrations by Ferreri and Vidal (2021, p. 14). This can take the form of «income limits, quotas for people on social housing registers, percentage of housing units reserved for social or municipal housing waiting lists, norms over the functioning of waiting lists» (*ibid.*). State regulation of the Danish cooperative sector has given rise to a twofold system of 1) «open waiting lists to which all sectors of the population are eligible» and 2) a municipality-controlled separate waiting list to fill 25% of dwellings (Vidal, 2019, p. 456). Aernouts and Ryckewaert warn of the danger that state-led inclusion of people who are not fully committed to commoning in CH projects will alter its essential participatory processes, as they observed in Brussels (2019, p. 101). However, practical cases show that housing commons can adapt and defend their self-governance DNA in the face of such state intervention, for instance through the establishment of new devices (e.g., local management committees in the case of merger of several housing cooperatives) to preserve local participation where it was threatened (p. 103). The prominence of the common good in decisions taken in CH projects can also be increased by including non-profit organisations that defend the interests of marginalised people or civil society in the management board (Aernouts and Ryckewaert, 2019, p. 103). Thus, there seems to be an inherent tension, though not an insurmountable one, between the self-governance and social justice goals of the commons.

An additional disabling consequence of state governance of the commons is the **increasing requirements** they have to fulfil, which excludes groups who do not have the necessary time, skills and/or expertise (Helfrich, Knaffl and Meretz, p. 46). Indeed, state support comes with autonomy restrictions including vis-à-vis occupancy and rental price, specific requirements in terms of equipment (barrier-free access), maximum construction costs, energy and heat consumption or construction (use of timber frame, passive house) (Holms *et al.*, 2021, pp. 235-236). These add to more general legal conditions and minimum standards (regarding fire safety, building physics, sound insulation or energy efficiency) which need to be met to obtain the right to build.

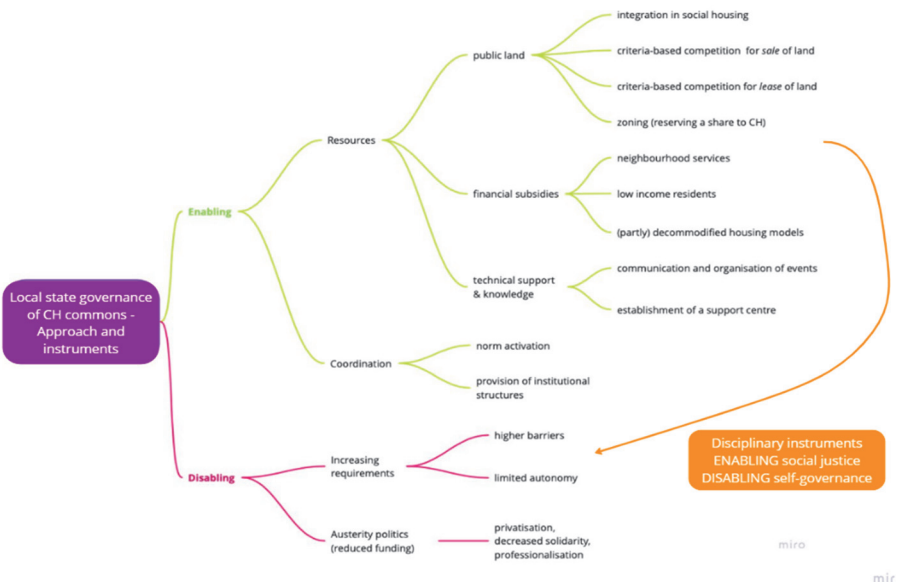


*Fig. 2 – Local state governance of CH commons - Approach and instruments* Source*: Author, based on Ferreri and Vidal (2022).*

In conclusion, in today's (German) urban context, the development of CH is closely tied to local state governance. Some scholars describe this embeddedness as an opportunity for the state to address critiques formulated against the commons and CH by guaranteeing they

contribute to a more socially just housing and city. The extent to which the cities studied in the literature embrace this role varies: while some have a more disciplinary approach of CH, others have a rather liberal take on it, intervening little in the direction in which it develops. The literature suggests that state involvement through provision of land, financial and knowledge resources as well as coordination is necessary to enable and upscale commoning practices within CH. Depending on the state's position on the disciplinary-liberal spectrum and the corresponding instruments it uses (or does not use), it can either foster or hamper commoning in CH, and thus its potential to offer a solution to today's housing crisis. Thus, leases of public lands and subsidies to low income residents and decommodified forms of housing contribute to the inclusivity, long term affordability and upscaling of CH. Technical support is also crucial to inclusivity in such a complex field. Norm activation and the provision of institutional structures allowing for mediation between actors and knowledge transfers are other important instruments for the inclusivity and upscaling of CH. However, the historical hindrance the state has represented to the commons through its imposition of austerity politics cannot be ignored, just like its potential to harm the commons' sense of community and self-governance through promulgating high requirements. This potential exists even when these requirements stem from a common good orientation, which indicates the existence of a tension between social justice ambitions of the commons at the city scale and the autonomy of the community of commoners at the project scale. However, there exist ways to reconcile regulation-driven inclusivity and self-governance of the CHC, notably through the inclusion of civil society actors in the management board of CH projects and the establishment of additional participatory structures.

After a few words about the methods mobilised in this study, a closer look will be taken at how a given state approach to CH - that of the Berlin Senate - and the corresponding instruments impact the development of commoning in the field of CH and thus its contribution to social justice. To that end, attention will focus on the relation between state governance and the development of intentional community, self-governance, decommodification, a non-state status within CH, as well inclusivity and the predominance of use value, both at CH project, neighbourhood, and city level.

 ISBN 9788835169062

# 2. *Methods*

## 2.1. Research approach

Given this study' focus on commoning practices, which are per definition socially constructed and thus conducive to subjective interpretation, its research question is answered following a **qualitative approach to research** (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). Accordingly, the conceptualisation of collaborative housing as a commons to be constantly reproduced detailed in the previous chapter guided both the collection and analysis of primary data (Mahoney and Goertz, 2006). In turn, the data collected helped refine this conceptualisation through a process of back and forth between theory generation and case analysis (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011; Mahoney and Goertz, 2006). Moreover, it is inscribed in a **critical research paradigm**, meaning that it «focuses on the *critique and transformation of current structures*, relationships, and conditions that shape and constrain the development of social practices in organisations and communities, through examining them within their historical, social, cultural and political contexts» (Fossey *et al.*, 2002, p. 720). In line with this paradigm, the objective of this study is not merely to understand the interplay between the state governance context and the (re-)production of housing commons, but to supply a "tool to be used in the on-going process of practical transformation of society" towards the development of collaborative housing commons (*ibid*.). Thus, this research was significantly impacted by close interactions with housing activism, based on the conviction that research and activism should not be occurring in isolation. Rather, involvement in the housing struggle and with its actors represents a

privileged position to observe the creation and reproduction of housing commons. Following Portelli and Teschoepe, this study adheres to the idea that researchers should take on the role of activist scholars to create results that are useful to communities, i.e., provide them with input to address their problems. They should turn away from an objectivist research paradigm that «legitimises and rationalises the greed of conquerors and self-proclaimed rulers, through the 'verifiable truths' of allegedly impersonal disciplines» (2020, p. 200). Accordingly, the conceptual framework and research questions as well as the data collection procedures of this study were informed by and iteratively developed based on interviews and many informal conversations with housing activists, which are privileged actors to assess the processes studied at a *city level*.

As the consequences of state governance for commoning in collaborative housing have been little theoreticised, this study proposes an **exploratory analysis** of the case of Berlin in the past 10 years, which should inform further research and theory-making, as well as policy-making.

## 2.2. Case selection

This study is concerned with an in-depth understanding of one case study (Berlin between around 2010 and 2021). It focuses particularly on the impact of this governance on the Lynarstraße project, whose planning efforts started in 2016 and which has been inhabited since 2018.

Berlin's housing activism history and the related tradition of CH forms in the city make it an especially rich case in which to observe communing practices in collaborative housing. This history has set the bases for its «large stock of alternative and innovative housing actors» (Droste, 2015, p. 88) and resulted in a high number of projects in the city: today more than 500 (LaFond, 2019). It is particularly interesting considering Thörn and Scheller's observation, derived from a cross-sectional analysis of different European cities, that a close relationship between CH and urban activism positively impacts its transformative potential on housing at the scale of the city (2020), which is the ultimate goal of housing commoning. Additionally, as Müller pointed out, since the 60s-70s, following citizen mobilisation against big urban

plans, there is a culture of citizen participation in urban planning processes in Berlin (2015, p. 150). Accordingly, it can be expected that its government is already well acquainted with citizens' claims to self-governance and its governance instruments relatively oriented towards collaborative forms of housing and commoning practices. This makes it an interesting case study for the impact of governance on CH commoning. In this study, references to "Berlin" as a governing actor correspond to the Senate of the state (Land) of Berlin, its administrators and the organisations it has mandated to represent it. It excludes district-level actors. Although they do have a role in urban development on their territory, their diverse context and political orientations prevents any general analysis of their governance at the level of Berlin. Moreover, their role did not emerge as significant from the interviews conducted in the framework of this study. Thus, this study examines Berlin's governance approach and instruments towards CH between 2010 and 2021 and derives conclusions on potential consequences for the development of CH commons. Then, it analyses the impact of this approach and these instruments in the context of a practical case of CH commons: the Lynarstraße project. The Lynarstraße project was selected following a preliminary analysis of 6 Berlin-based CH projects with considerable commoning ambitions, performed in the making of a book untitled "Social-Ecological Cooperative Housing", to which the author of this study contributed (id22, 2022). The interviews conducted for the production of the book as well as discussions with the book's co-authors (one of them involved in the Berlin alternative housing scene since the 90s) exposed the Lynarstraße project's particularly intense commoning ambitions and the Senate's particularly enthusiastic support for it. Consequently, it was chosen to understand how these two peculiarities relate to one another.

### 2.3. Data collection

In order to develop a detailed understanding of Berlin's key governance instruments and approaches in relation to CH, and their impact on commoning practices at city and project level, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of actors. These

interviews enabled the exploration of this under-researched topic and the reconstruction of processes that occur relatively underground/behind the scenes. Five of them were with actors involved in the Lynarstraße project. Among those, 2 were conducted with an employee of the cooperative that built and owns the house (called "Am Ostseeplatz"). As project manager and resident in the house, he was a key informant on the relationship between state governance and the project as well as commoning practices within the project and beyond (L1a, L1b). Another interview was with a representative of the construction manager of the project, who knew a lot about the hurdles to the production of CH, e.g., in terms of technical and legal requirements (L2). Another was conducted with a social organisation that occupies one of the spaces on the ground floor of the project (L4) as well as the person responsible for the participatory processes in the project (L3). Two interviews were conducted with state actors (S1, S2). And two final interviews allowed me to ask questions to activists in the scene of CH and/or housing commons (A1, A2). All but one (that was conducted in February 2022) were conducted in July 2022. They lasted between 15 minutes and 1:30:00. The interview guides and transcripts can be accessed upon request to the author of this study[1]. Access to these interviewees was facilitated by contacts made through the author's internship at id22[2] (L1a, L1b, S1, S2, A2), her supervisor (A1), or the website of Am Ostseeplatz (L2, L3, L4).

[1] Which can be defined as the process of conditioning access to these resources on ability to pay and its provision on the prospect of profit (Vidal, 2019, p. 450).

[2] id22 is a non-profit organisation researching and promoting social, ecological, decommodified forms of CH in Europe, and more specifically in Berlin. See: https://id22.net/en/.

| *Code* | *Role of the interviewee in the Lynarstraße project/CH in Berlin* | *Contact* | *Date of the interview* | *Length* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *L1a*<br>*L1b* | Project Manager of the Lynarstraße project (since 2018).<br><br>Staff of the Ostseeplatz cooperative, the developer of the Lynarstraße project. | Internship | 09.02.22<br>22.07.22 | ~45:00<br>~1:10:00 |
| *L2* | Construction manager of the Lynarstraße Projekt.<br><br>Staff of the planning and architecture bureau hired by the Ostseeplatz. | Am Ostseeplatz's website | 20.07.2022 | ~50:00 |
| *L3* | Moderator of the participation processes and relation point between the management of the project (architects, cooperative) and the residents (before 2018). | Am Ostseeplatz's website | 26.07.22 | ~50:00 |
| *L4* | Employee of the Diakonie Mitte Station, a social service provider renting a space on the ground floor of the Lynarstraße project and in charge of a shared apartment for people with dementia in the project. | Am Ostseeplatz's website | 22.07.22 | ~15:00 |
| *S1* | Civil servant at the Department of urban development, construction and housing of the Berlin Senate.<br><br>Followed the Lynarstraße project from the start. Involved in a subsidies program which supported innovative forms of housing in Berlin, including CH (the SIWA) and in charge of cooperatives' promotion in Berlin. | Internship | 22.07.22 | ~50:00 |
| *S2* | Employee of STATTBAU, the support centre mandated by the Senate for CH in Berlin. | Internship | 14.07.22 | ~45:00 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *A1* | Founding member of the Ostseeplatz and former Member of the Supervising Board.<br><br>Project developer for small cooperatives and building groups (BG) in Berlin since the 1990s. | study supervisor | 21.07.22 | ~1:30:00 |
| *A2* | Employee at Immovilien (a federal network advocating for common-good-oriented housing) and volunteer at the MHS's advisory centre for new projects in Berlin-Brandenburg. | Am Ostseeplatz's website | 29.07.22 | ~45:00 |

*Tab. 1 – List of interviewees. Source: Author.*

Interviewees were assured that their identities would not be revealed in order to increase the chances of receiving honest responses and observations. A standard topic guide was developed for the interviews, which included questions derived from the conceptual framework (especially the definition of CH commons, as well as approaches and instruments of state governance of the commons identified). This topic guide was adapted for each interview, depending on the specific relationship of the interviewee to CH in Berlin and the Lynarstraße project. Moreover, it was completed iteratively interview after interview, as elements of answer to the research question emerged in analysing the data of the interviews already conducted (see for instance Appendix 1 - the topic guide of the interview with L2a). Asking several interviewees the same questions represents a way to minimise the problem of non-objectivity highlighted by Berry (2002, p. 680). Additionally, interview findings were – when possible – triangulated with official information and documents published on the Senate's and STATTBAU's websites. Finally, a podcast episode released by the Mietshäuser Syndikat on their failure to make more projects available to Berliners since 2013, was superficially analysed to balance the focus of my case study on a rather institutionalised actor (a cooperative), which was assessed as exceptionally "successful" (2021).

## 2.4. Data processing and analysis

The data collected in the interviews was analysed to extract findings based on a three-step coding process as suggested by Boeije (2009). See Appendix 2 for a sample output of this process.

1. **Open coding**: First, all interviews were transcribed and screened to identify sentences or segments that appeared relevant to the research question. The essence of each segment was summarised in (sometimes repetitive) "codes", partly derived from the operationalisation of the conceptual framework (inductive), partly new (deductive).
2. **Axial coding**: To reduce the high number of codes that emerged from open coding, some of them were grouped into categories with other thematically overlapping codes. Some codes which, upon second consideration, did not seem relevant to the research question were dropped. To avoid an unbalanced selection of data and overemphasizing the first data (Boeije, 2009, p. 117; Berry, 2002, p. 680), attention was paid to the frequency with which codes appeared (e.g., the relationship to the squatters' scene was stressed many times).
3. **Selective coding**: Finally, core categories (themes) were extracted out of the remaining codes to provide an answer to the research question. To do so, relationships between codes and the research question were established based on the conceptual framework.

In addition, official websites/policies/documents mentioned by interviewees or identified through desk research were analysed to develop a deeper understanding of the Senate's instruments, priorities and strategies in the housing field, as well as its perception of and approach to CH. These findings were then linked to segments from the interviews and analysed in terms of their potential to promote or inhibit commoning in CH, based on the conceptual framework. To ensure conceptual validity, this conceptual framework was iteratively refined throughout the data analysis process (Mahoney and Goertz, 2006).

## 2.5. Limitations

Due to time constraints, the impact on communities of residents and neighbourhoods was not analysed first hand. Involving these groups (especially those traditionally excluded from CH projects) in a more **community-based, qualitative approach** would have been a relevant addition to the interviews with state, housing providers/developers and activists conducted in this research. Such an approach rests on the assumptions that involving people and communities that are directly participating in or impacted by housing policies and commoning, are 1) **relevant** actors to involve in order to grasp and assess these processes, 2) that their involvement is a **valid and accurate** way to collect and assess data, and 3) is more likely to yield **impactful** research (Hyra *et al*., 2019). Accordingly, further studies on the development of CH commons would benefit from conducting focus groups with residents in CH projects (to assess processes and impacts at *project/house level*) and inhabitants of/organisations active in their neighbourhood (to assess processes and impacts at *neighbourhood level*).

Next, it must also be noted that this study focuses on a model project that is not representative of the CH scene at large but rather exceptional, as statements by some interviewees below have made clear. To generalise the observations presented in this study, the role of state governance in commoning of more CH projects would have to be analysed, for example of projects that failed or of projects by non-professional actors. The conceptual framework developed in this study would be applicable to such further research. However, Berlin (and more broadly Germany) represents a very peculiar context for the study of CH, given the historic relationship of the CH movement with housing activism. The concept of CH commons might be less relevant in other contexts.

# 3. *Results and Analysis*

## 3.1. Development of CH in Berlin and current context

In line with the previously reviewed literature, several interviewees linked the current Berlin CH scene to its origins in the communes and the 80s and emphasised its intertwined relationship to the squatter movement (S2[1], A1, L1, L1a). This suggests that the CH movement in Berlin is strongly related to **housing activism**, which Thörn *et al.* depict as an important factor in determining its social justice orientation (2020, p. 225).

Additionally, the important role played by the **state** in its development was also stressed in the interviews[2]. S2 referred to the self-help program aimed at pacifying squatter groups that spanned the 80s, 90s and the first years of the 21st century. as key to the consolidation of communal forms of living and doing housing (A1, S2) in Berlin. At that time, many small cooperatives were founded that are still champions of CH today (S2). Cooperatives are considered pioneers of CH in Berlin (STATTBAU and SenSBW, 2021, p. 7). Reinforced by the sale of considerable segments of the Senate's housing stock to cooperatives between 2000-2002, this paved the way for the establishment of **cooperatives** as an important non-profit actor in the scene (A1). This wave of CH was relatively heterogeneous (Scheller, 2020; A1).

[1] For example: «It all plays together: Berlin's urban development, the history, why so many initiatives have developed here since the 1980s and since the communes. Certain forms are the building groups, others are the cooperative. Cluster living in the form and the processes you are investigating in the Lynarstraße, that is also another development» (S2).

[2] «In this CH topic, (...) public support is really necessary. That was proven historically in the cooperative movement. Upscaling is not possible without public support» (A2).

With the discontinuation of the program in 2002 and the sale of a massive share of its housing stock to for-profit actors to replenish the city's accounts (a key instance of austerity politics), a new form of CH took off, namely building groups, which were ownership-oriented and essentially the reserve of well-off citizens (S2, A1). Parallely, to a smaller extent, it is in that period between 2005 and 2012 that most of the (partly decommodified) **Mietshäuser Syndikat** projects in Berlin were founded and provided a larger diversity of people with CH (A2). Following the emergence of these new forms of CH in the city, in 2008, the Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing mandated STATTBAU[3] to establish the **Network Agency GenerationenWohnen** (Generations housing) to serve as a counselling centre for intergenerational and community housing in Berlin. Since then, 132 CH projects (3500 units) were realised in Berlin. This represents less than 3% of new apartments built in that period (Statista, 2022; STATTBAU and SenSBW, 2021, p. 9). Moreover, **the development of CH in Berlin has taken a toll in the last years** as booming prices made it virtually impossible for small, non-profit and non-professional actors to access land on the market (A1; A2; S2; NBMSI, 2021).

In spite of the marginal share CH represents and this increasingly difficult context, analysing which direction it takes is relevant in light of a study conducted by STATTBAU in 2021, which revealed that 64% of Berliners (as much as those interested in conventional housing!) who are planning on moving into a new rental apartment in Berlin in the next few years are interested in a large household (conventional apartments coupled with community spaces), and 33% would consider moving into a cluster apartment (small apartments with only a kitchenette and a bathroom "clustered" around community spaces). Additionally, 60% of those who do not plan to move would co-finance neighbourhood infrastructures (STATTBAU and SenSBW, 2021). Moreover, in the context of the 16 new neighbourhoods planned in Berlin for the next years to address population growth in the city, the state secretary for housing portrayed the integration of housing groups in new constructions as an important

[3] Historically, STATTBAU was founded as mediating institution between the owners of squatted houses, squatters, and the Berlin Senate in the 1980s.

building stone for the activation of lively neighbourhoods in newly planned city districts, which is a key point of the Berlin Strategy updated in 2021 (STATTBAU and SenSBW, 2021, p. 5). Moreover, the 2021 Berlin Strategy mentions as a goal for Berlin for the first time the sufficient realisation of community housing for people in need of care (STATTBAU and SenBW, 2021, p. 8). This represents an interesting new context in which to observe how the city of Berlin is governing CH and what the implications for its development as a commons are.

## 3.2. Urban governance of CH and impact on communing

This section reviews the ways in which the state of Berlin supports and hinders the development of CH commons. First, its impact on commoning is scrutinised in the context of its function as a **provider of land, finances**, as well as **technical support and knowledge**. Then, its efforts to activate **norms** and establish **institutional structures** to support the development of CH are evaluated in terms of their consequences for commoning in CH. Finally, the **complexity of requirements** as well as **austerity politics** imposed by state governance are analysed to draw conclusions on their disabling impact on the CH commons.

### *3.2.1. Berlin as a resource provider*

#### *3.2.1.1. Land*

*Concept procedure (Konzeptverfahren)*

One of the key measures that the Senate of Berlin has taken to tackle the growing scarcity of affordable land in the city was to announce (in 2013) and launch (in 2015) a new real estate policy (*neue Liegenschaftspolitik*), which entails new ways of managing public land. Its goal would no longer be to help the city pay its debt through selling municipal property to the highest bidder but to foster a sustainable urban development. To that purpose, it would allocate land to developers whose project proposals have the highest potential to

benefit the common good, for example through their focus on multi-generational living, social mixing, and/or sustainability (BIM, 2022; Senatsverwaltung für Finanz, 2022). According to this new policy, Berlin leases land instead of selling it, by granting developers heritable building rights for 90 years[4], which withdraws land from speculation (BIM, 2016; S2). The concept procedures for housing plots especially benefit social institutions, cooperatives, and cooperatively organised groups who propose to provide public services for the city. This is according to this principle that land is allocated in the development of Berlin's new urban districts, such as the Schumacher Quartier, where plots are specifically reserved for CH (SenSBW and STATTBAU, 2019, p. 9; S2, A1). Moreover, in those new districts, cooperatives are offered 25% (SenSBW, 2022b).

The quality of concepts is evaluated based on several criteria, including its urban-architectural character (e.g. quality of open spaces, integration into the neighbourhood), ecological value (e.g. energy efficiency, climate adaptation), low rent (weights for 10% of the final decision) and use (housing subsidies, offers for social mixing or target groups, community orientation, self-organisation and participation) (BIM, 2016, p. 7; SenSBW, 2022a). A usual additional condition for a project to be eligible is that 30% of the project's surface should be dedicated to subsidised housing or social associations (BIM, 2016). Given its immeasurability and the scarcity of state-owned land still available, there is no specific criterion for CH (S1, A2). This evaluation is carried out by the BIM (the real estate service provider for the state of Berlin), several Senate departments (finance, urban development and housing, and research and technology), as well as the district in which the plot is located.

On the one hand, even in the absence of specific criterion for CH, such a model based on land leases and a qualitative assessment of projects following their common good orientation seems to give good chances to CH commons projects, as was observed in Vienne (Rogojanu, 2015). Land leases to non-profit actors do not only ensure the **partial decommodification** of housing and thus their **long-term affordability**, they also bring down the upfront costs for groups

[4] Given the far time horizon of such contracts and the autonomy they grant developers, projects built on leased land are considered to be non-state.

acquiring the plot, therefore fostering **inclusivity** in the house project. The criteria for low rents and social mixing have the same effect. Furthermore, criteria such as community orientation and self-organisation favour CH projects, while the importance given to integration in the neighbourhood guarantees **openness** at a higher scale. This represents, just like in Hamburg, a disciplinary approach to CH governance.

On the other hand, several interviewees and activists in the Mietshäuser Syndikat Network in Berlin have stressed the **complexity** of the processes, which renders them **hardly accessible** to smaller, non-professional groups. An employee from STATTBAU deplores that even though the Senate is aiming to open those procedures to all, even groups who do not yet have a legal form, its efforts «to ensure they are safe and good for groups and comply with public procurement law» currently makes them highly complicated (S2). In the same vein, a podcast produced by the Mietshäuser Syndikat Network in Berlin blamed the elaborate and unpredictable nature of these procedures as one of the key sources of failure for their small, self-governed, non-speculative projects (2021). Indeed, according to the podcast, the evaluation of the projects is based on the ability of projects to produce tables and numbers as well as seal pre-contracts with banks to demonstrate their viability, which often requires hiring experts.

This is reinforced by the fact that these procedures concern an increasingly limited quantity of plots, whose quality is often poor. As the interviewed civil servant recognises they have «only few state-owned plots over, and they are being tendered now» (S1). This does not only imply that these plots are highly disputed. It also raises questions as to what will happen once all public plots have been leased and thus reveals the bleak potential of this strategy to activate a commoning of the city at large. Moreover, an interviewee working as a counsellor at the Mietshäuser Syndikat Berlin stressed that most of the good public plots have already been tendered (to the city housing associations in priority) and that since 2013, the plots have become increasingly scarcer and smaller (A2). This, in turn, enhances the level of expertise required to develop land (Helfrich, Knaffl, Meretz, 2021, p. 46). This represents a hindrance to the development of CH commons as these high requirements exclude groups who lack time and expertise (*ibid*.).

*Integration in communal housing stock*

Another instrument used by local governments to support CH discussed in the literature is its integration in the communal housing stock. The option is especially interesting in Berlin where the state-owned housing companies are set to expand their stock and have been designated by the Senate as significant actors in the building of new neighbourhoods (Stattbau and SenSBW, 2021, p. 8). This dedication arose in 2014 from a resolve to reverse the decision made by the city in the past to privatise its housing stock. In some of these municipal housing neighbourhoods, plots were leased to cooperatives and other developers based on concept procedures, to ensure social mixing at neighbourhood level (Stattbau and SenSBW, 2021, p. 12). This breaks with the tradition of segregation in social housing against which the project manager of the Lynarstraße project warned (L1b).

One measure through which the Berlin Senate supports the integration of CH in communal housing is its allocation of "relatively generous subsidies to community spaces in upcoming social housing" (S1). Additionally, it also subsidies STATTBAU's extensive efforts to activate norms, mediate and create institutional structures to incentivise state-owned housing companies (SOHC) to integrate CH in their stock (which will be detailed below). However, these are non-coercive measures as the government has no power to force SOHC to initiate CH projects (S2). Additionally, despite claims that these persuasive efforts have started bearing fruits (S2), other interviews revealed the difficulties encountered by the Berlin Senate in convincing the SOHC to build CH projects as they are used to setting up more conventionals buildings and CH «falls a little of the grid», «outside of their regular business» not least because «their core task is to relatively quickly create affordable housing» (S1, also L2). This represents a limitation on the upscaling potential of CH commons, and thus to their **inclusivity at city level**.

Where these efforts have been successful, restrictions on residents' autonomy and **self-governance**, which are core elements of the CH commons, have been noted. Indeed, although communal housing associations have conducted comprehensive participatory processes in model projects, one of their representatives has underlined that they would no longer involve residents in the planning phase (STATTBAU

and SenSBW, 2021, p. 37). Another pioneer project illustrates the obstacle communal housing associations can represent to the residents' wish for additional community rooms (p. 39). More generally, given the history of privatisation of the communal housing stock, the state status of such CH projects poses a threat to their LT existence as commons.

#### *3.2.1.2. Finances*

The Senate subsidises CH and its commoning potential with different financial instruments. A key tool which applies to all new constructions in Berlin is the granting of interest-free loans to developers who agree to rent 30% or more[5] of their newly built units to residents entitled to subsidised housing and respect the conditions (in terms of size, height of rents, tenant status…) that are tied to it. This loan has to be reimbursed within 30 years, in some cases only to 75% (Böttcher, 2020). Such interest-free loans can be granted to all developers regardless of their intention to set up CH. However, to encourage CH (S1), since 2019, in cases where the individual unit of a resident entitled to subsidies is smaller than what is allowed (40m² for one person), the difference in area can be used to fund common areas (STATTBAU and Wohnbund, 2019, p. 54). Thus, if this resident's private apartment does not exceed a surface of 30m² (which is the average in CH projects analysed in id22, 2022), 10m² of community spaces can be funded by the public interest-free loan. Moreover, community spaces can further be promoted by extending the maximal subsidy-eligible area by 10% per housing unit. In other words, in this case, an extra 3m² of common spaces could be financially supported. Additionally, one-off grants for innovative and experimental construction can be claimed in the case of CH projects (max 6000 € per subsidised unit) (p. 52).

Another source of financial support which the interviewed civil servant referred to as CH promotion is the Senate's funding for cooperative housing (S1; SenSBW, 2022b). Although he recognised

[5] This is a mandatory minimum quota for new constructions in Berlin, with exceptions (S2).

that not all cooperatives can equally be qualified as CH as this study understands it, they represent important partners in their capacity as pioneers of CH in the city. In addition to granting them privileged access to cheap land in the new social neighbourhoods, as mentioned above, the Senate is encouraging cooperatives to expand their stock by granting them interest-free loans for 10% of the total cost of new construction projects. Moreover, their members' cooperative shares are also subsidised by Berlin's investment bank for people who are entitled to housing subsidies (for a maximum of 50,000€).

A third financial support instrument for CH mentioned by the Senate's civil servant is Berlin's promotion of community housing for social institutions, i.e., service providers in child and youth welfare, social welfare, care, women's protection or in health programmes… (STATTBAU and Wohnbund, 2019, pp. 53-4). They receive extra support (500 000€ per CH project, often cluster apartments) given the urgent needs these institutions express for more space (including given the ageing population in Germany) and their special situation given that their residents 1) really need community living 2) generally have limited to no earnings (S1).

Finally, a special support program launched in 2015, the "Experimental multi-story housing in Berlin" program (SIWA), was mentioned by the interviewed civil servant as a flagship program for CH in Berlin. As part of this program, the Senate granted a total of 30 million to projects tasked with developing pioneering solutions for the construction of innovative and affordable multi-storey housing (SenSBW, 2015). The condition was that the project developers grant a share of the apartments to holders of subsidised housing entitlement certificates for a rental price of initially €6.50/m² over a period of 20 years. The selection criteria included construction materials and techniques, efficient land-use, cost savings, as well as cross-generational concepts, participation and openness to the neighbourhood. The project call was open to all private and municipal project developers, including housing associations and cooperatives, building groups, social organisations and private builders. However, out of the 10 selected model projects, 6 were projects within state owned housing associations, 2 of them by cooperatives and 2 were architect-led projects in collaboration with land foundations.

This resolve of the local government to financially support common spaces, even in cases where the total financed area (private + collective spaces) exceeds by 10% the normal surface limit eligible for funding positively impacts the affordability and thus **inclusivity** of CH commons (L1b). Additionally, given the strong ties between cooperatives and CH in Berlin[6] and in combination with its more direct support for CH, Berlin's funding of cooperative expansion favours the upscaling of a partly decommodified form of CH, and thus its inclusivity **at city level**. Moreover, subsidies for cooperative membership shares enhance its inclusivity at **house level** (L1b[7]). This support for cooperatives also supports the expansion of self-governed forms of housing. However, this positive impact on commoning is correlated to the significance of funding, which this study returns to when discussing the consequences of austerity politics.

#### *3.2.1.3. Technical support and knowledge*

The complexity inherent in planning CH highlighted in the theoretical part of this study can be both reinforced and mitigated by the way the state, in this case local government, govern it towards inclusivity and expansion. In Berlin, since 2008, STATTBAU is mandated by the Senate to offer free advice and connect interested individuals/groups to each other and to actors of the housing industry as well as to help groups find a plot of land (STATTBAU and SenSBW, 2021, p. 7; S2). Through the Netzwerkagentur, they also support the development and implementation of project ideas with their know-how.

Key instruments to the end of information provision are the regular **publications** they issue, that usually entail an introduction to the Berlin housing context, a step-by-step guide on how to plan a project and a presentation of model case projects. In the past 10 years, 4 such brochures were released, with different thematic focuses and target

[6] This is a result of CH's history in Berlin, and can be observed today for example in the image of cooperatives as pioneers of cluster apartments in the city (and elsewhere, e.g. Zürich) (STATTBAU & Wohnbund, 2019).

[7] «There, too, we have the opportunity to offer housing to people who perhaps don't have a loan or so much money on the side».

audiences. The first one, published in 2012 (and re-edited in 2015), was intended for "everyone who is interested in a housing project" (STATTBAU, 2015, p. 11). Beyond examples of successful CH projects in Berlin, it contained guidelines on how to choose the ownership form, an overview of the different steps of the process, a list of experts to reach out to as a building group. The *2016 brochure "Berliners build social neighbourhoods"* introduced the topic of CH for rent and its specificities in terms of planning and organisation (e.g., how can a group convince partners such as state-owned housing associations and cooperatives to collaborate?), as well as rental contracts. It also pointed to further **events** organised by STATTBAU to inspire and guide interested groups, or help them organise themselves in a group (pp. 73-89). Three years later, in *2019*, it produced another brochure with a focus on community living in clusters (STATTBAU and Wohnbund, 2019). Given the novel nature of clusters, many organisational, legal or contractual questions were open and had to be dealt with, such as «how do you organise a cluster?» and «Do you rent it as an association or do you sign individual rental contracts?» (S2). Thus, in addition to highlighting 4 pioneer projects in Berlin, the brochure contains a practical guide for the planning, construction and organisation of cluster housing. It exposed different cluster variants, different compatible ownership and organisation forms, different rental models, key components of the planning process (including participation), the points that deserve attention in designing cluster apartments, the existing funding that can be claimed and even how to organise living together. Finally, the latest brochure released in 2021 is entirely dedicated to community projects for rent and primarily addresses «the professional community - housing construction companies, cooperatives and project developers who will shape Berlin to a special degree in the coming years» (STATTBAU and SenSBW, 2021, p. 51).

In addition to these brochures, STATTBAU also provides **free first advice** to interested groups and individuals as well as to potential cooperation partners for CH projects and building communities (such as state-owned and private housing companies and housing cooperatives) (STATTBAU, 2022). Beyond this first advice, they direct interested parties to further CH experts through providing them with a pool of experts from which CH initiatives can

choose their partners (*ibid.*). Next to that, they regularly organise **events**, such as guided tours of existing CH projects (both online on their YouTube channel and live) or Friday cafes aimed at disseminating information about CH and enabling exchanges between interested parties, such as most recently on the topic of communal living the neighbourhoods being built in Berlin. Finally, some other events are reserved to specialists. In the past few years, key themes of such specialist salons were cluster apartments in 2018 and CH for rent in 2022.

Dissemination of information, through brochures, events or initial advice is crucial to making CH more inclusive (at house level) and to ensure its self-governance, as it to some extent contributes to building lay people's confidence that they can organise their own self-organised, user-oriented project. At the same time, in the past few years, these communication efforts seem to have been increasingly targeted at big, professional actors, which raises concerns for self-governance of CH, as these professional actors are likely to have a managerial approach focused on resource efficiency, which could leave little room for the integration of democratic structures and processes in the design and management of the housing project. Moreover, despite it being a key instrument of municipalities given its low cost (Ache and Fedrowitz, 2012), focusing efforts on building up understanding does not suffice in the current context of land scarcity and increasing complexity, as the MHS podcast made clear (2021). If part of an austerity policy strategy, such efforts are bound to fail to support the production of CH commons.

### *3.2.2. Berlin as a coordinator*

#### *3.2.2.1. Norm activation*

Although STATTBAU is bound to neutrality in its counselling function, meaning that they do not attempt to influence e.g., the ownership form taken by a given project (S2; STATTBAU, 2022), their activities do not have merely informative ends. Their efforts are also targeted at activating norms that promote CH while largely

aligning with Berlin's political objectives[8], and in that way, to shape the orientation of CH in Berlin. For instance, STATTBAU's brochures and events aim to upscale CH, among others through convincing certain actors to jump on board. As an interviewee put it «we hope that through the good examples displayed in our brochures and the regular working group meetings we organise with housing companies (…) as well as through other events, an awareness is going to emerge and push big companies to support the topic» (S2). This highlights the crucial role of exemplary, or model CH projects in Berlin's strategy, through subsidies for lighthouse projects and competitions between projects, as well as the advertising of model projects by STATTBAU (and to a lesser extent directly the Senate for Urban Development, Building and Living, in German the Senat für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen - SenSBW) through its brochures and events over the past ten years. The repeated references to STATTBAU by other interviewees reveal its normative power in the CH scene. Accordingly, in the following paragraphs, these brochures and events are examined to identify the norms activated by the city and their evolution, before these norms' impact on commoning of CH is reviewed.

*Theme 1 – CH as living in community in private dwellings*

Back in 2012, before land scarcity became an acute problem in Berlin, the main audience of STATTBAU's brochures were building groups. In its 2012 brochure 'Living in a community: From the idea to the collaborative house' (updated in 2015), STATTBAU displayed 15 project case studies, most of them resident-owned projects completed between 2007 and 2014. Openness to the neighbourhood was not yet a strong norm in the brochure, which described CH as being characterised by «the desire for living as a community in private dwellings, along with ecological construction, communal areas and

[8] Because of its close historical ties to the squatting scene and its relative independence from the state (it is a contractor), STATTBAU not only pushes the Senate's agenda onto the CH scene, but also actively shapes this agenda from the bottom up, based on insights from the ground, as an interview with one of its employees (S2) revealed.

social cohesion» (STATTBAU, 2015, p. 11). This theme became much more marginal since about 2014.

*Theme 2 – CH as a driving force of the social neighbourhood*

The norm that CH projects should be integrated in and offer benefits to their neighbourhood was however already discussed in 2012 at a professional *symposium* dedicated to the topic of CH's contribution to "social neighbourhoods" (STATTBAU, 2012). It was supported in 2014 by a *competition* for new cooperative constructions on the theme of "Generational living - living in community", following which the Senate rewarded a cooperative for its exemplary character. Decisive criteria included openness to the neighbourhood and contribution to an integrated city district (SenSBW, 2014). In 2016, CH projects' openness to and contribution to the neighbourhoods was the theme of a brochure by STATTBAU entitled "Berliners build social neighbourhoods", which can be regarded as activating it as a norm. The brochure highlighted some state services that could be assumed by CH citizens, such as the promotion of social cohesion, the development of networks of mutual help and civic engagement at the neighbourhood level (2016, p. 10; p. 76[9]). The goal of affordable housing was also formulated for CH (p. 11). Along the same line, at the end of 2018, another competition launched by the Senate rewarded projects that successfully contributed to strengthening community in and revitalising their neighbourhood with a one-off grant for the development of their community spaces (SenSBW and STATTBAU, 2019, p. 7; p. 17). Finally, this norm was also highlighted in STATTBAU's 2019 brochure on cluster apartments and its 2021 brochure on CH for rent (STATTBAU and Wohnbund, 2019, p. 6; STATTBAU and SenSBW, 2021, p. 8; p. 12). Key strategies for CH projects' openness to the neighbourhood are the integration of social service providers and the presence of public rooms on the ground floor of the building (STATTBAU and Wohnbund, 2019).

[9] «A lot of tasks can be trusted in voluntary hands. In times of tight communal budgets and increasing costs for accommodation, care and neighbourhood development, CH projects can represent an important contribution to the activation of neighbourly self-help and citizen engagement, as well as the stabilisation of neighbourhoods, and therefore also relieve the municipalities and housing companies» (STATTBAU, 2016, p. 10).

*Theme 3 – CH for rent with cooperatives and SOHC to foster inclusivity and social mixing*

The interview conducted with an employee from STATTBAU revealed 2 key interrelated themes for the Netzwerkagentur in the last years, which are also politically supported in Berlin politics. These themes are: 1) cooperative construction and CH for rent and 2) inclusion of people with low income (S2). Starting in 2010 but especially significantly in the past 3-4 years, Berlin's focus has shifted away from ownership-oriented to rental-oriented CH against the background of the increasing scarce availability of affordable housing room (STATTBAU and SenSBW, 2021, p. 7; p. 12; p. 14; S2[10]). It aims to give «people with low incomes the possibility to take part in CH» (S2).

This attention to rental CH can already be noticed in STATTBAU's 2016 brochure Berliners build social neighbourhoods. For the first time, the majority of model projects highlighted in the brochure were not (partly) resident-owned (only 4 were) but models offering safeguards from the market. This represents a deliberate shift away from ownership-oriented, increasingly professional building communities (p. 44). Housing associations and cooperatives are designated as key actors in the development of CH in the coming years (p. 7; p. 76), and arguments are presented to convince them to take up the theme of CH for rent and people wishing to live in community to consider a partnership with them (pp. 77-9).

This focus on public housing associations and cooperatives can also be found in STATTBAU's 2019 brochure on cluster apartments, in which they are designated as especially important actors to «rethink and integrate more CH concepts into their new housing construction» (p. 74). The shift of attention to rental housing is visible in their exclusive display of examples that are rental projects (p. 9). In this context, special attention is also paid to the advantages of including residents' participation in the planning phase and on

[10] «And because of the escalation here in Berlin – the price increases and the housing shortage, it is important that low-income earners and especially single parents who have a particularly hard time on the housing market in Berlin, but also old people who are not creditworthy... If they want to live together, they should be allowed to participate. That is important» (S2).

ways to achieve inclusivity in such projects, no matter the ownership model (p. 43; pp. 48-9).

Finally, STATTBAU's most recent brochure (December 2021), entitled *Community housing for rent: A concept for rental to groups in Berlin*, openly aims to lift the CH theme out of the field of ownership (*ibid*., p. 5). It points to not only large cooperatives but also state-owned housing associations as key targets of the brochure given «their political mission of developing social neighbourhoods» and significant involvement in the development of Berlin's new city districts (STATTBAU and SenSBW, 2021, p. 7). Such collaborations make CH available to people on lower incomes or who cannot easily access bank loans (e.g., pensioners) (A1) In this context, they insist on their support for a planning culture based on resident participation (citing the Lynarstraße project as positive example), while recognising that opportunities for participatory planning might be limited in CH rental projects (p. 42). This shows an awareness of the tension between self-governance and inclusivity in CH projects, and the priority given to the latter in Berlin.

The spread of this norm has so far achieved limited success as "only" 10 rental CH projects have been completed so far (S2). However, the interviewee from STATTBAU stressed that a point of awareness has been reached both within cooperatives and SOHC that implementing CH is doable and also advantageous, partly also thanks to the institutional structures set up by STATTBAU, which will be described in the next section (S2). However, this positive picture was tempered to some extent by statements from other interviewees about the reticence of SOHC (S1, L2, see above) to build CH and the reluctance of cooperatives to expand their stock (A2, S2). The representative of STATTBAU acknowledged that efforts need to be made to convince large, traditional cooperatives (which tend to be more conservative) to expand the stock of CH in the city and to include participatory processes in their planning (S2). According to one interviewee active in the Berlin cooperative scene, this is unlikely to happen, as traditional cooperatives are wary of building on state land leases due to their critical view of the state, and the risk is currently too high given the exploding cost of land and construction (A2).

*Theme 4 – Cluster apartments as the most promising form of CH*

A fourth theme pioneered by cooperatives but which was taken on by STATTBAU and the Senate around 2018 is that of cluster apartments. It has been promoted over other forms of CH by the city, notably in a dedicated brochure, on the following grounds. First, given the greater restriction of private space it fosters in comparison with most CH forms in Berlin, it also enables a more efficient use of space and therefore affordable housing (STATTBAU and Wohnbund, 2019, p. 6; pp. 19-20). Moreover, as already mentioned, this parsimonious use of space creates a surplus that can be transferred to community spaces in the framework of subsidised housing (p. 8). Additionally, the kitchenette and bathroom present in all individual units ensure a good balance between private and common life, which is more appealing to most citizens than shared apartments. Finally, a key element of cluster apartments is that they are built to allow for flexibility and adaptation by the next residents (S2). For these reasons, cluster apartments are considered as particularly innovative by the Senate, which justifies why they were also supported as part of the SIWA programme (S1[11]).

*Summing it up: betting on the power of examples*

Thus, STATTBAU and the Senate, extensively rely on model projects to activate norms for CH in Berlin. The promotion of projects as examples to follow happens not only in brochures, but also in urban development model projects such as the SIWA, whose aim is to develop experience to be replicated in standard procedures and to build up the trust of actors like Berlin's promotional bank (A1, S1). The norms propagated today echo to a large extent the vision of CH commons: intentional community, resident participation, inclusion and social mixing of residents (much more so than in 2012), openness to the neighbourhood, scaling up ambitions, and increasingly

[11] «(Communal living) still has something innovative about it because most people live in their own flats and, for example, the topic of cluster flats is something that has increasingly emerged here in Berlin in recent years. There is a difference between living in a cooperative and going to the neighbourhood meeting place on the ground floor, or in a cluster flat, where I only have one room for myself and then simply share the rest with everyone else».

decommodification of housing. However, the emphasis put by S2 on STATTBAU's efforts to convince big actors to engage with CH through the diffusion of positive examples suggests it is a key element of Berlin's upscaling strategy, which supports a qualification of the city's approach to promoting CH as rather liberal. This liberal perspective will be further examined in section 4.2.4 of this chapter, as a disabling factor of the commons.

#### *3.2.2.2. Institutional structures*

Another crucial role of Stattbau is to build **formal or informal, punctual or durable institutional structures to connect the different actors in the CH field**. For example, STATTBAU runs several local "Wohntische", which are regular meeting places for people interested in CH and whose purpose it is to act as a catalyst for the creation of new projects (S2). It also organises experience exchanges between CH projects, for example on the issue of integration in the neighbourhood, in particular through the provision of public spaces for use by the neighbourhood (SenSBW and STATTBAU, 2019, p. 34). In the past, they have also invited banks, financial institutes and foundations to take part in discussions on the topic of financing CH as part of a working group, to build their willingness to lend to projects (S2[12]).

Today, one function that STATTBAU sees as central to its work is the **mediation between prospective CH residents and the housing industry**, housing associations and private owners (STATTBAU and SenSW, 2021, p. 9). Most recently, in the framework of their efforts to build partnerships with **state-owned housing companies** described above, they successfully connected 6 groups of people interested in CH to land-owned housing associations (the GESOBAU, DEGEBO and GEWOBAG, STADT UND LAND), which agreed to offer one of their apartments to groups, to build community spaces for them and to organise some extent of participatory processes to give them a voice in

[12] «At that time ... it wasn't so clear for the banks what building groups are or what they can do. So we organised another working group with the financial institutions, with banks, with foundations» (S2).

the development of the apartment (S2; A1; examples in the brochures). To systematise these efforts, they founded a **working group called "CH for rent**" in 2019, composed of representatives of state housing companies, representatives of politics and administration, as well as engaged citizens defending the interests of Berlin's residents who strive to live in community. In several meetings and workshops, the different problems and challenges facing the realisation of community living forms for rent were identified. The cooperatives were invited to share their experience with the representatives of SOHA, to convince them of the feasibility of CH for rent (STATTBAU and SenSBW, 2021, p. 9; S2[13]). The outcome of these efforts was the elaboration of a **process that systematised** the experiences made by single projects on questions such as legal forms, how to involve inhabitants in the project and rental contract rules, to facilitate the integration of rental CH projects in new construction projects (p. 14). Moreover, to convince big actors such as municipal housing associations to integrate CH in their housing stock, STATTBAU proposed to **take over some tasks** along this process, such as the mediation between existing groups looking for a house and potential landlords, the pre-selection of groups and using its network to avoid vacancy in such CH (STATTBAU and SenSBW, 2021, p. 26; S2).

Such efforts have significant consequences for the development of CH commons as they give big, professional actors a key role in their production. For instance, the outcome of the working group's work is a substantially top-down process, in which construction companies choose the groups that move in. This has negative implications for self-governance and, in cases where these actors are SOHC, independence from the state, which are both crucial to the creation and reproduction of true commons.

### *3.2.3. Increasing requirements*

The interviews also revealed some detrimental developments instigated by the local government that threaten the formation of CH

[13] «When they hear from another housing company: "Yes, you can do it and yes, it is compatible with renting and it's not so complicated if you have someone else to support you", they believe it. When we say that, they don't believe us» (S2).

commons. The observation of concept procedures' complexity made above reflects a broader trend in Berlin's governance of CH, one of increasingly high requirements which harm non-professional actors' ability to access land and establish a CH initiative independently. These hard-to-meet requirements arise from the fact that professionalisation is expected by the Senate (S2). Professionals are indeed perceived by the senate as key allies in meeting its primary goals of building cheap housing, quickly and at scale. Beyond concept procedures, this expectation is also palpable in subsidy schemes' requirements. Indeed, different interviewees emphasised that the Senate's funding schemes are ill-suited to cluster apartments, and more even to the mixing of residents with and without entitlement to housing subsidies. For example, their standard specification for a housing unit is not automatically compatible with cluster apartments (S1[14]; A2[15]). Experts in the field, such as specialised architects, who have been in business for years «know how to get the maximum funding while integrating communal living in a way that corresponds to the senate's antiquated idea of floor plans» (A2). In contrast, for groups with little experience or insufficient financial resources to hire a project planner or an architect, «the requirements are so high that it has become difficult (…) to participate» (S2). The relevance of this exclusion is exacerbated by the current context of skyrocketing building prices, which increased the reliance of CH projects on state support.

Moreover, this expectation of professionalisation coupled to the Senate's political promise to build cheap, quickly and at scales to address the current housing crisis in Berlin implies that the groups cannot keep up with the required speed in the field of housing (A2[16]; S2[17]). This issue of irreconcilable rhythms between the senate and groups can also be observed in the way the call for projects for SIWA

[14] «Cluster apartments are not automatically compatible with the funding model, it depends how they are designed» (S1).

[15] «They have their standard specifications for housing units and how they have to fund them, and there must be so and so many bathrooms» (A2).

[16] «The rhythm is simply not compatible with the (non-professional) groups anymore» (A2).

[17] «Berlin is faced by a pressing need to build enormous social housing, notably because of bad past decisions. And this war for land as well as this professionalisation which the Berlin state expects, for example when concept procedures are tendered, accelerated everything» (S2).

program was conducted. An interview with the Senate's administration revealed that the call was made last-minute, which only gave a chance to developers who already had a concrete, ready project in the pipeline (S1[18]). Moreover, the temporalities of the Senate's budget were presented as practically irreconcilable with non-professional projects' rhythm:

> It is unusual to say "So we give you this money, come back in two years with a nice project and we'll see what you realised on the basis of this program". (…) Normally one cannot freeze some amount of money for 2-3 years and then give it away (S1).

Setting on large actors was defended by the interviewee from STATTBAU as the best available option to realise CH's social justice orientation (S2) in a context of booming land prices in Berlin. At the same time, she praised the more-dialogue-oriented approach to CH in Thübingen and other smaller towns. One of the governance instruments used by the city of Tübingen to promote a socially just CH is Dachgeno Wohnen Tübingen, a new umbrella housing cooperative initiated and financed by the city with additional funding from the state government (Dachgeno Wohnen Tübingen, n.d.). The aim of the cooperative, whose first project is currently under construction, is to bring together various CH projects, whose residents shape community life independently according to the principles of self-government. This means that decisions such as the allocation of vacant flats or the management of common areas are made by the projects themselves. Each project is supported in the planning, financing, construction, long-term management and maintenance of the buildings. To become a member of the umbrella cooperative, project initiatives can contact the cooperative with their project ideas. Networking opportunities are being developed for interested individuals without a group. As in Berlin, and independently of the umbrella cooperative, public land is leased on the basis of the best concept (with living in community, mixed use, social mix and/or community building on a neighbourhood scale and innovative architectural concepts representing favourable allocation criteria) (Forum Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen e.V.

[18] «Only the developers who had a really concrete project in mind could apply. The whole thing was a bit last minute » (S1).

Bundesvereinigung, 2016, p. 15). While the general rule is that CH groups contribute 20% of the construction costs, low-income individuals receive support from a solidarity fund within the cooperative. In addition, some of the flats in almost all projects are subsidised for members entitled to social housing. Such an approach fosters both intentional community and self-governance at the scale of the house projects of the umbrella cooperative. The housing units created are (partly) non-state and decommodified as the apartments built on state land are collectively owned and removed from the market. Through its model of land allocation, its solidarity mechanism and public subsidies for certain housing units, Tübingen supports the development of a CH that participates in the making of a more socially just city. However, the capacity of this model to provide CH at scale has yet to be demonstrated.

Thus, the Senate's business-like approach to CH – focused on efficiency and scale – favours large, professional actors and appears to be hostile to bottom-up projects. That threatens self-governance and community-building in state-supported CH projects, both of which are time-consuming processes but crucial to the (re)production of CH commons (Helfrich, Knaffl and Meretz, 2019, p. 47). This is in contrast to alternative, more dialogue-oriented governance styles which can for instance be witnessed in Tübingen.

### *3.2.4. Austerity politics and liberal perspective*

The interviews made it clear that although the Senate recognises the potential of CH, it does not rank high in its list of priorities regarding housing, which is topped by the quick, cheap and large-scale construction of new buildings to meet the high demand for affordable housing in the city. The low priority granted to CH by the Senate is first palpable in its civil servant's characterisation of the SIWA simultaneously as a building block of the Senate's support for CH and as "nothing big" (S1). Further, it is obvious in his explanation of the absence of programs specifically dedicated to supporting CH before the SIWA on the grounds that «for 10-15 years, there was no money in Berlin that could generously be distributed. The situation only changed

in the past 10 years with better economic development and population growth in the city. That's how we had tax surpluses we could use».

This consideration of CH as a cherry on the cake, which the state can only afford supporting when tax surpluses naturally occur, is confirmed by S1's statement that the SIWA program would not be repeated as it was generated by tax surpluses which the pandemic ate away. CH is thought of as something «that could receive more attention if there was more money for it». Moreover, it is associated with "a dot on the i" which the municipal housing associations often do not implement because they focus on their core task of offering cheap housing (S1).

Thus, this cherry on the cake is contrasted to «the realisation of cheap housing, which is the one, the overarching goal» (S1). This priority given to «constructing new housing to meet the demand» and to do so cheaply and quickly is also underlined by an employee at a housing cooperative (L1). Another interviewee working in an organisation with the purpose of educating on the cooperative movement, reported the visit of a German MP sitting in the commission for housing, stressing that

> all he thought about was "how to build at scales?". The quality of individual small projects is irrelevant to federal politics. The only solutions that matter are those that can generate 10 000 apartments. And in Berlin, it's pretty much the same thing (A2).

According to her, this need for scales explains the Senate's appeals to organised, professional actors with equity such as old cooperatives: they are the only actors that can construct big blocks, provide numbers (A2). The consequent timid state support for CH is emphasised by STATTBAU's employee in the following words:

> Though support for CH has been expressed in the coalition agreements of the two last ruling governments of the city and the city supports the counselling centre, there were years when there was no concept procedure, or there was no special funding dedicated specifically to it or community rooms (S2).

This profiles the above-mentioned subsidies for CH as modest. This recourse to austerity politics vis-à-vis CH was justified by S1 with liberal arguments, which are fuelled by a lack of awareness of the extent of the demand for CH in Berlin and a trust in the ability of market forces to recognise and their willingness to meet demand. Apparently unaware of the above-mentioned survey conducted by STATTBAU in 2021, which

exposed the interest of ⅓ of Berliners considering moving in an apartment for rent in cluster apartments, S1 asserted that «most people are okay with having their own apartment" and "maybe not everyone wants to live in a cluster apartment (…) At the end of the day, it's a matter of taste!» (S1). Assuming the liberal ideology underpinning his statement, he added that market players, such as private developers or cooperatives, not the senate, «are the ones who know what the demand is» (S1). As a result, he concluded that CH is supported, but not prescribed by the Senate. Such an approach is also visible in S1's recognition that the SIWA program did not enable actors upon disclosure of the call of projects, «to say "okay, that's the program and to be selected we are going to plan a project". It wasn't like that» (S1). Instead, only actors with projects in the pipeline could apply, as described above.

This half-hearted support of the Senate for CH obviously hinders its production and reproduction as a commons, as it limits state provision of land and financial resources crucial to their emergence as a community and self-governed, non-state and (partly) decommodified, social justice oriented alternative to conventional housing. In other words, in today's urban context of booming land prices, by failing to provide affordable land to enable upscaling or appropriate economic support to include low-income residents and provide neighbourhood services, the state threatens the capacity of CH to be (re)produced as commons.

## 3.3. Case study – The Lynarstraße Project

### *3.3.1. A few words about the project*

The house project "Living in community in Wedding" in the Lynarstraße was initiated by 'am Ostseeplatz', a (comparatively) small umbrella housing and building cooperative with (in July 2023, at the time of the interview) about 1000 members (L2). Since 2018, around 200 tenants spread in 98 units call the project their home. Key characteristics of the project are its location right next to the urban railroad tracks in the gentrifying neighbourhood of Wedding, the use of wood as primary building material and the promotion of community living through the organisation of most of its housing units in clusters, meaning that residents live in limited individual surfaces to the benefit

of larger shared spaces. The project is especially interesting to analyse in the context of this study as it was selected as a model project to be emulated as part of the "Experimental multi-story housing in Berlin" program (SIWA). As part of this program, the city subsidised 46 out of the project's 98 housing units, which makes it an interesting case to look at the role of financial resource allocation in the realisation of CH commons. More generally, it was designated as a flagship project by the city, used as a best-practice example in study and official visits by representatives of the Senate as well as STATTBAU's brochures (S1[19]; S2[20]; L2). This points to the project as illustrative of the vision of the city for CH and thus of the norms that it is aiming to activate.

### *3.3.2. Defining the project as a CH common*

To determine whether this flagship project of the Berlin Senate corresponds to CH commons and to get a better understanding of how this conceptual ideal can be translated and contrasted to a concrete CH case, this section analyses the Lynarstraße project along the CH commons' 5 defining criteria. The first element of the CH commons, **intentional community**, is visible architecturally at the level of the clusters which gives rise to automatic exchanges with the neighbours (L1a), as well as more broadly at the project level through the organisation of community activities (a flea market), regular meetings in working groups related to different topics of common interest (such as the garden) and the practice of sharing (e.g. a music room, a cargo bike). The impetus for community building was given by the cooperative through the organisation of a series of events early on in the project, such as a barbecue, where interested people and groups

[19] «When I have study groups or people from other countries who want to see building projects (...) then (the project manager of the Lynarstraße project) comes and presents us the project. (...) We exchange ideas when I have to show examples of best practice» (S1).

[20] «Great projects like the Lynarstraße are too rare!» (S2).

could get to know each other and decide who they would live with in a cluster (L2[21], L1a[22]).

The second feature of the CH commons, namely **self-governance**, is also present through the participation opportunities presented to the future residents during planning (referred to as one of the key characteristics of the project by its project manager), although it is limited by the important decisional power of the leadership of the Ostseeplatz cooperative. The cooperative's members and the project's future residents could shape the project in many ways. These efforts of the cooperative to bring *use value* central stage started before the start of the project, when it ran a survey among its members, inquiring about their interests in relation to future projects (L1b). These efforts were most intensive during the co-design of the floor plans by the future residents, who could choose how their apartments would be set up, with whom and where they move in (L3). They continued after completion, through the appointment of an employee of the cooperative as mediator between the cooperative's leadership and the residents (L1a) and the cooperative's agreement to let residents propose a succession in the case of units getting free, instead of imposing the next person on the cooperative's waiting list as long as the legal requirements regarding social housing entitlements are met (L1b[23]). Nevertheless, all but one interviewee involved in the project (L1a, L1b, L2, L3) also stressed the crucial role of the leadership of the cooperative in deciding which direction the house project would take. The project manager underscores that although the cooperative strives to meet the needs of its members, it is not their only consideration when building new projects, as these needs are very heterogeneous. The significant external demand for their projects (including CH projects), and economic factors (such as interest rates and subsidies) also come into play (L1b), which shows that the Ostseeplatz is taking the interests of the broader population into

[21] «About 1.5 years before planning really started, (...) a barbecue was organised (...) for people to get to know each other (...). The different flats then met in recurring meetings and found each other more and more. These meetings offered opportunities for future residents to network» (L2).

[22] «This pull factor, when you become a project resident, to automatically become part of this movement (...) is really a thing that was made possible by the project development» (L1a).

[23] «The cooperative says yes or no, but in 90% of the cases, it says yes. So it's the cluster that suggests the person» (L1b).

consideration. As a consequence, in this case, decisions regarding materials used and the building of cluster apartments were reached by the leadership (L2, L1b). Accordingly, one of the interviewees stated:

> 95% was predefined. There was not much margin for the future residents. You know the menu, you can choose the toppings, the sauce and so on. You can of course decide who you sit with. But you cannot determine whether it will be vegetarian or vegan. That's on the chef (L3).

For example, the leadership imposed the mixing of people with and without WBS (certificate of eligibility for subsidised housing) in the clusters. This, however, arose almost naturally and only had to be controlled more extensively by the cooperative for approximately 20% of the clusters (L2).

The third and fourth factors of CH commons, that is **non-state status** and (partial) **decommodification**, are primarily addressed by the ownership form of the project. It is owned by a cooperative, which has been characterised as an institutional basis for the housing commons (Nonini, 2017, p. 34). Importantly, the option for the residents to buy their unit and thus potentially sell it back on the market was ruled out from its statutes by unanimous vote in the members assembly in 2017, which constitutes a safeguard against speculation and capital accumulation from housing (L1a). One of the founding members of the cooperative however noted the weakness of this safeguard given the existence of court cases which ruled against the existence of a sound legal basis for such moves (A1[24]).

The final and crucial aspect of **social justice orientation** of the CH commons is likewise embodied by the Lynarstraße project in different ways *at house, neighbourhood, and city level*. Regarding the house level, substantial efforts were made (and paid off!) to bolster inclusivity in the project. This is reflected by the house manager's contention that «in the house, all are integrated, all are full members of the cooperative regardless of their status, their psychiatric illnesses or refugee status» (L1a). These efforts first targeted affordability and social mixing. Affordability/Low rents were described as a key aim of

[24] «This buying option was enshrined in the statutes of the cooperatives because it was founded at a time when the Senate of Berlin supported ownership-oriented cooperatives. This is a departure from the original cooperative idea, of which collective ownership is a cornerstone» (A1).

the project, to lower the economic barriers, even for those units that are not subsidised by the Senate (the average rent in the house is 8,5€/m²), thereby offering housing to all social classes (L1a, L1b). As already mentioned, embedding social mixing into the clusters was a non-negotiable condition set by the leadership of the cooperative, by requiring approximately 50% of the residents to be entitled to subsidies, thereby avoiding segregation or "social cases clusters" (L1a, L1b). Thanks to this, the house includes people who would usually not have access to CH projects (L1a[25]). An evocative example for this is the inclusion of a previously homeless person in one of the clusters (L2).

Then, beyond economic inclusivity, the project also explicitly opened its doors to residents belonging to usually marginalised groups in the context of housing, namely people with special needs and with migration backgrounds (with psychiatric conditions). Collaboration with social organisations such as the Lebenshilfe and Xenion and a resolve to avoid segregation, resulted in these groups being represented in different clusters (L3). Where a tendency to homogeneity can be observed is in the age of the inhabitants of one cluster (L1a). The project also partly addresses the critique of exclusivity formulated against cooperatives that they only cater to the needs of their members. Indeed, even though the interests of the cooperative's members received attention, notably through giving priority to those higher up on the waiting list, the cooperative tried to balance those with the public interest, which is obvious in the fact that non-members were informed about the project, invited to apply and ultimately included in the project (L1a[26], L3[27]). This inclusiveness and focus on the common good is due in large part to the progressive

[25] «Here in the house, you won't find the typical clientele that one would expect in such a community project. There are simply milieus who are explicitly looking for something like this and explicitly want a commune-like life, but the people who live in the house are generally not people who want to live in a commune» (L1a).

[26] «The project is a mixture of a cooperative approach, i.e., member-oriented, and at the same time opened to the public» (L1a)

[27] «The challenge was to maintain a balance between serving cooperative and public interest, between conducting a close-shop process and opening it up to external participation. The compromise found was that the kick-off event was public, meaning that also externs could get on the waiting list (...) but they were at the very bottom of the waiting list. If all (cooperative members higher up on the waiting list) had accepted to move in, newcomers wouldn't have gotten into the project at all» (L3).

culture of the supervisory board. This culture is fostered by the presence of various social actors on the board, such as Xenion, whose mission is not to represent the interests of the members of the cooperative, but to represent the social values of the cooperatives and the interests of people whose voices would otherwise not be heard, such as refugees with mental illnesses (L1b).

Regarding the *neighbourhood level*, the project manager stressed openness to the neighbourhood as a key aim of the project (L1b). This manifests itself in different ways. First, the needs of the neighbourhood were considered and materialised in the project. These were determined by asking neighbourhood associations and social organisations what kind of installations would serve the neighbourhood. The result of their inquiry was that a kindergarten, an apartment for people with dementia, a Diakonie Station, and a kitchen for homeless people offering some room for a versatile artistic atelier would fulfil that objective (L1b, L2). Today, these installations, be it the kindergarten or the shared apartment for people with dementia are meant for the residents of the neighbourhood. An employee from the Diakonie station located on the ground floor of the project describes the station as a local service provider in the neighbourhood, in that it offers care services and represents a connection point to general practictioners and other health services (L4). Spatially, these ground floor spaces are meant to «invite people to enter the building» (L1b, L4). This invitation is reinforced by the project's architectural openness to the neighbourhood: «we did not want to have a closed-off inner court that keeps the neighbourhood out. The court can be walked in and be owned by the neighbourhood. That happens very much» (L1b). Another facet of the project's openness to the neighbourhood is the care its planners took to communicate transparently on their plans to ensure the neighbours understood what was going on, through reassuring them on the fact they would not build expensive, owner-occupied flats and inviting them to visits of the construction site (L2). Finally, the neighbourhood is also invited to events, such as the topping out ceremony that played out on the street (L2). Nevertheless, despite these efforts to integrate into the neighbourhood and to offer low rents, the planner of the project sketches the potentially gentrifying consequences of the project, as the project demonstrated that plots in the vicinity of the railway tracks were exploitable (L2).

He describes how the street, which used to be a no-go area hosting drugs trafficking, was upgraded since the finalisation of the project:

> The drugs square no longer exists. There you now have a new building, and here, in the middle, another one is being built. It also looks much more welcoming when seen from the train. (…) The plots neighbouring the project have found investors and are being constructed. If the project did not exist, no other buildings would have appeared here, you can see it from the questions we receive from the neighbours regarding how we dealt with the constraint of the closeness to the railway tracks, for example (L2).

Lastly, at *city level*, the cooperative's expansive strategy as well as its resolve to plan projects that not only address the needs of its members but also meet the demand of other (future) citizens echoes core ambitions of housing commons, that is commoning the city. Indeed, am Ostseeplatz has a political agenda to make affordable, needs-oriented housing affordable to more people. To this end, although «the cooperative could say: we invest all the money that comes into our pockets, our shrinking debts, to sink the rents», they «decide to stabilise the rents and use our (their) profits to extend the offer of cheap housing by doing more projects» (L1b). As one interviewee noted, this expansive strategy is driven by the cooperative's leadership rather than the result of self-governance, since «if you ask a cooperative member, there's no doubt that they wouldn't be interested in new construction projects in Gartenfeld. Why should they? They already have a roof over their heads» (A1). The key role of the leadership of the cooperatives in this strategy is acknowledged by the project manager of the house, who recognises that this strategy «really hinges on the composition of the management as well as the supervisory board» (L1a). The mission of the supervisory board is not to defend individual interests but those of the common goods. It is reflected in its heterogeneous composition (experts from the construction field, social actors, squatters), meant to ensure a level of objectivity in the decisions taken (L1b). At the same time, according to the project manager, the cooperative's membership is supportive of this strategy, as demonstrated by their unanimous decision to renounce the possibility of buying their own apartment (L1b).

Am Ostseeplatz is building two further CH projects open to the neighbourhoods and with low rents (L1b). In planning these two projects, they include both their experience with the Lynarstraße house and the feedback of its residents. They decided to reproduce participatory processes but in a limited form for the sake of efficiency, asking future residents to choose from already designed floor plans, for example (L1b). In addition, they will include the house residents' preference for reduced private units and more expansive community spaces (L1b). A further consideration in the cooperative's planning of new projects is the inclusion of future residents' needs. This was achieved, in the project at hand, through building adaptable apartments that can be easily modified by their future inhabitants, based on the awareness that «this house will be there for the next 100 years» and should be able to meet evolving needs (L1b). Thus, it seems that the cooperative perceives its residents as stewards of affordable housing. Finally, to support the larger-scale development of CH commons, they also actively promote knowledge exchange with other project developers and politicians, who were also invited to visit the construction site (L2). They also do so in other fora, such as in the monthly meetings of the young cooperative network[28].

In conclusion, the Lynarstraße project is a concrete example of a CH commons, and thereby addresses most of the criticisms formulated against CH in the literature. Its residents form a largely self-governing intentional community (L1b[29]) despite considerable top-down imperatives regarding access rights (i.e., the mixing of residents with and without social housing entitlements). This is due in large part to the time and effort invested early in the project to form the clusters and deliberate together on the floor plans (L1b). This seems to support Helfrich, Meretz and Knaffl's assertion that integrating residents' needs by involving them in planning is crucial to fostering a sense of identification with the project (2019, p. 47). Additionally, it is supported by the degree of autonomy let to residents regarding the

[28] See https://junge-genossenschaften.berlin/.

[29] This conclusion is drawn based on the perspective of only one resident in the project who also happens to work for the cooperative which developed it. Interviewing several residents, some benefiting from social housing subsidies, other not, would have made a stronger case for this presentation of the residents of the project as forming a largely self-governed community (see limitations of this study).

access of new residents in case a flat gets free in their cluster, as long as about 50% units remain in the hands of residents with social housing entitlements.

Then, through its non-state status and partly decommodified form, the project is to some extent protected from both market and state. Finally, the project achieved high levels of inclusivity at house level. It substantially addresses the needs of the neighbourhood and of all present and future city residents through the inclusion of civil society actors in the supervisory board, an expansive strategy and architecturally, through making their flats adaptable to future needs. This expansive strategy is another form of constraint on the self-governance by the members of the cooperative which is "imposed" to the benefit of common good and seems to be supported by a progressive membership. An interesting development observed in the case of the Lynarstraße is that, despite the many services it renders to its neighbourhood, its contribution to upgrading it has already driven the apparition of investors in the neighbourhood. This seems to lend support to Thörn *et al.*.'s observation that also decommodified forms of CH can lead to gentrification mentioned above.

### *3.3.3. Berlin's role in the development of the Lynarstr. Project as a CH commons*

This study now turns to the factors that enabled the development of the Lynarstraße project as a practical case of CH commons, how it overcame obstacles, and the role played by the state in this process. The interest the cooperative took in CH was described by the Lynarstraße's project manager as pretty much disconnected from city governance. It was primarily driven by the many requests received from groups interested in CH by the cooperative and its close relationship to the squatter's scene (L1a[30], L1b[31]). Another factor mentioned by L1 was the previous experience of the president of the board of directors with cluster apartments in the context of another

[30] «They said «let's realise this now!» to create a project that addresses all the requests we receive» (L1a).

[31] «Given this demand, we have no doubt regarding the fact that we will find people» (L1b).

cooperative project (L1b) as well as the low rents they could achieve through high space efficiency (L1a, L1b). Although the project manager acknowledged that a last (but non-essential) impetus was given by the SIWA program[32], he suggested that even in its absence, the cooperative would have bought the plot and found another way to bring their idea to life (L1b). Thus, they hopped on the CH scene primarily following the Senate's liberal expectations. The same can be said about the cooperative's commoning intentions. That was highlighted by S1, who praised the Ostseeplatz: «it's an exemplary actor! (…) They did it on their own initiative. They planned a heterogeneous house from the very beginning, with a large diversity of residents and social organisations» (S1). The important role of the cooperative's leadership, which was already outlined, was also stressed by STATTBAU's employee:

> You simply have the right people in the decision-making positions on the directors' board. They have a mission, they want to build socially just housing, and to realise it they are willing to take more time by involving their members in planning and to work with housing subsidies" (S2).

For the translation of these motives into a CH commons project, many of the hurdles and challenges that presented themselves were surmounted with limited state intervention thanks to the **cooperative's experience, professional nature and connections**. First, the greatest obstacle in the realisation of CH projects in the past years, that of *finding a plot of land*, was overcome without state intervention and thus without participation in a concept procedure. The Ostseeplatz cooperative could buy the plot in the Lynarstraße at a low price given its location in very close proximity to the S-Bahn tracks, to an industrial area as well as owing to its shape deemed difficult to build. That is a risk the cooperative could afford to take thanks to its professional expertise and experience. Indeed, with this plot came key difficulties which the cooperative and the planners had to deal with. For instance, to be awarded a building permit, they had to get the Deutsche Bahn's approval, which was conditional on the project guaranteeing a certain level of noise protection (L1, L2).

[32] «(On top of our existing interest), there was a subsidy from Berlin to build experimental buildings, so we said "okay, let's just try these clusters"» (L1a).

Second, the cooperative's experience and professional resources also reduced its reliance on the *technical support and institutional structures* offered by the state. This was emphasised by the project manager's statements that «the cooperative's board of directors, which envisioned this project, has been doing this job for 20 years» and «did not have to be advised by the state» (L1b). For instance, the size of the clusters and their malleable nature raised questions regarding fire protection, which were resolved by the project planners hired by the cooperative (L1b; L2). Furthermore, they were able to involve the residents in planning their future home by hiring a befriended professional mediator whose role it was to take care of individual cases and questions. That would not have been manageable by the cooperative leadership or the planners/architects as they were overloaded with other responsibilities, dealing with the complicated process of receiving permits, communicating with the bank, and solving issues of funding (L3[33]). The **cooperative's network** was also exploited when it came to opening discussions with social associations for the ground floor, such as the Diakonie and the Lebenshilfe (L4, L1b). The project's timeline and the absence of any reference to the the norms championed by the senate (i.e., CH as a driving force of the social neighbourhood, CH for rent with cooperatives to foster inclusivity and social mixing and cluster apartments as the most promising form of CH) as having had any significance suggest their limited influence on the project's openness to the neighbourhood, inclusivity, or community-orientation. Quite on the contrary, STATTBAU's advertising of the project in its brochures and inviting the cooperative to share its experience suggests that the Lynarstraße project shaped STATTBAU's norms, such as its promotion of clusters apartments as an especially promising form and its determination of cooperatives as key allies for the development of a common-good oriented CH.

However, the significance of the Senate's support in *enabling* (as opposed to prompting) some of the commoning objectives of the project was recognised by both its planner and its manager. L1 highlighted the crucial role of the **Senate's subsidies** in realising their

[33] «The cooperative Am Ostseeplatz and the architects could not think about future residents' detailed questions (…) They had many issues and actors to deal with, including the city, the bank, the tender, the construction companies, … So even though they wanted to offer this participatory opportunity, they could not undertake it themselves» (L3).

inclusive vision for the house project: «We wanted to create mixing, and we were able to thanks to the SIWA support» (L1b). Moreover, he underlined that barriers to membership in the cooperative were lowered by the Senate's subsidies for cooperative shares (L1a). However, working with state subsidies to some extent added a layer of complexity to the realisation of the project, which had to be met by a certain level of expertise. In the case of the Lynarstraße project, it was successfully managed by the Ostseeplatz as it is staffed by a professional tasked with examining funding conditions and with designing eligible projects (L1b). Despite this and the Ostseeplatz's prior experience with integrating subsidised housing in their projects (L1b), several interviewees involved in the project underlined the complexity of accessing funding: «Some of the bureaucracy is hell, especially when it comes to financing: every flat has to be verified exactly and then you have to deliver documents» (L1b). That prompted a few prospective residents to «quit the project because they did not believe in the bureaucracy» (L3). The cooperative's intention to mix residents with and without entitlement to subsidies, which is hindered by funding requirements, further complicated matters and required consulting a tenancy lawyer (L1b). Thus, this seems to support the observation that the city's demanding requirements impose a **high level of expertise**.

In this case, the hard-to-meet requirements were mitigated by the fact that the project benefitted from a special status as innovative and outspokenly supported by the Senate. As a result, the Senate put much less obstacles in its way as it would in a normal situation (L2[34]). This was confirmed by L1b, who described the cooperative's relationship to the Senate as one of good collaboration. He added that the Senate «understood what we were doing, and they also tried to find solutions despite high bureaucratic hurdles» (L1b). However, this relationship from equal to equal was probably facilitated by the fact that the senate and the cooperative speak the same language. Indeed, the cooperative understands itself as «a businessman with the heart of a left activist, of a squatter», conducting «wacky projects with good commercial management» that can guarantee the economic security of its projects

[34] «The Senate had said "we support it!" and so they did not put too many obstacles in the way (of the realisation of the project)» (L2).

(L1b). The unique character of both this program (it was discontinued) and the combination of a commoners' heart with businessman's hands defining the cooperative (noted by L1[35]) raises doubts as to the generalisability of such a facilitating attitude of the state to other CH commons projects.

Nevertheless, the cooperative's commoning intentions at the city level through expansion of its stock is clearly supported by Berlin's land policies. Indeed, the two projects it is currently planning according to the same principles as the Lynarstraße[36] are both located in new urban quarters, where 25% of the stock has been reserved to cooperatives through zoning (SenSBW, 2022b). By doing so, the state Berlin supports the partial decommodification and long-term affordability of housing in the city, which are key aims of the (collaborative) housing commons. However, this expansion seems to be informed more by the experience the Ostseeplatz built in the framework of the Lynarstraße project than the institutionalisation of a formalised process for CH for rent (L1).

To conclude on the impact of state governance on commoning in the case of the Lynarstraße project, it seems not to have played a significant role in the cooperative's decision to engage in their production. Moreover, the cooperative acquired land and knowledge resources in other ways than through Berlin. However, the availability of a special subsidies program to support innovative construction as well as subsidies for cooperative shares played an important part in fulfilling the inclusivity purpose of the project, although that required massive (professional) efforts on the side of the cooperative. The Senate also explicitly supported the development of the project by restraining from putting any spoke in the cooperative's wheels, which reflects its trust in the cooperative, which is likely derived from its professional character. Despite state funding for and land allocated to the expansion of cooperative and CH housing in the city's new neighbourhoods and the resolve of the cooperative to reproduce the Lynarstraße concept, the inclusivity prospects of the future projects may be threatened by austerity politics, especially palpable in post-COVID Berlin.

[35] «I think we're more special in that sense» (L1b).

[36] Although with less intensive participatory processes and smaller individual spaces to the benefit of common spaces, with possible consequences for self-governance and community within the project (L1b, L3).

 ISBN 9788835169062

# *Conclusions*

In the face of increasingly loud calls for a right to housing and the city, and a parallel (and sometimes but not always intersecting) growing interest in collaborative forms of housing, this study set out to uncover in which ways city governance supports and hinders commoning in collaborative housing in Berlin. Several exploratory conclusions related to this question could be derived from the analysis of strategy, policy and communication documents released by the city as well as 9 semi-structured interviews with state actors, collaborative housing developers and activists. Having examined Berlin's instruments in the field of housing and their implications for the commoning of CH in a general way, this study zoomed in on a concrete case of CH commons – the cooperative Lynarstrasse project – and its relationship to the state. Through its governance approach to (collaborative) housing and the diverse instruments it uses to achieve its political aims in the field, the state of Berlin impacts the development of CH as a commons in many, sometimes ambivalent ways.

First, Berlin's decommodified and common-good-oriented model of **land allocation** should in theory favour the emergence and preservation of CH commons projects. However, in practice, the complexity of the concept procedure for accessing plots as well as the scarce and poor nature of remaining state plots represent high barriers for groups with limited time and expertise. As such, it *hampers the emergence of inclusive, self-governed CH projects and tarnishes the prospects of commoning housing more broadly*. The city's parallel efforts to incentivise its state-owned housing companies to include CH projects in their stock have yielded rather timid results so far but will likely yield more fruit in the future. This development represents a chance for inclusivity and the expansion of CH in Berlin. It also offers residents

opportunities for self-governance, although these remain limited, as the establishment of democratic structures and participatory planning methods contrast sharply with the usual modus operandi of SOHC. Moreover, given the history of privatisation of public housing in Berlin, the inclusion of CH in the state housing stock seems to only temporarily protect CH projects from commodification.

Second, the Senate's **allocation of financial resources** to the promotion of common spaces for citizens entitled to housing subsidies lowers the barriers for low-income citizens to live in CH, which fosters the affordability and thus *inclusivity* of CH commons (at *house* level). Moreover, Berlin's funding of the expansion of cooperative stock favours the upscaling of a partly decommodified form of CH, and thus its *inclusivity at city level*. Additionally, subsidies for cooperative membership shares enhance its inclusivity at house level. This support for cooperatives appears to be unmatched for other types of CH commons, such as Mietshäuser Syndikat initiatives and CH developed by non-profit landowners using leasehold structures. By emphasising the shared objectives of these different manifestations of CH commons, which exhibit significant interconnections in practice, this study advocates for a more holistic approach in Berlin towards allocating financial resources for the expansion of CH commons.

Third, the provision of **technical support and knowledge** by a central bureau (STATTBAU) free of charges observed in Berlin bolsters the inclusivity of CH (at house level) as it equips all Berlin residents with the tools and knowledge to develop self-governed, community-oriented housing. However, it has a limited impact in a context of land scarcity and increasingly complex procedures for the development of such forms of housing. The same can be said about **norm activation**. The city's strategy of advertising model projects does promote the vision of CH commons: one of intentional community and resident participation in housing development and management. Since 2012, it also increasingly emphasises social mix in CH projects, openness to the neighbourhood and the importance of scaling up ambitions and integrating CH in decommodified forms of housing. Especially its efforts to convince large actors to engage with CH discussed below are noteworthy. However, this is a rather liberal strategy whose effects might be limited, if not supported by financial and land provision.

Then, the city's **coordination** efforts today primarily **focus on big, professional actors** as key actors in the production of the CH commons, with the aim of scaling them up. This focus on professional actors reveals a business-like approach to CH focused on efficiency and scale, which can have negative implications for the creation and reproduction of true commons. As already mentioned, when these actors are state-owned housing companies, dependence on the state exposes the commons to political developments. In addition, this focus and the policymaking expectations associated with it raise the barriers to CH production, as it requires increasingly more expertise and puts commoning processes under potentially harmful time pressure. In doing so, this approach to CH can have exclusionary effects (for non-professional actors) and hinder self-governance and community-building in CH projects. This is reinforced by the fact that, due to the rivalrous nature of housing and an aging population, it is imperative to expand inclusive CH commons and ensure they fulfil their commitments to contribute to a fairer city. These imperatives warrant appropriate state intervention, through financial incentives for decommodified forms of CH but also regulation. Possible regulatory interventions identified in the literature and observed in Berlin include making financial support conditional on the allocation of a percentage of housing units to people eligible for housing benefit. As became apparent in the literature in the interviews, such requirements bring an additional level of complexity to the planning of CH projects and can harm the community-building and self-governing processes in CH. This highlights a tension between community-building and self-governance in the housing commons on the one hand, and the realisation of their social justice goals on the other.

This study suggests that the Senate's support for professional actors committed to the advancement of CH commons, such as the Ostseeplatz, can to some extent resolve this tension in today's difficult housing context. Indeed, the analysis of the Lynarstraße project opens the door to a more nuanced conceptualisation of the commons' self-governance than that found in the Berlin squats of the 1980s. In fact, it suggests that limiting some of the autonomy of the commons through integrating them into professional structures and subjecting them to regulatory requirements supporting social justice objectives does not preclude sufficient latitude for the design of resident-centred housing and the emergence of a sense of community. The involvement

of residents in participatory processes to design housing that meets their needs within certain limits can be a way of reconciling the community and autonomy aspects of the commons with the promotion of fairer housing at a neighbourhood and city scale. This, however, requires commitment from the professional project developers, as well as time, expertise and financial resources if it is to be done well. Efforts to engage future residents in planning as well as the establishment of participatory structures (such as the function of house manager) for the management of the project should be supported by the state. Further research on how to foster commitment of professional common-good-oriented actors and to design effective engagement processes and structures to strike a balance between upscaling and community-building as well as self-governance should inform state governance on this point. This strategy of targeting professional actors is, however, largely limited by self-initiative from these actors, notably to involve civil society actors in the development of CH, e.g., by giving them a say on the management board of cooperatives. This also hinges on the state provision of financial resources, which has decreased in the past years in line with the city's austerity politics. An alternative to turning to professional actors would be to explore more dialogue-oriented, state-led approaches supporting also smaller CH projects. The analysis of the case of Tübingen, among others, to assess the actual impact of such approaches and what the preconditions are for their success in promoting the development of CHC.

Finally, the austerity politics to which CH is subjected hinders its production and reproduction as a commons, as it limits state provision of land and financial resources crucial to their emergence as a community and self-governed, non-state and decommodified, social justice oriented alternative to conventional housing. In other words, in today's urban context, by failing to provide affordable land to enable upscaling or appropriate economic support to include low-income residents and provide neighbourhood services, the state threatens the capacity of CH to be (re)produced as commons. As such, the state is failing to support CHC while expecting them to take over important state responsibilities.

To conclude, it is important to note the limitations of this study and the field it opens up for further research. First, it focuses on a very specific case study, Berlin, where collaborative housing has a long history that is closely linked to the production of housing commons. As

such, its findings are not generalisable. Moreover, despite its ambition to draw conclusions about different forms of collaborative housing with commoning potential, it has primarily examined one form of CHC, housing cooperatives, as they are established housing actors in Berlin and represent the greatest potential for upscaling the housing commons. However, there are other promising models in Berlin, such as collaborations between land trusts and CH projects, or Mietshäuser Syndikat initiatives. While these models share many of the same goals, their different legal structures contribute to the diversity and self-reflectivity of the commons in Berlin, and hence to the resilience of the movement. Further research into the impact of state governance on other models of CH commons would help to develop a more valid answer to the enquiry and add to the body of knowledge on these under-researched forms of housing. Furthermore, contrasting the analysis of successful CH commons with the study of CH projects that do not fulfil their commoning potential (e.g. conservative cooperatives) or fail at producing commons (failed MHS projects) would provide a more nuanced picture of the impact of state governance on the development of CH commons. Finally, a greater involvement of affected communities in future research on this topic would not only provide rich insights into the commoning processes at hand, but also give the activists and urban residents at the heart of these processes a new source of power that could positively contribute to realising CH's potential as a housing commons.

 ISBN 9788835169062

# *References*


Ache P. and Fedrowitz M. (2012), "The Development of Co-housing Initiatives in Germany", *Built Environment*, *38*, 3: 395-412.

Aernouts N. and Ryckewaert M. (2019), "Reproducing Housing Commons. Government Involvement and Differential Commoning in a Housing Cooperative", *Housing Studies*, 34, 1: 92-110.

Awan L., Baum A., Gegg M., Gennies S., Lehmann H., Meidinger D. and Wittlich H. (2019), "Wer profitiert vom Berliner Mietmarkt", *Tagesspiegel*. Text available at the website: https://interaktiv.tagesspiegel.de/lab/mieten-und-renditen/ (04/06/2022).

Balmer I. and Bernet T. (2015), *Housing as a common resource? Decommodification and self-organisation in housing – Examples from Germany and Switzerland*, in Dellenbaugh M., Kip M., Bieniok M., Müller A.K. and Schwegmann M., eds., *Urban Commons: Between State and Market,* Bauverlag and Birkhäuser Verlag, Gütersloh/Basel.

Berge E. and van Laerhoven F. (2011), "Governing the Commons for Two Decades: A Complex Story", *International Journal of the Commons*, 5, 2: 160-187.

Bernet T. (2021), *Muskelhypothek und Staatsknete Zur Ökonomie der Förderung baulicher Selbsthilfe in der Berliner Stadterneuerung nach 1980*, in Holm A. and Laimer C., eds., *Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen und selbstorganisiertes Bauen*, TU Wien Academic Press, Wien.

Bernet T. (2022), *On the Radical Potential of the Cooperative Idea (and Certain Problems in its Actualization)*, in id22, ed., *Social-Ecological Cooperative Housing*, Jovis, Berlin.

Berry J. M. (2002), "Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing", *Political Science and Politics*, 35, 4: 679-682.

BIM Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH (2022), “Die Berliner Liegenschaftspolitik”, *BIM*. Text available at the website: https://www.bim-berlin.de/unserunternehmen/liegenschaftspolitik/ (22/08/2022).

BIM Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH (2016), “Konzeptverfahren: Kurz und knapp”, *BIM*. Text available at the website: https://www.bim-berlin.de/fileadmin/Bilder_BIM_Website/3_Immobilien/Verkauf/Konzeptverfahren/BIM_Broschuere_Konzeptverfahren_low_Doppelseiten.pdf.

Boeije H. (2009), *Analysis in Qualitative Research*, SAGE, London.

Bollier D. and Helfrich S. (2019), *Free, Fair, and Alive: The Insurgent Power of the Commons*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC.

Böttcher D. (2020), “Freitagscafé Netzwerkagentur Generationenwohnen”, *Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen*. Text available at the website: https://www.netzwerkgenerationen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Downloads_brosch%C3%BCren-dokumentationen/2020-0821_IVA29_Folien_Traeger_Exp.Geschosswohnungsbau_Foerderprogramme_IBB-KfW-SenWEB.pdf.

Brandsen, T. and Helderman J.K. (2012), *The Conditions for Successful Co-Production in Housing: A Case Study of German Housing Cooperatives*, in Pestoff V., Brandsen T. and Verschuere B., eds., *New public governance, the third sector, and co-production*, Routledge, London.

Bremer Höfe e.G. (2011), “Satzung der Wohnungsbaugenossenschaft Bremer Höhe eG.”, *Breme Höfe e.G.* Text available at the website: https://www.bremer-hoehe.de/media/pdf/Satzung/Aktuelle%20Satzung%2006-2011.pdf (05.02.2024).

Bruun M. H. (2015), *Communities and the Commons: Open Access and Community Ownership of the Urban Commons*, in Borch C. and Kornberger M., eds., *Urban commons. Rethinking the City*, Routledge, London.

Bunce S. (2015), “Pursuing urban commons: Politics and Alliances in Community Land Trust Activism in East London”, *Antipode,* 48, 1: 134-150.

Carrard C. (2021), “A la une de l’hebdo. Logement: La loi du plus riche”, *Courrier International.* Text available at the website:

https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/la-une-de-lhebdo-logement-la-loi-du-plus-riche (17/08/2022).
Castillo Ulloa I. (2015). *Acting in Reality Within the Cranny of the Real: Towards an Alternative Agency of Urban Commons*, in Dellenbaugh M., Kip M., Bieniok M., Müller A.K. and Schwegmann M., eds., *Urban Commons: Between State and Market,* Bauverlag and Birkhäuser Verlag, Gütersloh/Basel
Chatterton P. (2013), "Towards an Agenda for Post-carbon Cities: Lessons from Lilac, the UK's First Ecological, Affordable Cohousing Community", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37, 5: 1654-1674.
Chatterton P. (2016), "Building Transitions to Post-capitalist Urban Commons, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *41*, 4: 403-415.
Chiodelli F. (2015). "What Is Really Different between Cohousing and Gated Communities?", *European Planning Studies*, 23, 12: 2566-2581.
Czischke D. (2018), "Collaborative Housing and Housing Providers: Towards an Analytical Framework of Multi-stakeholder Collaboration in Housing Co-production", *International Journal of Housing Policy*, *18*, 1: 55-81.
Dachgeno Wohnen Tübingen (n.d.), "Die Dachgenossenschaft Wohnen - Fragen and Antworten", *Dachgeno Wohnen Tübingen*. Text available at the website: https://dachgeno-tue.de/die-dachgenossenschaft-wohnen-fragen-antworten/ (10/03/2024).
Schönball, R. (2020), "Mieten in Berlin steigen in fünf Jahren um 44 Prozent", *der Tagesspiegel*. Text available at the website: https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/mieten-in-berlin-steigen-in-funf-jahren-um-44-prozent-4183216.html (22/08/2022).
Deutsche Wohnen and Co Enteignen (2021), "Wohnen als Menschenrecht", *Deutsche Wohnen and Co Enteignen.* Text available at the website: https://www.dwenteignen.de/2021/08/wohnen-als-menschenrecht/ (24/08/2022).
Droste C. (2015), "German Co-housing: An Opportunity for Municipalities to Foster Socially Inclusive Urban Development?", *Urban Research and Practice,* 8, 1: 79-92.
Fedrowitz M. (2016), "Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen–Stand und Entwicklung in Deutschland", *Nachrichten der ARL*, *1*: 9-12.

Ferreri M. and Vidal L. (2022), "Public-cooperative Policy Mechanisms for Housing Commons", *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 22, 2: 149-173.

Forum Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen e.V. Bundesvereinigung (2016), "Grundstücksvergabe für gemeinschaftliches Wohnen: Konzeptverfahren zur Förderung des sozialen Zusammenhalts, bezahlbaren Wohnraums und lebendiger Quartiere. Praxisbeispiele aus Tübingen, Hamburg, München und Berlin", *Forum Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen e.V. Bundesvereinigung*. Text available at the website: https://verein.fgwev.de/media/forum_konzeptverfahren_1.pdf (10/03/2024).

Fossey E.; Harvey C., McDermott F., Davidson L. (2002), "Understanding and Evaluating Qualitative Research", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 36: 717-732.

Foster S.R. (2011), "Collective Action and the Urban Commons", *Notre Dame Law Review*, 87, 1: 57-134.

Fromm D. (2012), "Seeding Community: Collaborative Housing as a Strategy for Social and Neighbourhood Repair, *Built Environment*, *38*, 3, 364-394.

Griffith E. J., Jepma M. and Savini F. (2022), "Beyond Collective Property: A Typology of Collaborative Housing in Europe", *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 24, 1: 1-21.

Hall Z. D. (2021), "In Berlin 85% of People Rent Their Homes – and Prices Are Spiralling", *Financial Times*. Text available at the website: https://www.ft.com/content/4f02ecb1- 31cf-4125-b482-478b031d2e8d (04/06/2022).

Helfrich S., Meretz S. and Knaffl T. (2021), *Commons statt Gemeinschaft Anders bauen und wohnen*, in Holm A. and Laimer C., eds., *Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen und selbstorganisiertes Bauen*, TU Wien Academic Press, Wien.

Hesse-Biber S.N. and Leavy P. (2011), *The Practice of Qualitative Research* (2 ed.), Sage Publications, Los Angeles, CA.

Holm A. (2010), "Baugruppen mit Gentrification-Garantie". *Gentrification Blog*. Text available at the website: https://gentrificationblog.wordpress.com/2010/09/18/berlin-baugruppen-mit-gentrification-garantie/ (31/07/2022).

Holm A., and Laimer C. (2021), *Einleitung,* in Holm A. and Laimer C., eds., *Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen und selbstorganisiertes Bauen*, TU Wien Academic Press, Wien.
Holm A., Kravetz A., Laimer C. and Steinfeld, J. (2021), *Bausteine für ein Neues soziales Wohnen*, in Holm A. and Laimer C., eds., *Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen und selbstorganisiertes Bauen*. TU Wien Academic Press, Wien.
Hyra D., Moulden D., Weted C., and Fullilove M. (2019), "A Method for Making the Just City: Housing, Gentrification, and Health", *Housing Policy Debate*, *29*, 3: 421-431.
Id22 (2022), *Social Ecological Cooperative Housing*, jovis Verlag, Berlin.
Jarvis H. (2011), "Saving Space, Sharing Time: Integrated Infrastructures of Daily Life in Cohousing", *Environment and Planning*, 43: 560-577.
Kip M, Bieniok M., Dellenbaugh M., Müller A.K. and Schwegmann, M. (2015), *Seizing the (Every)day: Welcome to the Urban Commons*, in Dellenbaugh M., Kip M., Bieniok M., Müller A.K. and Schwegmann M., eds., *Urban Commons: Between State and Market,* Bauverlag and Birkhäuser Verlag, Gütersloh/Basel.
König B. (2022), *Cooperative: A Sustainable Idea*, in id22, ed., *Social-Ecological Cooperative Housing*, Jovis, Berlin.
Kornberger M. and Borch C. (2015), *Introduction: Urban commons*, in Borch C. and Kornberger M., eds., *Urban Commons: Rethinking the City*, Routledge, London.
Kratzwald B. (2015), *Urban Commons - Dissident practices in emancipatory spaces*, in Dellenbaugh M., Kip M., Bieniok M., Müller A.K. and Schwegmann M., eds., *Urban Commons: Between State and Market,* Bauverlag and Birkhäuser Verlag, Gütersloh/Basel.
Kriese U. (2022), *The Housing Question is an Ownership Question is a Land Question*, in id22, ed., *Social-Ecological Cooperative Housing*, Jovis, Berlin.
Lafond M. (2019), "CoHousing in Berlin", *SOA Cohousing Here*. Text available at the website: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JK-JJXWcCTI (20/05/2022).
Lamarca M. G. (2015), *Insurgent Acts of Being-in-common and Housing in Spain: Making Urban Commons*, in Dellenbaugh M., Kip M., Bieniok M., Müller A.K. and Schwegmann M., eds., *Urban*

*Commons: Between State and Market,* Bauverlag and Birkhäuser Verlag, Gütersloh/Basel.
Lang R., Carriou C. and Czischke D. (2020), "Collaborative Housing Research (1990-2017). A Systematic Review and Thematic Analysis of the Field", *Housing, Theory and Society*, 37, 1: 10-39.
Mahoney J. and G Goertz (2006), "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research", *Political Analysis,* 14: 227-249.
Marckmann B., Gram-Hanssen K. and Christensen T.H. (2012), "Sustainable Living and Co-housing: Evidence from a Case Study of Eco-villages", *Built Environment*, 38, 3: 413-429.
Mieder R. (2013), "Genossenschaften: Der Erbe wird Mitglied auf Zeit", *MieterMagazin 5, 13.* Text available at the website: https://www.berliner-mieterverein.de/magazin/online/mm0513/genossenschaften-der-erbe-wird-mitglied-auf-zeit-051324.htm (5/02/2024).
Mietshäuser Syndikat GmbH (2021), "Das Mietshäuser Syndikat und seine Projekte: Keine Profite mit der Miete. Sozialer und bezahlbarer Wohnraum für alle", *Mietshäuser Syndikat GmbH.* Text available at the website: https://www.syndikat.org/broschuere-nr-8-2021/ (29/01/2024).
Müller A. K. (2015), *From Urban Commons to Urban Planning – or Vice Versa? "Planning" the Contested Gleisdreieck Territory*, in Dellenbaugh M., Kip M., Bieniok M., Müller A.K. and Schwegmann M., eds., *Urban Commons: Between State and Market,* Bauverlag and Birkhäuser Verlag, Gütersloh/Basel.
Netzwerk Berliner MHS-Initiativen (2021), "Five Shades of Scheitern", *Netzwerk Berliner MHS-Initiativen Podcast*. Podcast available at the website: https://soundcloud.com/user-396159572/04-five-shades-of-scheitern (28/07/2022).
Netzwerk Immovilien e.V. (2022), "Strukturen und Prozesse für mehr Gemeinwohl", *Netzwerk Immovilien e.V.* Text available at the website: https://www.netzwerk-immovielien.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/220613_Immovielien-Heft2_web.pdf (29/01/2024).
Nonini D. (2017), "Theorizing the Urban Housing Commons", *Focaal*, 2017, 79: 23-38.
OECD (2020), "Social housing: A key part of past and future housing policy: Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Policy Briefs",

*OECD*. Text available at the website: http://oe.cd/social-housing-2020 (20/06/2022).
Opazo Ortiz D. (2015), *Creating and Appropriating Urban Spaces – The Public Versus the Commons: Institutions, Traditions, and Struggles in the Production of Commons and Public Spaces in Chile*, in Dellenbaugh M., Kip M., Bieniok M., Müller A.K. and Schwegmann M., eds., *Urban Commons: Between State and Market,* Bauverlag and Birkhäuser Verlag, Gütersloh/Basel.
Ostrom E. (1990), *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*, Cambridge university press, Cambridge.
Pappsatt and ReclaimYourCity.net (2024), "Berlin Besetzt", *ReclaimYourCity.net*. Text available at the website: https://berlin-besetzt.de/# (23/01/2024).
Parker P. and Johansson M. (2012), Challenges and Potentials in Collaborative Management of Urban Commons, in Besednjak Valic T., Modic D. and Lamut U., eds, *Multi-faceted Nature of Collaboration in the Contemporary World*, Vega Press, Ltd.
Parker P. and Schmidt S. (2017), "Enabling Urban Commons", *CoDesign*, *13*, 3: 202-213.
Pickerill J.M. (2015), *Building the Commons in Eco-communities*, in Kirwan S., Dawney L. and Brigstocke J., eds., *Space, Power and the Commons*, Routledge, London.
Pithouse R. (2014). "An Urban Commons? Notes from South Africa", *Community Development Journal*, *49*(suppl_1): i31-i43.
Portelli S. and Tschoepe, A.Y. (2020), "Activist* scholar Collaborations in Times of Crisis, and Beyond: Reflections on 'Urban Activism: Staking Claims in the 21st century", *Radical Housing Journal*, 2, 2.
Ressourcenwende (2022), "Policy Briefing: Wir brauchen eine sozial-ökologische Wohn- und Bauwende", *Stiftung trias*. Text available at the website: https://www.stiftung-trias.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/Wohn-und-Bauwende_Ressourcen-wende_2022.pdf (3/09/2022).
Rogojanu A. (2015), "Gemeinschaftliches Bauen und Wohnen zwischen Selbstorganisation, Solidarität und stadtpolitischen Interessen", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde,* 118, 3-4: 177-201.
Sargisson L. (2012), "Second-wave Cohousing: A Modern Utopia?", *Utopian Studies,* 23, 1: 28-56.

Scheller D. and Thörn H. (2018), "Governing 'Sustainable Urban Development' Through Self-build Groups and Co-housing: The Cases of Hamburg and Gothenburg", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

Scheller D. (2020), *Hamburg: Housing movements and local government*, in Hagbert P., Larsen H. G., Thörn H. and Wasshede C., eds., *Contemporary Co-housing in Europe: Towards Sustainable Cities*, Routledge, London.

Schmid S. (2021), *Typologie des gemeinschaftlichen Wohnens oder wie gemeinschaftliches Wohnen als Reflektor der Gesellschaft dient*, in Holm A. and Laimer C., eds., *Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen und selbstorganisiertes Bauen*, TU Wien Academic Press, Wien.

Seddon Kilbinger S. (2023), "Co-operative Housing in Germany is Making a Comeback", *German Real Estate Finance REFIRE*. Text available at the website: https://www.refire-online.com/markets/housing-cooperative-comeback/ (05/02/2024).

Senatsverwaltung für Finanzen (2022), "Transparente Liegenschaftspolitik", *Senatsverwaltung für Finanzen*. Text available at the website: https://www.berlin.de/sen/finanzen/vermoegen/liegenschaften/transparente-liegenschaftspoliti k/artikel.702602.php (19/08/2022).

Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen (2014), "Ergebnis des genossenschaftlichen Neubauwettbewerbs 2014", *Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen*. Text available at the website: https://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/wohnen/wohnungsbau/de/strategie/genossenschaften/genossenschaften_wettbewerb2014.shtml (28/08/2022).

Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen (2015), "30 Millionen Euro für kostengünstigen und experimentellen Wohnungsbau", *Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen*. Text available at the website: https://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/aktuell/pressebox/archiv_volltext.shtml?arch_1511/nachricht5845.html (28/08/2022).

Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen and STATTBAU Stadtentwicklungsgesellschaft mbH. (2019), "Gemeinschaft stärken, Quartier beleben. Projekte in Berlin", *Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen.* Text available at the website: https://www.netzwerk-

generationen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Downloads_broschüren-dokumentationen/2019-10-28_Broschuere_best_practice_web.pdf (28/08/2022).
Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen (2022a), "Neubau: Konzeptverfahren", *Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen*. Text available at the website: https://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/wohnen/wohnungsbauleitstelle/konzeptverfahren/index.shtml (28/08/2022).
Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen (2022b), "Neubau: Genossenschaftsförderung", *Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen*. Text available at the website: https://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/wohnen/wohnungsbau/de/genossenschaftsfoerderung/index.shtml (28/08/2022).
Stadtbodenstiftung (n.d.), "Ein Community Land Trust für Berlin", *Stadtbodenstiftung*. Text available at the website: https://www.stadtbodenstiftung.de/community-land-trust/ (29/01/2024).
Statista (2022). *Anzahl der fertiggestellten Wohnungen im Wohn- und Nichtwohnbau in Berlin in den Jahren von 1991 bis 2020*. Text available at the website: https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/259681/umfrage/fertiggestellte-wohnungen-in-berlin/ (25/08/2022).
STATTBAU Stadtentwicklungsgesellschaft mbH Netzwerkagentur GenerationenWohnen (2012), "Fachtag zum Thema: Bündnis für soziale Nachbarschaften, *STATTBAU*. Text available at the website: https://www.netzwerk-generationen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Fachtag_Soziale_Nachbarsch_Doku.pdf.
STATTBAU Stadtentwicklungsgesellschaft mbH Netzwerkagentur GenerationenWohnen (2015), "Wohnen in Gemeinschaft. Von der Idee zum gemeinsamen Haus (2nd ed.) ", *STATTBAU*. Text available at the website: https://www.netzwerk-generationen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Downloads_broschüren-dokumentationen/Wohnen-in-Gemeinschaft_Onlineversion.pdf.
STATTBAU Stadtentwicklungsgesellschaft mbH Netzwerkagentur GenerationenWohnen (2016), "Wohnen in Gemeinschaft. Berliner bauen Soziale Nachbarschaften", *STATTBAU*. Text available at the website: https://www.netzwerk-

generationen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Downloads_broschüren-dokumentationen/2016_Broschuere_SozialeNachbarschaften.pdf.
STATTBAU Stadtentwicklungsgesellschaft mbH Netzwerkagentur GenerationenWohnen, and Wohnbund e.V (2019), "Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen im Cluster. Ein praktischer Leitfaden zum Planen, Bauen und Wohnen", STATTBAU. Text available at the website: https://www.netzwerk-generationen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Downloads_broschüren-dokumentationen/2019-12-13_Broschuere_Cluster_web.pdf.
STATTBAU GmbH Netzwerkagentur GenerationenWohnen, and Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen (2021), "Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen zur Miete: Ein Verfahren zur Vermietung an Wohngruppen in Berlin", *STATTBAU*. Text available at the website: https://www.netzwerkgenerationen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Downloads_brosch%C3%BCren-dokumentationen/Gemeinschaftliches_wohnen_zur_Miete_web.pdf.
STATTBAU GmbH Netzwerkagentur GenerationenWohnen, and Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen (2022). "Beratung", *STATTBAU*. Text available at the website: https://www.netzwerkgenerationen.de/aufgaben/beratung?tx_cookiecontrol_main%5Baction%5D=submitandcHash=cc97e50906394c01fe7c440727c4ecf6.
Susser I. and Tonnelat S. (2013), "Transformative Cities: The Three Urban Commons", *Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology,* 66: 105-132.
Thörn H., Gutzeon Larsen H., Hagbert P. and Wasshede C. (2020), *Constraints and possibilities for cohousing to address contemporary urban and ecological crises: A conclusion*, in Hagbert, P., Gutzon Larsen, H., Thörn, H. and Wasshede, C., eds., *Contemporary Co-housing in Europe. Towards Sustainable Cities?,* Routledge, London.
Tummers L. and MacGregor S. (2019), "Beyond Wishful Thinking: a FPE Perspective on Commoning, Care, and the Promise of Cohousing, *International Journal of the Commons*, *13*, 1.
Vidal L. (2019), "Securing social gains in, against and beyond the state: The case of Denmark's "Common Housing"", *Housing, theory and society*, 36, 4: 448-468.

Wohnungsbaugenossenschaften Deutschland e.V. (2022), “How Housing Cooperatives Work”, *Wohnungsbaugenossenschaften Deutschland e.V*. Text available at the website: https://www.wohnungsbaugenossenschaften.de/genossenschaften/how-cooperatives-work.

 ISBN 9788835169062

# *Appendices*

## Appendix 1 – Topic guide for the semi-structured interview of L2b

Who are you and what is your relationship to the project? To the rest of the CH scene?

Defining the project as a CH commons:

- **Interest for collaborative housing**: What triggered the cooperative's interest in collaborative housing? Was it inspired or advised by specific actors?
- **Self-governance:**
  - Which participatory processes were involved in the development of the project?
  - Chances, hurdles involved?
  - Consequences?
- **Social justice orientation at house level**
  - How was social mixing achieved, at the level of the house and in the clusters? Were there chances/hurdles involved? Did it happen spontaneously or did the cooperative have to enforce it?
  - Which consequences does this social mixing have for the development of the project, especially regarding integration in the community of residents and involvement in the self-governance structures of the project?
- **Social justice orientation at neighbourhood level**
  - How was integration in the neighbourhood achieved in the project? How is the project's relationship with the neighbourhood?

- **Social justice orientation at city level**
    - **Expansion**: Are you planning other such projects?
    - **Consideration of public interests:** Social actors sit on the supervisory board: is this common for eGs?
    - **Right of access:** How do new residents move in the project?

Producing a housing commons

- **Access to land**: How did the cooperative acquire the plot of land on which the project was built? Were any chances and/or hurdles involved? Which ones?
- **Finances**: How was the project financed? Were any chances and/or hurdles involved? Which ones?

Relationship to the state

- Who were the cooperative's contact point on the side of the Berlin State's government/administration?
- In which ways did the state support the project? Hinder it?
    - Especially in the production phase: acquisition of plot, financial support?
    - How were financial subsidies obtained (process)?
        - Did the cooperative already have experience with state subsidies?
        - How did it influence the project?
- What in the political and legal context represented chances or hurdles for the development of the project?
- Are you still in contact with the Senate in the context of a follow-up of the project?

Concluding questions

- What was different in this project from the other projects of the cooperative? What did you learn? What would you do differently?
- Are there any other actors with whom I should speak?

## Appendix 2 – Extract of the outcome of axial-coding

| *Category* | *Code* | *Type* | *Description* | *Example from data* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Interest in CH* | Demand | *Deductive* | The demand received/perceived by the cooperative for CH is described. | "(die Genossenschaft) hat in den letzten Jahren mit Gruppen gearbeitet, die dieses Gemeinschaftlich gesucht haben, und regelmäßig Anfragen gehabt von externen Gruppen, Baugruppen, die die Genossenschaft gefragt haben, ob die Genossenschaft bereit war, Neubauten zu machen. Und da wurde sozusagen dieses Thema Cluster-/gemeinschaftliches wohnen wahrgenommen"(L 1a) |
| | Cost-efficiency | *Deductive* | CH as enabling housing affordability | "eine Reaktion drauf dass es immer teurer wird und man dadurch auch sein Wohnraum reduzieren muss" |
| | Squatter | *Deductive* | A link is drawn between the cooperative and the squatter scene. | "er hat halt große Kontakte halt auch in die Szene von der Rigaerstraße"(L2) |

| *Category* | *Code* | *Type* | *Description* | *Example from data* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Lynarstraße as a CH Commons* | Intentional community | *Inductive* | Reference to close relationships between the residents of the project. | "Und dann ist es halt - wie gesagt - immer wiederkehrend haben sich dann die unterschiedlichen Wohnungen, die sich dann immer mehr und mehr gefunden haben, getroffen. Und dass die untereinander auch vernetzt werden" (L2) |
| | Self-governance | *Inductive* | The extent and/or form taken by self-governance, at house or cooperative level, in the design of the project or in the long term, is discussed. | "Gleichzeitig konnte man sich aussuchen Duchen/Badewanne, Farben, mit wem ich mit auf die Etage ziehe, welche Grundrisse möchte ich: ein großes Zimmer oder 2 kleine, wo mach ich die Tür drin? In welchem Ort des Bauwerks, wo möchte ich einziehen? Das waren alle Möglichkeiten, die ich mit den besprochen habe" (L3) |

| *Category* | *Code* | *Type* | *Description* | *Example from data* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Decommodi-fication | *Inductive* | The mechanisms established by the cooperative to safeguard it from market appropriation are discussed. | "die Eigentumsübertragung wurde abgeschafft. Also es gab ein einstimmiges Votum bei der Mitgliederversammlung 2016/17 dass wir uns nicht mehr in Einzel Eigentum aufteilen. Also aus der Satzung raus" (L1a) |
| | Social Justice Orientation - Inclusivity | *Inductive* | The cooperative's resolve not to exclude anyone from its projects (low income, refugees, people with special needs, non-members of the cooperative…) is expressed. | "wir wollen allen Volksschichten in Berlin eine Wohnung anbieten können. Wir wollen keine Mittelstands Genossenschaft sein"(L1b) |
| | Social Justice Orientation – Neighbourhood's needs | *Inductive* | The instruments used by the cooperative to address the needs of the neighbourhood are highlighted. | "Die (Gewerbe) wurden mit einer Umfrage im Kiez festgestellt: Was ist der Bedarf?" (L2) |

| *Category* | *Code* | *Type* | *Description* | *Example from data* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Social justice orientation - Commoning the city | *Inductive* | The cooperative's resolve to make affordable housing available to all Berliners, is expressed. | "die Gewinne die wir machen, die benutzen wir um weiteren günstige Wohnraum anzubieten"(L1a) |
| *Success factor in the Ostseeplatz's DNA* | "Kaufmann" /Professional | *In-vivo* | The professionalism and/or business-orientation of the cooperative is stressed. | "die Grundfrage ist: "Wie sind wir wirtschaftlich abgesichert? Wie entsprechen wir die Förderung? Da ist sozusagen die Genese. D.h. natürlich stößt man auf Probleme, aber es ist nicht so "es kommt ein Problem, lösen wir das!" sondern nee wir müssen gewisse Dinge sicherstellen: wie stellen wir die sicher?"(L1b) "Richard ist so einer der Verkaufmänner" (L3) |
| | Experience and network | *Deductive* | The way the experience and the network of the cooperative facilitated the success of the project are evoked. | "Der Vorstand der Genossenschaft der das hier projektiert hat, der macht den Job seit 20 Jahren, also der hat viel mit diesem Thema zu tun gehabt, auch mit Stattbau gearbeitet" (L1b) |

| *Category* | *Code* | *Type* | *Description* | *Example from data* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Relationship to the state* | Enabling | *Inductive* | The ways in which state intervention enabled the creation of commons are discussed. | "Die Genossenschaftsanteile sind in dem Bereich, die für alle Menschen finanzierbar sind. Also selbst das Amt übernimmt die Genossenschaftsanteile weil es mehr ist wie eine Kaution bei uns"(L1a) |
| | Model function | *Deductive* | The model function of the project from the perspective of the state is expressed. | "Lynarstraße als "eines der Vorzeigeprojekte geworden dieses ganzen Programms" (S1) |
| | "Own initiative" | *In-vivo* | The spontaneous common good orientation of the cooperative is emphasised. | "die das aus sich aus so machen. Die haben das ganze Haus vom vorderan sehr heterogen geplant mit viel verschieden Bewohner und soziale Träger" (S1) |

Note: This is a selection from a much more extensive table in which all quotes identified as relevant were classified per category.

 ISBN 9788835169062

# *Acknowledgements*

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who have supported this research and writing endeavour. This journey has been marked by many inspiring encounters with those working towards more just housing.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to the collaborative housing activists I met through my internship at id22 in Berlin. I am indebted to my exceptional colleagues at id22 – especially Giulia Carones, Dr Michael Lafond and Vasylysa Shchogoleva – for their trust, encouragement and the light they shed on this initially unfamiliar subject and context. Special mention goes to Caroline Rosenthal and André Sacharow for their conceptual impulses and influence on this work. It has been an immense privilege to learn and collaborate with each of you. I am grateful to my interviewees for their generous time, their valuable reflections and their patience with my hesitant German.

My gratitude also goes to Professor Joris Scheers, without whose guidance this study would not have seen the light of day. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity and freedom to delve into this pertinent topic and for the trust and encouragements offered throughout. I would also like to thank Prof. Pieter van den Broeck, Xenia Katsigianni and Clara Medina Garcia at the Catholic University of Leuven for their additional support and insights. A special mention goes to Alessio Surian for his keen interest in my research and for providing a platform for reflective dialogue in his own classroom. Thanks more generally to the professors and students of the STeDe master's who have provided me with critical lenses through which to look at relationships of power and fairness in urban contexts and beyond.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for giving me the strength to persevere in the face of the sometimes overwhelming task of providing relevant answers to the big questions raised in this study.


# Governance of collaborative housing: towards an urban commons?

## A Berlin case study

Cities worldwide are grappling with escalating housing costs that burden low-income citizens and threaten to turn urban centres into exclusive spaces. In Berlin, where the majority of residents are tenants, housing commons have emerged as a source of hope for urban citizens and activists concerned with guaranteeing residents' right to housing and a resident-centred city. In parallel, there has been a resurgence of interest among citizens and local authorities in collaborative housing, characterised by both community and self-governance structures. However, scholars have questioned state support for the movement based on its exclusivity in stark contrast with its promises to create inclusive housing and social cohesion at the neighbourhood scale.

This study examines the impact of state governance on the development of CH as a housing commons in Berlin, that is, as a decommodified, non-state form of collaborative housing that pursues the goals of inclusivity and serves the interests of the neighbourhood and city as a whole. It analyses policy documents and communication materials published by the state of Berlin, as well as semi-structured interviews with 9 state actors, CH developers and activists.

It finds that the provision of state resources can support the production of more inclusive forms of CH and contribute to the commoning of housing in the city. However, the increasing requirements for accessing resources, resulting from the Senate's focus on professional actors with upscaling potential and the active promotion of social justice objectives in housing, raise the barriers for small groups to participate in the creation of the CH commons. This is problematic for the self-governance and community aspects of the CH commons. Appropriate participatory processes and structures, especially in non-profit projects initiated by bigger actors (cooperatives, social housing providers), represent an opportunity to reconcile the issues of self-governance and community with the social justice ambitions of the commons (including their extension and inclusiveness). However, the austerity politics in which CH is increasingly embedded are a major obstacle to the development of CH Commons of this sort.

**Chloé Jonniaux** graduated from an Erasmus Mundus Master's in Sustainable Territorial Development. She contributed to an e-book on Social Ecological Cooperative Housing and has been working with id22 on promoting decommodified and ecological forms of Collaborative Housing in Berlin and beyond. She is now active in the field of citizens' engagement in policy-making in Germany and at EU-level.

FrancoAngeli
La passione per le conoscenze