

# Squatting in Potsdam between 1980 and 2000

## ...under two different systems

Between 1980 and 1989, squatting („Schwarzwohnen“) was a silent act and predominantly a way to resolve a housing shortage, independent of the socialist government which controlled the housing industry. An example is the *Holländer Viertel* between 1984 and 1989, a historical district with a high concentration of occupied apartments and houses. Many houses in this district were empty and dilapidated. Alternative living communities like those in the West German scene didn't exist. In the 80s these occupied spaces acted nevertheless as illegal Galleries, ateliers, rehearsal rooms and offered an unofficial space for subcultural and countercultural scenes and the opposition milieu. They tried to form a contrast to the centralist system of the GDR. Therefore the scene was monitored by the *Staatssicherheit* (secret police). The main reason was not the act of squatting, but rather the alternative attitude to life. The punk-scene was a particular focus of the *Staatssicherheit*.



The Hegel 5 (1994)

The new political situation (since 1989) transformed the practice of squatting. Open social centers, new collective forms of living, bars, concert rooms, alternative economies like shops and workshops, and galleries had expressed a new self-awareness. In the following two years a broad squatting-scene in Potsdam grew, which became the "Capital of squatters" in the year 1991 with the most squats in Germany. Housing space became again a commodity and the object of capitalist interests. After the reunification in the year 1990 the houses were returned to their old owners and thus privatized. Often these acts took a long time, during which the houses were empty. Squatting was, in the new system, a part of political public and a part of a long conflict between squatters on the one side and homeowners and the interests of city governments on the other side.

GDR

D

1980

1985

1989

1990

1991

1993

2000

Squat map Potsdam  
scan qr code!



<http://sqek.enif.uberspace.de/en/cities/potsdam/squats>

A part of the punk scene organized 1987 an independent antifascist group (named *Antifa-Gruppe*) because of increasing attacks of Naziskinheads against leftist punks. The group's work included criticism of the political system, a thematic connection between Neonazis and the GDR, and self-defense, despite the state measures of repression. In December 1989 the *Antifa-Gruppe* started the first public squatting in the city center of Potsdam.

January 1991: Some of these squatters moved to Potsdam and squatted a lot of houses in the city center

November 1990: squatters were evicted from houses in *Mainzer Straße*

September 1993: riots after the eviction of the social center *fabrik*