## Squatting in Potsdam between 1980 and 2000

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## ....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.

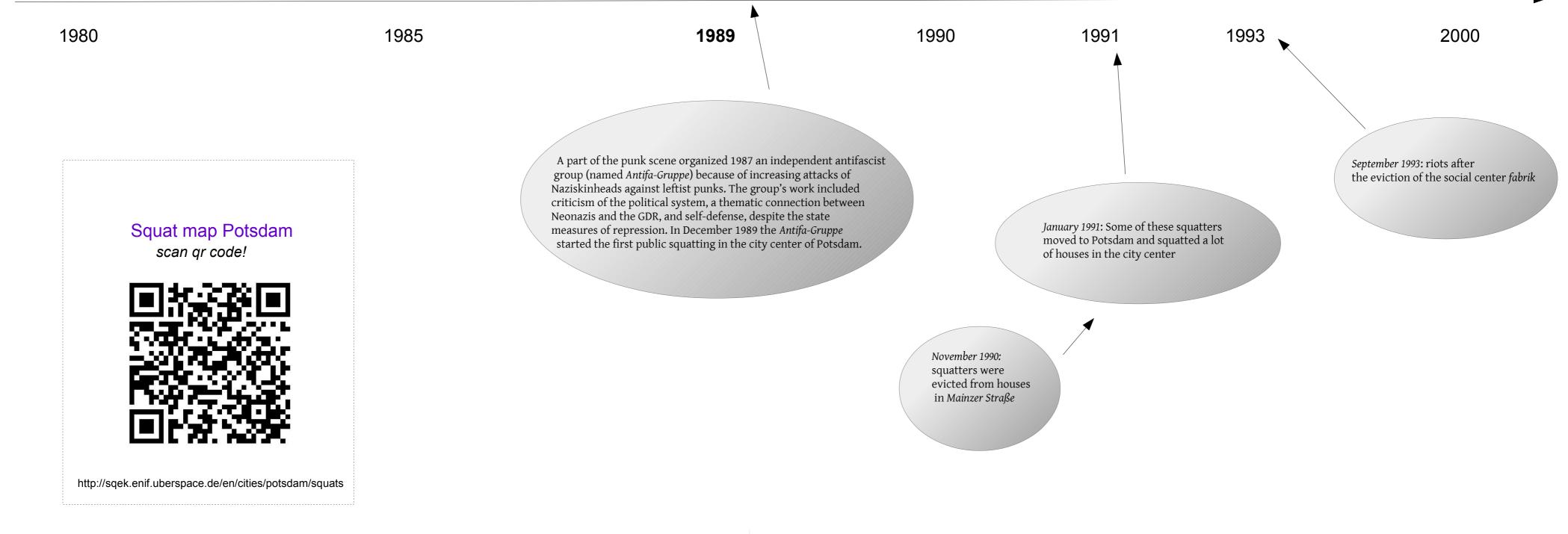
They tried to form a contrast to the centralist system of the GDR.

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.