Chapter 1

Introduction

Housing in the Entanglements of Formality, Informality, and the State

Taking the train from Schönefeld airport, a visitor to Berlin rides through a vast area of urban allotments.[1] Still on the periphery, the train follows the East–West divide that long defined the city, if not much of the world. Straight ahead, at a distance, a passenger can spot the tip of the Berlin TV Tower – the symbol of former East Berlin that marks today's city center. Green garden plots, seemingly endless along both sides of the tracks, are cluttered with small and colorful allotment huts [*Lauben*].[2] I have been asked if these sites are the "slums" of Berlin – or if people live in these huts. Certainly, from a distance, their spatial and social order is difficult to grasp.

This book delves into the everyday governance of housing at these sites. More particularly, it explores the gardeners' scattered, unruly, and precarious dwelling practices as well as the multifaceted and frequently contradictory efforts to regulate them. It examines these negotiations with an interest in learning about the mechanisms through which room for maneuver is gained and constrained in the everyday (re)production of urban order and the exclusions these processes entail.

One way of approaching this task is by framing the practices under examination through the notion of informality. Since the 1970s, researchers have used this concept to describe the unauthorized construction and inhabitation of urban space, particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (ILO, 1972; Hart, 1973; Hann and Hart, 2011). These themes remain, as Tonkiss writes, "a major plot-line in the story of contemporary urbanization" (2012: 55), although today, critical scholarship employs the notion of informality to consider the ambiguities of state regulation, rather than the phenomena that lie beyond the oversight of state institutions (Roy, 2009a; McFarlane, 2012). In this critical understanding, the concept provides a starting point for describing

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the scene above through the incoherencies of state and urban governance in regulating housing at these sites.

Another way of approaching the theme of this book is by exploring the enactment of rules in everyday practices of regulatory enforcement. Dwelling in Berlin's allotment gardens breaches the rules of the law, but it is also marked by other forms of intense regulation. Rather than being characterized through spontaneity, the construction of allotment huts is embedded in long-standing traditions of city life. Sheds transgress building codes but are organized strictly on clearly fenced plots. Although buildings are erected without permits, they are systematically serviced with water and electricity. Their residents exceed use rights, but they comply elsewhere with registration commitments. A closer look at the housing situation in the gardens provides insights into the ways in which transgressions are accommodated in the "formal" production of urban order and thereby also points out the institutional ambiguities on which allotment dwelling frequently depends.

Housing in the Margins relates these two approaches and argues that this matters because it accounts for housing and urban governance in a Western liberal democracy in ways that challenge some of the *epistemological* assumptions that have long been engrained in research on cities. With informal housing playing hardly more than a marginal role in scholarship on European, Canadian, or US cities, an exploration of how allotment dwelling is negotiated in Berlin troubles the North–South divisions that underlie much production of knowledge on urban informality and raises questions about the particularity of local experiences and the universality of concepts, including that of informality. I pursue this project with empirical and theoretical objectives: studying *empirically* how Berliners negotiate ways of staying put in allotment gardens and how boundaries around their dwelling practices are drawn, I aim at understanding the production and governance of housing precarity in a relatively rich European city. In *theorizing* these processes of governance, I seek to unveil the possibilities of conceptualizing informal housing in the context of bureaucracies that are commonly understood to regulate thoroughly, coherently, and according to fixed rules.

In the Margins: Allotment Dwelling in Berlin

An abundance of research has documented the history of allotment gardens, but it has rarely associated these sites with informal housing. Most of Berlin's allotment compounds (see Figure 1.1) go back to a period of industrialization and rapid expansion of the city at the turn of the twentieth century. They are frequently referred to as colonies – a term that I adopt and contextualize in

FIGURE 1.1 View of allotment colony in Berlin-Neukölln. Source: Michael Berger.

Chapter 3. As that chapter also details in depth, Berlin has witnessed more than a century of allotment governance in which dwelling on one's plot was variably forbidden and politically sustained. The dwelling practices that persisted throughout two wars, rival political systems, and the increasingly profit-driven use of urban land have left their vestiges in the contemporary city: today's landscape of allotment colonies, 876 compounds with 71,071 garden plots on 2,915 hectares of urban space (SenUVK, 2019: 24), is served by an infrastructure of mini-scale allotment huts, electricity networks, water hook-ups, and telephone lines (Urban, 2013; Hilbrandt, 2015).

By and large, allotment gardens can be characterized as spaces of the lower middle class, though over-proportionally white. Most gardeners are of an older generation that has fostered social networks between allotment holders who have gardened, plot by plot, over decades (SenSW, 2019: 32). Despite repeated exceptions with far-reaching consequences for the acceptability of dwelling, permanent residence on these sites is generally prohibited – today most centrally through the Federal Allotment Law, the Bundeskleingartengesetz (BKleinG). Yet, allotment holders rely on a variety of regulations as they take up residence within allotment huts. To avoid any misunderstandings, it should be stated that allotment dwelling is not a mass phenomenon. In addition to 1,131 gardeners who hold dwelling permits (documentation of the

Berlin Senate, provided in an interview, 18.09.2013), an unknown number of Berliners with other legal statuses permanently reside in colonies, particularly in those that have functioning infrastructures throughout the year, including electricity connections and water pumps. *Schwarzwohnen* [literally: "black" (here signifying clandestine and unlawful) dwelling] remains the exception,[3] although my research has taught me to expect at least one or two permanent dwellers in each colony and higher numbers in some of the colonies at the periphery of the city. Conversely, *Sommerwohnen* [summer dwelling] is a rather frequent practice. It implies moving "out" into the colonies in early spring and returning "back" into the city in late autumn, and possibly subletting one's flat during the stay on the plot, or inhabiting a hut throughout longer vacations, or routinely spending the night.

In the diversity of these practices, the case of allotment dwelling widens understandings of housing precarity in a European city. In contradistinction to studies of homelessness (Mitchell, 1995; Marquardt, 2013), camps (Clough Marinaro, 2017; Pasquetti and Picker, 2017; Picker, 2019), emergency shelter, or some of the work on informal settlements in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, allotment dwelling does not limit the study of housing precarity to an exploration of severe urban poverty. Berlin's allotments – even if some may be inhabited – are commonly seen as orderly and tradition-bound. It is to a lesser extent that allotment gardens also provide refuge for the income-poor – people scraping by on unemployment benefits, or migrant laborers, or pensioners with limited means, for example. Yet the case of allotment dwelling also speaks to growing social divides in which those at the bottom of the income ladder are additionally disempowered through the tensions in European housing markets and their spatial and social effects.

Over the years in which I researched and wrote this book, investment-led policy, housing privatization, and the financialization of real estate have crucially changed Berlin's housing conditions. In the aftermath of the 2007/2008 financial crisis, processes of displacement and the associated deepening of social divides have increasingly appeared to be the order of the day (Aalbers and Holm, 2008; Bernt, 2012; Soederberg, 2017). As a result, Berlin has experienced a resurgence of interest in the "new" housing question (Schönig et al., 2017; PROKLA, 2018). A plethora of urban scholarship (e.g. Holm, 2011; Uffer, 2014) has drawn into sharp relief that Berlin's housing crisis has been politically caused through neoliberal approaches to housing provisioning and the resultant reductions of social housing and rent increases in all market segments; that it is structurally determined through the global financial crisis that moved Berlin's housing stock into the spotlight of capital flows; and that the crisis has been aggravated through the population growth of the city (Investitionsbank Berlin, 2017).

As I argue in Chapter 4, literatures explaining the resulting processes of gentrification and displacement focus predominantly on the political interventions that allow for or hinder gentrification, or on areas that experience gentrification and displacement (Holm, 2010; Schipper, 2018). This includes *qualitative* attention to incoming middle- to high-income pioneers and gentrifiers or *quantitative* explorations of population mobility incidences and rent increases to identify affected areas (e.g. Döring and Ulbricht, 2016). Yet, the debate remains limited in providing an understanding of the affected populations, their housing trajectories, and new forms and locations of residency – in part due to the difficulties of locating displaced residents (although see Helbrecht, 2016). The scarcity of literature on displaced populations is indicative of the lacuna of qualitative studies on housing precarity – including on the many faces of housing practices in irregular conditions. To date, informal housing is hardly recognized as existing in Berlin or in other European, Canadian, or US cities and rarely researched in relation to processes of governance (but see Chapter 4 for a discussion of existing research). Thus, to develop a more complete understanding of housing exclusion, to grasp the practiced relations formal and informal housing have to one another, and to challenge the "intellectual segregation" between these extensive but still largely disparate debates, my discussion of allotment dwelling joins up three strands of work: a global literature on informal housing, the contemporary German housing debate, and more specific and partly historical accounts of urban allotments.

To be sure, my aim is not to establish a direct causal relation between the tightening of housing markets and informal housing practices in Berlin's allotments. Rather, the book approaches questions of the housing crisis "sideways," as Jackson (2015: 3) puts it, through examining one of the "back ends" of the housing crisis – temporary or permanent residency in sites not deemed appropriate for dwelling. This includes discussion of people's lived realities, strategies of staying put, and interim solutions; for instance, when people lessen their rent burden by moving into their allotments over the summer and subletting their apartments during that time. In particular, Chapter 4 offers a rich empirical account of how and why gardeners take up residence within allotment huts. On the one hand, it illustrates the entanglement of formal and informal housing in the dwelling biographies of the allotment's residents. On the other hand, it explores how residents experience their housing conditions in widely varying ways.

This perspective promises two conceptual contributions to understandings of housing precarity. First, allotment dwelling constitutes an object of inquiry through which questions of governance can be explored through processes of negotiation in which informality tends to be tolerated and sustained.

Although I also discuss instances of evictions, allotment dwelling allows examining the normalcy of governance arrangements in which rule-breaking is mostly accommodated by all concerned. Instead of top-down regulation by a heavy-handed state, the case of allotment dwelling permits us to understand how such compromises are collectively secured. Second, and conversely, I maintain that a focus on understanding small-scale negotiation also fosters an understanding of registers of exclusion and boundary work that often remain uncovered in structural accounts of informality and the state. This includes discussion of how ethnic discrimination, self-regulation, and other boundary mechanisms undergird the compromises I previously discussed.

Negotiating Formalities: Postcolonial Urbanism, Informality, and the State

Beyond empirical questions about housing precarity, this book wrestles with the theoretical implications of allotment dwelling and its regulation for an understanding of informality in cities that are commonly understood to regulate thoroughly, coherently, and according to fixed rules. For decades, scholars have argued that informality was a "problem" of the South, in quantity at least, if not in sheer existence. It was seen, as Auerbach et al. put it, as "perhaps the distinguishing feature of contemporary urban life in the Global South" (Auerbach et al., 2018: 262). Yet, informal housing in Berlin's allotments can hardly be understood as a shift in the geographies of power that has fostered the growth of this allegedly Southern phenomenon in a European city – not least because it has had a century-long tradition in Berlin. Rather, an analysis of informality in a relatively rich city of the global North calls for a critical reflection of the concept of informality itself, as well as of the epistemological place and value of that concept in a more global urban analysis.[4]

Critiques of the paternalistic and colonial gaze of theorizing that prescribed informality to the South have long been ubiquitous in postcolonial urban studies (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff, 2012; McFarlane and Robinson, 2012; Lawhon and Truelove, 2019). But the challenge of "othering" Southern cities continues to "haunt" urban studies (Hentschel, 2015: 80), enlisting cities of the global South into an alleged trajectory of development that presumes one desirable future for all cities, epitomized by the economic hubs of the global North. For the development of a more cosmopolitan urban studies, this debate has proposed forging new lines of connection through more "worldly" (Roy and Ong, 2012; McCann et al., 2013), "planetary" (Brenner, 2014; Sidaway et al., 2014), and comparative methodologies (Nijman, 2007; Robinson, 2011; Myers, 2014). In this vein, authors have attempted to

"theorize back," or to postcolonialize the global North by transmitting knowledge from the South northwards (Schindler, 2014a; Hentschel, 2015; Lamotte, 2017; Hilbrandt et al., 2017).[5] This book follows that suggestion: it brings informality – a concept that tends to be used to research cities commonly located "off the map" (Robinson, 2002: 531) of mainstream theory-production – to Berlin, a place normally understood through conceptions of Western urbanism. Yet, this move confronts significant hurdles that may have more to do with the conceptualization of the state in understandings of informality and less with this epistemological approach itself.

As noted, today's more prudent use of the concept of informality in most parts of interdisciplinary urban scholarship has developed a nuanced understanding of the multiple entanglements of informality and the state. First, authors have placed a spotlight on the ways in which the state itself acts informally: by the rule of exception – in other words, suspending the validity of its own order (Roy, 2009a, 2011; Wigle, 2014; Davis, 2018), and by maintaining flexibility in regulation, thereby leaving its citizens in a state of "permanent temporariness" (Yiftachel, 2009a: 90). For instance, Ananya Roy suggests that informality is not a result of planning failure but a mode of urbanization in which "the law itself is rendered open-ended and subject to multiple interpretations and interests" (Roy, 2009b: 80). Moreover, discussions of informality and the state have considered the relation between the two through questions about citizenship, insurgency, and multiple other modalities of struggle and subversion (Miraftab, 2009; Meth, 2010; Porter et al., 2011). In these debates, the state is central as the primary object of contention – an antagonistic force working through the powers of oppression and domination.

Despite their critical contributions, I suggest that these approaches do not travel well into Berlin's allotments. In Chapter 2, I argue that the literature on informality, by casting the state in ways that tend to either underscore its flexible and oppressive use of informality or the ways in which citizens obstruct state powers by resisting it "from the outside," methodologically has less to say about the more interactive practices of negotiation that this book is concerned with, where the roles and interests of "both sides" are more fluid and frequently merge. By constructing informality through the powers of domination and oppression, on the one hand, or insurgency and resistance, on the other, the debate tends to neglect analyzing informality through the quieter registers of change, i.e. the small-scale and incremental powers of negotiation. *Housing in the Margins* focuses attention on these mundane negotiations, drawing on theoretical traditions that place weight on the normative judgments and social embeddedness of those who are negotiating (e.g. Tilly, 1999; Lea, 2008; Lipsky, 2010 [1980]), the legal-material processes of

regulatory enactment (Valverde, 2011; Blomley, 2014), the entanglement of institutions in social life (Tilly, 1999; Corbridge et al., 2005; Straughn, 2005), and the ways in which these processes of enactment reflect on and transform wider processes of institutional transformation (Cooper, 1998; Hunter, 2015). Examining allotment dwelling through this lens suggests three contributions to understanding the governance of urban informality in Berlin.

First, by placing weight on the normative judgments, subjective understanding, and social embeddedness of governing actors, *Housing in the Margins* reads informality and its regulation through the ways in which people apply their ambivalent and multiple understandings to processes of governance. For instance, this becomes apparent in Chapter 7, which focuses on the legal work upon which practices of governance rely. Utilizing critical legal studies, the chapter unravels how both regulators and allotment holders employ legal frameworks in regulatory practices to maintain, extend, or restrict outsized huts. Yet, while such frameworks of order constitute a pivotal resource in the making of order, the chapter discusses their operation in practice to understand how order is built through the interpretive mechanisms that shape how rules become "emplaced." In this way, the book seeks a more practice-centered understanding of the interpretive work through which rules operate "on the ground." This fosters an understanding of informality as emerging through the "ordinary stuff" of policy implementation, in which subjectivity, positionality, and individual agency are key.

Second, the case of allotment dwelling highlights that the room for maneuvering through rules lies, in part, beyond the realm of state institutions and is used, and at times coproduced, by civil *and* institutional actors. Chapter 6 makes this point most explicitly when considering the governance of temporary or permanent occupancy from the perspectives of different bureaucrats and allotment holders involved in the transgression and regulation of order. Through this focus, *Housing in the Margins* accounts for a constellation of regulating actors that exceeds the realm of Berlin's bureaucracies and includes the gardeners themselves. Beyond common assumptions about regulatory enforcement as a process in which state actors implement rules, combining the perspectives of all governing actors allows me to consider the ways in which people within and beyond state institutions negotiate room for maneuver in implementing order. Across all chapters, I describe the production of socio-spatial order as a cooperative effort that is shaped by all parties concerned and leads, at best, to a joint although contested arrangement. At the same time, my focus on consensual arrangements raises important questions about the limits of this tolerance and the inequalities that define such a politics of negotiation. The everyday may be a site of small-scale agency, but, as I

attempt to show, understanding governance at this scale also unveils the degree to which the various parties concerned with allotment gardening have asymmetric capacities in such maneuvers, and the exclusionary practices that mundane negotiations may also entail – enacted through both civil society and state actors.

Third, *Housing in the Margins* accounts for the minor acts of negotiation in focus here as a means of redefining how urban governance is "lived out." For instance, Chapter 5 confronts this question in its spatial and material dimensions by focusing on the ways in which incremental adaptations of the gardens and their governance have shaped the urban development of the city and its modalities of urban change. Theoretically, the chapter traces questions about urban planning and governance, on the one hand, and coproduction and incrementalism, on the other, in order to juxtapose these forms of transformation. My aim is to unravel how these modalities are entangled in urban development and to tease out how we can understand forms of coproduction, incremental adaptation, or self-built housing in a city of the global North. Across the book, I maintain that understanding informality through the ways in which all those concerned with allotment governance shift legal boundaries and alter the city's urban fabric at the everyday scale allows us to grasp how these practices shape the structures in and through which these practices take place.

Taken together, I suggest that the "payoff" of these theoretical propositions is that they enable us to grasp informality through the *routine* enactment of rules and regulations. In this view, informal housing emerges in and through a normal, not a particular, "mode of urbanization." This understanding requires us to rethink the analytical role and significance of informality in an analysis of urban governance and state enactment. Instead of presupposing the existence of formality and deriving the concept of informality from that, placing weight on *how* transgression and regulation become acted out in negotiation turns the operation of formality itself into an ethnographic question.

In conclusion, Chapter 8 returns to the book's epistemological starting point and reflects on the promises and difficulties of translating concepts from "elsewhere" to Berlin. Drawing its lessons about processes of formalization and informalization both in and beyond the case discussed, the chapter concludes that Berlin's allotments are not an exceptional case but rather a paradigmatic example of governing irregular housing conditions through small-scale negotiations. Rather than seeing informal housing as a distinguishing feature of the global South, I maintain that despite the different analytical route taken here, conceiving of irregular housing through the lens of urban negotiation allows us to build more global approaches to housing research.

Methodology: An Institutional Ethnography of Informality and State Enactment

As with other sensitive issues, researching informality is fraught with methodological, practical, and ethical challenges that require critical scrutiny (cf. Auerbach et al., 2018: 263). The methodological challenge lies in accounting for multiple perspectives and levels of investigation: urban order is enacted through the embodied and situated practices of all concerned, but it is also mediated through institutions, codes, laws, and regulations. My investigation starts from the former; I center this inquiry on the level of situated practices – i.e. place-specific, day-to-day interactions. Yet I explore these in relation to the frameworks of order in which they are embedded by adapting Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography to the context of urban studies (1990, 1999, 2005). This feminist approach is committed to focus social research on people's everyday lives, and to ground this inquiry in the discursive, institutionalized, or legal relationships within which their practices are embedded. Through this perspective, Smith argues, the study of everyday life can account for the "ruling relations" – relations that enter into and organize social life through unobservable facts that are mediated through replicable texts, discourses, plans, laws, and the like (1990: 6; see Billo and Mountz, 2016 for a geographical perspective on institutional ethnography).

To hold these perspectives in tension requires a mix of approaches. The study combines three data sets: qualitative interviews with bureaucrats and allotment gardeners, ethnographic explorations of the research sites, and textual sources, including statutory texts, the documentation of legal cases, newspaper reports, and archival data. To collect the first set of data, I conducted interviews between July and November 2013 as well as between April and July 2014 and returned to the gardens to update, expand, and refocus this material in April and May 2019. My interviewees included city officials in the Senate Department for Urban Development, the so-called allotment garden administrators [*Kleingarten Sachbearbeiter*innen*], who are administrators at the district level, allotment holders with administrative responsibilities, and residents in the allotments. Across these four groups, I conducted a total of 41 "formal" interviews and an uncounted list of shorter spontaneous interviews "across the fence," as it were.

Access to city officials or functionaries in the allotment association proved to be unproblematic once I had learned that most practitioners already possessed intimate knowledge of the dwelling practices in Berlin's colonies. Not surprisingly, finding allotment holders who permanently lived in their huts was more complicated, and only a mix of strategies allowed me to recruit

interview participants. I ended up searching for participants via postcards that I distributed on walks through the colonies; through the gardening associations, which established contact with gardeners they knew were living in the colonies; and while strolling through the gardens, talking about the topic in public, or mentioning my search to friends.

Second, I complemented the interview material with ethnographic observations in order to gain a better understanding of the lived experience of allotment holders. Within the framework of institutional ethnography, my use of ethnographic observations aimed at explicating how institutional frameworks are felt, produced, and contested within and beyond institutional spaces in the everyday (Diamond, 2006; Billo and Mountz, 2016: 7). I aimed to observe the spatialities and social patterns of interaction as well as the material solutions that gardeners find to adapt their huts in response to regulatory efforts. As it is difficult, if not impossible, to "hang out" in the rather private allotments, because the grid structure of the colonies does not tend to provide spaces for the sojourn of external visitors, a good way to enter into the intimacy of the gardens was to walk through the colonies. In practice, my ethnographic data collection thus took the form of observational strolls and a series of *perpetual encounters* that these walks facilitated. This part of my strategy is akin to what Streule (2018: 27–41, 2019) and others (Lee and Ingold, 2006) have described as a mobile ethnography – an approach that captures the materiality, geography, and symbolic representation of a field site through walking. These visits allowed me to establish an overview of the phenomena, facilitated a number of informal chats with the gardeners I encountered, and triggered questions for my interviews. They also provided a means to register the materiality of the buildings and the infrastructures in the colonies, as well as their spatial layout.

In order to further immerse myself in the colonies, I eventually decided to lease an allotment garden and became a member of an association. Although I never ended up living in an allotment, despite my original plan to do so, this strategy of membership still proved to be a fruitful way to gain access to information. Most importantly, the "hunt" for the right hut provided me with an opportunity to get in contact with gardeners, to learn necessary tricks for remaining under the radar, and to get an inside glimpse into the lived experience of allotment dwelling. In my quest for a garden, I struggled to combine the role of a fellow gardener with that of an investigator. Although I was initially worried that any reference to the study would prevent my gaining access to an allotment plot, I nevertheless decided to introduce my role as a researcher, as well as the theme of my project, whenever the opportunity arose. Mentioning my research not only seemed more ethical but also triggered further chats about dwelling practices in the colonies.

It may be difficult to get to the mechanisms through which regulations are understood and put to work "on the ground" through surveying documents, such as laws, contracts, or reports, but the question of urban order is not one that could be answered without these accounts. To understand how spatial order is shaped through these documents, they make up the third set of data in this study. As institutional ethnography is concerned with the ways in which sequences of text coordinate "relations of ruling" (Smith, 1990: 6), this method of investigation is particularly well placed to frame an analysis of documents. Broadly speaking, I concentrated this analysis on two more or less active modalities through which textual discourse shapes socio-spatial relations.[6] On the one hand, I followed a linguistic approach (Dittmer, 2010) to grasp the ways in which documents influence spatial order through the understandings that are embedded in text. On the other hand, I pursued a more contextual approach in order to analyze documents with regard to the ways in which they enter into public life, circulate through different social spheres, and interact with local practices.

Geographically, the primary data collection focused on multiple allotment compounds in four Berlin districts: Pankow, Neukölln, Reinickendorf, and Treptow. I do not explicitly compare the colonies in these districts. The selection aimed to cover a wide variety of colonies across a range of regimes of regulation (with varying degrees of laxity) and locations in the city (across the different historical and legal contexts of the former East and West Berlin). Furthermore, the project is designed as a multi-sited study due to an ethical concern with anonymity, i.e. in order not to compromise specific colonies. To publish on the specificity of one colony or the colonies in one district would have allowed for identifying particular sites and calling individual gardeners or associations into account. When considering particular colonies, I refer to them anonymously. Similarly, I pseudonymized all personal data to ensure the anonymity of my participants.

This book continues across seven further chapters, structured as follows: Chapter 2 presents the book's theoretical perspective. Chapter 3 discusses the shifting political and normative placement of allotment dwelling over a century of allotment governance from a historical perspective. To follow the tracing of these larger political shifts, Chapter 4 turns to the contemporary housing question to explore how and why gardeners take up residence within allotment huts. The subsequent empirical chapters then discuss small-scale negotiations and their wider effects from three perspectives. Chapter 5 considers the negotiation of allotment dwelling in its spatial and material dimensions. Chapter 6 analyses the gardens'

temporary or permanent occupancy as a question of governance. Chapter 7 focuses the discussion of negotiability on the legal work upon which practices of governance rely. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes by revisiting the book's key themes.

Summary: Chapter 1

This chapter outlines the book's empirical and theoretical objectives, introduces the study on which the book builds, and explicates the methodological underpinnings of that study. It shows that studying *empirically* how Berliners negotiate ways of staying put in allotment gardens and how boundaries around their dwelling practices are drawn fosters an understanding of the production and governance of housing precarity in a relatively rich European city. In *theorizing* these processes of governance, the chapter unveils the possibilities of conceptualizing informal housing in the context of bureaucracies that are commonly understood to regulate thoroughly, coherently, and according to fixed rules.

Notes

1 Wherever possible, I restrain from translating the diverse German terms for urban allotments, most importantly "Kleingarten," "Schrebergarten," and "Laubenkolonie," as they are materially and culturally not equivalent to what the word "allotment" generally signifies in English. While the official term for a German allotment is *Kleingarten* [literally: small garden], the term used most commonly in colloquial language is *Kleingartenkolonie* [literally: small-garden colony].

2 The German term *Laube* refers to a small-scale roofed building that is typically made of stone or wood, is more solid than a shed, but more lightweight than a house.

3 The term *Schwarzwohnen* is more commonly known in the realm of other informal housing practices in the GDR, but used to designate irregular dwelling practices in allotments as well.

4 The terms "global South" and "global North" are used here as a "concept-metaphors," (Lawhon and Truelove, 2019: 11; see Sparke, 2007, for a similar argument) to point to the global dimension of postcolonial relations rather than to a geographical hemisphere.

5 In this vein, concepts such as "fabricating" (Hentschel, 2015) or "subaltern urbanism" (Schindler, 2014a) have been employed to understand European and US cities.

6 I considered five types of documents: legal statutes and administrative regulations, transcripts or reports of court cases, statutes and pamphlets of the allotment holders, historical documentation of the colonies, and finally, secondary and tertiary material, especially statistical data and media reports.